

The Archetype and its Meanings in Hardy's Novels

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When we closely investigate Hardy's depiction of nature and character, we can find what might be called archetypes of the unconscious. Hardy seems to project his own inner self on landscapes and women through the eyes of characters. Therefore, his unconscious parts will be revealed if we find some kind of archetypes in his external description. The archetype whose existence we can vaguely feel in his novels must be examined with reference to the professional psychologist if we are to know its precise meanings. Fortunately, a Jungian psychologist studies the archetypes on the traditional images of goddesses and witches held in the minds of many ancient people. He also studies the landscapes on which they projected their unconscious minds. In landscapes as well as feminine images he discovers the archetype of 'Great Mother' and he defines its spiritual phase as 'anima'. These archetypes have some correspondence with Hardy's depiction. So we can draw an inference that these archetypes have dominant power over Hardy himself. I think this fact provides his works with the feelings of unrest, fear and tragedy.

1

In many cases, both landscapes and women depicted by Hardy reflect the unconscious parts of characters. For instance, 'earth', 'water', and 'trees' as well as women have two contrary images : birth image and death image. As for some kinds of women, these images are much more complicated. They are given images of inspiration, wisdom on one hand, those of temptation, rejection, drunkenness, stupor and madness on the other. The contrary images mentioned above tend to change places with each other, when two antipodal phases attain the peak. The former turn into the latter, and vice versa. But when these various states of mind stop their projective function, a great tragedy arises. Therefore, closer investigation will reveal some archetypes of the unconscious in Hardy's depiction of nature and women.

In this paper, I'd like to show some examples of his typical depictions, and consider the relationships between these depictions and archetypes. Further, I'd like to make clear Hardy's inner self which produced such archetypes, and point out some problems concerning his mentality.

2

First, we investigate his typical nature depictions in his works :

- (1) The season developed and matured. Another year's instalment of flowers, leaves, nightingales, thrushes, finches, and such ephemeral creatures, took up their positions where only a year ago others had stood in their place when these were nothing more than germs and inorganic particles. Rays from the sunrise drew forth the buds and stretched them into long stalks, lifted up sap in noiseless streams, opened petals, and sucked out scents in invisible jets and breathings.¹
- (2) There was not a tree within sight ; there was not, at this season, a green pasture—nothing but fallow and turnips everywhere ; in large fields divided by hedges plashed to unrelieved levels.

.....

Each leaf of the vegetable having already been consumed, the whole field was in colour a desolate drab ;²

Of these two depictions extracted from *Tess*, the former represents Talbothays Dairy, the latter Flintcomb-Ash farm. They represent two contrasting phases of the earth. In this work, the landscapes of 'water' make the same kind of contrast :

The river itself, which nourished the grass and cows of these renowned dairies, flowed not like the streams in Blackmoor. Those were slow, silent, often turbid ; flowing over beds of mud into which the incautious wader might sink and vanish unawares. The From waters were clear as the pure River of Life shown to the Evangelist, rapid as the shadow of a cloud, with pebbly shallows that prattled to the sky all day long.³

Here are the water nourishing life and the containing water of the depths. The feature of the containing water is symbolically described in *A Tragedy of two Ambitions* where drunken Old Halborough fell in a weir, in *Jude* where Jude attempted suicide in the frozen pond, and in the dénouement of *The Return of the Native* :

Across this gashed and puckered mirror a dark body was slowly borne by one of the backward currents.

.....
Here he was taken off his legs, and in swimming was carried round into the centre of the basin, where he perceived Wildeve struggling.⁴

Many typical depictions of 'trees' are to be seen in *The Woodlanders*. Here, too, we consider both positive and negative images of 'trees'.

Spring weather came on rather suddenly, the unsealing of buds that had long been swollen accomplishing itself in the space of one warm night. The rush of sap in the veins of the trees could almost be heard.⁵

Such fresh images of life force in 'trees' can be found almost everywhere, whereas this very tree has the death image which threatens the human life. In the next passage, John South in *The Woodlanders* has a morbid fancy toward an elm tree :

I could bear up, I know I could, if it were not for the tree—yes, the tree 'tis that's killing me. There he stands, threatening my life every minute that the wind do blow. He'll come down upon us, and squat us dead ;⁶

Here we have the feeling that he is not so much caught in a delusion of persecution as controlled by something like archetypes of the unconscious. The 'earth' image in *Tess* moves in a cycle like 'birth → death → rebirth' and we can clearly find the mechanism to the effect that in the midst of birth comes death, and at the bottom of death comes rebirth. The ripened scenery of Talbothays Dairy became faded, and the rich soil mud when the marriage collapsed. Lifeless landscapes of Flintcomb-Ash farm follow. But the New Forest in which Tess hid with Angel after killing Alec is warm and full of life.

As for 'trees', we can find the same kind of depiction. The promising sapling is slowly suffocated

by the ivy. Young beeches are amputated and the sap bleeds for many days.

The leaf was deformed, the curve was crippled, the taper was interrupted ; the lichen ate the vigour of the stalk, and the ivy slowly strangled to death the promising sapling.⁷

The wet young beeches were undergoing amputations, bruises, crippling, and harsh lacerations, from which the wasting sap would bleed for many a day to come, and which would leave scars visible till the day of their burning.⁸

On the contrary, new life is being nourished in the wood which is compared to a house of death :

The whole wood seemed to be a house of death, pervaded by loss to its uttermost length and breadth. Winterborne was gone, and the copses seemed to show the want of him ; those young trees, so many of which he had planted, and of which he had spoken so truly when he said that he should fall before they fell, were at that very moment sending out their roots in the direction that he had given them with his subtle hand.⁹

3

As for the depiction of characters, the images of the god or goddess mainly give them inspiration and wisdom, as is seen in Sue who is devoted to the images of Apollo and Venus. But in a moment, the witch-like images drive them to madness or death. Susan Nunsuch who fixes a curse on Eustacia ; Arabella who traps Jude and drives Sue mad ; Rhoda Brook who withers the arm of Gertrude Lodge out of pure jealousy.

Witch-like images are projected on all these women. Henchard, who had got drunk on furmity sold by a woman, had a mad act of selling his wife to a sailor. After taking an oath before God that he would avoid strong liquors for twenty-one years, he made a new start. But when he was a magistrate and attended Petty Sessions, the same furmity-woman, now put on trial, caused him to fall again by speaking out his old evil. To Henchard, this furmity dealer was a witch. Jude was tempted by Arabella in the midst of self-absorption in wisdom :

‘Meanwhile I will read, as soon as I am settled in Christminster, the books I have not been able to get hold of here : Livy, Tacitus, Herodotus, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes—’

‘Ha, ha ha ! Hoity-toity !’ The sounds were expressed in light voices on the other side of the hedge, but he did not notice them.

His thought went on :

‘—Euripides, Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius, Epictetus, Seneca, Antoninus. Then I must master other things : the Fathers thoroughly ; Bede and ecclesiastical history generally ; a smattering of Hebrew—I only know the letters as yet—’

‘Hoity-toity !’¹⁰

This temptation made it an occasion for him to fall. In the course of falling, the wisdom of Sue absorbed him like a goddess, while her coquetry tempted Jude, and her obstinate rejection of sexual relationships made him fall even deeper. He was recaptured by Arabella, and at last died in agony. In this sense, Arabella and Sue are two different kinds of witches for Jude.

Now we have another type of characters besides Jude, Sue, Eustacia and Henchard. They are Oak and Winterborne. To Oak, the goddess-witch image is Bathsheba. To Winterborne, it is Grace. Unlike

Jude, Sue or Henchard, they do not collapse. They can completely cast reflections of their unconscious parts on the external world, because they can keep the “tension between ‘character’ and ‘land’ which the novel poses as a necessary condition for human equilibrium.”¹¹ This “tension” is, I think, a necessary state of minds in which some elements of the unconscious can be objectified. When this “tension” relaxes and projective function of mind weakens, the equilibrium is disturbed and groundless fears or uneasiness occur, which results in a tragedy. For instance, toward Egdon Heath Mrs. Yeobright simply has fears, and Eustacia has pure abhorrence, while Clym and Henchard are buried in it. The former can objectify only the dark part of their unconscious, as is traced in the mentality of John South. The latter can hardly objectify their unconscious parts. In any way, they lack the tension between the subject and the object. They fail to project fully their unconscious on the external world, and come to a tragic end.

In case of Tess, the tension between her and objects is usually maintained, but some special circumstances oblige her to break it. When her father got too tipsy to take the journey with beehives, which can't be put off, and she was obliged to go with his brother, ‘cold pulses of the stars were beating amid the black hollows above, in serene dissociation from these two wisps of human life.’ And further more, when Tess was seduced during her sleep in the Chase, rabbits and hares were hopping happily and heedlessly about the defenceless Tess. This dissociation of outer objects, which is the cause as well as the effect of sleep, brought about a great tragedy.¹²

4

Now let's consider the feature of the unconscious which is now objectified, then dissociated. Erich Neumann, the Jungian psychologist, discovers the ‘Archetypal Feminine’ in the unconscious, and defines its natural phase as ‘Great Mother’, the spiritual phase as ‘anima’. According to him, ‘Great Mother’ is made up of two parts: ‘Good Mother’ and ‘Terrible Mother’. So is ‘anima’: ‘positive anima’ and ‘negative anima’. These four archetypes, which have distinct idiosyncrasies, are invested with suitable feminine images:

- (1) Good Mother : birth, rebirth (Isis, Demeter)
- (2) Terrible Mother : holding, devouring, death (Hecate, Gorgon)
- (3) positive anima : wisdom, inspiration (Sophia, Muse)
- (4) negative anima : madness, drunkenness, stupor (Lilith, Circe)¹³

It seems that all these archetypes are hidden in the unconscious of characters' mentality. They are to be projected on the external world of natural objects or women. Of four archetypes, the anima is projected entirely on women, and the Great Mother on natural objects as well as women. As for the ‘earth’, Neumann explains thus:

Man is bathed in this abundance of vegetative life in forest and steppe, in mountain and valley. Everywhere it grows: roots and tubers under the earth, a sea of fruit on trees attainable and unattainable, herbs and berries, nuts and mushrooms, leaves and grains, in field and forest. And this primordial world is also a world of the Great Round and the Great Mother; she is the protectress, the good mother, who feeds man with fruits and tubers and grains, but also poisons him and lets him hunger and thirst in times of drought, when she withdraws from living things.¹⁴

As for the ‘water’, too, he comprehends its ‘containing’ phase as well as ‘nourishing’ one:

This containing water is the primordial womb of life, from which in innumerable myths life is born. It is the water “below”, the water of the depths, ground water and ocean, lake and pond. But the

maternal water not only contains; it also nourishes and transforms...¹⁵

And, as for the 'tree', he points out clearly the projection of 'Good Mother' and 'Terrible Mother' :

But the tree as house or bearer of fruit is not only evaluated positively as a place of birth ; in accordance with the ambivalent structure of the Archetypal Feminine from which it arises, it can also be an abode of death. Into the treetops the dead are hoisted ; the tree trunk embraces the corpse as the cedar tree embraced Osiris ; the wooden coffin is laid in the earth—¹⁶

A morbid fancy John South has toward an elm tree is the unconscious fear of 'Terrible Mother'. As aforesaid, the archetype of 'Terrible Mother' is projected on such characters as Susan Nunsuch, Arabella, Rhoda Brook, and an old furnity dealer. 'Good Mother' is projected on Tess, but when she kills Alec, 'Terrible Mother' is projected, too.

The archetype of the anima, positive or negative, is projected on Bathsheba, Sue, Avice and the like. Concerning two contrary poles of 'Great Mother' and 'anima', Neumann points out their reversing features :

When an ego approaches a pole along one of the axes, there is a possibility that it will pass beyond this pole to its opposite. This is to say that in their extremes the opposites coincide or can at least shift into one another. This phenomenon, which is typical for the unfathomably paradoxical character of the archetype, constitutes the foundation of a great number of mysteries...¹⁷

This 'unfathomably paradoxical character' explains Hardy's famous phrase on love problems : "Love lives on propinquity, but dies of contact."¹⁸

5

As long as the Archetypal Feminine is projected on outer worlds, characters of Hardy's novels do not enact a tragedy. But tragic are those who fail to project the archetypes and therefore fail to recognize them. They always have groundless fears and a feeling of helplessness. what does this mean ?

Seeing that Hardy's unconscious sentiments produce such powerful feminine archetypes, and that characters, if excluded from them, fall into an extremely uneasy state of minds and meet with a tragic end, these archetypes must be absolute for the author. The homeless unrest found in Hardy's novels is the unrest of characters who are excluded from archetypes, and in the ultimate sense the unrest toward death. In *The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion*, for instance, 'homeless unrest' is subtly mingled with 'death' in the words spoken by Matthäus Tina who left his mother in Saarbrück.¹⁹ Jude, who stole out of Marygreen and ascended the ladder of the barn to see his long-cherished Christminster, suddenly felt uneasy at the horror of death, when the city became veiled in mist. For Jude, Christminster as well as Marygreen is too much estranged for his spiritual home.²⁰

Therefore, those who cannot objectify the archetypes are left with the problem of how to face the unrest of death and restore their homes ; the problem concerning the individual existence. Were this problem solved, they could be perfectly independent of the Archetypal Feminine. Hardy seems to deal with this problem in his last novel *The Well-Beloved*.

NOTES

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- 1 Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (Penguin Books, 1981), p. 185.
- 2 Ibid., pp. 358-360.
- 3 Ibid., p. 157.
- 4 Thomas Hardy, *The Return of the Native* (Penguin Books, 1978), p. 437.
- 5 Thomas Hardy, *The Woodlanders* (Penguin Books, 1981), p. 183.
- 6 Ibid., p. 138.
- 7 Ibid., p. 93.
- 8 Hardy, *The Return of the Native*, p. 268.
- 9 Hardy, *The Woodlanders*, pp. 393-394.
- 10 Thomas Hardy, *Jude the Obscure* (Penguin Books, 1980), pp. 79-80.
- 11 Ian Gregor, *The Great Web : The Form of Hardy's Major Fiction* (London : Faber & Faber, 1975), p. 96.
- 12 "Elsewhere in the novel it is true to say that when Nature is not presented through Tess's consciousness, it is neither innocent nor guilty ; neither sympathetic nor hostile, but indifferent. When Tess and her young brother are driving their father's cart through the night, 'the cold pulses' of the stars 'were beating in serene dissociation from these two wisps of human life' (IV). The birds and rabbits skip happily and heedlessly round the defenceless Tess at her seduction (XI) ;..." (David Lodge, "Tess, Nature, and the Voices of Hardy," *Hardy—The Tragic Novels*, p. 180)
- 13 Erich Neumann, *The Great Mother : An Analysis of the Archetype*, trans. Ralph Manheim (Princeton : Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 47-54.
- 14 Ibid., pp. 51-52.
- 15 Ibid., p. 47.
- 16 Ibid., p. 50.
- 17 Ibid., p. 76.
- 18 Florence Emily Hardy, *The Life of Thomas Hardy 1840-1928* (London : The Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1962), p. 220.
- 19 " 'I don't mind that. I should have disappeared from the world some time ago if it had not been for two persons—my beloved, here, and my mother in Saarbrück....' "
- 20 " '...If my dear land were here also, and my old parent, with you, I could be happy as I am, and would do my best as a soldier....' " (Thomas Hardy, "The Melancholy Hussar of the German Legion," *The Distracted Preacher and Other Tales* [Penguin Books, 1980], pp. 200-201)
- 20 "He anxiously descended the ladder, and started homewards at a run, trying not to think of giants, Herene the Hunter, Apollyon lying in wait for Christian, or of the captain with the bleeding hole in his forehead and the corpses round him that remutined every night on board the bewitched ship." (Hardy, *Jude*, p. 61)