

THE TRADITIONAL SACRED IN THE CHRISTIAN POETRY OF VASILE MILITARU

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ABSTRACT. *The meaning of the word “sacred”, when associated with traditions, refers to a comprehensive process, manifested by the Christianization of the Romanian people, the human presence within the world and its relationship with the Divinity. The sacred is a category of interpretation and evaluation that “only exists in the religious area” and escapes reason, according to German theologian and philosopher Rudolf Otto. In his words, the sacred has a live component in all religions, which makes up its very specific characteristic. Without this content, Rudolf Otto maintained, “all would be far from religion”. He called it “numinous”, which implies the idea of “good, divine”. The human being is linked to the divinity through faith, but only in the presence of love. The human feelings configured through faith by numinousness are those of thrilling, respectfully sacred, mystical attraction, vital energy and love. “Christianity creates the world again, linking the human being to the divine work.” The principle is the incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus Christ [...]. He brought into this world, devastated by sin, a new way to accomplish this work, the theandric way, the divine-human way.” (Crainic, *The Paradise Nostalgia*, Iași, Moldova Publishing House, 1996, p. 6). Vasile Militaru acknowledges this type of relationship, and his religious poetry is centered on meditation and the relationship with the divinity. From a stylistic point of view, in his poetry one can observe the process of human development towards a superior moral being, with the coordination of religion. Critically, beyond the written verse there we find strong experience of the Orthodox faith, a modest artistic and esthetic level. The Christian poet describes the religion state, but not how it is experienced. There are stylistic elements, but in all cases, with few exceptions, they are sacrificed at the expense of versification, moral and education precepts.*

Key words: *sacred, divine, poetry, faith, numinous, Cosmic Christianity*

The numinous – integral part of the sacred

In the Christian lyrics, poetry and mystical revelation are forms of living ones faith. Faith, an attribute of the Christian man, is an intuitive form of understanding the human condition, streamed from tradition and the emotional bond with the world created by God. Vasile Avram calls this form of faith “cosmic Christianity” (Abraham 1999: 12) specifying that this doesn’t change at all the truth revealed by the Gospels.

One of the essential determinations of faith is the certainty of the existence of a reality even inaccessible to conceptual understanding, just as beauty in esthetics or time – no matter its forms of existence or sacred in religion. They all are just interpretatively rated concepts which describe forms of reality. The meaning of the concept sacred which we associate to tradition, tries to synthesize a broad process displayed during the Christianization of the Romanian people. The two stages of the Christianization process analyzed as manifests emphasize the particularity in which the sacred was assimilated and endowed with the proprieties which gradually became part of our peoples’ faith.

The first stage is related to the conveyance of the new religion on the Roman North-Danube territory, through the Christianized roman soldiers as well as through the apostleship of Andrew which fixed the idea that the Romanian peoples were born Christians. Arguments show that in the IV century the apostleship of the bishop Nicetas de Remesiana (335 – 414) had the concrete historical mission to preach the Gospels to the natives of Dacia (Kernbach, 1994: 267). The second stage is “reabsorbția lui din Liturghia slavonă, intruziunea adstratului bizantin de expresie slavă” (Kernbach, 1994: 267) and the scholarly impact of either heretical Bogomil sources or heroic narratives “vestit Alixândrie” – as the hagiographic Byzantine writings. Lucian Blaga has written similarly: “The villager won’t think about God as abstract, dogmatic or philosophic as the Byzantine culture defines Him, but mythological that is prehistorically. The Romanian village assimilated many of the motifs which built the great Byzantine culture’s heritage that was absolutely historical; but this historical culture has been assimilated to the pre-historical style of the villages” (Blaga 1977: 61). Specification: Lucian Blaga uses the term pre-historical related to the type of minor village, not the villages from the end of the XIX century (from the poet’s childhood, at the same time different from the village where Vasile Militaru grew up) what is more the Romanian interwar village studied rigorously by the researching “teams” of Dimitrie Gusti.

God the Father, Jesus Christ, Mother Mary are for the Christian villagers legendary countenances, fairytale characters: the incantations involve the Trinity, the saints are comprised in the mythical-magical practices. In his selection of fairytales, Lazăr Șăineanu presents “the overlap of the Christian factor on the pagan primitive layer. Mother Mary replaced the primitive fairy. The archangel substituted death. The good fairies were replaced by Christian

saints (Saint Sunday, Saint Wednesday, Saint Friday) and the evil ones with the devil. God Himself descends, accompanied by Saint Peter, to explore people's thoughts, rewarding the good and punishing the evil" (Șăineanu 1978: 27).

As a category of interpretation and evaluation, the sacred "doesn't exist like that only in the religious field" (Otto 2002: 11). Strictly analyzed, the sacred shows a component which is alive in all religions and precisely establishes the characteristics of the religion. According to Otto's terms: without this content "none would be the least of a religion". The German theologian and philosopher calls it numinous the sacred undertaking the idea of "good" and absolute goodness which simplifies the content of the concept and also of the feelings this designates.

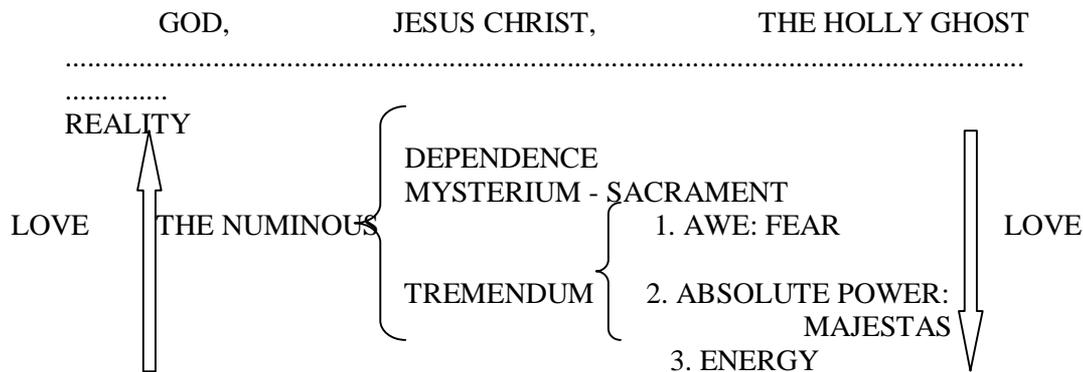
The numinous' element would be "the feeling of being a creature" or of being dependent, that of *mysterium tremendum*, the element of absolute power (*majestas*), the element of energy. There are fixed elements which make something special out of the numinous compared to the regular human experience. Awe, sacred respect, fear, fascinations as mystic attraction, vital energy, power, against which the human is dust and ashes (Abraham spoke to God about the fate of those from Sodom, the Book of Genesis 18, 27 "Let me take it upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes."). Even though these feelings which we should call characteristics are embedded into the human conscience, there lacks one decisive for faith – love. God's love "descending into people makes these absorb the projection of God's image in their selves" (Stăniloae 1993: 162).

In the popular Christianity God's image reflects in the human self differently: beginning with an anthropomorphic image to His presence in everything that is seen and unseen. However, the divine energy once impregnated in one's soul heads for God bearing the subject's own intentionality and affection.

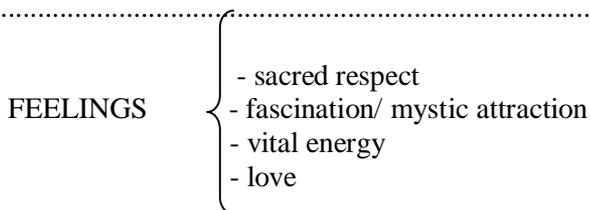
In Nae Ionescu's interpretation of the phrase: "love the Lord your God and your neighbor as you love yourself" we find an important shedding of the meaning and understanding of Christian love. The first part of the phrase "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind" means that nothing of what you feel or think should be aimed at another direction than God: "...the target of your entire activities, your every moment's strain should strive after God, after a guidance center of all your spiritual powers" (Ionescu 1995: 125). The second part of the phrase, according to the Romanian philosopher, means that you should relent something of yourself to give to someone else. Goodness is self-surrender, not self-love.

The existence of the numinous and of its characteristic feelings including love is likewise highlighted by Gustav Carl Jung who also finds the creational function of the religious spirit in spontaneous images precisely because this is religious by nature (Jung 1973: 15), an idea completed by Mircea Eliade

showing that the sacred “is an element in the structure of the conscience and not a phase in this conscience’s history” (Eliade 1994: IX) and emphasizing it through an interrogative argument: “how could the human spirit function without being convinced that something irreducibly real exists in the world?” (Eliade 1994: IX). Here is a sketch of the presence of the divine in the world and in humans:



FAITH
THE
HUMAN



We notice that Christianity recreates the World associating the human being with the divine work. This principle is the incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus Christ, says a great Christian thinker Dionisie Areopagitul. He brought in the world devastated by sin a new working approach: the theandric way, the divine-human way” (Crainic 1996: 6).

Our model is able to present reality in its irreducible aspect with the presence of the divine which leads to the representation of the human communion with God, communion expressed in all forms of human activity. From all these activities we stop at the artistic creation, more accurately at poetry and mysticism, an activity which shows the rising of the human to the state of salvation.

The theandric way inflicts the idea of its realization through two types of Revelations according to the orthodox doctrine: the natural Revelation and the supernatural Revelation whereby God manifests as human. Humans unite with the deities through image and affinity, two Christian anthropological concepts. Developing further the ideas of Nechifor Crainic, we highlight the fact that humans bear God's image given in their spiritual structure (see the example above), but due to his freedom he might not be similar to God. The fulfillment of God's image in a human is the genius, fulfilling the affinity with God is the saint. The genius is the natural prophet of "an order o superior perfection of our world symbolized in his psalms" (Crainic 1996: 6) and the saint which externalizes the Christian character allows us through its moral perfection to "contemplate a sign of eternal perfection". Of course, their common basis, the image, leads to their convergence of the genius' creation who becomes a prophet and of the saint who is the model of deification. Wishing to systematize, we skim through the aspects from popular Christianity to the theoretic in order to reveal the manner in which the assimilation process took place forming the religious experience, the sense of iconic plasticity, the sensitive perception of God's world as a world of the humans with God where imagination, words, sounds and colors may be animated by the natural Revelation.

From divine revelation to human revelation

From this general frame, from the perspective of which we understand the religious art and literature, we place ourselves at a lower level of understanding of the lyrical creation of Vasile Militaru, which we consider as being the expression of talent. "The talent surpasses our epoch. The talent is a technical virtuosity, which gives a beautiful shape or agreeable to an ordinary content. " (Crainic 1996:225) We will find in the lyrical forms, where the sacred will be symbolized, this particular ordinary content, but which, starting from the traditionally Christianity, will draw also the orthodox theology's pattern systematized in holy books. To an extent, we can say that the author followed the path from the human world having God's face, a world of villages and traditions to the divine world transmitted by the Holy Spirit in the content of Holy Scripture.

Literary, though, taking into account also the esthetic success, the road will be a difficult one. The poet has in view the depiction of the religious mood and not its experience, he illustrates metaphysical moments, stressing the ethics and their teaching. A mere poem of the faith that is offered, which lacks, though, the mystery's thrill and the unutterable of the divine order. For the Christian poet, the heart represents the organ where it is focused the power of faith, it is here that lays the enthusiasm of great actions, which configures the fulfillment's path and the purpose of the poet:

„Te cânt inimă, că, vie, printr-o sfântă vrere-adâncă
Ai pornit să bați în pieptu-mi, până-a nu mă naște încă,
Și de-atunci tu bați într-una, fără clipă de repaus
Puls al Cosmosului însuși, încheag în ce-a fost haos”.

The unique metaphor “pulse of the outer space itself” indicates the energy, element of the sacred; the further symbolic expressions indicate vitality, passion, will, love, being the personification of God himself, but also the tension of touching and unification with the divinity. The poem of my heart from the volume *The poems of immortality* (1995, Craiova) is a large unfolding of the sacred’s vitality aspects conceived by the human being. We situate ourselves in a high position that the poet has reached through the image promoted by the theology (and of course, by the poem that has influenced him, particularly the eminescian one), through which the divine creation meant the transition from chaos to outer space, the outer space being perceived as an order. We mention that in ancient Greek, for Pythagoreans, the outer space was considered as a “living creature” (zoon), with breathing system but it was also a principle of Boundary (peras).

The leit motiv “Te cant inima” is the lyrical form through which the human being’s decisions are connected, as a living person, in the reality crossed by the divinity’s spirit, moral values and the faith rises upon the Absolute Creator “The one from which you withdraw”. The heart, “a startling human being”, the fertile soil of love, the sun, the life, the music and the weeping, bears in it the power of the Holy Cross, and the secret of the celestial worlds, it praises the Creator of the nine Canopies of Heaven and it rises the Human Being to the sky “indumnezeindu-I firea”.

The message of the poem is obvious, if we take into consideration the Latin etymon of the word heart: anima. The signification “vital principle, life, soul” is able to reveal the idea of the assembly, of the Outer space organized in its own rules by the Creator. The power of faith and the redemption paths are found also in the concept of the “heart” as an equivalent for the soul. The poet builds its vision through the indication of the vital organ and its functions passing to the old meanings disguised in the Latin form of the word, used in religious texts and in the liturgical ones.

The personification, as a semantic figure, is created in the poem through metaphors taken from the most diverse areas of existence: the heart is YOU, alter ego, a person and a flower: “.. te-mbeți adânc în fața unui răsărit de soare/ Căntre florile grădinii, ce de asemeni te îmbată/ Înflorind mereu ca ele, te simți floare înmiresmată”. It is, as well, a fireplace with vapaie “mangaioasa” (epitet adjectival derivat din verb) it is gold, not mud, it is Maiastra- a remarkably semantically dense metaphor, and finally, Golden Shrine, suggesting the

popular image of God, an Old Man that sits on a golden throne and who supervises the ongoing life of the world and human beings.

The heart is in poem also the perceptive organ of the Revelation, it is shown the world created in the fabulous of faith, but also the Revelation's means of conduction. The heart, personified, it becomes another thing and we distinguish "the human being's experience in the second person" through the fact that unlike everything that exists in the world, it appears as a subject that limits us. Now we can add that the human being, in the most vivid existence, as YOU, is being sent by us, as a subject that leaves and raises us too to the subject level (Stăniloae 1993: 23). Through the poetic makeshift of division, Vasile Militaru places two subjects in a communication situation, when he writes:

„Te cânt, inimă, că tu ești vietatea ce tresaltă
În adâncul veșniciei cu fiorii cei mai nalți
Ce pe OM îl suie-n ceruri, îndumnezeindu-i firea
Că-n pământul tău răsare floarea-florilor: iubirea!”

The poet applies in the lyrics the ideas of faith, love and the presence and the conduction of the Revelation. The faith of the other one ("the heart", You), is the faith in the human being, because it is in the heart of eternity, faith in God. Love is the harmony with God and the way to the deifying of the human being. The idea of the sacrifice of the Jesus Christ is in people's understanding as the means through which the Son of God saved the world. The poet keeps only the pain. In the case of Crucifixion, we talk about an absolvable suffering, "a penalty carried voluntarily without any sign of reproach against God, as an absolute tribute brought to Him" (Stăniloae 1993: 271). The suffering is pure sacrifice, the only one that God wants.

In the poem "On the Cross", the poet imagines similar sufferance and invokes the name of the One that dies on the cross. Through the dialogue, as a literary means, the scene is dramatized: „Au ce sunt durerile tale, nevrednic vierme – îmi spui,/ Ce-nseamnă-ndurarea ta toată, pe lângă-ndurările Lui?”. The poet's pains are appeased, living among the loved ones, but he asks himself: „Dar Celui pe Cruce-n piroane – în pieptu-I stingându-și suspinul/ Au cine-a venit să-l aline, măcar mângâindu-I tot chinul?. The unappeased suffering is given precisely to emphasize the assuming of guilt, of the humanity's sins. Through it, the intensity of love, responsibility and purity reaches the last limit, a condition that can bring the redemption. The cross on which the poet crucifies is the one of pain linked to the impossibility of expression: the image of the young apple, personified "numai zambet" is a gift, the poet though, doubts it; it can be one of temptation, of testing, "cum dar lui Adam s-a dat Evei?". Is it the creation an illusion? „Că-n florile mărunții toate, drag, chipul iubirii s-arată”.

Vasile Militaru didn't express himself in a "poetical art" in the poem; he rather illustrated in the lyrics the role of the poet: the promotion of the identity values, the moral ones, the traditions and the faith. It is just accidentally, like it is the poem above that he speaks about the poem as an expression of sufferings, that through the word they succeed to reach the salvation. With gentleness "zambeste din orice petala", the face of the flame induces him the feeling "de nu stiu cum", that nescio quid of the esthetics of the romanticism's beginnings. For the analyzed poet, though, "nu stiu ce"/ "nu stiu cum" receives concretization: "Can dinger e, cand o femeie!". The poem becomes clear, the ambiguity is a strange notion for the poet, the esthetic effects of the chiaroscuro are unknown as well for him. He goes only after the clear expression of love in two aspects of a soul "alb fluture", which knows the fly's tension "spre Tine la ceruri" si freamatul coborarii la "ea". The terrestrial love, born from suffering cannot fulfill but melted with the divine love: "Poetul si-a marului floare se-nalta vapaie spre Tine".

Another argument of the religious background of human being is given by the presence of the symbols in the religious practices. Their existence indicates also the religious way of thinking. It's a symbolic way of thinking, in which takes place a signification of the symbol in relation with the Christian vision. "In terms of ideas, a symbol is still a connection element, charged with meditation and analogy. It unifies the contradictory elements and reduces oppositions. Nothing can be understood, nor communicated without its participation" (Benois 1995:6)- tells us Luc Benois.

The poem, using the word as a symbol, is at its turn, meditation and analogy. Using the religious symbols, the poet expresses its state of spirit, in which the perception of the divine is transmitted through the word, the message meaning the charge of the symbol. In the popular Christianity, the range of symbols is extremely vast and it keeps a part of their original significance. The cross, the faith's central symbol represents the extent on the horizontal axis of the "human being's extension in all directions of his individuality. Vertically, it unifies the hierarchical stages of the superior phases towards which he can aim." (Benois 1995:62).

In Troita from the Stropi de roua volume, Vasile Militaru brings the Cross' symbol in its basic form. The crucifix placed in the field, near the road, achieves "fair and saint" face for the land toiling. The peasant, searches for years a cure for his wife, has the revelation of faith, kneels and praises. Important, is though, the saint frame where the communion act with God takes place. : „Picior de om în preajmă nu-i;/ Sunt doar scaieți în cărării/ Și, roșu, soarele apune...” Ceasul de grație în care țăranul și-a urcat spre Dumnezeu durerea, cu ochii spre cer l-a covârșit și-a rămas „cu ochii uzi, cu fruntea-n jos,/ Ca și când i-ar fi zis Hristos/ Să aștepte leac pentru nevastă...”.

The last verse cited upsets the balance of the composition saturated by the holly as a whole. The icon and the prayer are part of the symbolism of man's intimacy with God. The practical aspect, in this case the efficiency of human undertaking invoked in the prayer, has introduced the common, the mundane in the rustic setting. Esthetically it is a loss, as the poet concerned with exposition and narrative unity, produces an unbalance by putting together inspired imagery with prosaic elements. Poetry is first and foremost artistic imagery, as the ending demonstrates:

„Și-n timp ce sufletul lui cheamă,
Plângând o rază de lumină
Sub a apusului maramă
Troița pare de aramă
Iar Sfinții-ncununați se-nchină!”.

In these poems about feelings, the poet manages to elevate lyricism to the level of the metaphysical and convey emotions related to the believer's exceptional state in relationship to the symbolized divinity. In another poem from the same tome, *Icoana veche* (Old icon) Vasile Militaru uses words as means of painting a portrait of the peasant at work surrounded by the same air of the metaphysical. The pain of the one who digs the land which is not his is concentrated in a tear.

The shovel, like half of a sun shining in thousand rays, the old incurable longings give a face its dramatic substance, which seems to be looking for God's help. The hues of the sunset expressed in a concentrated form by „Jariștea din soare” (“the scorch from the sun”), projected onto the stony face, bloodies the running tear. The agony of humanity's sins on Christ's face crucified on the cross of deliverance, the poet's agony crucified in words, man's agony in prayer and the one separated from his land are impregnated with faith as a form of uplifting and deliverance. The expressive power of the poems steaming from traditional Christian vision is stronger, the poet's means are lyrical. Image, suggestion, color, atmosphere are communicated in forms that follow the rhythm of natural speech.

Within the orthodox dogmatic the icon is an object of worship and to the same extent an object of study. Saint John of Damascus, the first dogmatic theorist to talk about the cult of the icons, defines the icon as follows: “... a resemblance, a model, an engraving of someone which shows the person presented in the icon. This does not wholly resemble the original since the icon and the original are two different things...” (Damascus 1937: 19). Let us keep in mind the attributes of the icon: resemblance, an anthropological concept that implies the presence of divinity and gives the depiction its Christian character; the model is the reflection of and the clear proof that the Son of God, in the case

of the icon of Jesus Christ, has truly crafted His own human body; the engraving is the reception and assimilation of the exhibited face into the consciousness, thus amplifying the religious feeling. We also add here the beautiful as the aesthetic category validating the theological attributes of the icon in terms of feeling. We wish to mention one of the most beautiful icons of Orthodoxy with the Holy Trinity as its topic, titled the Trinity of the Pious icon painter Andrei Rubliov (Breda 2001: 7-21). For poetry the icon can achieve not so much aesthetical significance (the thesis of *Ut picture poesis* was augmented in the history of aesthetics) as one of content and the meaning presupposed from the perspective of the poet's individual perception.

Prayer is another form of lyrical expression, borrowed from Christian ritual and found in the works of the most important poets. The content of prayers has laic characteristics for the most part. Of importance are the structural elements and the kind of relationship (the beneficial feeling of being protected, of support), but the requirements are worthy of the poet's attitude and his demands. If Octavian Goga asks: „Dă-mi tot amarul, toată ura/ Atâtor doruri fără leacuri./ Dă-mi visele în care urlă și gem/ Robiile de veacuri”, the neomodernist Mircea Dinescu asks for the values specific to man in a partial form with ironic distance: „Dă-mi Doamne, totul numai pe din două/ Spânzurători din funie de mac/ Iubite credincioase doar când plouă/ Și libertatea ghemuită-n sac”. These are two examples which indicate an accepted form, but also the distance between traditional and contemporary poetry, having overcome the modern experience.

In a Prayer (Ruga) Vasile Militaru uses the image of Christian purity, of spiritual purity necessary for communication and communion with God through prayer: „Mi-e sufletul ca un cireș în floare” (My soul is like a blossoming cheery tree) – says the poet. This is in accordance with the structure of the Christian prayer: 1) Calling upon God; 2) the request regarding temptation; 3) the request regarding salvation and 4) purification for the Final Judgement:

- (1) „O, Doamne, azi când nimeni nu mai poate
- (2) Să biruie a ispitelor sudum,
Când înspre iad duc drumurile toate,
Iar înspre Rai mai duce-un singur drum
- (3) Trimite-mi Îngeri, astfel să mă poarte,
Să nu mă întineze nici un greș,
Ca, sufletu-mi să ți-l aduc la moarte,
Îmbătător ca floarea de cireș”.

(Rugă – volume Stropi de rouă)

We notice new elements in this poem : at the lexical level he uses words such as temptation in the religious sense of attraction or minimal resistance to the seductions of the laic world but also the regional term “sudum” in the sense of

effect, crowd. The necessities of rhythm and rime are met (sudum/drum); communication is however obscured. The opposition Heaven/Hell, purposefully substantiated using capital letters, is also borrowed from tradition, as well as the Angels, who have the role of accompanying man in his endeavors, the more so considering this is the road to salvation.

Prayer is a constant of the believer's behavior, and evening prayer has the role of accentuating human consciousness' communion with God. The meanings of protection, of home and trust are necessary to: „Să pornesc la muncă sfântă, cum pornesc albinele/ Să pot umple ca și ele fagurii cu binele” - Evening Prayer. Another prayer for the Final Judgment evokes the countless numbers of those who will come: „Și stăpâni, și slugi, și tineri, și bătrâni, și fragezi prunci,/ Și bogații, și săracii, și smeriții, și trufașii”. But the image of their division is devoid of the tension between the souls who are on the threshold of redemption and those who are not: „Dreptii vor fi dați la dreapta, păcătoșii-n partea stângă”. Its simplicity bares the mark of orality, without the supposed dramatic tension.

Man's relationship with the divine mystery

In popular Christian-orthodox tradition the elements of the Gospels were assimilated through liturgical practice, through the parables, allegories, the histories of the martyrs and through popular books. The Gospels themselves are related in a literary form, close to that of legends, stories, consequently having a powerful persuasive impact. The poetic substance and sometimes even the forms were structured in a certain manner, with a precise moral message. The gap between soteriology and theology is one that rational metaphysics is supposed to fill by grounding the divine mystery in rationality. Dogmatic thought in its conceptual richness and in its hermeneutical engagement can not become poetical substance. You cannot semantically burden a concept which is clearly defined by itself and instrumentalized to function within a specifically articulated logical system.

The path Vasile Militaru walks is one of great trials, a path on which the aura of poetry threatens to disintegrate. The poet attempts a lyrical exegesis of one of the statements from the Lord's Prayer, “Our Father”, the first Christian prayer left behind as a model by Jesus Christ in his Sermon on the Mount. Its content is structured into four parts (Ciobanu 1994: 246):

(1) Calling upon God the Father: Our Father who art in Heaven

(2) Three requests regarding the Kingdom of Heaven:

Hallowed be thy name;

Thy kingdom come

Thy will be done

On earth as it is in heaven.

(3) Three soteriological requests, the ones regarding man: Give us this day our daily bread;

And forgive us our trespasses

As we forgive those who trespass against us;

And lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil.

(4) Praise to God: For thine is the kingdom,

And the power,

And the glory,

Forever.

Vasile Militaru remembers the second request directed at the Kingdom of Heaven and sets it as title: Thy kingdom - come. (In the poet's orthography some deviations from rules are present. In quoting the lines we respect these for deontological reasons. The question arises if the punctuation marks are omitted for a stylistic purpose?) In some poems/lines this aspect is obvious but in others it is not. Here, the rule can change the meaning of the sentence (and of the whole prayer!). *Vie* (come) can be understood as a substantive and then the meaning is of a „Împărăție vie” (“Living Kingdom”) or in the spirit of the prayer as an imperative verb: *să vie / să vină!* (*Come/let it come!*)).

It is a massive poem, graphically structured, with long, Alexandrine lines, specific to the poet with ten line stanzas (three) followed by two six line stanzas, than a succession of eight, ten, six, two, four line stanzas, finishing with three eight – ten – eight line stanzas.

From this formal structure we can infer that the poet's aim is to exhaust the idea over the length of the stanza. Thus the graphic form is the result of the thought pattern and not of deliberate aesthetic effects related to rhythm and form. We can assert that this graphic model is in accordance with the content. Vasile Militaru has the conviction that the clarity of the words from the Lord's Prayer (this is how he refers to it although the classification is theological!) hides a deep meaning:

„La suprafață-s ape limpezi ca de izvor, dar au în ele

Atât adânc precum e-adâncul cel pururi plin de sori și stele”.

Not any mind, says the poet, can interpret the meaning of godly words, and through alliteration – a figure of sound often used by the poet - „Atât adânc precum e-adâncul...” gives the image of the sky full of suns and stars. Fortunate is he who can retrieve the gems of wisdom from this depth: the comparison „Acela e ca un scafandru ce din adâncul fund de mare,/ Îi scoate lumii, ca și sie-și, comoară de mărgăritare!” expresses the condition of the poetic self. Intuition leads him to the depths were the gems lye. The mind and words in their expressive forms bring to the surface the gems meant for the world but also for

oneself – as remedies for the moral condition – and the lights which show the way to redemption.

The logic of the verse seems twisted: the depth is that of the skies filed with suns and stars, the nine mentioned in another poem or of the diver, immensely deep (adanc de mare)? We can also identify the poet as a gaze, which reminds us of the first sentence from Plotin's Enneads: We can also find the beautiful as a diver absorbed in the depths of his feelings (Plotin 2000: 11). Vasile Militaru opens up vast perspectives and from a discursive point of view introduces the exemplifying parable, full of meanings, which are eventually indicated under a practical aspect. The human condition is marked by sins, among which is living the moment without the awareness of eternity:

„Și totuși, tu te dăruie clipei, la Cel Etern fără-a căta
Pe când, din ale lui cuvinte, zici: «Vie Împărăția Ta!»
Unde să vină, când în tine, în loc de-a lui Împărăție,
S-a-ntins pustiul fără soare, cu noaptea ca de veșnicie”.

Deep understanding of the request regarding the Kingdom is necessarily linked with the preparatory practice for salvation:

„Alungă-l pe Satan din tine, cu toate-a lui viclene șoapte,
Să fie-n tine numai soare, ca-n veci să nu mai fie noapte”.

To get to the meaning of this sentence, the poet creates an antithesis between preparations to receive an earthly emperor and earthly happiness and the preparations to receive the heavenly emperor, He who reigns eternal over everything else and for which the sinner is not prepared.

The two parts are different in regards to tone because stylistically the rhetorical interrogation is the only means by which the poetic discourse develops. In the first part gradation is achieved through cumulation: the house becomes a garden, the most valuable garments, the table full of fine dishes, everything should be of the best quality. „La fel de-nșelătoare toate și toate pier ca fumu-n vânt!”. The tone changes, it becomes solemn, full of incriminations, of invectives: foolish mouth, a path full of shards and sharp broken glass gravel.

In this poem we find the poet's attempt to settle his role in relationship to spreading the faith: the one who discovers the precious gems, he who writes from a theological perspective feels this time that it his calling to enlighten the sinner, to show him the path to redemption. Thus, Vasile Militaru, having reached the holly texts, turns towards the believer as a preacher. His rhetoric is however limited to the stylistic repertoire characteristic of him: rhetorical interrogation used to incriminate, antithesis, dialog, invocation, invective, metaphor: cei ce caerul își torc sub Cer, a metaphor for people's lives. Divinity and its attributes

are marked by capital letters: Izvorul Vieții, Prea-Înaltul, El Eternul, Dumnezeuul Slavei, inversions and the image is diluted through explanations: „Și-ntru eternitate fi-va-n fiecare, deci, și-n tine! ”. One observation is necessary regarding the excess usage of the hyphen as a consequence of aphaeresis which in the spoken popular language is frequent. In this case it is not a mark of orality but rather a requirement of the necessities of versification (metrical foot and rhythm). The aesthetic effect seems diluted by the verse’s monotony and graphically by the recurrence of the sign.

“All Christianity consists of communication and receiving the divine «word»: in Jesus Christ himself, all we have is the divine «word», in the sense of speaking to the people” (Stăniloae, 1993: 120), writes Dumitru Stăniloae. Faith is supported by trusting the dialogue with God and the prayer is appreciated as a heavenly gift and as a man’s deed, it is the mystery of union with God. Whereas Vasile Militaru is trying to replace that mystery with another, in the ideal way, that is thorough poetry, but words are deprived of the very thing that they should suggest – the mystery of the divinity, the secret of faith. On the same lines, the author of the Divine Building has in mind to unveil the meanings of Communion through an ample poem, entitled *The Holy Housel*, for the world oafs [who] do not understand it.”

The moment when Jesus sets up the Mystery of Communion by transubstantiation, the bread into His Body and the wine into His Blood, as symbols of supreme offering for the redemption of mankind, is at the Last Supper, in Marie’s House, together with His twelve Disciples. The Gospel of Matthew (26, 26-28) thus describes the moment:

“26. As they ate, Jesus took the bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to his disciples, and he said: consume it, this is my body.

27. And he took the cup and made the covenant and gave it to them and said, "Drink in fulfillment of it, all of you.

28. This is my blood of the New Covenant, that will be spilled on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.

These verses are put into lyrics, with the intention of suggesting the sacredness loaded atmosphere around Jesus:

„În vremea ceea, Astrul lumii stinsese farul lui feeric,
Și coborâse peste fire nemărginire de-ntunerice...
Iisus, cu Ucenicii-n juru-I, învăluți de-a nopții haină
Intrau, tăcuți, unde sta gata să-nceapă «Cina cea de taină»”.

“În vremea aceea”, a typical formulation of the Orthodox religious ritual and especially of the patristic writings, which is of obvious oral manner, starts the narration of that unique moment when the bread and the wine are

transubstantiated by the Holy Ghost. By repeating the invocation “O”, a hopeless state, and also the presence of the divine world, is transmitted.

„O, Cină plină de durere, o, Cină plină de lumină” says the poet, also explaining his state:

„Din care, lumii-n veac unire cu Dumnezeu avea să vină”.

Two different states indicate the invocation: in our opinion, that is a rather dramaturgic procedure, the poem being sprinkled with dialogues – monologues, to be more precise – because, on the one hand, Jesus will communicate the symbolic of the bread and wine, and on the other hand, the Christian poet receives the divine command to cleanse himself before the Mystery of Communion.

The poem is written according to the Gospel of Matthew and it encompasses short episodes from Jesus’ life, which, being transformed into lyrics, they dilute the message of the poem. Besides, the redundancy of the poems in general diminishes the aesthetic effect, turning them into educational poems. We follow the content units of the poem and, by comparison, the plan of the Gospel of Matthew (Mihoc, Mihoc, Mihoc 2001:119-121). In each of the five parts of the Gospel we find a narrative section and a lecture. (the Gospel preach Sermon on the Mount; the apostolical lecture – the mission of the Holy Disciples, Lecture – seven parables, the ecclesiastic Lecture – the community conduct, the eschatological Lecture).

The model of poem goes like this:

1. The circumstance of the Last Supper

The narrative section:

2. The Disciples and the story of His betrayal by Judas

3. The transubstantiation of the bread and wine

Lecture:

„«Spre a păcatelor iertare», cu înțelesul că dă viață
Întregei lumi, în veșnicie, nu numai celor Lui de față”.

What follows is the development of some general meanings linked to the Christian dogma, such as the Holy Trinity, the Holy Ghost, the Crucifixion, the episode about the Holy Disciple Thomas and his remorse, narrations from other Gospels also being illustrated in the poem. (Marcus, John).

In general, the poet uses the language by following denotative meanings. The herd = mankind; black, mud, dirt = sin; fire = divine light, purification; emptiness = lack of faith, just as they appear in the other poems.

The invention manifests itself at the metaphorical level concerning the naming of the divinity: the Pious of Eternity, Eternal Priest, at the lexical level by turning into adjectives: pity>Pious (inner feature of Jesus, turned into a noun by

articulation and written with a capital letter, in fact, a double change of the grammatical category), Eucharistic> “your Eucharistic fire”. A vegetal comparison for the efficiency of Communion: „O, Sfântă Cuminecătură, sfințenia lucrând în om,/ Cum, nevăzut prin bunătate lucrează și altoiu-n pom,/ Când, dintr-un pui de pom sălbatic, el se preface-n pom de soi/ Dând rod de mare preț în ramuri, cum n-ar fi dat fără altoi...” is diluted by the repetition of the comparison, explaining the identities: the poet = wild tree; the graft = the Holy Communion. It seems to be a particular understanding of the notion of poetry that, regularly, tries to find multiple connotations for an idea or a feeling.

In the case of these poems, we are in the presence of some lyrical homilies, where the dogmatic contents are being interpreted and revealed to us. In this poem, there is a moment when the poet creates the dramatic tension that will determine him to repeat the experience of crucifixion in order to redeem himself. Here we are shown the difference between the religious poem and the Christian educational prosody:

Și inima-mi, Tu las-o, Doamne, să simt cum lancea-n ea se-implântă,
Cum curge sângele-mi șiroae, pe lemn, de-a lungul și de-a latul,
Nu spre-a fi Dumnezeu ca Tine, ci ca să-mi spal cu El păcatul!...”
(Sfânta Euharistie)

If dying on the Cross is the symbol of redemption for Jesus, a symbol of achieving his divine being for the Christian, like in Miorita, the death-wedding is, at its origin, an ancient religious element. “It is about a new religious creation, typical for the South-Eastern Europe, which we called “cosmic Christianity” because, on the one hand, it projects the mystery of Christ upon the entire nature and, on the other hand, it neglects all historical elements of Christianity, though insisting on the liturgical dimension of the man’s existence in the world”. (Eliade 1980:246)

With the poem “White witch, a letter chosen for my bride!” of the volume “The Poems of Immortality”, Vasile Militaru illustrates this vision of folkloric Christianity which, by the rich rituals of posthumous wedding ceremonials, is the poet’s source of inspiration. But the Christian mystics and theologians also interpreted Christ’s agony and Death as a wedding. Mircea Eliade (see above) quotes St. Augustin: Christ, like a newly wed... comes in the honeymoon bed of the Cross and climbing in it, he completes the wedding”, and Nae Ionescu, interpreting strictly spiritually the Song of Songs, develops the idea that the act of mystical union of the man’s soul with God is a wedding because the cornerstone of the Mystery of Wedding is represented by the act of love, just like in the case of the intercommunion with God, Jesus being the bridegroom.

So preoccupied in other poems with identifying faith and its virtues in life’s rhythms or explaining its secrets in lyrics and its theological wisdom, now, by personifying death, the poet tries to encompass its grand secret. With a

philosophical intuition that was never emphasised elsewhere he induces the idea of a limit: „Și mă-ntreb într-una, cu păreri de bine:/ Cam ce-ar face, Moarte, omul fără tine?...”. Death is the limit of life, “the tragical situation is only compatible with conscious beings, beings confronted with the limit” (Liiceanu 1975: 37) – writes Gabriel Liiceanu and he comes back on the limit as a task of philosophical reflection – about the limit, Bucharest, Humanitas Publishing House, 1993. The poet catches death as a limit in the form that is known by the man, as moral censure, as a barrier of excesses, as a dimensioning of destinies, as an egalitarian factor. The poet’s interrogations are headed towards the fundamental data of this great and mysterious miracle: Ce le spui tu oare, Moarte, tuturora./ De-ți ascultă-ntocmai, totu-n tot, cuvântul?... „În ce limbă le grăiești cuvântul”, „Ce beteală-aduce mâna ta, din soare/ Tinerei copile...”, „Pruncilor din leagăn, fragezi ca răsura/ Ce povești cu zâne și cu zmei le-ai spune?...”, to the warriors that have fallen with their eyes towards the sky, to the mothers who abandon their children. The answer is that of a conscience filled with faith in redemption:

„Eu te văd: Înaltă, tânără Crăiasă,
 Creatorul dându-ți nesfârșite grații
 Tinerii, bătrânii, Regii și-Împărații
 Și câți vor cuvântul pe pământ să-ți crează
 Pe când mor în lume, dincolo-nviază”.

The cosmic wedding ceremonial has for fulfilment the eternal happiness. Here is the reason for which the existence, as it is understood and lived by the Romanians, has to do with the order of eternity and blurs the conscience of the tragic. In the Criterion generation and in definitive cultural creations, in general, we meet numerous examples of this attitude. We consider that in the Orthodox religion, too, assimilated as a fundamental spiritual component, this motive of wedding-death persists, the intercommunion with man-God also being the state of complete happiness.

The poems that emphasise the celebration of existence in its metaphysical dimension, whose loop is faith, are all, in Vasile Militaru’s creation, filled with religious meanings. Christ’s bride, the ancient Church, is hailed through the words of the poet because it is the only one that gives a meaning to the existence:

„M-a dezlegat pe veci de lanțul păcatelor în care frânt
 Goneam în ocne de-ntunerice și n-aveam către Cer cuvânt:
 Din ciutura-I cu «Apă Vie» sorbind, m-am curățit de tină,
 Și-am îmbrăcat veșminte nouă, țesute-n raze de lumină...”.

The Church becomes a community of those who confess their faith in God through the Descent of the Holy Ghost. Following the Holy Scriptures, the poet emphasises once more the fusion of the folkloric ceremonial with the Christian belief about Whit Sunday, when the Holy Ghost descended over the Disciples and, as whips of fire, he gives then the gift of speaking in unknown languages in order to disseminate the word of God throughout the world. At this point, we also come across a comparison implicit with the poet, whose words are meant to bear the “Living Water” of faith.

The divine revelation is found in the Gospels, the natural revelation in poetry. Vasile Militaru does not build himself a poetic, but he expresses the thought that poetry, “white shore of a white flower”, with infinite powers, filled with jewels, “bright empire”, is the one through which the emperor-poets go in the “Sky to God”. Images assimilated to Eminescu (“emperor-poet”), poets’ destinies (born in cottages, have light on their foreheads), evocations of universal values – Homer, Vergiliu, Dante – are comprised in two functions that they are meant to fulfil: Fiindcă poleiești cu aur zdrențele cui ți se-nchină/ Și-n Palat preschimbi coliba-i cea de sărăcie plină” și „Pentru că-i alungi din Suflet, frânt fiind adeseori/ Întunerecul și-n locu-i, harul tău aprinde Sori”. „Strai de purpură și aur peste țărâna cea grea” said Mihai Eminescu through poetry, his echo resounding through the years in a faithful conscience, that inspires him to a poem fit to eliminate sin and pour in the light of faith.

Summoned to voice the purity of faith, Vasile Militaru evocates in a ceremonial tone “Christ’s Brides”, “the maidens that give all their lives” to God through prayer. The poem “on their forehead a beam shines” is the anthem that hails this spiritual union, whose model is the wedding:

„Mărire vouă-n veci Mirese ce nu v-ați întinat nicicând,
Ci pe Iisus mereu purtându-L ca Mire-n inimă și-n gând
I-l închinați și trup și Suflet Lui, pentru oameni rugătoare”.

The language of the poetry embedded in the soul by the Holy Ghost spreads the light of faith, bringing the intercommunion the conscience of the one who, not only feels like the bearer of faith, but also by poetry, „Aproapelui meu, viața toată, Să-i fiu un frate-adevărat, Să pot veni-n a Ta lumină, Sublimule crucificat!”.

As conclusions

The path from cosmic Christianity to the theoretic one is covered in Vasile Militaru’s Christian poetry in such a way that his faith is a intuitive form of understanding the human condition. His poetry has a constant: identity, as a concept that rightfully defines “what is permanent and fundamental in the life of a people”.

The analyzed works have all the attributes above mentioned. We notice, beyond them, a strong feeling of faith, but a modest artistic and aesthetic level. In his lyrics, the Christian poet seeks the description of the religious state and not its experience. The chills of mystery and indefinable are missing. The style and prosody elements are present, but in all cases, these are either sacrificed in the detriment of prosody, or in the shadow of morale and educational perceptions.

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