Archetypal Patterns in *The Green Child*

I begin to remember everything
but how it has changed

Yoshimasa Yokogawa

*The Green Child* (1935) is the only work of fiction that Herbert Read thought worth preserving. It has been called a romance, a fairy tale, a parable, a Utopian fantasy, an allegory, and it contains elements of all these in its intricate symbolic suggestiveness. This work was written during a six weeks' holiday in the summer of 1934, and as he said later, was an exception that 'owes its existence to an unexpected break in the routine'. It is the kind of *jeu d'esprit* which many poets have performed once in their lives, as a change from the familiar genres, so that it is inlaid with many experimental but rare gems of imagination and fancy which make *The Green Child* a small but unique classic.

It is true that this novel is based on a folk tale entitled *The Green Children*, which Read quests in the chapter on Fantasy in *English Prose Style*, but has nothing to do with the conventional mysticism seen in its original. Just as Paul Klee had partly to abstract his landscape as the letter *R* to give it a new visual entity, Read also partly abstracted his landscape and people as crystalized forms to produce a new myth of the Green Children whose hearts have remained green with an intensified effect.

Usually the world of romance tends to overstep the limits by which our daily experiences are bounded. It excludes the ordinary facets of reality in order to concentrate intently on its fantasy. A hero and a heroine in romance, as in the dream, are our representatives with simplified characters, and conversely their virtues and beauty are to universalize them. However, although the Green Child as an elf is a figure in the world of myth, her strange characters and some farfetched incidents around her are not cut off from our ordinary world at all, but are deliberately paralleled or juxtaposed to it in this novel. The scene where she emerges to meet with Olivero the hero, is at the mill in the Yorkshire moors where Read grew up, and all devices are derived from the memories of his childhood. *The Green Child* has another distinctive truth as a chart of its writer's inner journey. The three parts of this novel are united in Olivero's recollection which seems to be identified with Read's. In other
words, the author aimed to combine the world of fantasy with that of experience, and as M. Bodkin says, "thus conflicting, produced an inner
tention that seeks relief in the activity either of fantasy, or of poetic
imagination, either originally or receptively creative." For the reason
above we are unable to call *The Green Child* a romance in its pure sense
of course, an autobiography, but "a triptych of romantic genres" would
be the proper name for it.

The first part is an example of the fairy romance in which some being,
human in appearance but not in nature, enters this life and transforms it.
A stream as one of the romantic devices leads Olivero who has returned
from distant lands, to a mill where he looks through the window and sees
Kneeshaw trying to feed blood to a woman he recognized as the Green
Child, whose appearance in the village had taken place on the very day of
his departure and had haunted him since then. He liberates her from
Kneeshaw, the miller who got her in unconsummated marriage, and after
he has extracted her history from Kneeshaw, the two men fight and the
miller is drowned in his own stream, and Olivero and the Green Child
follow the stream whose flow is reverse, until they reach the bog that is
its source, and there stepping on to a silvery quicksand, they sink below
the surface of the pool.

Robert Melville in Henry Treece's symposium entitled *Herbert
Read* says that the essence of *The Green Child* should be found in the first
sixty-six pages which he calls a complete work of romance. Melville's
further comment is concerned with the relationship of this part of *The
Green Child* to the remaining section of it:

Strictly speaking, the title of the novel belongs only to this
section. Sally, the Green Child, does not appear at all in the second
part, which is the story of Olivero's life before their meeting, and
in the third part her name changed to Siloëni and attached to one of
the slightly nauseating inhabitants of a subterranean world: these
two sections, the story of President Olivero and the study of the
green people, are descriptions of Utopias—a patronising Utopia
for masses and a puritanical, quasi-intellectual one for individuals.
It seems probable that the two distinct Oliveros who appear in them
are projections of that Silver Knight who figured in Read's adoles-
cent day-dreams, 'riding to quixotic combats, attaining a blinding
and indefinable glory', and represent two experimentally isolated aspects of the personality of their creator; so the stories in which they appear could be considered as parts of an uncentred composition...

What Melville perceives is the structural discontinuity among the various parts of this novel, and the supplemental quality of them. However, I would disagree with him in giving the first part too much importance and overlooking the dialectic that runs through the whole work.

In the second part we move into an apparently realistic narrative of Olivero's adventuring after he leaves the village in 1830. This is also romance, of another kind, the Quixotic romance in which the hero passes through testing perils (he is imprisoned in Spain, and captured by privateers at the sea). Here Olivero is "a man of action" who integrates himself only in the circumstances of virgin chaos like in the South America. For example, in Roncador Olivero displays military talents resembling those Read did during his period as a soldier and civil servant. Yet, once there he is elected to power to rule over the pastoral realm, ideal as the republic may be, ironically a spiritual complaint is produced not only by the very triumph of his own policy, but also by the mental stagnations within himself.

I know that such a mental disease had afflicted the monasteries in the Middle Ages, when they attempted to draw away from the world of action and live a life of contemplation. It is true that mine was not a life of contemplation, but it was becoming one of intellectual abstraction. So long as the republic was unformed, I was occupied in practical affairs. My ideas were immediately translated into action. But now no action was called for; my mind felt no resistance in facts, no tension in circumstance."

Finally in the last part we return from the apparently real to the superreal level. The tone of fantasy is described as "a large grotto, filled with an aqueous light, blue in the darker reaches, pale green towards the apparent outlet". If we remember that convention of the reverse stream, its symbolical meaning would become clear in this part where the subterranean world of the Green People is in every respect absolutely contrary
to the measurement of the real world of relativity. The third part is much more than "a puritanical, quasi-intellectual one for individuals!" It is just a demonstration of the anti-vitalism that is implicit in the Utopian tradition, and a confirmation of the aesthetics of classicism.

Thus surveying the discontinuous mosaic rather than the linear pattern of this novel, we recognize that there is an organic or cyclic structure coupled with a unity of centripetal conception. To give for the present one example, each chapter ends in its climax of death pattern. At the end of the first part Olivero dies to his life on the earth by descending into the pool. At the end of the second part, he dies to his life as a dictator by arranging a fake assassination. At the end of the third part he dies in the level of another reality. Therefore, the three parts of *The Green Child* are of equal importance and have a dialectic organism, whether one considers them inverse in chronological and topographical structures. At the centre of every knot we can find Read's philosophy which sets its roots in a kind of biological reality or is based upon the archetypal patterns of nature.

According to the view of George Woodcock, *The Green Child* has the pattern of *mandala* rendered in literary form, for the whole world is unified within a circle of biological experiences. For example, the hero Olivero is destined to leave the native country and afterwards to return to seek regeneration. His earthly adventures end when he starts to follow a stream that against all the laws of reason flows upwards to its source; there he descends with the Green Child into a mysterious realm beneath the earth from which she emerged. It seems to me that by *mandala* Woodcock means to show us Read's personal view of life to live in nature and to return like prodigal children to the contemplation of its beauty, not looking forward to some Utopia at the end of progress, but rounding a curve of intention that will lead him out of corruption to simplicity; "a progress from complexity to simplicity would no doubt require a non-human world, as Olivero was to discover." Of course, not everything in this novel or his career can be explained by a single model like the mandala. Whether one may accept the mandala or the dialectic as complementary working patterns, both of them share with a common aesthetic structure of the universe, which can be reduced into terms such as "rythm, balance and proportion."

From the following descriptions of the mill-wheel scene where Olivero is watching the movement of water, we can imagine to some extent the
principle of flux in nature which only the intuition of poet can insight:

Olivero went to the far end of the small platform and looked down into the confused waters. The moon was still sufficient to cast an oily sheen on the water, but Olivero could see no direction in the whirlpool: the falling water had in many years gouged out a deep pool, and one might look into this pool for a whole day without seeing its hundreds of cross-currents repeat a single pattern. It was a continual interweaving of irregular ribbons of water, gushing and spouting in every direction. The final drift of the stream was now lost in the darkness.\textsuperscript{13}

A rhythm involves a pattern of life in nature and is always self-identical. But no rhythm can be a mere pattern; for the rhythmic quality depends upon the differences involved in each exhibition of the pattern of water. The essence of rhythm is the fusion of sameness and novelty; so that the whole stream never loses the essential unity of the pattern, while the parts of water exhibit the contrast arising from the novelty of the detail.

Here it is not my aim to discuss about the problems of aesthetics. Yet, to appreciate the world of The Green Child we can not pass over this question which obsessed Read through his life. Probably, the answer to his life long thesis that "my experience cuts across the classical-romantic categorization\textsuperscript{14} would be found in this work, where Read sets forth his belief in artistic creativity and order: "aesthetic pleasure was a perception of the degree of transgression between the artificial form and its natural prototype, and the greatest aesthetic emotion was aroused by those crystals which transgressed most within the limits of probability."\textsuperscript{15} A crystal lacks rhythm from the excess of rigorous pattern, while a fog is unrythmic in that it exhibits a patternless confusion of detail. "Such preferences probably correspond to various phases of art in the terrestrial world—at one extreme the baroque fantasy of the cubic system, at the other extreme the classic simplicity of the hexagonal system."\textsuperscript{16} Precisely, in this difference we may find the distinction between classic and romantic art: the one observes the formal laws inherent in the structure of nature, whilst the other ignores them for the sake of some other value. Olivero tries to persuade the Green People who are classicists by nature that the beauty in the forms of artificial crystals belongs to an intermediate state, halfway between
order and disorder. For even in the most pure and formal manifestations, all classic arts intuitively avoid an exact observation of the laws of natural morphology. There is no law but his own instinct to guide one beyond the limits of natural forms. When our consciousness requires a sudden passage from reason to intuition, the work of art takes a leap into the unknown and another order of reality. Obviously the arts that keep the canons of reason can not make any necessary synthesis because the intention of the artist is no longer related to the inherent dynamism of his inventive act. Both an art that rises above conscious reality and an unconscious art are necessary. In this fact lies the final and inescapable justification of romantic arts.

However, the underground world of the Green People is absolutely limited, one-dimensional and inanimate. There, they are lost in the ecstasy of objective proportion, or the pleasure in anticipating the objectivity of death. As for their sense of order, "Disorder is empty space. Only Order exists; Disorder is not, and cannot be, conceived." The only way to be an eternal existence is to construct the mathematical precision and perfect structure of crystal. This is opposed to what is based on the degree of transgression between artificial form and its natural prototype. Therefore, we need not wander their strong disgust at the organic and vital element of their bodies, and consequently cannot but acknowledge they are classicists. Naturally, the characters of the Green People which consist of the negation of vital forces and antiorganic view of existence make Olivero accept death through the denial of life. So, he does not return from the underworld; he has been reborn into death, not into life eternally.

From the moment when Olivero found the flow of the stream reverse "the whole structure of his memory was challenged" and at the same time he began to make sure of his sense of reality:

Reality? That may not be the right word to describe the contrast between two states of mind, one of which is drinking in the bright charm of tangible things, of picturesque towns and people, of hill and sky, of food and wine, of books and papers casually bought, of music overheard; the other occupied by a landscape distant and withdrawn in the long dark tunnel of time, but bright in its crystal setting.

There were two ways to reconstruct his sense of reality: one was
through 'tangible things' and the other through his memories. Olivero
dipped his hand in the stream, right up to his sensitive wrist, and felt the
flow of the cold water, thus confirming by an independent sense the im-
pression which he had received from his eyes. He tried to assimilate to
nature to feel the flow of moment, which is equivalent to that of eternity.
Time is also a reality, and to reconstruct the sense of time is "to escape
from the sense of time," to live in the eternity of what he accustomed to
call "the devine essence of things."\[15\] The reversed flow of the stream is
just a symbol of time, whose place Olivero searches in his memories in
vain, because "all the conscious attempts at recalling the past\[16\] can not
bring him the enduring reality of his life. However, he can not resist the
ruling desire to return to the scenes of his childhood "withdrawn to a fan-
tastic distance, bright and exquisite and miniature, like a landscape seen
through the wrong end of a telescope."\[16\] In *The Contrary Experience* Read
says how dominant the memories of his childhood have been through his life:

My childhood, the first phase of my life, was isolated: it grew
detached in my memory and floated away like a leaf on a stream.
But it never finally disappeared, as these pages witness. Instead,
as this body of mine passes through the rays of experience, it
meets bright points of ecstasy which come from the heart of this
lost realm. But the realm is never wholly lost: it is reconstructed
stage by stage whenever the sensibility recovers its first innocence,
whenever eye and ear and touch and tongue and quivering nostril
revive sensation in all its child-godly passivity.\[20\]

As the way to recover the sense of reality, there remains nothing but
having a child's eye and the awaking mind of a creative artist. It is the
very innocent sensibility that makes Olivero able to see "the whole world
even in a drop of rain, clinging like a crystal bead to the edge of a cab-
bage-leaf,"\[14\] and to catch the final drift of the stream in a continual inter-
weaving of irregular ribbons of water. Time is change and a mark of our
transitional nature. "All that is misty and fluid, all that is soft and labile,
fall, precipitates, returns to the chaos of unformed matter; but out of the
same chaos is slowly formed all that is fixed and harmonious."\[17\] Olivero's
only desire is now to become a part of the harmony of the universe, exem-
plifying its immutable laws and proportions.

The links between *The Green Child* and Read's own imaginatively transfigured memories in *The Contrary Experience* are worth examining. The former is a poetic fiction modified by his autobiography, while in the latter Read is just the recognizable centre with subjective reconstruction of his own experiences. Therefore, in *The Green Child* we may find the relationship between the work and the autobiographical elements substantially less direct than in the case of *The Contrary Experience*. For this reason, *The Green Child* indicates symbolically the pattern his later life would follow, since he too like Olivero was to return—exactly thirty years after he decided in 1919 to abandon Yorkshire—finally to his native country. Read, like both Olivero and his rival Kneeshaw, came of a family of miller, and the mill of his uncle occupied his mind of childhood. The mills were daily reality, the image of a life governed by a routine of primitive machinery. But there was so much for childish wonder that the descriptions of the mill we see recur with his admiration and expectation for it, not only in *The Contrary Experience* but also in *The Green Child*.

As for the memories of natural phenomena in Yorkshire and Kirkdale where Read was born and grew up, this novel provides us two principal topographical wonders. In fact a stream vanished underground and emerged to feed the Strickland mill at "Howkeld" which meant "spring head."¹²⁹ This mysterious water is symbolically treated, as we said, to change its course and flow back to its source. By "this rationally incomprehensible fact"¹²⁹ which Olivero noticed first of all after his return to his native village, the whole structure of his memories was challenged. And the other mystery is the deep cavern near the church at Kirkdale, which became the model for the underworld of the Green People. As a child Read organized an expedition to explore the cave, and he must have thought of the great cave's mysteries and of the possibility of the survival of something in the days of palaeolithic man.²⁰ When one recalls his own past, he is beginning to identify himself with a green existence of his childhood because the scene in his memory is an epitome of life. Before there can be an art, there must be memories, and before there can be memories, there must be experiences. And "the memory is a flower which only opens fully in the kingdom of Heaven, where the eye is eternally innocent."¹³³

*The Green Child* may be called a novel dealing with memories which are
crystalized to some extent like a landscape seen through the wrong end of a telescope, but always control one's activities as if some mysterious power emanates from the level of his unconsciousness. The main characters in this novel are more or less the incarnations or the representatives of the writer's Self. As Olivero's nature resembles Read's own, so his career seems to be an imaginative projection of his creator's. Now, what is the significance of Kneeshaw's character which is opposed to Olivero's? He appears at first a sullen, churlish peasant. His nature has been in general "sullen" and not impressive since he was a school boy. He does not seem to fit in with so simple a characterization as Olivero who is straightforward and not obscure. Olivero was somewhat baffled by "a character at once so elementary and so complex as Kneeshaw." "In Kneeshaw primitive instincts were much stronger than the conventions of civilized life; but this does not mean that he was necessarily crude." What is the most striking is that Kneeshaw takes on a definite quality, "the evil destructive instinct which lurks beneath the civilized conventions of society." As a school boy he committed the act of destruction which set his teacher Olivero on his wandering for years, and now sexually fascinated with the Green Child he wants to get her without knowing that "anything so feminine (and therefore so strongly attractive to his masculinity) could be without what we in learned world call sexual characteristics." The confrontation between him and Olivero was inevitable. They are both fascinated by the Green Child, and eventually through her each is lost in water and becomes dead to earthly life.

George Woodcock pointed out that the deeper reason for Jung's interest in The Green Child is evident:

One might very plausibly chart the novel as a parable of the Jungian process of individuation. Kneeshaw is the archetypal dark brother, the Shadow. Having confronted him, Olivero can travel on with the Green Child, who corresponds to the archetypal Anima, the soul-image, and with whom, descending into the pool, he undergoes symbolic baptism and is born again by ascending in the pool of the underworld, where he confronts the wise old men who in Jungian terms personify the spiritual principle.
Though it is hard to imagine that Read was aware of these resemblances between what happens in the Jungian dreams and what in his novel, the conceptions for the Shadow, the Anima and the Wise Old Men seem to be very helpful to examine the characters of Kneeshaw and the Green Child, who after all prove to be the counterparts of Olivero. The Shadow and the Anima are the archetypal contents in the unconscious which Jung calls "collective unconscious," and are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals and identical in all men. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited, "so that it is sheer objectivity, as wide as the world and open to all world." "It consists of pre-existed forms, the archetype, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic content." As for the Shadow concept, Jung gives us a concrete example of a man who looks into the mirror of the water and sees his own face that is always in the most hateful expression. In The Green Child, by the encounter with Kneeshaw Olivero is to see in him the shadow of himself which has controlled his personality for many years. Kneeshaw is the Shadow to Olivero symbolizing an evil instinct to be extinct, so that the meeting is the most unpleasant thing that should be avoided as possible. But if Olivero was able to see his own shadow and had the courage to bear knowing about it, then a small part of the problem would already be solved. Yet, on the contrary Olivero escaped from the instinctively evil boy and after thirty years, at last killed him by his own hands for the reason why "yet nothing had diminished his sense of the actuality and power of evil." It is true that the act of vandalism in Kneeshaw was to be blamed, but Olivero was not aware that Kneeshaw was a complemental existence to him, and after killing Kneeshaw he ceased to be a man of action but intellect. He was far from being flexible enough to accept evil as "a necessary agent of good, an irritant to stir the slothful soul." Olivero's only error has been to deny his shadow which led to the stelile achievement in Roncador. In destroying his own self, Olivero is self-condemned to perpetual alienation from the forces of life.

Before discussing the Anima concept, we must remember some distinguished features of the Green Child again. She is a green naiad who has came from the direction of the moors and returned to the source of a stream that turns to be a large grotto from which she strayed. "She had the same ageless innocent features which she had when she first
appeared. "Among her peculiarities were "an inability to go close to a fire, and a violent distaste for any form of animal flesh." There was no evidence that she possessed any ordinary human affection. "She liked the cold water of the mill-race, and without shame or hesitation would throw off her frock and float like a mermaid, almost invisible, in the watery element." If we speculate on the connection between the reversal of the stream and Olivero's meeting with her, we are left to assume that she herself has the power to reverse the laws of nature or that some mysterious power which controls her emanates from the world of below. But how do we dare to call such an elfin being as the Green Child the Anima? Again, according to the theory of Jung, "Anima means soul and should designate something very wonderful and immortal." It is an archetypal prototype of human unconscious and "is usually projected upon a figure of woman in the psychology of a man wherever emotions and affects are at work." The most important part that the Anima palys is to guide a man to the state of mind with more harmonious inward depth and bring a cosmos in all chaos, in all disorder. The Green Child takes Olivero through the Green People's world as a spiritualistic medium, and when his body became part of the crystal harmony, the body of Siloëen also is carried to the same trough. The Green Child is not merely a figure ruling over the world of Olivero's memories, but should be identified with "the carrier and embodiment of this omnipotent and ageless image, which corresponds to the deepest reality in a man." Though the Shadow is a moral problem and one of the dark and inferior aspects of the personality, the Anima is the solace for all the bitterness of life. In the story of the individuation of Olivero's personality, every advance has been due to those two characters of Kneeshaw and the Green Child, which are "the opposed terms of a dialectical progression" whose reconciliation is accomplished in an artistic work, The Green Child.

On the stone that was raised over his grave in the shadow of Kirkdale's fir-trees, Herbert Read is described as "Knight, Poet, Anarchist". The description would be true if by knight we mean a man imbued by the sense of glory, and by anarchist a man imbued by the sense of freedom. Both of the words, "knight" and "anarchist" relate partly his life filled up with a number of activities always based upon the society. However, it is also necessary to note the appropriateness of the centrality of "Poet".

- 127 -
For, in the case of Read the poetic sensibility continued through the whole lifetime as a significant core of his multitudinous activities, no matter how small the actual outputs of the works considered poetic. Like the centre of the mandala, his active imagination wielded an incalculable influence not only on the works of art and literature but even over his way of life. Read's life forms a circle rather than a progression, related to a centre rather than a goal and so it would have been equally valid to have begin with the criticism or the political writings and have ended with the poetry.

Towards the end of his life in The Contrary Experience, he noted sadly; "the two experiences—to live in action and to live in meditation—are forever incompatible," though he did combine them to a great extent successfully. Yet he had a consistent belief that it is the function of art and poetry to reconcile the contradictions inherent to our experiences: that artist should not suppress his instinctive synthetic tendencies, but try to express them in all their vividness. For Read, the father of art is a state of conflict, which means everything. He so carefully avoided all monolithic systems, all logical categories that it is sometimes impossible to abstract a schematic or linear pattern of reasoning. Perhaps he must be fully aware of the appearance of logical duality, but he had no fear of appearing to contradict himself, and thought it was possible, even natural to live a life of bewildering contradictions. For he was always listening to the true voice of feeling within himself and above all was impatient to remain as a passive onlooker. If we chart Read's life and achievements rather drastically, it would be possible to compare them to that restless image of a pendulum swinging from side to side while ever moving forward another unified level of reality. The wisdom to live for him is to establish a balanced standpoint in an essential mutability or to seek for the needle which comes to rest between reason and romanticism (a word which comprises instinct, intuition, imagination and fantasy). Such a state of mind can not be attained through an intellectual categorization or abstraction, but through the awaking mind of a creative artist. What characterizes Read's personality is immediacy and lability, or the capacity to change or grow without loss of his integrity and wholeness. John Keats, who discerned the quality in himself, gave it the name of Negative Capability."

Thus The Green Child reveals its ultimate significance as a parable
illustrating a universal phenomenon, which rests on the most profound distinctions between freedom and order, between reason and instinct, between essence and existence, universality and particularity. The point at issue is not the recognition or differentiation of these two aspects but the possibility of mediating between them. *The Green Child* is the visual embodiment of the nature of being through an organic form, the *mandala*. The evidently discontinuous triptych form of the plot and the complementary characterization about the hero and heroine as the Shadow and the Anima are appropriate to demonstrate the process of poet's individuation and the form of life.
Notes:

7) Loc. cit.
9) Ibid., p.150.
11) Treece, op. cit., p.81.
18) Ibid., p.174.
21) Ibid., p.12.
22) Loc. cit.
23) Loc. cit.
24) Ibid., p.11.
27) Ibid., p.193.
28) Read, op. cit., The Contrary Experience, p.43.
30) Read, op. cit., The Contrary Experience, p.43.
31) Ibid., p.55.
33) Ibid., p.44.
34) Loc. cit.
37) Ibid., p.43.
39) Loc. cit.
40) Ibid., p.33.
41) Ibid., p.38.
42) Ibid., p.44.
43) Ibid., p.39.
44) Jung. *op. cit.*. p.70.
47) *Loc. cit.*

(本稿は、昭和52年度、科学研究費補助金（一般研究B）による研究分担の成果の一部とする。)