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Inna SAVYNSKA, PhD (Philos.)

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-3929-6801

e-mail: inna.savynska@knu.ua

Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Kyiv, Ukraine

GENEALOGY OF HADEWIJCH'S CONCEPT OF MINNE: SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS ASPECTS

Background. The article is devoted to the Minnemystik of Hadewijch of Brabant in the XIII century. It deals with the genesis of Hadewijch's concept of Minne in its relation to the monastic Cistercian mysticism of Bernard of Clairvaux, William of Saint-Thierry in the XII century and Beatrice of Nazareth in the XIII century. It also considers the conception of theologian and philosopher Richard of Saint-Victor in the XII century. Considering the existing advances of researchers on Hadewijch's Minnemystik, since the XX century, this investigation especially focuses on the primary role of the secular tradition of minnesingers and trobairitz of the mid-XIII century in her texts.

Methods. The main method of the article is a comparative analysis. It is used to find the common meaning of Minne in two traditions: secular and religious minnesingers. The historical-philosophical approach allows us to demonstrate the conceptual link between monastic theology in the XII–XIII centuries and Hadewijch's beguinal Minnemystik.

Results. The article sheds light on Hadewijch's concept of the Minne and stresses the primary role of the secular and religious conceptions of predecessors and contemporaries in Hadewijch's Minnemystik.

Conclusion. The author underlines that Hadewijch's concept of Minne comes from the secular tradition of minnesingers and, especially, trobairitz. It also derives from the XII-century male and female mystic theology, which follows Augustine. Thus, the concept of the Minne is deeply connected with the notion of Amor and the tradition of "courtly love", and with Caritas and the tradition of "pure love".

Keywords: Hadewijch's concept of the Minne, Caritas, trobairitz, minnesingers, troubadours, Minnemystik, Unio Mystica, William of Saint-Thierry, Beatrice of Nazareth, Richard of Saint-Victor, Bernard of Clairvaux.

Background

Despite the increased search interest in Hadewijch's texts since the XX century, her figure is completely unknown today, as pointed out by Rob Faesen (Faesen, 2023, p. 66). She was the "first mystical author in the Dutch language area – who wrote an extensive oeuvre consisting of visions, forty-five poems [...] and forty-seven letters [...]" (Faesen, 2023, p. 66). Most researchers accept the hypothesis that Hadewijch was a beguine from Brabant in the XIII century. According to her didactic letter, she was a leader of one of the beguinal groups and had a personal mystical experience of Divine presence.

Hadewijch's *Minnemystik* is a part of the great tradition of the *Unio Mystica* in the XIII century. It appeared under the influence of different cultural phenomena. This article aims to articulate the main of them, which indirectly formed the polysemantic meaning of Hadewijch's concept of *Minne*.

The main objective of this research is to consider the Cistercian's tradition of Bridal mysticism, and secular and religious traditions of minnesingers in the XII–XIII centuries which were the main sources of Hadewijch's conception of the *Minnemystik*.

This investigation uses the English translation of Hadewijch's and Beatrice's of Nazareth texts. It is also based on the works of Paul Mommaers, Bernard McGinn, Rob Faesen, Winfried Corduan and Anita Mir about Hadewijch's *Minnemystik* and minnesingers' tradition of *Minne*.

Methods

The research belongs to the area of history of Medieval mysticism in the XIII century. This article uses a method of analysis and comparative method to explicate the conceptual connection between secular and religious traditions of minnesingers. It also applies a hermeneutic approach to make clear all meanings of the *Minne* of Hadewijch's texts.

Results

From the secular to the religious image of Minne:

1. The literary tradition of minnesingers (from German "*Minnesänger*") or Middle Dutch minstrels was popular in the XII–XIII centuries in Germany and on the territory of the

Low Countries. Thus, minnesingers founded brotherhoods in Hennegau, Liege, and Antwerp. The phenomenon of minnesingers dates back to the Provençal troubadours, who wrote mainly lyric vernacular texts (southern France), and trouvères (northern part of France), which were characterised by an epic genre. One of the popular subjects for both of them was *Amor/fin'amor* – sensual and emotional love to the *domina*, *domna* or *feignaire*. Troubadours and trouvères wrote texts (love poetry or "*gai saber*"), that were performed by jugglers – vagrant musicians. Troubadours could also perform their songs, which they dedicated to the noble ladies, travelling from court to court. Another name of this cultural tradition of the feudal society is "courtly love" – the name came from the name of the place *corteis* or royal courts, where it was developed. The mediaeval literary world of the XII–XIII centuries has been represented not only by troubadours but also by *trobairitz* – female troubadours (e.g., Comtessa de Dia, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Ermengarde of Narbonne). Besides *trobairitz* who were noble women, there also existed *jouglaresses* – female jugglers from the lower class of society who led a vagabond way of life, writing and performing poetry. *Trobairitz* performed their songs, using mediaeval musical instruments such as harp or vielle. Their realistic folk songs about self-determination and experience of love were more popular than fictional troubadours' songs of courtly love and, probably, became one of the sources of inspiration for lyric texts of female *minnemystik*.

Minnesingers in their turn incorporated lyric and epic genres of courtly love. At the same time, they transformed troubadours' art of love poetry into idealistic and metaphysical songs about pure *Minne* with the shade of religiosity. Thus, poetry about the divine power of *Frau Minne* or *Liebesgöttin* drunk ideas from the religious cult of the Virgin Mary (e.g., Ulrich von Liechtenstein "*Frauendienst*" (Service of the Lady)).

According to Paul Mommaers *Minne* is the Middle Dutch (from the old Dutch – "*Mina*") and the Middle High German notion. The etymology of *Minne* refers to the Latin word *memini* (to remember). This word means: "[...] that another person, notably the *be-min-de* (beloved), is present in one's

consciousness. This psychological phenomenon – being internally occupied with, or being won over by a loved one – was a fundamental discovery of courtly love (*fin'amors*), which found its first literary expression in the songs of the French troubadours and trouvères" (Mommaers, 2004, p. 4).

The Latin word "*memini*" is connected with the Latin words "*mens*" and English "*mind*". Thus, "*Minne* – *memini* – *mens* – mind" is the strong etymological chain (Mommaers, 2004, p. 4). Consequently, as conceals Clara Auvray-Assayas: "In short, *Minne* is love insofar as it occupies the lover's mind and leads him to resort to poetry, for instance, to testify to his psychic experience" (Auvray-Assayas, & Cassin, 2014, p. 599). This sense of *Minne* is very close to the ancient Greek ἀγάπη, in the sense of the apostles Paul and John – "essence, that in me remaining, dwelling".

Thereby, minnesingers' poetry about the psychological and idealistic phenomenon of *Minne* became one more inspiration for the mystical texts of female religious minnesingers.

The tradition of the religious minnesingers in the XIII century began with a well-educated Cistercian nun Beatrice of Nazareth from Lier (Brabant) and her contemporary – beguine Hadewijch of Brabant. Ida from Nivelles, a spiritual daughter of Beatrice, and Ida from Leuven are the Cistercian nuns who are also worth mentioning. The spiritual, and mystical experiences (visions) of both nuns were described by their biographers and received development in further mystical texts.

Beatrice and Hadewijch talentedly assimilated the values of the secular phenomenon of *Minne* by *trobairitz* and minnesingers to characterise the mystical experience of God. But unlike secular minnesingers' tradition, religious *Minne* is not an idealistic abstraction, or, just a psychological phenomenon, its fundamental reality of Divine Love: "God is not just an object of thought or of faith; he is a reality that makes itself felt, an object of contact and impact – this truth Hadewijch illuminates by calling him by a new name, a name that sounds alive: *minne* (Love)" (Mommaers, 2004, p. 5).

Tracing back the preceding monastic theology, especially Cistercian's, they portrayed the love to God as pure, simple, mutual and violent, influenced by the "feeling mysticism of the heart" of Bernard of Clairvaux and by the concept of "*violenta caritas*" of Richard of Saint-Victor. They also emphasised that Reason and Love – both lead to God and stressed the importance of love over knowledge (according to William of Saint-Thierry). At the same time, religious female minnesingers added a new existential and individual meaning to the image of Divine Love – *Minne*, which is also strikingly different from the scholastic understanding of God as pure *Esse*: "'Holy love' is a what happens between an individual human being and the Divine. This love is unique, as well as the shared process towards its sublime manifestation" (Beatrice of Nazareth, 2016, p. 7). Thus, Beatrice was one of the pioneers, who worked out the "language of *Minne*". In the work "On Seven Ways of Holy Love", she defined *Minne* (Holy love) as disinterested divine "active power" (*begete*) or "desire" that renews the soul. The "aim" of this divine power becomes one spirit (fruition) with the Groom (God). Beatrice used the style of the Bridal language which she, one of the first in the female Christian mystical tradition, supplemented with language of Dionysius's "abyss" and "madness of love" to describe the personal unity with God/Godhead/high Trinity. She described unity with God as a rest in the sweet embrace of love (highest bliss, which includes "great pleasure" and "great sorrow") or immersion of the soul: "[...] into the eternity of love, into the incomprehensible wisdom and the silent highness, into the deep abyss of the Deity, who is

everything in all what exists, elusive, elevated above all things, imperishable, almighty, all-encompassing, and who powerfully execute everything" (Beatrice of Nazareth, 2016, p. 25).

Also, unlike the tradition of monastic Cistercians, female religious minnesingers emphasised the importance of the female voice in the mystery of love between God and the human soul. They described feelings of love from afar (*amour de lonh*), where the central experience is "longing" for a Beloved instead of a monastic "possession" or experience of Beloved/Divine presence: "[...] the fruition of love comes to reside in the paradoxical nonfruition of continual yearning for the Beloved" (McGinn, 1998, p. 169). But one of the striking differences is that the human soul becomes equal to Infinite Love in the union as opposed to Cistercians, who wrote about unity between Infinite and finite love (McGinn, 1998, p. 170).

Consequently, the tradition of *Minnemystik* incorporated both – secular and religious genesis of the concept of *Minne*. On one hand, secular tradition demonstrated the evolution of *Minne* from an individual experience of a real love by the *trobairitz* to the female minnesingers' idealistic and metaphysical concept of a holy *Minne*: "Hadewijch took the term 'minne' (beloved) from the minnesingers. In their work, 'minne' simply replaces the 'Dame Amour' of courtly love lyrics. There are similarities between the Dame Amour/minne of courtly love lyrics and minne as Hadewijch uses it, the chief of which are that both are the object of love, both depict figures that are capricious in their loving, and both describe female figures – minne being a female gendered noun in both the German and Dutch of that period" (Mir, 2018, p. 184).

On the other hand, the religious meaning of *Minne* had evolved inside Cistercian monastic theology from the concept of pure love to the concept of mystical feelings and flourished inside the female Cistercian and beguinal movement in the conception of an individual experience of Divine unity.

Hadewijch's concept of Minne. Hadewijch's *Minnemystik* absorbed the Cistercian tradition of the Bridal mysticism, that replaced hierarchical language (Father-Son-human soul) with the language of Holy *Caritas*, and clothed it into literary forms of "mystical visions", "didactic letters" and poetry in the tradition of religious minnesingers. Winfried Corduan underlines: "Hadewijch is credited with inventing a new literary form, namely transforming mediaeval poetry of courtly love into Christian mystical poetry" (Corduan, 2001, p. 201).

Hadewijch described the process of unity with God through the *Minne* as a renewal of lasting eternal equal unity. In addition, Hadewijch combined Neoplatonism, according to which all forms have their pre-existence in Divine Great Reason, with Augustine's conception of original sin, as a consequence of which we lost our initial unity with God. This type of unity still keeps two separate subjects but narrows the gap between the human Will and God's Spirit/Will. It also may be described as the expiration of one into another or being engulfed by God. Hadewijch, following the tradition of predecessors, also described God as the abyss and depth: "Where the abyss of his wisdom is, he will teach you what he is, and with what wondrous sweetness the one and the Beloved dwell one in the other, and how they penetrate each other in such a way that neither of the two distinguishes himself from the other. But they abide in one another in fruition [*ghebruken*], mouth in mouth, heart in heart, body in body, and soul in soul, while one sweet divine Nature [*ene soete godlike nature*] flows [*doer*] through them both (2 Pet. 1:4), and they are both one thing through each other, but at the same time remain two different selves – yes, and remain so forever" (Hadewijch, 1980, p. 66; Hadewijch, 1952, pp. 79–80).

Such unity is a kind of *theosis*, in which the human soul restores lost perfection – pure free Will (liberty) and achieves deification: "But when by fruition man is united to Love, he becomes God, mighty and just" (Hadewijch, 1980, 84). Hadewijch added, that "[...] God is a way for the passage of the soul into its liberty, that is, into his inmost depths, which cannot be touched except by the soul's abyss" (Hadewijch, 1980, p. 86).

Although Hadewijch's vernacular theology relates to the affective mystical tradition. "*Ghebruken*" or fruition is an enjoyment of a union with God, but the purpose of a union is to see God's face (e.g., "*an eternal fruition*" in Vision 8:30, "*the Six-Winged countenance*" in Vision 13:24), not sweet feelings. Hadewijch in equal measure described "*ghebruken*" (to have a fruition) and "*ghebreken*" (not to have a fruition). Thus, she wrote about the experience of "*weelde*" (sufficiency) and "*wee*" (grief of unsatisfied desire). Both results do not depend on the person. When a person prepares his soul through virtues, he realises his limitations and understands that unio depends on God and it is His gesture [*gracien*] (Mommaers, 2004, p. IX).

Minne in Hadewijch's texts is the characteristic on one hand, of the human soul, on the other hand of God's Being. Through *Minne*, a human person knows himself and knows God as a great Love.

Minne regarding God is:

- the ontological principle or essence that manifests all created beings (following Beatrice of Nazareth);
- Godhead (*Goetheit*), beside the persons of the Trinity (Corduan, 2001, p. 201);
- Christ (*Beminde, Lief*) – real live *Minne* and way to God. To achieve perfection is not possible without the desire of living God: "Now you have tasted me and received me outwardly and inwardly; and you have understood that the ways of union wholly begin in me" (Hadewijch, 1980, p. 284). As well as, in the vernacular theology of that day imagination plays a key role in knowing Christ. Keeping the image of Christ (*Minne*) in mind was a very popular practice which contributed to a personification of *Minne* itself as an individual, separated entity;
- the Divine Love (*Caritate/Karitate*) towards us that manifests itself in the mission of our life and is the principle of unity in the Trinity – a model of "active love". Hadewijch writes: "You must also live in joyful hope and strong confidence that God will allow you to love him with that great love wherewith he loves himself, Three and One [...]" (Hadewijch, 1980, p. 80).

Minne concerning the human experience of "*Unio Mystica*" is:

- the binding force (amor ligans, according to Richard of St. Victor) (McGinn, 1998, p. 203) that acts in the human soul as the bond (bant) or glue (lijm). Hadewijch writes: "Love is truly a chain because she binds and grasps everything in her power" (Hadewijch, 1980, p. 352);
- the transformative power that prepares the soul for the union through three stages: a light (licht) – "In this light we can learn How we shall love the God-man" (Hadewijch, 1980, p. 354; Hadewijch, 1952, p. 78), this light enlightens the human Reason – "enlightened reason"; a live coal (cole) – "sets afire and extinguishes by the madness of Love" (Hadewijch, 1980, p. 354; Hadewijch, 1952, p. 80); a fire (vier) – burns out all the differences of the soul; then a gentle dew (dau) descends on this scorched desert and brings union with God (Hadewijch, 1980, p. 354; Hadewijch, 1952, p. 81). "Between God and the blissful soul that has become

God with God, there reigns a spiritual charity. So, whenever God reveals this spiritual charity to the soul, there rises within it a tender friendship (cf. Rom. 8:28)" (Hadewijch, 1980, p. 111). The next stage is a living spring (leuende borne) (Hadewijch, 1952, p. 82) or a new life in the transformed calm soul. Hadewijch describes: "If two things are to become one, nothing may be between them except the glue wherewith they are united together. That bond of glue is Love, whereby God and the blessed soul are united in oneness" (Hadewijch, 1980, p. 80). The last stage is a hell (*helle*)– chains of love hold the human soul firmly in the waiting for the next union with God (Hadewijch, 1952, p. 83).

Therefore, Hadewijch's concept of *Minne* refers to the two dimensions of reality: divine and human. It also combines psychological and metaphysical aspects and belongs to the great tradition of Christian mysticism in the XIII century.

Discussion and conclusions

We resume on the one hand that Hadewijch's concept of the *Minne* has been influenced by the secular psychological meaning of *Amor* by troubadours and metaphysical holy Love by minnesingers. It was also formed due to the key role of the idealistic and individual meaning of Love by *trobairitz*. These female troubadours were popular on the territory of the Low Countries, especially contemporary France, Germany and Belgium during the XIII century. Their realistic image of Love, in turn, influenced the existential meaning of the *Minne* of Cistercian's nuns. Thus, the works of Beatrice of Nazareth were the source of inspiration for Hadewijch's religious concept of *Minne*.

On the other hand, Hadewijch's concept of the *Minne* comprised the meaning of "rational *Caritas*" from texts by Cistercian monastic theologian William of Saint-Thierry and the meaning of "violence *Caritas*" from texts by Richard of Saint-Victor School. However, it was formed with the conception of affective mysticism by the Bridal mystic Bernard of Clairvaux. Thus, the monastic concept of the *Caritas* in the XII-XIII centuries, which refers to the early Augustine's tradition, is one of the aspects which formed Hadewijch's concept of the *Minne*.

We can sum up that Hadewijch used the notion of *Minne-Karitate* to describe God itself and God's Love. It also used the notion of *Minne* as a divine transformative power in the human soul, which leads to union with God.

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Інна САВИНСЬКА, канд. філос. наук.
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-3929-6801
e-mail: inna.savynska@knu.ua
Київський національний університет імені Тараса Шевченка, Київ, Україна

ГЕНЕЗА КОНЦЕПТУ *MINNE* ХАДЕВЕЙХ: СЕКУЛЯРНИЙ І РЕЛІГІЙНИЙ АСПЕКТИ

Вступ. Присвячено мінемістиці Хадевейх із Брабанта, бенгінки XIII ст., тексти якої стали предметом наукового дослідження лише в XX ст. Основну увагу зосереджено на релігійному та світському аспектах концепту *minne* в текстах Хадевейх. Генеза цього концепту відсилає до містичної теології цистерціанців XII ст. – Бернарда Клервоського та Гійома зі Сен-Тьєрі. Також на формування поняття *minne* у текстах Хадевейх вплинула її сучасниця – цистерціанка Беатріс Назаретська, погляди відомого теолога та філософа XII ст. Рішара Сен-Вікторського. Крім монастирської теології, вивчення генези поняття *minne* вказує на світську куртуазну культуру трубадурів і мінезингерів у Нижніх країнах середини XII – початку XIII ст. Чільне місце в цій поетичній і пісенній культурі посідає феномен трубадурок, що разом із мінезингерами сформували психологічний образ поняття *minne* або любові, який своєю чергою вплинув на релігійний мінезанг бенгінки і цистерціанок XIII ст., зокрема на тексти Беатріс Назаретської. Бенгінки завдяки своїй містичній теології (*Unio mystica*) трансформували світське поняття *minne* в релігійний концепт, додавши до ідеалізму, що вже існував, метафізичний вимір реальної Божественної любові. Дидактичні релігійні тексти Хадевейх є ученням про цю містичну любов.

Методи. Як основний метод історико-філософського дослідження використано компаративний аналіз світської традиції мінезингерів і монастирської теології цистерціанців з метою виявити спільні значення поняття *minne*, які вплинули на формування мінемістики Хадевейх.

Результати. Установлено, що поняття "*minne*" Хадевейх походить із двох джерел: світської традиції мінезингерів, де вживають поняття *minne* та *amor*, і містичної теології, здебільшого цистерціанців, основні релігійні практики яких сформувались під впливом текстів Августина Аврелія. Любов в їхніх роботах здебільшого позначена поняттями *caritas* та *amor*. Концепт *minne* Хадевейх об'єднує ці два полюси любові.

Висновки. Підкреслено, що особливу роль у генезі поняття *minne* в текстах Хадевейх відіграв культурний феномен трубадурок, що були поетесами та виконавицями пісень, зокрема про ідеальне кохання. Відповідно, концепт *minne* в релігійно-дидактичних текстах Хадевейх стосується як людського буття, так і Божественного та може бути зведений до значення Божественної сили в душі людини, що веде до єднання з Богом (Любов'ю).

Ключові слова: Хадевейх, мінемістика, містична теологія, *Unio mystica*, міне, *minne*, трубадури, мінезингери, цистерціанці? Вільгельм із Сен-Тьєрі, Бернард Клервоський, Рішар Сен-Вікторський, Беатріс Назаретська.

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