TRADITIONAL ANIMUS IMAGES OF THE “FEMME FATALE”*

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Abstract: This essay presents certain occurrences of the animus as a Jung archetype in three modern Western and Middle Eastern folk narratives cycles: a) Tabubu And Satni; b) “‘Play girl’; c) “La Belle Dame San Merci”, depicting ancient, Medieval, and contemporary occurrences of the story. In all three cases presented, the female protagonist projects Maslow’s specifications of the “high dominance” female pattern of behavior in reference to food and to sexuality.

Keywords: Animus. Archetype. Femme fatale. Sexuality. High dominance

INTRODUCTION

The present essay treats certain occurrences of the animus as an archetype delineated in older Middle Eastern expressions and their influence on modern Western elite culture. The link between the psychological concept of “archetype” and the folkoristic “motif” was delineated by the present writer:

Of the many archetypes Jung designated, four seemed to him to be more recurrent, laden with emotional significance, and traceable directly to ancient myths of origins. Consequently, Jung considered them separate personality systems. These four are: the persona, the anima, the animus, and the shadow. The persona (or outermost aspect of personality) conceals the true self; it is the

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mask that an individual wears publicly and is comparable to the concept of role-playing. The anima is the feminine characteristics in the male. The animus is the masculine characteristics in the female. The shadow (or darker self) is the inferior, animal-like part of the personality; it is something primitive in our human nature (EL-SHAMY, in: GREEN 1997, p. 38).

Within the human experiences of social interaction, these emotional forces, or archetypes, complement one another. Psychologist Aisling Ireland (2019), has pointed out recently that a male’s attraction to the “femme fatale” is an effect of the failure to relate to his Anima in a proper manner:

When one relates to the Anima in a negative manner, one views the Anima as a dark and dangerous figure—the Anima, for the man, becomes a femme fatale. In waking life, this association with the Anima as femme fatale can lead to an attraction to dangerous, disturbed, unstable, or controlling women. Often men find themselves attracted to women they view as sexually provocative or even sexually dangerous (IRELAND, 2019, p. 2).

The popular literary term “femme fatale” does not occur in Thompson’s Motif-Index (THOMPSON, 1955-58), nor in the Aarne-Thompson’s Type-Index (1961/1964). However, the concept appears through a number motifs within other categories of analytical classification of folkloric expressions. These include Motifs E474, “Cohabitation of living person and ghost [(revenant)]”; G264, “La Belle Dame San Merci”, and its derivative: G264.4, “Fairy-like witch marries man and causes him misfortune”, and new Motif “G640.1.$, ‡Ogre (ogress, demon) as shape shifter”.

Presented below are three salient folk narratives that may be seen as an expression of the “animus” are encountered in fairly modern literary traditions; each expression seems to have generated wide popular following (readership): a) Tabubu (also spelled: “Tbubui,” “Tbouboui,” “Tabubue,” etc.). And Satni (also spelled “Satmi,” or “Satmi-Khamois”. Also labeled “Satni I”); b) “‘Play-girl’: immodest woman as seducer of men”; c) “La Belle Dame San Merci”/“The Outcast Queens and the Ogress Queen”.

**TABUBU:** “COHABITATION OF LIVING PERSON AND GHOST” (MOTIF E474) - “DIABOLIC BEAUTIFUL WOMAN” (MOTIF T370.0.1$)

This ancient Egyptian narrative dating back to 21st or 22nd Dynasty (c. 1069-615 BC) occurs within a fairly elaborate context cohering around quest for wisdom. It has a number of main characters, of whom only two are of immediate relevance to the present inquiry:

The first main protagonist in this account is Satmi-Khamois (Satni) “son of the King Usimares [(i.e., Ramses II)]”.

Satni set out to the land of the dead on the hazardous quest of acquiring a book, written by the god of wisdom (Thoth) himself. Satni was told that the book will endow him with supernatural powers of knowledge (SHAMY, 2002, p. 270).

The second protagonist is a female named Tabubu.

After succeeding in getting possession of the book, Satni saw a young woman surrounded by an entourage of young girls and household staff members. The young woman was so uniquely beautiful that Satni became stricken with irresistible sexual desire the moment he laid eyes on her. He learned that her name is Tabubu, the daughter of the priest/(prophet) of Bubastet, and that she was on her way to the temple in order to worship. Satni, sent his page (as go-between) to offer Tabubu a payment of “three ten pieces of gold” for an hour that she would pass with him, otherwise he would resort to violence to reach his goal. Tabubu accepted the offer; but stipulated that she is not a mere common girl, and that if he really wanted her, he will have to come to her own residence. Against the disapproval of his own entourage, Satni agreed.
At her house Satni was perfumed and escorted to her private quarters on the second floor. There, he demanded: “Let us accomplish that for which we have come here”. Tabubu eluded the fulfilling of their agreement on the grounds that she was not a mere common girl. She demanded that her future interest be secured against Satni’s children and family. Thus, through a legal official, Satni transferred all his property to Tabubui.

Tabubu still demanded more assurances against future conflict before fulfilling her part of the bargain. She demanded that Satni cause his children to be slain “so that they may not seek a quarrel with my children on account of thy possessions”. Satni agreed to have his children slaughtered and their corpses thrown to dogs and cats. He was able to hear their cries of anguish while he was getting drunk with Tabubu, but he did nothing to help them. Meanwhile he restated his desire for the sexual intercourse.

At long last, when Satni laid herself down next to Tabubu [she marvelled about his masculine organ]. But when Satni tried to get hold of her she opened her mouth and uttered a horrendous cry that was like a “tempest” that carried Satni away and cast him out of his senses. Tabubu vanished leaving Satni in a swoon.

When Satni came back to his senses, he found himself “in a place of a furnace” lying naked totally exposed. He was unable to stand up due to shame. A pharaoh-like elder figure appeared and gave him a garment to cover himself (his genitalia). He instructed Satni to return the book he usurped, and to go back to his family.

Surprisingly, when Satni reaches home, he found his wife and children alive and well. The whole Tabubu experience was merely a hallucinatory illusion: “years of experience in a moment”.

THE LEGACY OF TABUBU IN WESTERN ART AND LITERATURE

The application of the title “femme fatale” to the Tabubu affair is most likely due to the remarkable research by Egyptologist Stephen Vinson. His meticulous and encompassing study, a tour de force, titled, “Strictly Tabuuhue: The Legacy of an Ancient Egyptian Femme Fatale” (2011) observed: “[T] his ghostly seductress has fascinated readers since 1867 when the first translation of “First Setne” was published”. Vinson’s study covers the sources of the story throughout the ages as well as the rise and spread of this narrative genre in Europe and beyond; and that from the days when Arthur Conan Doyle wrote ‘The Ring of Thoth’ in 1890, and even earlier than that, all sorts of stories of the supernatural have been set in ancient Egypt. This broad impact includes our present story ‘in its many modern adaptations, which include the 1932 Universal Studios film ‘The Mummy” (VINSON, 2011, p. 47-49).

More recently, the story also appeared in European popular publications without the label of “femme fatale”. One such work is Roger Lancelyn Green’s Tales of Ancient Egypt (1970). Green (1970) attributes the text to the Period of Rameses the Great (1290-1224 B.C.).

‘PLAY-GIRL’: IMMODEST WOMAN AS SEDUCER OF MEN (Motif T404$)

The main source for this medieval “humorous” narrative is the Arabic A Thousand and One Nights, a literary legacy that is read through print more than heard by word of mouth. Although the element of savagery represented in the murdering of children in the presumed ancient original is not present here, the plot revolves around what a “high-dominance” female can exact out of a sexually driven male. As an actual social practice, this narrative describes a “craze”. The linkage between this story and some aspects of the “femme fatale” theme was introduced by El-Shamy in Maspero and El-Shamy (2002), Popular Stories of Ancient Egypt.

The story is one of the so called “orphan tales” that are not connected to a frame story, a trait that is likely to reinforce the view that it is related to ancient disintegrated tradition. It accounts for a young man’s erotic experience, as described by the story’s teller (who is that young man’s brother). Three protagonists may be designated in this narrative:

1. An old woman acting as a go-between (bawd). She also serves as ‘greed-evoker’ (or, promoter of false hope).
2. A young man enticed into a scheme involving frolic with promise of sexual liaison with a beautiful young female.

3. An upper-class young woman (cf. "no mere common girl") seeking sexual excitement with a young man (dupe), but reneging on her promise.

The text may be summarized as follows:

An old woman (go-between) accosted a young man engaged in his daily work and offered him "... handsome quarters and a fair garden with flowing waters, flowers blooming, and fruit growing, and old wine going and a pretty young face whose owner thou mayest embrace from dark till dawn". The old woman added the instruction (condition): "Know, that the young lady, to whom I shall carry thee, loveth to have her own way and hateth being thwarted". Upon agreeing to the offer and the condition, the two entered a fine large house. Under the pretense that the young man was a workman needed for some repair, the old woman escorted him to the upper story against the servants’ objection. Once they were in the private quarters "in came a troop of slave girls surrounding a lady like the moon on the night of its fullest". The young man "... fancied that the lady was in love with him and that she would soon grant him his desire". After engaging in listening to lute music and heavy liquor-drinking, the young woman "... slapped him hard on the nape of his neck". Then she made all her handmaidens also slap and cuff him "but the women slapped him till he well-nigh swooned away".

The old woman sought to pacify him: "Be patient a little and thou shalt win to thy wish". She added, "As soon as she is warm with wine, ... thou shalt have thy desire". The young woman ordered her guest be bathed and his face sprinkled with rose-water. She explained, "... Allah hath made me passionately fond of frolic; and whoso falleth in with my humour cometh by whatso he wisheth".

Subsequently, the young man had his eyebrows dyed red, and his moustach plucked out. As before, the old woman sought to pacify him: "Be patient; thou wilt now at once win to thy wish!" The young woman wanted his beard shaved. He objected because shaving his beard would "disgrace [... him] before the folk". But he was told that this measure would "make him a smooth o’ face" since she happened to prefer beardless men. Thus, "he appeared dyed red as to his eyebrows, plucked of both mustachios, shorn of his beard, rouged on both cheeks".

Subsequently, the two went into a nude dancing bout while drunk, the old woman explained: "It is her wont, when she is in her cups, to let no one have her until she put off her dress and trousers and remain stark naked". The old woman instructed the young man: "Then she will bid thee doff thy clothes and run; and she will run before thee as if she were flying from thee; and do thou follow her from place to place till thy prickle stands at fullest point, when she will yield to thee".13

When this happens, she added, "‘Strip off thy clothes at once.’ ... So he rose, well nigh lost in ecstasy and, doffing his raiment, showed himself mother-naked". Then the young woman set out at a run and he ran after her, while she rushed out of room after room, "in a rage of desire like a veritable madman, with yard [(phallus)] standing terribly tall".

"After much of this kind she dashed into a darkened place, and he dashed after her; but suddenly he trod upon a yielding spot, which gave way under his weight and before he was aware ... where he was, he found himself in the midst of a crowded market .... of the leather sellers ..., naked, with standing yard, shorn of beard and mustachios, with eyebrows dyed red, and cheeks ruddied with rouge".

The crowd flogged him with animal skins upon his bare body till a swoon came over him. Then they threw him on the back of an ass and carried him to the Chief of Police. At this stage of the narrative-plot, the identity of the frolicking young woman is revealed. The angry crowd reported: “This fellow fell suddenly upon us out of the Wazir’s house in this [disgraceful] state”.

So the Prefect gave him an hundred lashes and then banished him from Baghdad. However, his brother (the story teller) went out after him and brought him back secretly into the city and made him a daily allowance for his living.
“LA BELLE DAME SAN MERCI” (MOT. G264)

According to Aa-Th The Types of the Folktale (1961/1964), the story was reported only from India. This Tale-type may be summarized as follows:

An ogress assumes the shape of a lovely girl and places herself in a public park. A king (raja) promenading in the park sees her and takes her for a wife. The new wife devours the animals in the palace, and demands that the king’s other wives be blinded and thrown into a dungeon. The blinded wives were pregnant. In their captivity they were starved and driven to cannibalism. They agree that each, in turn, would surrender her newborn to be slaughtered and divided among them to eat. One mother hid her newborn, a boy, thus sparing his life. The newborn grew up within the servant quarters of his father’s palace and was recognized by the “Ogress queen”. She sent him on a series of fatal missions, but he always succeeded and returned triumphantly. Finally, the King (raja) discovered his son and learned the truth about his ogress wife. She was slain and the blinded queens healed and reinstated.

Although incidents of the presence of Tale-type AT 462 were present at the time the Aarne-Thompson Index was updated, only India was presumed to be the location where the tale existed. Thus, relying only on the Indian sources, the tale was classified under Entry G: “Ogres”, a category within which Thompson identified the Semitic “Satan”. However, this narrative proved more widespread than originally reported. A more representative sample would have altered its typological nature.

Regrettably, folklore scholarship has steered away from typology under the inaccurate, seemingly unshakable, impression that it deals only with the abandoned theory/method labeled the “Finnish School” or the “Historic-Geographic method” whose main objectives were to establish a folktale’s birthplace and reconstruct the original form in which it originated.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

Although folk traditions are replete with incidents of unnatural cruelty (Chapter S. in the Motif-Index) by females, see for examples the following Tale-types in El-Shamy’s Tales Arab Women Tell: the “femme fatale” seems to be of relatively limited distribution. Associated with the personality pattern of the “femme fatale” is Abraham Maslow’s findings on “high-dominance” versus “low-dominance” women (MASLOW, 1954). His findings do coincide with the “femme fatale” character presented in this essay.

As an “interpersonal response trait” the behavioral attributes of the “high-dominance” female prove to be quite pervasive as well as a companion personality characteristic of the animus. In all three cases presented here, the female protagonist projects Maslow’s “high-dominance” pattern as David Krech et al. (1962), describe it: with reference to food:

“The high-dominance woman typically prefers foods that are saltier, sourer, and more bitter, more sharp and of stronger taste, e.g., foods that taste good even though ugly and unattractive, e.g., shellfish; foods that are novel and unfamiliar, e.g., fried squirrel, snails … [in our cases: eating horses, drinking wine till drunk/“sexually warm”].

With reference to the sexuality:

The sexual conduct of high-dominance women is sharply different from that of low-dominance women. “The high-dominance woman ... is much more apt to be pagan, permissive, and accepting in all sexual realms ... In other words, here too she is apt to be more forward, less inhibited, tougher, harder, stronger” (KRECH et al., 1962, p. 112)

All three female protagonists: The ancient Egyptian Tububu, the Medieval Arab-Islamic Vizier’s Daughter, and the contemporary Indian Ogress Queen project these sexual traits of character.
Notes

1. Words and phrases that carry special symbolic significance for analysis of texts are italicized.
2. The signs $/HeS$ indicate a motif or tale-type added by the present writer to the Aarne-Thompson systems. Underlined characters represent under-dotted one in Arabic script.
5. Near Zagazig in Egypt’s Delta. During his boyhood, the present writer and friends visited this isolated site frequently as recreation.
7. An “obscene detail” that Maspero (1915) opted to exclude from his text (“The Adventure of Satni-Khamois with the Mummies,” [No.7 I], p. 140 n. 1). This exclusion was done in spite of the evident instrumentality of the omitted portion in the depiction of the negative portrayal of the archetypal character of Tbubui, the tale’s cardinal female personae. Maspero noted: “An obscene detail, which occurs several lines farther on, and which I have not translated, proves that here, as in all tales of the kind, Tbubui was forced to yield herself entirely in order to get her enemy into her power”.
8. Compare Mot. Z186.8.2.1$, “Symbolism: oven (furnace)--vagina, womb”. On the presumed symbolic significance of an adult male in “a place of furnace without any clothes on his back,” (Maspero/El-Shamy, Popular Stories, xvi-xvii, n. 42 = (Maspero 1915, p. 140 n. 2). Vinson, (p. 50 n. 14) translates this word as “chamber-pot”. On the problems of the translation of this “obscene” theme, see Stephen Vinson, (p. 57 n. 27); see n. 11, below.
9. Maspero (1915, p. 135 n. 3), using the jargon of his time, aptly remarked: “The part played by Tbubui in this episode is in conformity with the universal ideas of demonology, and shows us the nature of the personage. She is no other than Ahuri, [sister-wife of the owner of the “Thoth” book, returned to earth to seduce Satmi and render him incapable of making use of his magic powers; when she has accomplished this, Nenoferkephtah, [(the dead owner of the magic book)] will come in his turn and force him to return the book of Thoth.”
11. Maspero/El-Shamy. Popular Stories, [no. 7 I]. The Adventure of Satni-Khamois with the Mummies (p. 34). Tale-types: HeS 1645DS, Perilous Journey in Search of Treasure Trove; HeS 792$, Resuscitation in order to Learn Truth (Get Information about Past Events). The tell-tale corpse (mummy); HeS 1469$, Foolish Person Tricked into a Humiliating (Disgraceful) Position, (p. 135-40). Compare AaTh 68I, King in the Bath; Years of Experience in a Moment. (Conclusion of story, p. 140-144).
12. Motifs K830$, “Gradual reinforcement of behavior in order to deceive. Series of rewards conditions (ills) intended victim into a predictable behavior pattern used to attack him”); and its derivative, K830.1.2.3$, “Types of deceptive pseudo-investments offered by ‘greed-evokers (mutammiCîn, swindlers)”.
13. Burton (I, p. 327 n. 3) provides the following personal remark indicating the broad influence of this social “craze”: “This scene used to be enacted a few years ago in Paris for the benefit of concealed spectators, a young American being the victim. It was put down when one of the lookers—on lost his eye by a pen-knife thrust into the ‘crevice’.” In this respect an exorcistic ritual that seeks to appease jinn who possess mainly women provides a close parallel to the erotic “craze”: “The zâr cult is argued to have entered Egypt and other Arab countries during the eighteenth century, when it was carried into Egypt by Ethiopian slaves and into the harems of rich rulers and their [seeming always absent] army generals. [Females in their households in the peak of their lives but without adequate sex partners, readily embraced the sacrilegious ritual].” See Hasan El-Shamy. “Northeast Africa (Eastern Section) Folklore: Overview.” In: African Folklore: an Encyclopedia, P. Peek and K. Yanka, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 292-296, p. 295.
14. Motifs: G640.1S, “Ogre (ogress, demon) as shape-shifter”; K961.2.2, “Ogress wife demands eyes of six wives of raja or she will die”; and S413.1, “Ogress wife orders raja to turn out [(cast-off)] his six wives”.
15. On this issue, see Hasan El-Shamy, Folk Traditions of the Arab World: A Guide to Motif Classification,
(“The Personal Factor in Indexing” Vol. 1 p. xxi-xxii): For example, a person with an Arab culture orientation (cognitive system, worldview) would not be apt to seek information on “[...] The Devil, Satan, The Bad Man, Old Nick, etc.” (Motif: G303) in the Chapter titled: “OGRES” (Motif: G0), nor under the subcategory: “Other ogres” (Motif: G300); for such a person, an ogre is a man-eating supernatural being, while “The Devil, Satan, ...” is never perceived in that role of predatory carnivora.

16 See: Tales Arab Women Tell (1999). The work lists texts from Qatar, Palestine, Syria; Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia, and Algeria. Also see Types of the Folktales in the Arab World (2004), where 16 texts are treated.


18 Especially Tale-types: AT 510, Cinderella and Cap o’ Rushes.; HeS 403DS, The Cruel Maternal-aunt Blinds her Niece and Substitutes her own Daughter as Bride; AT 511A, The Little Red Ox. [Cow helps orphans (brother and sister)]; AT’ t 720, My Mother Slew Me; My Father Ate Me. The Juniper Tree. The boy’s bones transformed into a bird.

References


MASPERO/EL-SHAMY. Popular Stories of Ancient Egypt, By Sir Gaston C. Maspero. Edited and with an Introduction by Hasan El-Shamy (ABC-CLIO: Santa Barbara, 2002), p. 95-118. (Maspero (1915), [No. 07. I]. “The Adventure of Satni-Khamois with the Mummies” ... [or Satni I], p. 115-143; the part under consideration appears on p. 135-144).
