

A Raving Literary Character - The Airman

Mariana Andrei

A Raving Literary Character - The Airman: *In the popular mythology, the airman is a fantastic human being embodied as a bad spirit that torments the night sleep of girls and women. He appears also in the romantic literature as the personification of missing the beloved man; the ideal embodiment of lover (DEX).*

Key words: *the airman, mythology*

In the popular mythology, the airman is a fantastic human being embodied as a bad spirit that torments the night sleep of girls and women. He appears also in the romantic literature as the personification of missing the beloved man; the ideal embodiment of lover (DEX).

We find out the oldest attestation of the airman's myth at Dimitrie Cantemir, who sees the popular faith in the airman, the raving character, involved in the imaginary love scenes: *Insemneaza cel ce zboara. Ei zic ca este o naluca, un om tanar, frumos, care vine noaptea la fete mari, mai ales la femeile de curand maritate si toata noaptea savarsesc cu dansele lucruri necuviincioase, cu toate ca nu poate fi vazut de ceilalti oameni, nici chiar de cei care-l pandesc. Iar noi am auzit ca unii barbati insurati au prins asemenea zburatori si cand au aflat ca sunt fapturi cu trup ca si altii, i-au pedepsit cum li se cadea.*¹

We notice from the explanation given in DEX that the airman appears like a synthesis of two mythical appearances, correlative and autonomic, fact seen also by R. Vulcanescu: *Love's day (Dragobetele) embodied of beloved person, mythic and loved, who inspires love and trust to girls and women and The Airman, archaic demon of malefic nature.*²

*The demoniacal character of The Airman is clear, specifically in the consequences that he has on the victims that he haunts. The girl or the woman haunted by the airman can be easily recognized by her pale face, weakness or by the madness signs that appear.*³

The genesis, the embodiment and the entering the house as well as the magic treatment of sickness are taken over from popular myth. In the popular faiths, the airman is embodied from the dream of the person who suffers from love. This may take more appearances, for example, as a pear or roll of fire, he descends into the chimneys during the night, but also through the opened doors or windows. He brings sick. *The sickness haunted by the airman is called soldering. It cures by exorcising on Tuesday or on Friday, melting two kinds of plants in a pot filled with fresh water.*⁴

The young girls perceive the approaching of the airman during the night, because the restless human being suffers mysterious changes translated by contradictory moods that confuse and try to understand by telling them to their mothers, friends, sisters or neighbors during the day.

The raving character, felt, but unseen, that doesn't suffer the sun light, the airman appears in the literary works of many Romanian poets, the Romanian spiritual universe, being a main element of shaping in their trying of total assimilation of the popular treasure : I.Heliade Radulescu *Zburatorul*, V. Alecsandri *Zburatorul*, C.Bolliac *Zburatorul*, M.Eminescu *Calin (File din poveste)*, *Luceafarul*, *Peste codrii sta cetatea*.

¹ Dimitrie Cantemir, *Descrierea Moldovei*, Bucuresti, Editura Minerva, 1973, p.261

² R. Vulcanescu, *Mitologie romana*, Bucuresti, Editura Academiei, 1987, p.337

³ Silviu Angelescu, *Mitul si literatura*, Bucuresti, Editura Univers, 1999, p.58

⁴ T. Pamfile, *Mitologie romaneasca*, I, Bucuresti, Academia Romana, 1916, p.246

V. Alecsandri gives this explanation concerning the essence of the airman: *Zburatorul este un geniu nevazut care pandeste femeii in lunci si le saruta pe furis¹: Draga, draga surioara/ Nu stii canticul ce spune/ Ca prin frunzi cand se strecoara/ Raza zilei ce apune./ Zburatorul se arunca/ La copila care vine/ Sa culeaga fragi in lunca./ Purtand flori la san ca tine?*

The airman, a robust dark haired, in fact, a *Spirit*, is felt in V.Alecsandri's poetry, in the river meadow, *cand e umbra mai adanca, mangaie copila mandra,alba/ Ce culege viorele cu a sa*

mana nevazuta./ Si pe frunte si pe gura/ El o musca s-o saruta.

In Vasile Alecsandri's poetry, the dialogue between the two girls who change the impressions of a *robust person* or a *Spirit*, called the airman, is unfold as a joke and everything is immediately forgotten after they left the dark river meadow.

We notice that V.Alecsandri in his lines shatters the airman's image, presenting his love experience in an idyllic light, that supposes joy, joke and song. The airman has a human appearance and in this way, the love experience unfolds in the human area, that more lures than worries.

The apparition of the airman is totally different embodied in the C.Bolliac' s poetry. In the first part, a neighbour observes both physically and behaviouring sudden changes of a girl and tries to find out the cause asking her directly : *De ce slabesti, copila?/ De ce-ai ingalbenit?/ De ce de joc ti-e sila/ S-atat te-ai ofilit?/ Te stiu de vorbitoare, / La danturi tu-ncepeai./ Si noaptea-n sezatoare/ Pe toate le-ntreceai.*

The girl's answer, which is the second part of the poetry, is a recognition of the fact that the airman, under the appearance of a *Young man*, appears in the girl's dream and *M-apuca, ma trudeste./ Si eu cu el ma joc;/ Ma strange, ma ciupesti, / Ma musca plin de foc.*

Finally, the girl recognizes that the apparition of the *Young Man* is raving, because in the moment when the night disappears, *he vanishes like a ghost*. The poetry doesn't offer a portrait of the airman, but focuses on the totally change that the girl suffers from the apparition of the first love's thrill, love felt and presented like a mysterious, unaccountable and overwhelming feeling.

Being different by extension and poetical function, the airman is also presented in the I.Heliade Radulescu ballad that tries to present the way in which the love experience is lived in the village world. Situated in the cosmic level, the airman, having the same contradictory nature, is changed completely into a **lightning**; *Dar ce lumina iute ca fulger trecatoare/ Din miazanoapte scapa cu urme de schinteii?, dragon, Tot zmeu a fost surato.Vazusi impielitatul/ Ca l-alde Floarea in clipa strabatul!, dragon, Balaur de lumina cu coada-nflacarata,/ Si pietre nestimate lucea pe el ca foc.*

All the changes of the airman have the same purpose: the secret entering in the house of victims for turning into a young robust person and passionate of love⁶ and send us in the Romanian myth, easy to identify, arriving to a real human being: june cu dragostea curata;/ Dar lipsa d-a lui dragoste !, but also a young boy: Ca brad un flacaiandru si tras ca prin inel./ Balai, cu par d-aur!

It is not difficult to notice the status of a malefic angel of the airman who associates the beauty with the bad.

In the girl's confession, we find out the proof that the lived experience is also contradictory: *Ah! Inima-mi zvacneste!...si zboara de la mine!/ Imi cere ...nu-s ce-mi cere! Si nu stiu ce i-as da/ Si cald si rece,uite, ca-mi furnica prin vine:/ In brate n-am nimica si parca am ceva.*

The airman, mixture of reality and dream, arouses a sickness to the naïve girl and with lack of experience, which explains itself mythically and treats magically through the quack medicines and even through a prier: *Oar' ce sa fie asta? Intreaba pe bunica:/ O sti*

¹ V. Alecsandri, *Poezii*, vol.I, Bucuresti, E.S.P.L.A.,1966, p. 102

⁶ R. Vulcanescu, op.cit., p.339

vreun leac ea doara...o fi vrun zburator! Ori aide l-alde baba Comana, or, Sorica,/ Or du-te la mos popa, ori mergi la vrajitor.

The agitated and mysterious mood of the girl, aroused by the airman changes into a sick named *soldering*, which, as the sisters suggest, knows the cure neither by *exorcism*, nor by *priers*.

Raving character, the airman masters the girl, melting the reality in a dream through the indistinct images of imagination, emphasizing the idea that the airman, a mythical character, is in fact a mental image verbally expressed. Opposite to V.Aleksandri and C. Bolliac, I.H.Radulescu stressed the note of mystery and the grave, strained character of living, supposing the restlessness.

In the poem *Calin (File din poveste)*, M.Eminescu doesn't show us the story of an airman, being similar more to the Love's Day (*Dragobete*), meaning an embodiment of a beloved person, the fairy-tale projection of a young man who loves a girl. Living her love like a night adventure, the girl called the boy *Airman with dark hair, a shadow without luck*, merging in her love dream the face of the young man from the reality and the image of the airman, the emotional, spiritual, evanescent image, remembering the mythical character: *O ramai, ramai la mine tu cu viers duios de foc, / Zburator cu plete negre, umbra fara de noroc, / Si nu crede ca in lume, singurel si ratacit, / Nu-i gasi un suflet tanar ce de tine-i indragit,/ O, tu umbra pieritoare, cu adancii, tristii ochi,/ Dulci-s ochii umbrei tale- nu le fie de diochii! El s-aseaza langa dansa si o prinde de mijloc,/ Ea sapteste vorbe arse de al buzelor ei foc:/ O sapteste-mi - zice dansul- tu cu ochii plini d-eres/ Dulci cuvinte nentelese, insa pline de-nteles.*

In this poem, as also in *Luceafarul*, M.Eminescu shows in the romantic spirit the love reason of the airman, turning to account the resources of the myth only as means of building some characters, subordinated to more extensive perspectives and having a lot of senses.

In the poem *Luceafarul*, the signs of myth are seen in Hyperion's embodiments and in the keeping of sense regarding the meaning of supernatural character.

M.Eminescu gives up the malefic essence of the airman in the popular believes, turning into a symbol of abnegation of love. Although he doesn't recognize the accomplishment of love desire, he will start and even he will amplify the earthly love.

In comparison to these poems, where the myth of the airman is only an important element inside some constructions having other meanings, *Peste codrii sta cetatea* is the single poem that treats entirely the problem of the love myth. Narrative and lyrical, the poem tells the genesis, the destiny and the mission of the airman, as well as the restlessness of an emperor's young lady who lives mysterious agitation of the unknown hidden in the first love signs.

In this poem too, the beauty of the young lady from the lonely fortress overpasses imagination, resembling with the emperor's young lady from *Luceafarul*: *Si e una la parinti, / Cum e luna printre sfinti, / Si intre fete tinerele / Ca si luna printre stele,/ Si e una chiar sub soare/ Cine cata-n ochi-i moare.* After the explanation concerning the airman genesis that comes *din nemurirea serii/ Si din fundul sfant al marii* or *din ploaia cea cu soare/ Si de dor de fata mare*, a joining of space and time, sky and waters, sacred and profane, the image of airman is presented: *Ochii negri-ntunecosi/ I se uita mangaiosii,/ In par negru stele poarta, / Dara alba fata-i moarta.*

Interested especially in the airman, the poet presents the fabulous appearance of this one, which is also the source of his seducing power: *Ori se face nor de ploaie/ Care cade in siroaie/ Si bureaza asa lin/ Prin perdelele de in;/ Si-n fereastra, ca-ntr-un prag,/ Se arata nalt si drag,/ Cu par lung de aur moale/ Si cu ochii plini de jale. / Trestia l-ncununeaza,/Hainele ii scanteiaza/ Haine lungi si stravezii,/Pare-un mort cu ochii vii.*

The moment of his apparition coincides with the night fall, when *luna cea balaie/ Varsa apelor vapaie*, when *tainicul izvor... suna-ncetisor*, when all nature's elements increase the night charm, when even the airman takes part secretly to the unfold of the

charm in a mysterious identity: *A lui suflet e-o scanteie/ Din luciri de curcubeie, / Din dragoste de femeie;/ A lui glas la miez de noapte / E ca muzica de soapte / Cand se clatin ramurele / Si suspina pasarele.*

Different from the other texts mentioned above, M. Eminescu shows the calling of the airman and not of the girl having the form of an invocation with many parts: the inhuman essence of the airman has an imponderable firmness *Si deschide-mi un oblon / Ca sa trec fara de zvon, his sources of vitality; Ci eu sunt/ Zburator/ Ca un vant/ De usor/ Ma anin/ De un ram/ Si suspin/ Langa geam./ Ca-n salas/ Tremurand/ Sa ma lasi/ Mai curand, as well as the pray and the love temptation of the airman, who takes the attributes of Love's Day (Dragobete): *Sa ma iei la tine-n pat./ Ca sa dorm lang-al tau san/ Ca un biet copil strain; / Adormit la pieptul gol./ Nu ma-ndur sa te mai scol.**

The voice becomes attractive: *Ci-am sa suflu-asa de cald./ In miroase sa te scald./ Sa-mi vezi fata de ninsoare/ Si aripele usoare./ Caci viata mea o tin/ Cu miros de flori de crin; / Nu beau apa, ci scantei/ Si miros a flori de tei.*

The request of being received by the young lady in her room ends, confessing another of his characteristics, that, of the apparition of dawns, will disappear, melting in the unknown in which he was embodied: *Teama n-ai ca te-ai trezi./ Ca eu pier in zori de zi.*

The girl's heart starts of an unknown miss, appeared in a secret way and the eyes are filled with tears, while *suspina fara vrere, iar gandirea ei cea dulce/ N-o mai lasa sa se culce.*

Undecided and *unknowing what she was asked / The heart with her pain*, the girl, named finally Margarita hears the soft voice of the airman *ce-o chema in departare: Lasa zidurile tale, / Vino-n vale, vino-n vale.*

The myth of the airman represents the main element that outlines the image of the poem *Peste codrii sta cetatea* by M. Eminescu.

Converted into a poetic motif, the love myth of the airman got different values from one author to the other, had deep significance, underlining the attitude of the poet and of the poem on the fundamental experience - love.

About the author:

Senior Lecturer dr. Mariana ANDREI, University of Pitesti, Romania

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Докладът е рецензиран.