

Nataliya Petreshak

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1671-9189>

Ukraine, L'viv

Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Department of Philosophy

PhD student

Review

Оболевич Тереза, *Мирра Лот-Бородина. Историк, литератор, философ, богослов*, ред. Е. Твердислова, Нестор-История, Санкт-Петербург 2020, 352 с., ил.
(Obolevitch Teresa, *Mirra Lot-Borodina. Istorik, litierator, filosof, bogoslov*, ред. E. Tverdislova, Nestor-Istoriya, Sankt Petersburg 2020, 352 s., il.)

The Roman Middle-Ages and analysis of its way of thinking, along with knight epos, translations, patristic tradition, Liturgical theory and practices make the circle of interest of Mirra Lot-Borodina (1882–1954), to which is devoted the new book of sister Teresa Obolevitch *Mirra Lot-Borodina: Historian, Literarian, Philosopher, Theologian*. The first Russian women-theologian who spent her entire life in France and in some special cases made her own contribution into the development of philosophical and religion thought of that time from Paris – a crucial intellectual center in the beginning of the 20ct. Madam Lot, as she was called by her contemporaries was to this time shadowed by other thinkers, but still had her own view on catastrophic events she witnessed. Intellectual activity, ecumenical position, determined and supported motives about the military actions, fascism, anti-Semitism etc. show that this woman had a strong spirit and critical view of the world which

she expresses without fear. As she comments in one of her letters: "Fear is a bad adviser."

Madam Lot corresponded with intellectuals like Florovsky, Frank, Shestov, Berdyaev, Struve and Lossky. As the author of the book shows, Borodina completely fits into the sphere of Russian intellectuals in France. As many of those thinkers who have met the revolutionary and military events in the first part of the 20th c., she strives to answer the questions about the existence of good and evil as well as the reason of suffering. We can clearly state, that it was the picture of the surrounding world led her to re-thinking of metaphysical problems, as it happened with others thinkers she corresponded with.

During the military actions that the French side experienced, she helped those in need. Apart from intellectual activity in the field of history, philosophy, theology and Liturgical studies this delicate nature also carried a cross of married life. Lot-Borodina, the wife of historian Ferdinand Lot and a mother of three daughters managed to combine the research activity with home duties in those aspects where God called her. As she told: "My job is my daily bread."

The distinguishing feature of that century in Paris were inter-confessional meetings, greatly contributed by Jacques Maritain and Nikolay Berdyaev, who organized them for working in ecumenical sphere, and the religious-philosophical academy in Paris became the center. Madam Lot distinguished herself there, caring for Christianity and especially Orthodoxy. Despite spending her entire life in Catholic France she presented herself as Orthodox, finding it close to her soul. She often used the works of comparison of Eastern and Western Christian tradition, including the sphere of Liturgy, Triadology, Mariology, and other. It is important to emphasize, that her research is composed not only of gathered facts but their critical analysis, while she was a religious person and practiced Christianity for real. So, she combined theory and practice and included her own experience into her research.

As already mentioned but should be more emphasized, Lot-Borodina was interested in patristic studies. The reason of such interest was due to the waves of Russian migration and orthodoxy. In the 1930th appeared

her numerous works devoted to the very idea of Theosis (θέωσις) which is the highest point of her works and, as sister Teresa underlines, her research can be admitted the best in this sphere. She uses the Eastern and Western attempts of the Church Fathers, including Macarius of Egypt, Clement of Alexandria, Ignatius of Antioch, Evagrius Ponticus, followers of Meister Eckhart, Pseudo-Dionysius, Gregory Palamus, and many others.

Crucially, that she includes into her research the liturgical aspects which she developed under the inspiration of Nicolas Cabasilas. Her research developed into a book *Nicolas Cabasilas: un maître de la spiritualité byzantine au XIV^e siècle*.

One more component that combined them both was the topic of love that dominated in Cabasilas' works. What about Lot-Borodina, here is impossible to avoid one of her main works *De l'amour profane à l'amour sacré*, into which she turned an attention on the qualitative issue of love in the Medieval highlighting two kinds of them namely human (passionate) and divine. By madam Lot was admitted the link between monastic spiritual love and those of Medieval troubadours while both given admiration of the spiritual beauty of a woman. Therefore, we can firmly say, that the heart of her creativity is devoted to the science of love (d'art d'amer, ars amoria), what admits sister Teresa and this fact should definitely attract the attention of a reader. It is worth mentioning that the interest of Mirra Lot-Borodina captured her attention of the phenomena of love in her university years and the work she defended at that time is titled *La femme dans l'oeuvre de Crétien de Troyes* actually touched mentioned art to which, as the reader can find, she remained devoted throughout her life. What refers to her book *De l'amour profane à l'amour sacré*, unfortunately, it was published after the death of the author, what is more, a preface written by Gilson signs the value of this book.

Madam Lot's contribution into the sphere of Medieval epic is also worth mentioning. She notes its affinity with Christian tradition determining a number of Christian symbols which implicitly appears in medieval classical novels. She comes to a pretty rigorous conclusion about

a symbolic display of Medieval epic and the Christian tradition, or, so to say, in the sense of incarnation one in another. A relay of symbolism or to say more precise, a realistic symbolism proposed by her is taken from, mentioned above author Nicholas Kabasilas, wisdom of whom inspired here on such ground as well. Even more, for her mentioned parallelism is created by the natural consequence of Greek philosophy and exactly platonic and neo-platonic tendencies which set a ground for the Medieval world. The most vivid sign of such state of affair is a patristic age but which, for madam Lot, is not exceptional.

Importantly, that it would be wrong to say that Borodina who had lived all her life in France was recognized only by own Russian diaspora. In contrary, she was a person who is respected by different intellectual circles. Famous catholic thinkers, such as Yves Congar and Marie-Dominique Chenu, Valentin-Marie Breton, Jean Daniélou, and other recognized her as an expert of patristic research.

In conclusion, we can sum up, that the book *Mirra Lot-Borodina: Historian, Literarian, Philosopher, Theologian* written by sister Teresa Obolevitch has a unique characteristic and qualitative features which can draw attention of a contemporary reader. Notably, that this is already a distinctive style of sister Teresa when she touched the topics which are surprisingly left in shadow. Such attitudes is really demanded in our time fixed on popularity and quantity therefore skipped novelty and quality. The detailed book shows many facts about the main of its character, madam Lot, her participation in sacred and profane worlds, as well as touched a historical dimension showing the atmosphere and people' spirit of the time of alteration.