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# Archetypal Nature Image in the Works of Maria Luisa Bombal

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## Abstract

An archetype is a prototype of patterns or behaviors recurring during history. Those images are universal and they transmit the cultural phenomenon from one generation to another. Archetypes are immortal parts of the unconscious which constantly change their form. The archetypal relation between nature and woman goes back to the very early days of the universe and is interrelated to the myth of "The Great Mother" identified and exemplified by Erich Neumann and Carl Gustav Jung. The archetype of the great mother reveals itself in different forms which may show her life-giving and devastating aspects together or isolated. The archetypes represented in various forms can be observed in literature. As the great mother has close bonds with nature, these forms are often natural elements such as the "tree" motif which will be analyzed in this study.

Chilean author Maria Luisa Bombal focuses on the dual structure of nature in her works, particularly creating a bond between a "tree" and a "female character". Those characters are alive with nature and hold on to life, but they cannot breathe (both literally and really) when nature fades away. Nature, in the short stories "The Tree" and "Braids" by Maria Luisa Bombal, in relation to the archetype of the great mother becomes visible through the image of a tree. Thus, this study aims to employ an archetypal approach and discuss the role of nature, which is a reflection of the great mother archetype, in the stories by Bombal.

**Keywords:** Maria Luisa Bombal, archetype, myth, nature, woman, tree

## MARIA LUISA BOMBAL'İN ESERLERİNDE ARKETİPSEL DOĞA İMGESİ

### Öz

Arketip, tarih boyunca tekrar eden kalıpların veya davranışların bir prototipidir. Bu imgeler evrensel ve kültürel olguyu bir nesilden diğerine aktarırlar. Arketipler, bilinçaltının sürekli biçim değiştiren ölümsüz parçalarıdır. Doğa ve kadın arasındaki arketipsel ilişki, evrenin yaratılışından buy ana süregelmektedir ve Erich Neumann ve Carl Gustav Jung tarafından tanımlanan ve örneklenen "Yüce Ana" miti ile karşılıklı ilişkilidir. Yüce Ana arketipi, onun hayat veren ve yıkıcı yönlerini bir arada veya izole olarak gösterebilen farklı biçimlerde kendini gösterir. Çeşitli formlarda temsil edilen arketipler edebiyatta gözlemlenebilir. Yüce Ananın doğa ile yakın bağları olduğundan, bu formlar genellikle bu çalışmada incelenecek olan "ağaç" motifi gibi doğal unsurlardır.

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Şilili yazar Maria Luisa Bombal, eserlerinde özellikle “ağaç” ile “kadın karakter” arasında bir bağ kurarak doğanın ikili yapısına odaklanmaktadır. Bu karakterler doğayla iç içedir ve hayata tutunurlar ama doğa tahrip edildiğinde onların da hayat bağları kopar. Maria Luisa Bombal'ın “The Tree” ve “Braids” adlı kısa öykülerinde Yüce Ana arketipiyle ilişkili doğa, ağaç imgesi aracılığıyla görünür hale gelmektedir. Bu nedenle bu çalışma, arketipsel eleştiri yönteminin verilerinden yararlanarak Maria Luisa Bombal'ın “Ağaç” (El árbol) ve “Örgüler” (Trenzas) adlı kısa öykülerindeki arketipsel “doğa” imgesini tartışmayı amaçlamaktadır.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** Maria Luisa Bombal, arketip, mit, doğa kadın, ağaç

## INTRODUCTION

Chilean writer Maria Luisa Bombal (1910- 1980), was one of the first authors who wrote about the inner world of her protagonists breaking with the realist tradition in the fiction of her time. Influenced by the surrealist movement in France during her years of education Bombal created remarkable works emphasizing unconscious themes. Her works that received international acclaim include *La Última Niebla* (The Last Fog) (1935), *La Amortajada* (The Shrouded Woman) (1938), *El Árbol* (The Tree) (1939), *Las Islas Nuevas* (New Islands) (1939), *La Historia de María Griselda* (1946), *House of Mist* (1947).

The study aims to discuss the archetypal “nature” image in the short stories of Maria Luisa Bombal in terms of archetypal criticism. The scope of the study consists of two stories by Bombal: “The Tree” (El árbol) and “Braids” (Trenzas). The dual structure of nature is strongly stressed in the works of the writer, particularly with a “tree” and a “female character”. Those characters are alive with nature and stick to life, but they cannot breathe (both literally and really) when nature fades away. The archetypal relation between nature and woman goes back to the very early days of the universe and is interrelated to the myth of “The Great Mother” as shown by Erich Neumann and Carl Gustav Jung. Nature has opposite functions: life-giving and devastating. Influenced and nourished by Neumann, Jung and Nietzsche, Camille Paglia exemplifies the dual characteristic of nature in her work *Sexual Personae, Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*. Following Nietzsche, Paglia identifies woman with nature in an archetypal context and thus associates femininity with Dionysus while associating masculinity with Apollo: “As Life’s totality is summer and winter, floridity and devastation, The Great Mother is both seasons in her benevolent and malevolent halves” (Paglia, 2001, p. 85). Those characteristics attributed to The Great Mother can be traced in the elements of the literary works written by Bombal through characters, themes, place, or space. Through those elements in the stories, she is able to make them visible and concrete enabling the readers to imagine and envision the concepts in their minds.

As to Mercedes Valdivieso; “among Chile's outstanding women writers, Maria Luisa Bombal is perhaps the most complex and permanent figure” (Valdivieso, 1976, p. 70). Bombal’s complexity is not limited to her works but her personal life as well. As an intellectual woman from an upper-class family, she graduated from Sorbonne with a thesis on Merimee. She was interested in theater and acting. Bombal had close friendships with important figures of Latin American literature such as Jorge Luis Borges and Pablo Neruda, and her work was admired by her literary peers. Bombal’s

surrealist writing style and themes were revolutionary and influenced writers of magical realism later.

While giving a brief history of Latin American countries, Susan Bassnett also outlines the literary themes in Latin American literature: "The history of Latin American countries is a history of colonialism, of revolution, of emergent nationalism, of tyranny and resistance, of genocide, poverty, economic and ecological crises, but also a history of survival, struggle and triumph and it is history in which women played a crucial yet underestimated role" (Bassnett, 1990, p. 2). Women's undervalued role was apparent in literature where female characters were portrayed shallowly and generally by male writers. The overwhelming power of the patriarchy on women is portrayed in the novels directly or implicitly whose authors have the opinion that women have an irreplaceable role in fulfilling domestic responsibilities, but not shaping the future for the next generations because this ability and rational mentality belongs to men. The patriarchal and conformist structure of the era defined the (in)visibility of women both in society and literature.

In this society, woman's role has had a mythical quality. Certain static concepts are routinely attributed to her. "Beauty" - "Sorrow" - "Romance" - "Hatred" – are grandiose ideas with which one supposes her to be naturally concerned. Society, with compromising intent, has made a myth of women. Rather than a temporal and widely varying individual, she has become a fixed and eternal concept (Valdivieso, 1976, p. 70).

Conversely, Bombal goes out of those images mentioned above as they overgeneralize the traits of women, instead, there should be no limitation to describe them if they are "individuals" ready to change the world rather than traditional stereotypes giving prevailing ideas of the society. Bombal shows interest in going back to the very early roots of the relationship between nature and women, and the patriarchal idea that as nature has a dynamic and unpredictable structure, women are unstable like nature. Therefore, it is inconceivable to put them into a frame enforcing to limit their attitudes and mindset.

Between the two world wars, it was an era for Spanish-speaking countries and their literature focusing on social and political conflicts. However, Bombal focuses on the inner world of her female characters. Thus, she was mirroring the social situation of women in Latin American culture.

Her works focus on the plight of female protagonists who are unable to find realization and fulfillment in the male-dominated worlds they inhabit. The female protagonists of *La última niebla*, *la amortajada*, *El Arbol*, *La historia de Maria Griselda* and *Las islas nuevas* (New Island, 1939) clearly demonstrate that there is an insurmountable void between the ways in which males and females understand the world. Women are intuitive, intimately connected to nature, to the realms of imagination, myth, and dream. Men are bound to the material, to the objects of civilization, and they are ruled by the dictates of logic (Rublo, 2001, p. 46).

As Rublo points out, Bombal's female characters are connected to the unconscious while the conscious is the realm of the male characters. Bombal's use of symbols and mythical language creates a female world of fantasy contrasting with the material world surrounding them. Presenting both the fantasy and material worlds together indicates how distinctive they are in their essence like men and women.

Bombal unifies gothic and surreal elements to create a fantastic atmosphere where she frees her female protagonists from the oppressions of the patriarchal society. Agosin describes Bombal's stories as a mixture of Gothic and fairy tale elements: "A pure geography, crafted in words with the skill of a sculptor, an ambiance that calls to mind Gothic heroines of English novels or fairy tales by Nordic writers: these elements form part of the essence of Maria Luisa Bombal" (Agosin, 1990, p.26). Bombal's heroines are dreamy characters dangling between the real world and the misty surreal world of the unconscious. Therefore, they sometimes become so cheerful and hopeful for the bright future, but they are sorrowful and pessimistic when they confront the harsh realities of daily life. This unstableness arises from the uncertainty in nature. The unpredictable structure of nature can lead to the inconceivable attitudes of women, as there is an archaic relation dating back to the creation of the universe.

Bombal's unification of woman and nature is visible in her stories. As Paglia states "The identification of woman with nature was universal in prehistory. In hunting or agrarian societies dependent upon nature, femaleness was honored as an immanent principle of fertility" (Paglia, 1991, p. 8). In the matriarchal society, the Great Goddess or Mother Goddess personified Mother Earth and was the supreme deity. She was the source of all human life and the source of all food. To survive, societies needed to produce children and to produce food. They knew how dependent they were upon the blessings of the Great Goddess, and they worshipped her properly so they would receive those blessings (Rosenberg, 1994, p. xix). Likewise, Neumann emphasizes the association between woman and earth; "...the Feminine is nevertheless the black earth in need of fecundation, and the queen is the goddess of the land" (Neumann, 2015, p. 240). Thus, it can be declared that Bombal owes universality of her female characters to her use of archetypal woman image. As Moran points out, by using archetypes, the artist goes beyond the personal and touches the universal and addresses the reader with a stronger voice than her voice (Moran, 2003, p. 224). Accordingly, the reader discovers herself and unconsciously feels those roots going back to the very early beginning of history while reading such literary works. And all the references mentioned above prove that there is a substantial and undeniable interconnection among women, nature, earth and fertility.

According to Jung, no archetype can be reduced to a simple formula. The archetype is a vessel that we can never empty and never fill. It has only a potential existence, and once embodied it is no longer what it was before. It lasts through the ages and has to be reinterpreted each time. Archetypes are immortal parts of the unconscious, but they constantly change their form (Jung, 2014, p. 179). In other words, they are recursive, but each time they seem different when compared with the previous ones. Traces should be followed and traced carefully if someone would like to decipher them. Archetypes, which Jung mentioned in his works and which are frequently encountered in literature, can be grouped into three groups as archetypal characters, archetypal situations, archetypal symbols and associations. Archetypal characters are universal characters that are constantly recurring in literature. These include mother, father, child, hero, trickster and scapegoat archetypes. Among the archetypal characters, the "mother" archetype was the most emphasized by Jung. According to Jung, a person cannot discover what a mother is through experience alone. One is born with the 'mother' archetype in the collective unconscious, and the 'real parent' only 'animates' this mother archetype.

“The image of the mother found in every child is not an accurate portrait of the mother, but a portrait created and colored by the innate capacity to create an image of a woman, namely the anima” (Fordham, 2015, p. 69). According to Jung, the mother archetype:

First in importance are the personal mother and grandmother, stepmother and mother-in-law; then any woman with whom a relationship exists—for example, a nurse or governess or perhaps a remote ancestress. Then there are what might be termed mothers in a figurative sense. To this category belongs the goddess, and especially the Mother of God, the Virgin, and Sophia. Mythology offers many variations of the mother archetype, as for instance the mother who reappears as the maiden in the myth of Demeter and Kore; or the mother who is also the beloved, as in the Cybele-Attis myth. Other symbols of the mother in a figurative sense appear in things representing the goal of our longing for redemption, such as Paradise, the Kingdom of God, the Heavenly Jerusalem. Many things arousing devotion or feelings of awe, as for instance the Church, university, city or country, heaven, earth, the woods, the sea or any still waters, matter even, the underworld and the moon, can be mother-symbols. The archetype is often associated with things and places standing for fertility and fruitfulness: the cornucopia, a ploughed field, a garden. It can be attached to a rock, a cave, a tree, a spring, a deep well, or to various vessels such as the baptismal font, or to vessel-shaped flowers like the rose or the lotus. Because of the protection it implies, the magic circle or mandala can be a form of mother archetype. Hollow objects such as ovens and cooking vessels are associated with the mother archetype, and, of course, the uterus, yoni, and anything of a like shape. Added to this list there are many animals, such as the cow, hare, and helpful animals in general. All these symbols can have a positive, favourable meaning or a negative, evil meaning. An ambivalent aspect is seen in the goddesses of fate (Moirai, Graeae, Norns). Evil symbols are the witch, the dragon (or any devouring and entwining animal, such as a large fish or a serpent), the grave, the sarcophagus, deep water, death, nightmares and bogies (Empusa, Lilith, etc.). This list is not, of course, complete; it presents only the most important features of the mother archetype (Jung, 2003, p. 14-15).

The mother archetype includes both positive and negative aspects of femininity with its innumerable manifestations. Following the views of Jung and Nietzsche, Paglia identifies woman with nature in an archetypal context and thus associates femininity with Dionysus. Paglia explains the conflict between nature and culture with the dichotomy of Apollo and Dionysus. Apollo symbolizes masculinity, culture, science, and form while Dionysus symbolizes femininity, nature, limitlessness and exuberance. Apollo is among the Olympic gods; Dionysus is a god who was not taken to Olympus and was always seen as a foreigner. Apollo represents the cult of the sky, the sun, light and vision. “The Apollonian eye is the brain’s great victory over the bloody open mouth of mother nature” (Paglia, 1991, p. 50). As a god of the earth cult, Dionysus represents the opposite of Apollo. Dionysus, who is associated with soil and fertility, is fertile but destructive like nature. “Apollo’s great opponent Dionysus is the ruler of the chthonian whose law is procreative femaleness. As we shall see, the Dionysian is a liquid nature, a miasmatic swamp whose prototype is the still pond of the womb” (Paglia, 1991, p. 12). Unlike Dionysus, who represents the chthonian fluidity of nature, Apollo categorizes, and gives order and form to chaos. Therefore, Apollo is elitist, but Dionysus is egalitarian.



The Apollonian and Dionysian, two great western principles, govern sexual personae in life and art. My theory is this: Dionysus is identification, Apollo objectification. Dionysus is the empathic, the sympathetic emotion transporting us into other people, other places, other times. Apollo is the hard, cold separatism of western personality and categorical thought. Dionysus is energy, ecstasy, hysteria, promiscuity, emotionalism—heedless indiscriminateness of idea or practice. Apollo is obsessiveness, voyeurism, idolatry, fascism frugidity and aggression of the eye, petrification of objects (Paglia, 1991, p. 96).

Paglia identifies woman with nature and Dionysus, and man with culture and Apollo. The woman who is identified with nature understands nature and its endless cycle and never desires to dominate nature. According to Paglia, it is the man who is at war with nature. "Nature's cycles are woman's cycles. Biologic femaleness is a sequence of circular returns, beginning and ending at the same point. Women's centrality gives her stability of identity. She does not have to become but only be" (Paglia, 1991, p. 9). While women, nature and Dionysus are the representatives of productivity, equality, limitlessness, and fluidity; man, culture and Apollo represent law, limit and form. This dichotomy between man/woman, nature/culture, rationality/irrationality etc. through Greek mythology can be supported by a table given below:

Dionysus	Apollo
God of wine	God of Sun
Disharmony	Harmony
Chaos	Order
Amorph	Perfection
Enthusiasm	Dignity
Woman	Man
Nature	Culture
Plurality	Individuality
Myth	Irrationality
East	West

In the following chapter, how the archetypal image of nature is associated with women will be indicated via both direct quotations from the short stories by Bombal and supporting references. Thus, the deep-rooted relationship between nature and women will have been reinforced. Besides, Bombal's artistic way and perception of life will be added-value for the unity of the study.

### ARCHETYPAL NATURE IMAGE IN "THE TREE" AND "BRAIDS"

Maria Luisa Bombal's work has been referred to as a mirror of the Latin American woman's social situation in the 1930s, and the expected completion of their duties is made obvious by the treatment of her female protagonists by the male characters (Zink, 2009, p.2). The women in Bombal's works struggle to find their true identity despite the oppression of a patriarchal society. "These brief intense narratives all describe the alienated and anxious existence of a woman whose sole passion is to find a way to live completely and fully" (Agosin, 1990, 28). Bombal's protagonists find refuge in their own created reality. The fantasy world they create for their own sake makes them to

survive and hold on to life. Thanks to this special area/place just belonging to them, they can get rid of undesirable attitudes and treatments of men and transform themselves into self-actualized ones.

Bombal uses poetic language symbolism and flashbacks to give the reader a glimpse of the fantasy of the women who had to mentally escape from their unfulfilled daily lives. In Bombal's two short stories "The Tree" and "Braids" nature is a place where women escape from society and men who cannot understand their needs. They are isolated from daily life issues, but very close to nature.

Water has a significant place in Bombal's writing. In this context, Agosin associates the imaginary world of Bombal with her birthplace. Bombal was born in a coastal city which is the source of the recurrent use of water in her narrations: "In order to enter the cosmogony and magic of the stories of Maria Luisa Bombal, one has to explore the city of her birth Viña del Mar, on the Chilean coast. Viña del Mar is a city of water." (Agosin, 1990, p. 26). Bombal's nature imagery mostly consists of water, fog, mist, ponds, forests, trees, and gardens which belong to the feminine. Water makes a city feminine just as the woman's body has a menstrual process or fluidity due to the pregnancy. Erich Neumann recurrently refers to the "femininity" of water, earth and the mixture of the two elements:

For this reason, the female dwell not only in ponds, springs, streams, and swamps but also in the earth, in mountains, hills, cliffs, and-along with the dead and unborn- in the underworld. And above all, the mixture of the elements water and earth is primordially feminine; it is the swamp, the fertile muck, in whose uroboric nature the water may equally well be experienced as male and engendering or as female and birthgiving (Neumann, 2015, p. 260).

In his well-known quote, Thales states "All things are from water and all things are resolved into water". As water is the beginning of everything on the earth, emphasized by Thales, it is associated with femininity and birth:

To be sure, the mighty sea has its masculine ruler, and the streams, which flow along full of power, have their male gods. But in the depths of the ocean and on its surface the mermaids and the sea goddesses are more important than the masculine spirits, and Nereus is not surrounded with sons, but with daughters. The springs, the lakes, and the marshy lowlands, however, belong exclusively to female spirits (Otto, 1965, p. 171).

Symbolically water is also associated with the unconscious where all dreams, fantasies, and myths are born. Using water and fog as constant images in her writings Bombal places her fictional world in the realm of the unconscious. Throughout her stories fog serves as an instrument transforming real life into a world that is surreal, dreamlike and fantastic.

"The Tree" (El árbol) is one of the most recognized works by Bombal. The writer "focuses particularly on motifs of music, the tree, the room/womb, light, darkness, the mirror mist" (Diaz, p. 58). The story opens with the protagonist Brigida listening to a concert and being taken away to her past by the music. As the pianist begins to play Mozart, Brigida is led to her memories of a motherless and neglected childhood. When the music shifts to Beethoven, Brigida travels back to the time of her marriage with Luis an older man, a friend of Brigida's father. Luis treats Brigida as a child and underestimates her needs as a grown-up woman. Through her lonely and misunderstood marriage, Brigida finds comfort in the presence of a tree. The gum tree outside Brigida's bedroom becomes a



shelter and a refuge for her. In a sense, the tree takes her husband's place as a companion. Brigida needs love and compassion, however; Luis is far from understanding Brigida's alienation and frustration. When the pianist starts to play Chopin, Brigida remembers the rainy fall night when she suddenly wakes up and rushes to the dressing room covered by the tree's shadow. As her marriage deteriorates the tree becomes a crucial element. The presence of the tree keeps Brigida from leaving her husband but for a short time. Soon the tree will be cut down and Brigida will lose her connection to her married life. The light fiercely penetrating her room after the fall of the tree represents the awakening of Brigida as a mature woman. At once Brigida leaves Luis. The story ends back in the concert hall with applauding audiences all around.

In "Braids" Bombal tells the fabulistic story of two sisters who unified with nature through their braids. The story starts with the narrator's contemplations on women's hair and its connection to nature. The narrator gives examples of the strength of women's hair by citing stories of Tristram and Isolde, Queen Melisande, Jorge Isaac's novel *Maria*, and Bluebeard. The narrator then continues with the two sisters' story. One of the sisters is a 'spinster' who has chosen not to marry and to take care of the family hacienda and the other sister who is a widow and shot her unfaithful husband to death. One day the forest surrounding the hacienda takes fire and at the same moment, the candelabra in the other sister's house catches fire. The sister living in the city dies simultaneously with the forest as she is linked to the trees by her hair.

In her stories, Bombal creates a Dionysian and chthonian world for her protagonists where they try to fulfill their emotional and erotic needs. As Rublo points out, Bombal's characters have an "ability to connect intimately with nature" (Rublo, 2001, p. 46). Connected with nature with strong fibers women in Bombal's two stories, like many others, cannot internalize the social norms shaped by patriarchal culture. In Bombal's stories, Apollonian culture clashes with Dionysian nature and hence the tragedy of the women characters unfolds. The tragedy of Bombal's heroines originates from their inability to sever ties with nature and to adapt to the norms of an Apollonian patriarchal culture.

Campbell emphasizes the "unhappiness" of Bombal's protagonists while commenting on their liminal position:

The unhappy protagonist (usually a woman) creates in dreams reinforced by daydreams, a person to whom she can turn for affection. As the protagonist dreams and daydreams, we peer into her head and heart. Through her thoughts we observe the characters as they oscillate between unreality and reality, dwelling largely in the penumbra. The characters drift effortlessly into the ethereal world because of the author's skill in tying together the intangible and the tangible (Campbell, 1961, p. 418).

The protagonist of "The Tree" Brigida is one of Bombal's unhappy heroines who is not only psychologically but also developmentally in a liminal position. Brigida is a young woman seen as a child by her older husband. Throughout the story the reader witnesses Brigida's coming of age as a young woman who finds her selfhood. "The story deals with the theme of illusion, and with the conflict between illusory and matter-of-fact realities" (Debicki, 1971, p. 123). The story starts in the present time with Brigida listening to a concert. The first melody takes her back to her childhood

when she was neglected by her father and five older sisters. Her liveliness is misunderstood by her family as dumbness and the only one she feels comfortable with is his father's friend Luis:

From childhood, she would run to Luis when everyone else abandoned her. He would pick her up and she would encircle his neck between giggles that were like tiny bird cries and kisses she flung like disorderly raindrops on his eyes, his forehead, and his hair — which even then was graying (had he never been young?). "You are a necklace," Luis would say. "You are like a necklace of sparrows." (Bombal, 1982, p. 52).

Using the bird imagery Bombal establishes a relationship with nature and her heroine. This image also exemplifies the patriarchal view of women as inferior. The fact that men liken women to small, fragile, and cute animals is based on the idea that women are weak, passive and to be dominated. Luis' naming of the "necklace of sparrows" also implies that the woman served as an ornament for the man.

Brigida's marriage to Luis stems from her need for a protective and loving father figure, which she lacked throughout her childhood. Brigida demands to spend more time with her husband either at home or outside. However, Luis ignores her need for the company while he is busy with work and other social activities.

Unconsciously, he would turn away from her in sleep; just as she unconsciously sought her husband's shoulder all night long, searching for his breath, groping blindly for protection **as an enclosed and thirsty plant bends its tendrils toward warmth and moisture** (Bombal, 1982, p. 55) (emphasis added).

Bombal resembles her protagonist as a plant in need of warmth and water which are the source of its life. Brigida is "thirsty" for love and attention. Disappointed and deserted Brigida tries to give a meaning to the social norm to which she can not fit: "Maybe life for men was based on a series of established and continuous customs" (Bombal, 1982, p. 56).

The vivid plant imagery is enhanced by the "rubber tree". Neumann states that the image of a tree as shelter is archaic:

The image of the tree firmly implanted in the earth that feeds it, but rising in the air where it unfolds its crown, has stirred man's imagination from time immemorial. It shades and shelters all living things, and feeds them with its fruit, which hang on it like stars. In its branches nest the birds, the denizens of heaven who, rising up from it with their unfolded wings, hover in the middle space between the tree's branches below and the World-covering wing-branches of the tree or bird of heaven above (Neumann, 2015, p. 245).

As a dominant image, the rubber tree becomes a shelter, a protector, a companion, and a confidant throughout the story.

Her awakenings. Ah, how sad were her awakenings! But – it was curious- no sooner had she entered her boudoir then the sadness vanished as if by an enchantment. Waves clash, clashing far away, murmuring like a sea of leaves. Beethoven? No. **It is the tree** outside her dressing-room window. She had only to enter the room to experience an almost overpowering sense of well-being. How hot the bedroom always was of a morning! And what harsh light! By contrast, in the boudoir, even her eyes felt rested, refreshed. The faded cretonne curtains; the tree casting shadows that undulated on the **walls like cold, moving water**; the mirrors refracting foliage, creating the illusion of a **green and infinite forest**. How

enjoyable that room was! It seemed **a world submerged in an aquarium**. And how that huge rubber tree chattered! All the **birds in the neighborhood took refuge in it**. It was the only tree on that narrow, falling street that sloped from one side of the city directly to the **river** (Bombal, 1982, p. 55-56) (emphasis added).

In this quotation water and plant imagery intertwines to compose a supernatural world, a prenatal heaven. As stated by Valdivieso, "The uterine connotation of refuge, is evident" (Valdivieso, 1976: 73). It is obvious that the writer provides her heroine with the comfort and peace she needs by creating an underwater forest. Brigida's awakenings are sad because of her frustration and alienation. She does not feel belonged neither to her husband not the house she lives in. "Seeking refuge from the heated frustration of her marriage in the freshness of the dressing chamber, poetically presented in cool and aquatic imagery, Brigida attempts to cope with a barren and joyless life". (Bente, 1984, p. 110). Brigida lives in an inescapable waiting for an absent husband. The tree substitutes the human companion Brigida yearns for. The tree becomes an actual character in the story and it is the one "who" helps Brigida reach maturity. After being neglected by her father and then by her husband, she cannot find anyone to rely on. "If communication with man is impossible, then Brigida sublimates the desire for that communication and relates to the tree, saving herself from an actual break from the social frame which surrounds her" (Valdivieso, 1976, p. 73). The nickname "necklace of sparrows" is symbolic, Brigida is like the neighborhood birds taking refuge in the rubber tree. It is the tree for the sake of whom she stayed married. Presence of the tree and the serene feelings it brings to her prevent her leaving when one night she decided to desert Luis:

Heavy rain soon began to lash its cold leaves. How lovely! All night long she could hear the rain thrashing, splashing through the leaves of the rubber tree like a thousand tiny rivers sliding down imaginary canals. All night long she heard the ancient trunk creak and moan, the storm raging outside while she curled into a ball between the sheets of the wide bed, very close to Luis (Bombal, 1982, p.59).

Encompassing her with the shadow of its branches and leaves the tree creates a womb-like shelter. Therefore, cutting down of the tree is the breakpoint for Brigida. "When the tree is cut down and her boudoir loses its cozy enchantment, her room is "invaded by a terrifying white light". In this new light, she sees her existence for what it is, a loveless young woman enchained by an old, wrinkled man incapable of love" (Diaz, 1994, p. 58). The event, cutting down of the tree, is sudden and convulsive:

A thunderous noise, followed by a flash of light from which she recoils, shaking.

The intermission? No. The rubber tree.

Having started work early in the morning without her knowledge, they had felled it with a single stroke of the ax. "The roots were breaking up the sidewalk, and, naturally, the neighborhood committee ... (Bombal, 1982, p. 63)

The light mercilessly fills the room unveiling those trying to be ignored. It resembles in a way to the moment of birth when the baby comes from the compassionate darkness of her mother's womb into the direct light of the outside world:

And all that ugliness lay embedded in her mirrors, along with nickel-plated balconies, shabby clotheslines, and canary cages. They had stolen her intimacy, her secret; she found herself naked in the middle of the street, naked before an old husband who turned his back

on her in bed, who had given her no children. She does not understand why, until now, she had not wanted children, how she had resigned herself the idea of life without children. Nor does she comprehend how for a whole year she tolerated Luis' laughter, that over-cheerful laughter, that false laughter of a man who has trained himself in joviality because it is necessary to laugh on certain occasions. Lies! Her resignation and serenity were lies. She wanted love, yes love, and trips madness, and love, love... (Bombal, 1982, p. 64).

Brigida feels naked as the reality descends upon her and at last comprehends that she has been living a lie. The canary imagery reveals her position as caged in an unhappy marriage. She was once a necklace of sparrows and now turns out to be a canary in a cage. Hence, Brigida comes to realize her misery and decides to act for the first time in her life: "But, Brigida — why are you leaving? Why did you stay so long?" Luis had asked. "The tree, Luis, the tree! They have cut down the rubber tree" (Bombal, 1982, p. 64). Brigida's symbolic birth is realized by cutting of the tree and thus the umbilical cord connects her to the tree. Thus, this event works as an initiation process for Brigida, she comes to the realization of the fact that she is not living a life she desires. She awakens to be a new woman.

A similar organic bond between woman and nature is observed in Bombal's other short story "Braids". In "Braids", the umbilical cord between the trees and the protagonists of the story is visualized by the woman's hair. Again, Bombal associates women with a tree which is an archaic symbol of femininity. "In the symbolic equations of a feminine that nourishes, generates, and transforms, tree, *djed* pillar, tree of heaven, and cosmic tree belong together" (Neumann, 2015, p. 243).

Bombal uses the hair motif as a symbol of woman's power in her relationship with the earth and reproduction. The narrator of the story emphasizes the importance of woman's hair by giving examples from history and literature: "Did not the dark and lustrous braids of Isolde, princess of Ireland, absorb this mysterious power even as her lips took the first drop of that enchanted potion?" (Bombal, 1982, p. 67). The narrator, and Bombal herself as we can assume, criticizes women cutting their long hair namely their bond to nature:

Day by day, proud human beings that we are, we have a tendency to renounce our elemental roots, which accounts for the fact that women no longer appreciate their braids.

Being rationalists nowadays, women in cutting off their braids ignore that in effect they are severing their ties with those magic currents which issue from the very heart of the earth.

Because a woman's hair springs from the most profound and mysterious source, whence is born the first trembling seed of life- evolving therefrom to struggle and grow among many entangling forces, thrusting through the vegetal surface into the air and on upwards to the privileged forehead of its choice (Bombal, 1982, p. 67).

This quotation represents a vivid image of the chthonian earth, which is the realm of Dionysus. With images of entangling vegetation and water coming from deep down the earth the writer creates a fantastic world.

In this respectively short story women become unified with nature both physically and symbolically. "Braids" is about the tragedy of two sisters. The tragedy is born as Nietzsche states from the clash between the Dionysian and the Apollonian. In Braids, the two sister protagonists are in every aspect represent the Dionysian. One of the sisters nicknamed "the Amazon", she chooses to be single, cut her hair short and manage the family hacienda all alone. "And that eucalyptus she had

embraced- very young, crying stupidly after experiencing her first disillusionment: that grief she never confessed, that pain which drove her to cut her hair, to become the Amazon, resolving never to love again... never..." (Bombal, 1982, p. 73).

The other sister is a beautiful widow who killed her adulterous husband and her most distinctive feature is the single red braid she wears: "[...] the single red braid that she wore in a circlet around her small head cast a resplendent light over her pale complexion. Yes, she was a sweet and terrible woman. She would fall in love and love madly" (Bombal, 1982, p.71). The two sisters portrayed as two matriarchal goddesses who possess both life and death like the "Great Mother" of Neumann. Being "sweet and terrible", they represent the femme fatale archetype. As Paglia states:

Daemonic archetypes of woman, filling the world of mythology, represent the uncontrollableness of nature. Their tradition passes nearly unbroken from prehistoric idols through literature and art to modern movies. The primary image is femme fatale, the woman fatal to man. The more nature is beaten back in the west, the more the femme fatale reappears, as a return of the repressed. She is the spectre of the west's bad conscience about nature. She is the moral ambiguity of nature, a malevolent moon that keeps breaking through our fog of hopeful sentiment (Paglia, 1991, p.13).

The two sisters realize the worst dream of Apollonian men: independent women who refuse to be subordinate and obedient. Representing the uncontrollableness of nature and its malevolent power the two sisters pose a threat to the men and yet the patriarchal society. It is impossible for them to survive in this community of male dominance for they hold on to their organic ties with nature. Eventually they are predestined to a tragic end. A sudden fire ravages the forest surrounding the Amazon's farm and at the same moment the beautiful sister faints on her carpet and the candlestick catches fire. It took the beautiful sister to die all night long as it took the forest to burn down. It is remarkable that her red braid is "still vivid, seemingly alive" (Bombal, 1982, p. 73). Her hair eventually dies as the forest burns to ashes: "You see, the forest had to die along with her and her hair, because they shared the same roots. Because the green climbing plants that twine on the trees, the sweet algae clinging to the rocks, are but strands of hair: are the word, the coming and soaring of nature- its happiness and melancholy, the means of expression by which she gently instills her magic and wisdom into all living things" (Bombal, 1982, p.74).

The narrator concludes with an impressive epilogue in which she declared the reason for women losing their inherent powers: "And it is for this reason that women nowadays, having renounced their braids, have lost their prophetic powers, no longer have premonitions, or feel absurd joy, or have their old magnetism. And as a result, their dreams are but a sad sea tide bringing and rebringing faded images, or some other domestic nightmare" (ibid, 74). Thus, breaking ties with nature, as imposed by the patriarchal system, reduces or even destroys the physical and spiritual power of women.

In her short studies discussed above Bombal creates female protagonists representing an archetypal association between woman and nature. Vivid imagery of vegetation, trees, braids, sea, shadows, water and birds blend into a miasmic world of unconscious. It would not be wrong to say that Bombal's works bear traces of her own life. Moreover, her life bears traces of her works; in such an anecdote Agosin shares about Bombal: "One day when we returned to her house, Maria Luisa



turned to me and said, 'The day they will cut down this tree next to my window I will die too' And indeed the tree was cut down some time later and Maria Luisa died a week after in a hospital in Santiago on 6 May 1980" (Agosin, 1990, p.30).

## CONCLUSION

This paper aims to discuss the archetypal "nature" image through the tree symbol in the short stories of Maria Luisa Bombal within archetypal approach. Tree is a reflection of the nature image which is a representation of the Great Mother archetype in Bombal's selected short stories. In her stories "The Tree" (El árbol) and "Braids" (Trenzas), Bombal creates Dionysian heroines who are not able to integrate into the Apollonian western society. The female protagonists are heartbroken women who are misunderstood, neglected and disillusioned in a patriarchal society. Interestingly, Bombal does not provide her protagonists with female company either. Bombal's female protagonists in "The Tree" and "Braids", like her many other characters, are deprived of the countenance of any peers. As they are not able to fit into the norms of the Apollonian society, they are destined to be alienated. Bombal implies that some women manage to comply with the social norms and live happily', however, these women also cast independent women out of the community as Brigida's older sisters do. Another notable fact is that none of the heroines are mothers. As her protagonists search for wholeness and individuality, Bombal frees them from motherhood. Since motherhood is perceived as an institution in patriarchal society, it may serve as an element that causes the alienation of women.

Bombal unifies gothic and surreal elements to create a fantastic atmosphere where she frees her female protagonists from the oppressions of the patriarchal society. In her stories Bombal places her fictional world in the realm of the unconscious. In "The Tree", Brigida finds comfort in the presence of a tree trying to escape her lonely and deteriorating marriage. The gum tree outside Brigida's bedroom becomes a shelter and a refuge for her. Brigida is an unhappy young woman who is seen as a child by her older husband. It is in a way a story of Brigida's coming of age as a young woman who finds her selfhood. As a dominant image the rubber tree becomes a shelter, a protector, a companion and a confidant throughout the story. The substitutes the human companion Brigida yearns for.

In "Braids" female protagonists become unified with nature both physically and symbolically. The two sisters are bonded to trees with their hair. Bombal uses the hair motif as a symbol of a woman's power in her relationship with the earth and reproduction. Just as the cutting of the tree in "The Tree", the fire that burns down the forest in "Braids" disconnects the bond between women and nature.

In her stories, Bombal creates a Dionysian and chthonian world for her protagonists where they try to fulfill their emotional and erotic needs. Thus, by writing about the feminine body and its relation with nature, Bombal aims to break the patriarchal discourse and give voice to resistance in women's writings.

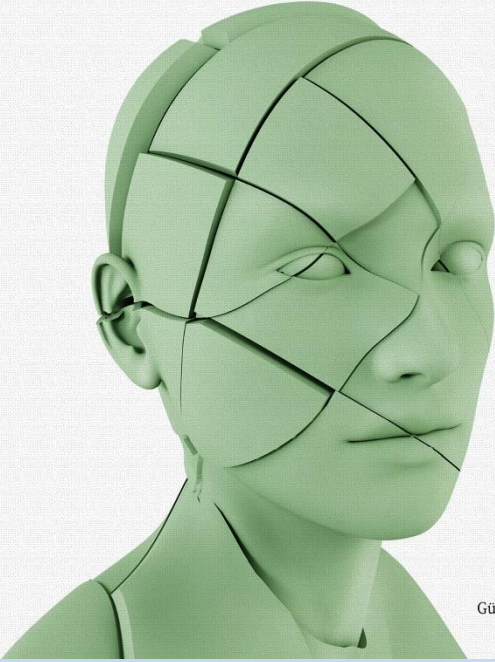


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# TÜRK BİLİMKURGU EDEBİYATI VE ARKETİPLER

DR. VELİ UĞUR



Günce Yayınları

Oktag Yivli

## Öykü Nasıl Okunur

modern öykü ve yöntem



Günce Yayınları

MAKSUT YİĞİTBAŞ

Edebiyatın Ebemkuşağı

Halit Ziya Hikâyeciliğinde

Renklerin Dili

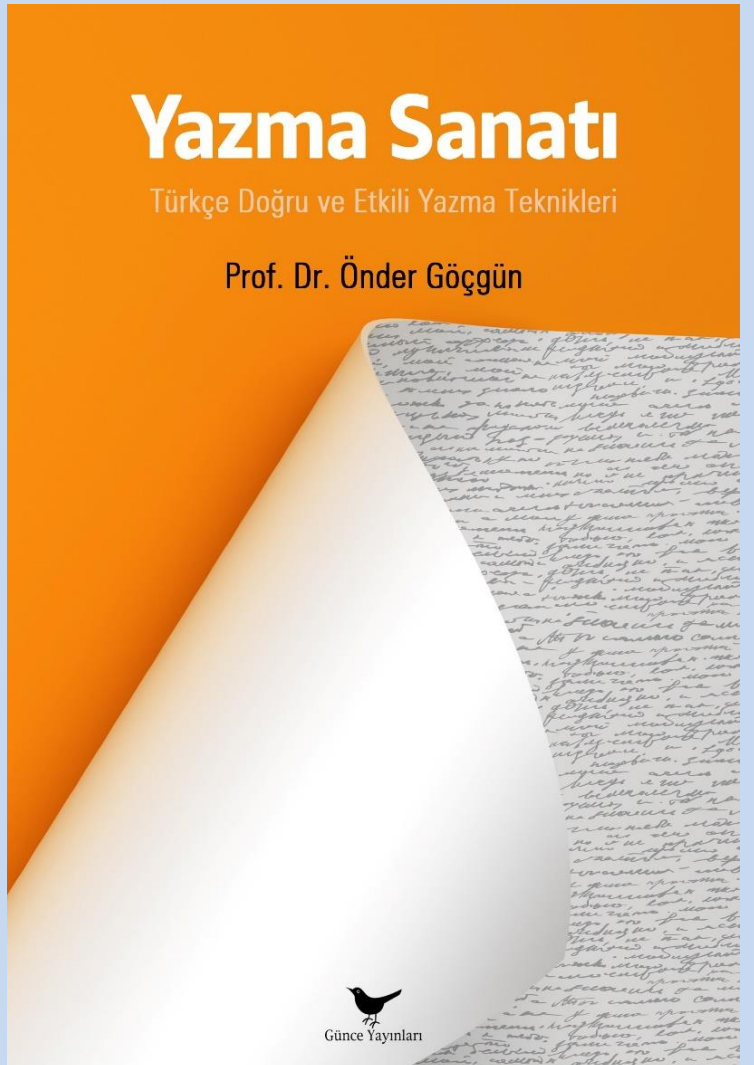


Günce Yayınları

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Prof. Dr. Önder Göğün



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