

The Shadow in the Contemporary Fairy Tale

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The shadow wedges itself comfortably into the contemporary fairy tale. Taking on many forms within the traditional and contemporary fairy tale the shadow expresses itself as the doppelgänger, the amorphic presence, the reflection, the ghost, and a host of other incarnations. The shadow in the fairy tale is not only comprised of the overt shadow that is seen in the physical world of the fairy tale, but also the covert psychological shadow described by Carl Jung as an aspect of the unconscious mind and the intertextual shadow formed by the creation of the contemporary fairy tale. In the contemporary fairy tales Haroun and the Sea of Stories by Salman Rushdie, Bluebeard by Kurt Vonnegut, Mr. Fox by Helen Oyeyemi, "I Am Anjuhimko" by Hiromi Ito, "The White Cat" by Marjorie Sandor, and "I'm Here" by Ludmilla Petrushevskaya the shadow makes its presence known.

The shadow is itself a non-whole entity. In its most basic and literal form it cannot survive without its progenitor. However, in fairy tales the shadow can gain autonomy or become a representative of the psychological unconscious. For psychologist and Freudian disciple Carl Jung, the shadow, at its most basic level, represents the whole of the unconscious mind. Within the large blanket of the shadow Jung also identifies the female Anima and the male Animus as well as a large group of Archetypes produced by the collective unconscious. The shadow enshrouds all aspects of the unconscious and can be viewed as a combination of the personal shadow (one's own unconscious) and the collective shadow (a.k.a. the collective unconscious or the unconscious, produced by the whole of humanity and its universal and primordial desires and fears) (Franz 4).

The shadow is the unconscious, "the dark, unlive, repressed side of the ego complex" and one of Jung's archetypes of the collective unconscious (Franz 3). The shadow can take the form of ghosts, spirits, shadowy existences, hauntings, presences, animate shadows, doppelgängers, automatons and memories within fairy tales. With the appearance of the shadow there is opportunity for terror, the eerie, the unanny, and the macabre; however, there is also opportunity for humor. The simplest way to think of shadows in fairy tales is to divide them into three separate categories: 1) the overt, 2) the covert and 3) the intertextual. Freudian psychoanalytic critics "give central importance...to the distinction between the conscious and the unconscious mind. They associate the literary work's 'overt' content with the former, and the 'covert' content with the later" (Barry 105).

The overt shadow is simply a shadow that appears as shadow within the text (ex. a person's shadow). However, the overt shadow can also take on the form of other shadow-like entities such as: doppelgängers, demons, djinns, spirits, reflections, or ghosts. While the covert shadow can be read into the overt shadow (i.e. a doppelgänger can be interpreted to be expression of the psyche), the reverse is untrue. In short, the overt shadow cannot be read into the covert.

When speaking of overt shadows it is important to note texts that could possibly have influences on other texts that incorporate the presence of the shadow. In particular, there is the autonomous shadow. "The

Shadow" (1847) by Hans Christian Andersen is the most notable example, with J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan following in a close second. Both stories approach the topic of shadows severed from their lighter, or original, halves. In Salman Rushdie's more contemporary take on the severed and autonomous shadow in Haroun and the Sea of Stories, Rushdie incorporates Indian culture to create the character Mudra, the Shadow Warrior from the land of Chup, and the villain Kattam-Shud.

"[I]n the Land of Chup, a Shadow very often has a stronger personality than the Person, or Self, or Substance to whom or to which it is joined! So often the Shadow leads, and it is the Person or Self or Substance that follows. And of course there can be quarrels between the Shadow and the Substance or Self or Person; they can pull in opposite directions...but just as often there is a true partnership, and mutual respect." (Rushdie 132)

While Mudra is in harmony with his semi-autonomous shadow that can move separately from himself but stays attached, the villain Kattam-Shud has separated himself from his shadow, allowing his shadow to become completely autonomous. Furthermore, Kattam-Shud encourages other shadows to become completely autonomous.

"Khattam-Shud's black magic has had fearsome results...He has plunged so deeply into the Dark Art of sorcery that he has become Shadowy himself – changeable, dark, more like a Shadow than a person. And as he had become more Shadowy, so his Shadow has come to be more like a Person. And the point has come at which it's no longer possible to tell which is Kattam-Shud's Shadow and which his substantial Self ...he has separated himself from his Shadow." (Rushdie 133)

This struggle for power between the shadow and the progenitor, and the struggle for autonomy and individual life could be perceived as a covert struggle between the unconscious and the conscious mind, or a struggle between the id and the ego.

Moving on from the shadow represented as the shadow itself. We also see the blue-whiskered Water Genie, Iff, in Haroun and the Sea of Stories. Jungian scholar Marie-Louise Franz theorizes that, "The collective shadow is still personified in the religious system by belief in the devil or evil demons... as long as such collective demons get us, we must have a little bit of them in us; otherwise they would not get us, for then our psychic door would not be open to infection" (8). If this is taken to be true, then Haroun has opened himself up to the possibility of demons in his psychological torment, worry and inability to sleep and thus is able to meet Iff.

The covert shadow results purely from psychoanalysis and is a psychological, disembodied and interpretive shadow. Fairy tales are rife with Jung's archetypes and "mirror collective unconscious material" (Franz 137). This makes them, like dreams, prime targets for Jungian scholars and psychoanalytic critics. The covert shadow approaches the shadow in fairy tales as if it is elusive and seen only as embodiments of the psyche. Thus, "Everybody is everybody's shadow in fairy tales" (Franz 34). The villain in fairy tales, or the Vladimir Propp's false hero can be seen as the embodiments of the hero's psychic shadow and "[i]n fairy tales, where there

is no such thing as the shadow, there is the doubling of an archetypal figure, one half being the shadow of the other" (Franz 34). Essentially, because the shadow is both whole and part of what Freud would call the Id, the locus of primitive and repressed emotions, fears and desires, good or bad, there is possibility for immense complexity in the expression of the shadow.

In Marjorie Sandor's short story "The White Cat" the female cat is made to wait for the ever-questing hero. The white cat can be read as an expression of the hero's shadow or the shadow of the hero's human wife. For the wife the cat is a counterpart, a animalistic doppelgänger of sorts, but for the hero, if the cat is his shadow, then the female cat is an expression of his Anima (the female portion of his unconscious). Kurt Vonnegut's novel *Bluebeard* also addresses the Anima in the form of Circe Berman who comes into the novel for the sole purpose, seemingly, to torment Rabo Karabekian. Helen Oyeyemi's novel, *Mr. Fox*, on the other hand, addresses both the Anima and the Animus in its convoluted ambiguity.

The covert shadow can take on more amorphous forms of the psyche and in many postmodern fairy tales there is a focus on the shadows and hauntings produced by violence. Sociologist Avery F. Gordon suggests that "haunting is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life, especially when they are supposedly over and done with" (xvi).

In Vonnegut's *Bluebeard* this type of haunting is seen clearly in Karabekian's masculine war reminiscences. These haunting shadows of war appear in other non-fairy-tale postmodern texts as well such as, Donald Barthelme's "See the Moon?" which dwells on the shadow of the Korean War. In Hiromi Ito's story "I Am Anjuhimeko" this focus on violence is expressed as sexual violence instead of war. In that same store, a Donkeyskin tale, the rape committed by her father haunts the protagonist, Anjuhimeko, throughout the story. Gordon's "abusive systems of power" are seen in these fairy tales as products of a violent patriarchal society (war, rape, incestuous abuse by a father).

In these stories, the protagonists are continually haunted by an event that is passed. Deconstructionist Jacques Derrida says of this looming presence that lingers on:

"One touches there on what one does not touch, one feels there where one does not feel, one even suffers there where suffering does not take place, when at least it does not take place where one suffers (which is also, let us not forget, what is said about phantom limbs, that phenomenon marked with an X for any phenomenology of perception)."

In essence, the haunting is a pained phantom limb. However, this haunting does not go on forever as Gordon also states that, "haunting, unlike trauma, is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done" (Gordon xvi). The overcoming of these shadowed hauntings for Vonnegut's protagonist Karabekian comes in the form of his painting entitled *Now It's the Women's Turn*. For Anjuhimeko, she reaches Joseph Campbell's Hero's Journey monomyth stage of apotheosis (recognizing the divine within herself and coming to terms with her inner struggles) after meeting with the mountain witch, Yamanba, and learning the leech child's language.

Though the overt and the covert seem somewhat clear cut, there are stories that toe the line between overt and covert. One of these is "I'm Here", a Baba Yaga or

Ivan Tsarevich story by Ludmilla Petrushevskaya, which focuses on the real or imagined ghost of Baba Anya who confronts and tests the heroine Olga who has come back to her old place of residence seeking answers to her psychological dilemmas. This ambiguity between what is real and unreal is only seen in the postmodern fairy tales as they confront the discourse of the traditional tales.

The intertextual shadow in these tales is produced by a cascading or genealogical effect: where previous incarnations of a fairy tale are incorporated into new versions. Most new material contains a familiarity or resemblance to the "original" progenitor (whether it seeks to negate what came before or to reinforce), but with a few outliers that are almost completely removed from the family tree and possibly unrecognizable as being related to a specific fairy tale despite whether the reader is familiar with any texts-gone-before. This intertextual shadow can be interpreted as the antecedent texts' shadowy presence within the contemporary, or new, text. Contemporary authors of literary fairy tales (Kunstmärchen) often create an implied lineage within their texts and the implied reader is expected to be familiar with most, if not all, antecedent texts. In this way the older text overshadows the younger text.

In these contemporary fairy tale texts, and in others, the shadow is present in three different ways. It is present as the overt shadow, which takes the shape of the shadow, the doppelgänger and the reflection, the covert shadow, which is discovered within the text through psychoanalysis, and the intertextual shadow, which is the progenitor texts' influence upon the contemporary text. These three types of shadows are not mutually exclusive and can inhabit the same tale together quite amicably. Though we often think of the shadow as the opposite of light, and thus bad as the opposite of good, the shadows in fairy tales represent the personal and collective unconscious whether good or ill.

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