THE IMAGE OF "ZBURĂTORUL" IN ION HELIADE RĂDULESCU'S POETRY

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Abstract: *Ion Heliade Rădulescu was an important Romanian writer in the 19th century, who managed to develop his literary creation by using many themes and motifs, different tropes and embracing a variety of styles. The myth of "Zburătorul" (meaning The One Who Flies) is a constitutive myth of the Romanian folklore and it is highly represented in Heliade's poetry, being a personification of the feeling of desire.*

Keywords: *myth, eroticism, ballad.*

1. General aspects

The myth as a concept appeared in the ancient times and the attempts in trying to provide theories and definitions for all the elements that are linked to this (mythology, system of myths) have occupied long periods of time, due to the fact that these ideas have a massive spiritual content.

The myth is a key-concept of the mythology. Down the ages, a lot of definitions and theories of this concept have been sought. That is to say, for Claude Levi Strauss, the myth is the product of the creative imagination of the primitive man, that had a savage way of thinking and that could build his logical knowing through knowledge: "mitul este produsul imaginației creatoare a omului primitiv, a cărui gândire sălbatică își construiește modele logice de cunoaștere și de integrare prin cunoaștere în viața naturii" (Vulcănescu, 1987: 26). Moreover, for Lauri Honko, the myth is a concept that has a complex evolution of definitions, dividend in two categories: ancient interpretations and modern theories. The myth is a story of gods, that helps us know more about the beginnings of the world, about the creation, about the gods'actions, being a result of understanding the world, the nature and the culture itself: "Mitul exprimă și confirmă valorile și normele religioase ale societății, el prevede ca modelele de comportament să fie inițiate, să ateste eficacitatea ritualului cu obiectivele lui practice și stabilește sanctitatea cultului" (*ibidem*: 29). According to Mircea Eliade, the myth is a cultural reality that is extremely complex and can be approached in multiple and complementary perspectives. The myth narrates a sacred history, telling about an event that took place in the primordial time, the fabulous time of the beginnings. In other words, the myth is the one that reveals how the reality comes into existence, with the help of the facts made by the supernatural creatures. Here we can talk about the total reality (Cosmos), on the one hand, or about a single fragment of reality, on the other hand. The myth can be considered the story of the creation: it starts with the narration of the moment when a thing is being produced, the moment when something started to exist. In the same time, the myth is considered a sacred and real history because it always refers to reality, to

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things that can be proven. The supernatural creatures, the ones that are actually the characters of the myths, step in and they finally manage to create what the man is today: a cultural and mortal human being: "Miturile descriu diversele și uneori dramaticele izbucniri în lume a sacrului (sau a supranaturalului). Tocmai această izbucnire a sacrului fundamentează cu adevărat lumea și o face așa cum arată astăzi" (Eliade, 1978: 6). The myths have three basic aspects: history, transfiguration and, of course, universe.

The Romanian mythology is very well defined, sharing the same long history with the people that created it. Also, besides the scientific mythology, we can identify the mythology of literature, which means that some Romanian scholars have tried to reinvent the literature by using and connecting fragments of myths, making a large and seamless paper accessible to the public. In the 19th century, they created a literary mythology due to their pronounced patriotism. Moreover, they thought that their mythology would be complex, sublime and it would compete against the ancient Greek mythological poems. The national mythology was built by developing popular traditions, being an artistic transfiguration of the reality with the help of several visions and images that characterize the original and creative personality of the Romanian people. Also, the myth can facilitate the understanding of the origin of the human societies.

That is to say, in the 19th century there have appeared four national myths: the myth of Traian and Dochia, the myth of Miorița, the myth of Meșterul Manole and the myth of Zburătorul. George Călinescu said that the four myths represent, in fact, four fundamental problems: the ethno-genesis of the Romanian people, the cosmic situation of the man, the problem of creation and the sexuality. All the four myths are well-represented in our literature.

2. The myth of Zburătorul

The myth of Zburătorul is the fourth fundamental myth in the Romanian literature. It is known as Zburătorul, the erotic myth, the Incubus. It is an erotic semi-god, a malefic daimon that symbolizes all the forms of the sexuality. George Călinescu said that Zburătorul is a beautiful demon that perturbs the young girls; therefore, Zburătorul reveals the fundamental problem of the sexuality. Regarding his appearance, the look of this demon should be in accordance with his capacity of seduction. At first, he usually took the avatar of an animal (snake, pig, and dog) or of fire, using this in order to get in the houses of his victims; later, he would transform himself in a charming and handsome man. Once he got in the house, he used to agitate his victims that were ending up falling in love with him. Zburătorul used to appear after midnight and his aim was to disturb young girls that were ready for marriage, neglected wives and widows. He would spend the whole night with his victims and the ones that were visited by him had different signs during the day such as tiredness, bleakness and other signs. Moreover, Zburătorul was not a vampire, he only had an erotic-oneiric activity that led to a syndrome of hypersexuality for his victims. He was like a disease, like a passionate love that inflames the soul.

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3. Zburătorul in Ion Heliade Rădulescu's poetry

Ion Heliade Rădulescu was an important personality in the 19th century, hall-marking the literature of that time, on the one hand, and the language, on the other hand. His literary creation is extremely valuable due to the fact that he tapped various subjects and literary genres. Moreover, being a romantic writer, Heliade was a pioneer in the Romanian literature because his poetic work was one of the ways wherethrough the Romanticism not only got into our literature but also it managed to assert.

Regarding the poetry, Ion Heliade Rădulescu's masterpiece is the ballad called *Zburătorul* that was first published in *Curierul Românesc* in 1844. This ballad develops the popular myth of Zburătorul, which was also remembered in the Romanian literature by Dimitrie Cantemir in *Descriptio Moldaviae*. Moreover, Heliade's demon is a predecessor motif for the lyric poetry of Mihai Eminescu or George Coșbuc in the Romanian literature; meanwhile, it is close to Victor Hugo's flying one in the universal literature. The poem is a monologue and consists of three parts (the first and the third one as a ballad, the second one as a pastel).

This poem suggests the apparition of the love feeling at young girls, an undecipherable mystery that imprints fear at the same time. In Heliade's poetry, Zburătorul is a superior being, that knows two different impersonations: on the one hand, the cosmic one: "balaur de lumină" and on the other hand, the telluric one: "tânăr june". The story begins with the discourse of the young girl, Florica, who is madly inlove with an enigmatic being:

Vezi, mamă, ce mă doare! și pieptul mi se bate,/Mulțimi de vinețele pe sân mi se ivesc;/Un foc s-aprinde-n mine, răcori mă iau la spate,/Îmi ard buzele, mamă, obrajii-mi se pălesc!

The two of them communicate during the dream and they meet in a phantasmagorical world. Zburătorul is something that gives the girl a feeling of anxiety and only some old people know the treatment for this; during her discourse, the girl hints the fact that she has a strong desire for getting over this: Oar' ce să fie asta? Întreabă pe bunica:/O știi vrun leac ea doară... o fi vrun zburător./Ori aide l-alde baba Comana, ori Sorica,/Ori du-te la moș popa, ori mergi la vrăjitor.//Și unul să se roage, că poate mă dezleagă;/Mătușile cu bobii fac multe și desfac;/Și vrăjitorul ăla și apele încheagă;/Aleargă la ei, mamă, că doar mi-or da de leac.

The second part of the poem brings out the solemnity of the night, as a recurrent theme for the romantic writers. The reality is imagined through dreams: Dar câmpul și argeaua câmpeanul ostenește/Și dup-o cină scurtă și somnul a sosit./Tăcere pretutindeni acuma stăpânește,/Și lătrătorii numai s-aud necontenit.//E noapte naltă, naltă; din mijlocul tăriei/Veșmântul său cel negru, de stele semănat,/Destins cuprinde lumea, ce-n brațele somniei/Visează câte-aievea deșteaptă n-a visat.//Tăcere este totul și nemișcare plină:/Încântec sau descântec pe lume s-a lăsat;/Nici frunza nu se mișcă, nici vântul nu suspină,/Și apele dorm duse, și morile au stat.

Zburătorul can be decoded in the third part of the poem, the night is a facilitator for his apparition: Tot zmeu a fost, surato. Văzuși, împelițatu,/Că țintă l-alde Floarea în clipă

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străbătu!/Și drept pe coș, leicuță! ce n-ai gândi, spurcatu!/Închină-te, surato! — Văzutu-l-ai și tu?

Zburătorul looks like a real being: Balaur de lumină cu coada-nflăcărată,/Și-pietre nestemate lucea pe el ca foc. [...]/Ca brad un flăcăiandru, și tras ca prin inel,/Bălai, cu părul d-aur! dar slabele lui vine/N-au nici un pic de sânge, ș-un nas --ca vai de el!

For Florica, the encounter with Zburătorul is very mixed up, all the sensations become painful in the end. The girl passes from one mood to another, from happiness to sadness, from laughter to tears.

Zburătorul is a combination between reality and dreams. Ion Heliade Rădulescu reveals this myth as in a fairytale, in this way being closer to the real version. As a universal myth, references that are in connection with heavenly creatures that come on Earth to change people's lives can be found in different literatures across the world. Zburătorul is at the same time an erotic myth, a folkloric motif and also a literary one.

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