

Collective Unconscious in Children's Literature: A Jungian Approach

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Abstract:

This study investigates the role of the collective unconscious in Arabic children's literature from a Jungian perspective. It explores how archetypes such as the Hero, the Shadow, the Mother, and the Wise Old Man appear in symbolic narratives addressed to children. These archetypes function beyond surface meaning, activating emotional and psychological processes in the child's inner world. Through selected Arabic tales, the research analyzes how stories serve as symbolic journeys of transformation and self-integration. The child interacts with these patterns unconsciously, finding in them images for fear, courage, guidance, and emotional growth. The study highlights the narrative's role as a mirror of collective memory, not merely as a didactic tool. Ultimately, it calls for deeper critical attention to the symbolic and psychological functions of children's literature in shaping identity and imagination

Keywords: Collective Unconscious ; Children's Literature ; Carl Jung ; Archetypes, Psychoanalysis ;Symbolism ;Child Imagination, Symbolic Journey ;Narrative Structure ; Psychological Representations.

Jel Classification Codes: XN1, XN2.

1. INTRODUCTION

Children's literature is considered one of the most significant mediums through which early perceptions of the world are shaped. It firmly establishes in the consciousness of the young patterns of thought, imagination, and interaction with the self and the other. While this literature is often viewed as both didactic and imaginative discourse, it is not devoid of deeper effects that infiltrate the child's psyche through images, symbols, and stories. From this perspective, it becomes possible to approach children's literature through the lens of psychoanalysis not only from the traditional Freudian viewpoint based on desires and repression, but also through broader theories such as those developed by Carl Gustav Jung, particularly his fundamental concept of the collective unconscious.

The collective unconscious, according to Jung, is a reservoir of symbols and archetypal images shared by all humans, regardless of cultural or linguistic backgrounds, as it is rooted in the collective human experience throughout history. While children receive these archetypal images in their modern forms through tales, proverbs, and myths, children's literature as a mirror of collective consciousness and a stage for symbolic imagination can serve as the ideal vehicle for these unconscious legacies that shape the individual from childhood.

This study aims to explore children's literature from a Jungian perspective by tracing manifestations of the collective unconscious in narrative texts directed at children. The research will be divided into three main sections: the first is theoretical, addressing Jungian concepts related to the collective unconscious and their connection to literature; the second and third are applied, focusing on identifying archetypes and symbolic images in both Arabic and global children's tales, respectively, and exploring their psychological and aesthetic impact on the young reader.

1. Children's Literature and the Concept of the Collective Unconscious in Light of Analytical Psychology

The concept of the collective unconscious is one of the most prominent features distinguishing Carl Gustav Jung's theory from Freudian psychoanalysis. This concept refers to a psychological dimension shared by all human beings, one that goes beyond the individual experience to encompass accumulated, transgenerational archetypal knowledge. According to Jung, the collective unconscious contains what he called archetypes primordial, universal images that symbolize fundamental human experiences such as the Mother, the Shadow, the Hero, the Wise Old Man, among others. These archetypes appear symbolically in dreams, myths, rituals, and the arts.

This vision has opened new avenues for rethinking literature not merely as a purely individual expression of the author's experience, but as a domain in which the symbolic memory of the human species is reactivated. Thus, it becomes possible to approach literary texts including children's texts not only from a personal or social psychological perspective, but through their symbolic structure, which embeds and reproduces the collective unconscious. In this sense, the characters and events of stories become recurring images that represent shared universal emotions

and experiences, nourishing the child's need for symbolic belonging to something deeper than their immediate family or school environment namely, the collective memory of humanity.

In this context, the presence of symbolic storytelling in children's literature serves as an indicator of the active role the collective unconscious plays in shaping a child's imagination. Unconsciously, the child identifies with a hero who confronts "the Shadow," seeks a "treasure" under the guidance of "the Wise Old Man," or escapes from "the dark forest" images that recur across cultures and enrich the child's emotional and psychological reservoir. These correspondences between folktales, myths, and children's literature pave the way for a Jungian symbolic reading in which each story is seen as a deep psychological pattern continuously reproducing itself across generations. (Jung, 1968, p. 42)

Through his concept of the collective unconscious, Carl Gustav Jung sought to liberate the notion of the unconscious from the confines of Freudian individuality, granting it a universal dimension that transcends personal experience and connects to a shared symbolic human heritage. This collective unconscious nourished by symbols, myths, and archetypal patterns is unconsciously reproduced in children's literature, whether through narrative structure, character development, or symbolic depth.

The archetypes of the Hero, Great Mother, Shadow, and Wise Old Man represent central axes within the deep structure of children's literature. Though often cloaked in simple stories or fantastical figures, these archetypes exert a profound psychological and symbolic influence on the young reader. For instance, in *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, we do not merely follow a child traveling across planets; rather, we witness a symbolic inner journey through the layers of the human psyche, a living example of what Jung calls "the ego's journey toward individuation."

Literary-psychological studies have indicated that children are instinctively drawn to these archetypal figures without conscious awareness, as they are embedded within the structure of inherited collective awareness. This makes literature aimed at children a fertile ground for activating these deep-seated mental images. For example, the figure of the wizard or wise teacher frequently appears as an embodiment of the Wise Old Man archetype, guiding the young protagonist on their journey of discovery, as seen in the characters of Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings* or Dumbledore in *Harry Potter*.

Interestingly, the collective unconscious manifests not only through characters but also through recurring symbols in children's literature such as the mirror, cave, path, or key which function as symbols of psychological transition or transformation. These motifs become pathways through which the child comes to understand both the self and the other, as well as the mysteries of life. These symbols are not merely educational but are ritualistic in the Jungian sense; they possess a transformative function, helping the child transition from one psychic stage to another through a veiled symbolic journey.

Scholar John Pearson observes that "children's literature serves as a grand mirror for archetypal psychic imagery and offers the young reader a remarkable opportunity for reconciliation with their collective unconscious" (Pearson, 1991, p. 38). Thus, children's literature, through its symbols and archetypal figures, does not belong merely to the realm of surface-level innocence is

a living representation of the deep currents of the collective unconscious, making it a rich mine for psychological study and symbolic analysis through a Jungian lens.

Jung developed the concept of the collective unconscious to surpass the personal and the individual, positing a shared psychological foundation among all humans, embodied in primordial symbolic patterns known as archetypes. The significance of this concept lies in its reference not to past personal experiences, but to a collective psychological reservoir inherited by humans since ancient times. Consequently, even when literary expression appears personal, it remains infused with unconscious symbols originating from this hidden collective field.

In this context, literature especially children's literature functions as an active vessel for the emergence of these shared symbols. Folktales, myths, and popular narratives reproduce these archetypes and present them to children through representational forms that carry profound psychological and educational significance, going beyond pleasure to reshape the unconscious structure of the young recipient. The villain in folktales, for instance, embodies the Shadow, a Jungian archetype representing the repressed or disavowed parts of the self, allowing the child to form awareness by confronting and transcending it.

Marie-Louise von Franz, one of Jung's most prominent disciples, argues that stories told to children are not merely forms of entertainment; they are symbolic reconstructions that contribute to building the child's psyche on a deeper level (Franz, 1996, p. 18). Likewise, scholar Steven Walker contends that the collective unconscious provides the infrastructure through which most symbols in children's literature operate, with fairy tales and myths being the most prominent examples (Walker, 1993, p. 45).

These symbols appear not only in stories, but also in imagery, rhythm, repetition, and structural patterns of texts, evoking in the child a simultaneous sense of familiarity and mystery stemming from an internal response to inherited images, even if the child is not consciously aware of them. Children's literature, therefore, becomes a space where the collective unconscious is not simply a theoretical abstraction, but a dynamic force alive within the narrative and symbolic fabric of the text.

In the following section, we will explore these theoretical concepts through an analytical approach to a well-known tale, applying Jungian concepts to uncover the archetypes embedded within its deep structure.

When analyzing the collective unconscious in children's literature, one must consider the child's unique mode of reception. Unlike adults, children do not receive literary texts through rational comprehension alone; they engage with them through the senses, imagination, and symbols deeply rooted in the psyche what Jung refers to as archetypes. Thus, literary reception in children is tied to a symbolic structure anchored in the collective unconscious.

Childhood literature theorists such as Boris Zakhoder and Bruno Bettelheim have emphasized that children do not engage with symbols through intellectual understanding, but rather through identification. The image of the wolf, for instance, signifies imminent danger not because the child has learned this logically, but because it is culturally embedded in the child's unconscious through stories, songs, and myths. Consequently, the repeated symbols in children's literature are not literary coincidences but manifestations of a shared unconscious that transcends geography and language.

Studies in analytical psychology (Jung, Man and His Symbols, 1964, p. 57) confirm that core symbolic models such as the Mother, Shadow, Moon, Tree, Cave, and Dragon are recurring psychological constants evident in children's drawings, dreams, and narrative responses. When a text presents a figure like the Wise Old Man or Savior, the child does not interpret this as merely a fictional character, but instinctively experiences it as a symbol of protection, belonging, and salvation. Thus, the child does not "interpret" the tale, but rather embodies it, forming an emotional relationship with the symbol.

Here, Reception Theory intersects with the Jungian approach by emphasizing the role of the child-reader as an active co-creator of meaning. Hans (Jauss, 1982, p. 29) argues that literary reception does not occur in a vacuum, but within a "horizon of expectation" shaped socially, psychologically, and culturally. Accordingly, it becomes crucial to understand recurring symbols in children's literature as the product of an interactive process between the structures of the collective unconscious and the child's perceptual horizon.

Therefore, it can be argued that literary texts lacking in symbolic depth fail to leave a lasting aesthetic impact on the child. In contrast, texts that subconsciously incorporate Jungian symbols often without the author's conscious intention retain narrative power and produce long-term psychological and symbolic effects in the child's memory and development.

2. Analyzing Symbols of the Collective Unconscious in Selected Arabic Children's Stories

In Arabic narratives intended for children, recurring images and symbols are often rooted deeply in the collective unconscious. These symbols reflect complex internal conflicts as well as embedded social and cultural values. A close reading of several Arabic tales reveals the prominent presence of archetypal patterns that are reimagined in ways appropriate to a child's level of awareness and understanding.

Take, for instance, the Hero archetype, which frequently appears in popular adventure tales such as the stories of Sinbad the Sailor or Aladdin. In these tales, the hero is not merely a brave individual but a representation of deeper psychological growth and transformation. The journey undertaken across seas or through mysterious cities symbolizes an inner voyage through the unknown, a confrontation with fear and shadow, and a quest for wisdom and psychological wholeness.

The Shadow archetype also emerges in various forms, such as enemies or mysterious creatures confronting the hero. These figures represent the darker aspects of the self that must be confronted and integrated for growth to occur. In stories like Sinbad, the monsters and natural or magical challenges embody the Shadow, which is not necessarily purely evil but often serves as a trial toward maturity.

The Great Mother or Protective Caregiver also appears frequently in Arabic stories. However, she is not portrayed merely as nurturing and affectionate. She symbolizes safety, stability, and connection to one's origins a collective unconscious image of shelter and emotional security. Her

presence in the text represents the psychological need for grounding and protection, functioning as the stable point from which the journey toward self-development begins.

Nature-related symbols such as mountains, deserts, and forests occupy central roles in these tales and serve multiple symbolic functions. The desert, for instance, is not just a physical backdrop but a symbolic space of the unknown, where the hero is tested and must make pivotal choices. The mountain may represent spiritual ascent, while the forest becomes a realm of concealment, transformation, or psychological liminality.

Although these symbols may seem primitive or simplistic on the surface, they carry profound psychological resonance aligned with archetypal structures of the collective unconscious. They speak to the child not through literal interpretation, but through the depth of collective memory, far removed from didactic or overtly educational modes of meaning.

Continuing with the analysis of archetypal imagery in Arabic children's literature, the figure of the Hero remains especially significant. This figure goes beyond a conventional narrative role and symbolizes the evolving self, shaped through trials and transformation. The hero leaves a familiar world to enter an unfamiliar one, confronting both internal and external struggles that mirror the psychological development of the child. This journey is not just an adventure it is a metaphor for psychological growth, for encountering the Shadow, and for overcoming personal and social challenges, culminating in the emergence of a renewed, integrated self.

In many stories, the Shadow appears in the form of an enemy, a beast, or even natural forces resisting the hero. These adversarial elements do not merely represent external evil, but rather internal fears, anxieties, and repressed aspects of the self. Through this confrontation, the child symbolically experiences the transcendence of inner limitations an essential psychological lesson in identity formation.

The Mother or Protective Figure is also more than a gentle, loving presence. She represents the Archetype of Stability, the connection to roots and origin. This figure embodies a deep-seated need for psychological security and inner peace. Her presence offers the child comfort and at the same time anchors the balance between departure and return, adventure and containment.

Natural environments in stories carry rich symbolic meaning. Barren deserts or dense forests are not merely geographical spaces but psychological landscapes representing inner disorientation or separation from the self. The desert signifies emptiness, solitude, and spiritual trial; the forest symbolizes mystery and the unknown that the hero must overcome. These settings heighten the intensity of the psychological journey and transform the story into a symbolic narrative more than a surface-level tale.

One can argue that Arabic children's stories instinctively employ these archetypal symbols to nourish the child's inner structure. Even without conscious awareness on the part of the child or reader, these images work toward building a subconscious understanding of the world and the self, providing tools for internalizing both internal and external challenges.

Many Arabic stories for children also contain the presence of Wise Man or Teacher figures, who represent another core archetype in the collective unconscious. These characters are not merely advisors or informants they symbolize inner knowledge and wisdom that the hero needs during their journey. The presence of the Wise Old Man represents the integrated self that helps the child maintain psychological balance and encourages reflection and introspection.

In many tales, the wise figure appears at critical moments, offering the hero symbolic tools or guidance. He thus embodies what Jung refers to as the Higher Self or the psychic center of balance. This figure reflects the child's need for an internal psychological guide someone who offers reassurance and aids in navigating complex emotional situations.

Additionally, material symbols such as the key, mirror, and bridge in these texts carry deep psychological meanings. The key, for instance, is not merely an object for unlocking doors; it symbolizes access to hidden knowledge or the opening of new dimensions of consciousness. The mirror reflects the self and functions as a symbol for self-awareness and recognition. The bridge represents the transition from one psychological or emotional state to another whether internal, social, or spiritual.

The recurrence of these symbols in Arabic tales is not just narrative repetition it is an implicit affirmation of the psychological transformations children undergo. These symbols nourish the collective unconscious and prepare children for the existential changes they experience within, fostering their awareness of life's complexity.

Thus, it can be concluded that Arabic stories directed at children contain within them a fabric of archetypes and symbolic imagery that quietly contribute to the psychological and social formation of the child. These symbols serve as conduits between conscious experience and unconscious structures, offering emotional guidance, cultural meaning, and psychological depth through the very stories that entertain and inspire young readers.

These symbols do not lose their significance over time; rather, they remain relevant and impactful due to their psychological depth and rootedness in the collective unconscious. Analytical studies of Arabic children's literature confirm that archetypal symbols emerge in texts in indirect ways, yet they carry a profound psychological influence on the young reader. They do not merely offer entertaining narratives but instead create symbolic spaces in which the child can explore the self and psychological identity through a metaphorical journey that reflects inner conflicts and psychological development.

This influence is manifested in how these stories employ symbolic elements such as the hero, shadow, wise old man, mother, and symbolic landscapes like deserts, mountains, and forests. These components combine to form narrative structures that resonate with the child's inner world, activating the collective unconscious in ways that are appropriate to their level of awareness and stage of development.

Moreover, these symbols help empower the child to confront internal and external fears and offer archetypal models that assist in adapting to reality and developing the self. Despite their apparent simplicity, these stories demonstrate a remarkable ability to connect with the deep roots of human collective memory, making them powerful pedagogical and psychological tools.

From this perspective, a deeper understanding of archetypal symbolism in Arabic children's literature not only enriches critical literary reading but also contributes to the development of educational and literary approaches that consider the symbolic psychological dimension. Such approaches can enhance the potential of texts to cultivate children's awareness and support their psychological growth and identity formation.

Thus, the relationship between the collective unconscious and children's literature in the Arabic tradition becomes more fully illuminated. This study affirms the importance of continued exploration and analysis of these symbols in order to further develop and enrich children's literature through an awareness of its profound psychological dimensions.

3. A Symbolic Study of the Collective Unconscious in Selected Contemporary Arabic Children's Literature

In contemporary Arabic children's literature, a distinctive engagement with the symbols of the collective unconscious is clearly observable. The literature continues to draw upon archetypal patterns, yet it reshapes and reinvests them in response to the demands of modern life and evolving cultural contexts. These modern texts do not merely transmit traditional symbols; they actively employ them to address new psychological and social issues, while retaining their symbolic depth that resonates with the child's collective unconscious.

For instance, in several recent stories, the hero is no longer depicted as a traditional warrior or supernatural adventurer, but rather as an ordinary child facing everyday challenges—fear of school, loss of a loved one, or struggles with self-identity. This shift reflects a deeper understanding of child development and brings archetypal symbolism closer to the child's lived experience.

The shadow, which was typically portrayed in traditional tales as a villain or external threat, is now often represented as inner fears or complex emotions such as grief and anxiety. This transformation allows children to engage with their internal world in ways that are psychologically safe and realistic.

Likewise, the figure of the wise old man or mentor is sometimes reimaged as a friend, teacher, or even a symbolically wise animal. This reflects the diversification of learning and guidance sources in the modern child's environment, while still preserving the archetype's function as a symbol of inner balance and awareness.

Environmental symbols have also evolved; traditional settings such as forests or deserts—once spaces of mystery and trial—are increasingly replaced by schools, cities, and open public spaces. These contemporary environments test the child's psychological and social capacities, aligning more closely with their real-world surroundings.

In this way, contemporary Arabic children's literature reflects a continuity of collective unconscious symbolism while renewing its modes of expression. This allows children to encounter themselves within stories that resonate symbolically with their psychological and social realities, offering a meaningful bridge between archetypal imagery and the demands of modern childhood.

Contemporary texts demonstrate remarkable flexibility in reshaping archetypal symbols to align with shifting social and cultural landscapes. The hero figure, for example, has become more complex and realistic no longer limited to grand feats or fantastical adventures, but depicted undergoing inner psychological processes such as doubt, fear, and the search for identity. This change indicates a growing awareness of the child's internal world and emotional needs.

In many modern stories, the shadow is not merely a source of danger or evil but is portrayed as an integral part of the self, requiring recognition and integration. This signals a new psychological

orientation one that encourages children to confront, rather than suppress, their fears and vulnerabilities.

The mentor or guide figure, once portrayed as distant and authoritative, now often appears as someone familiar to the child whether a friend, a teacher, or a symbolic animal. This softens the traditional hierarchical image and makes wisdom more accessible and relatable, reflecting contemporary models of social interaction and learning.

Symbolic environments have undergone significant transformation as well. Expansive urban landscapes, schools, and homes are now depicted as spaces that can hold symbolic challenges such as alienation, loneliness, or social integration, replacing traditional wilderness metaphors like deserts and forests. These new spaces reflect the psychological landscape of the modern child and root the symbolic experience in more immediate and recognizable settings.

From this vantage point, contemporary children's literature can be seen as an ongoing renewal of archetypal forms. It preserves the link with the collective unconscious while reconfiguring its manifestations to address the child of today, aiding them in self-understanding and world comprehension in a way that is responsive to contemporary challenges.

When symbols of the collective unconscious penetrate the child's awareness through story, they do not remain confined to abstract interpretation; rather, they generate enduring mental images of the world. The child does not perceive these as "symbols" per se, but as narrative givens that shape their perception of reality. When such symbols recur—the dragon, the cave, the wise man, the forest, the journey, the locked door, the light—they construct a cognitive-emotional framework through which the child comes to understand the existential and epistemological dimensions of life.

What is most striking is that these symbols do not explicitly teach meaning; instead, they orient perception toward specific interpretive and emotional patterns. For example, when the forest is associated in stories with being lost, fear, and testing, the child does not merely learn that forests are dangerous but internalizes a deeper concept: that the unknown calls for caution, that survival requires courage and assistance often symbolized by the archetype of the "magical helper."

These symbolic representations do more than shape an understanding of external reality they foster metaphorical cognition. When the child later encounters real-life experiences of being "lost" or "afraid" or facing a "trial," they may often unconsciously evoke the symbolic image of the forest and the way out, mapping the new experience onto the embedded archetypal narrative. In this way, symbols of the collective unconscious function as interpretive and adaptive mechanisms that make sense of what is otherwise confusing or overwhelming.

Emotionally, these symbols nurture imagination and evoke wonder and a longing for discovery. The symbol of the locked box, for instance, sparks persistent curiosity about what is hidden—life becomes, in the child's imagination, a series of closed boxes waiting to be opened. This emotionally charged curiosity is a cornerstone of cognitive and emotional development, linking symbolic storytelling with the expansion of the child's inner and outer world

4. The Dual Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious in Arabic Children's Literature: A Psycho-symbolic Reading

Some symbols such as the shadow figure, the mirror, or the mysterious voice plant within the child an early awareness of the “Other” and the “inner self,” training them in subtle ways to confront themselves. These symbols do not merely convey meaning; rather, they open spaces for psychological reflection and self-formation, generating deep emotional resonances tied to fear, hope, responsibility, and existential questioning.

Thus, the archetypes of the collective unconscious do not merely embellish the narrative or serve the plot. They actively participate in constructing the human within the child, instigating silent internal transformations that enable the child to comprehend life even before they can name it.

The duality of the Superego and the Shadow manifests in children’s stories as an internal moral-ethical conflict. This tension often reflects the desire to break free from social norms on one hand, and the impulse to conform on the other. In tales such as the Arabic version of “Little Red Riding Hood” or “Samir and the Bird,” we observe deceptive figures that embody the shadow often in the form of sly creatures or tempters contrasted with guiding figures (a grandmother, a mother, or an inner voice) that represent the Superego, symbolizing wisdom and restraint.

In more recent stories, the shadow is portrayed with greater complexity. No longer merely the embodiment of evil, it is framed as an experiential necessity that contributes to the protagonist’s maturation. For example, a mischievous child who lies or steals is not immediately condemned, but instead undergoes a series of consequences that awaken self-awareness. Here, the shadow serves not as an external enemy, but as a catalyst for internal growth.

Importantly, the Superego is not always represented by external authority. It often emerges progressively through the narrative, manifesting as guilt, introspection, or remorse evidence of the child’s growing ethical consciousness. This internalized moral compass suggests that the Superego can be self-generated through experience rather than merely imposed from outside.

This dual structure teaches the child indirectly that within them reside opposing forces: one inclined toward selfishness, evasion, and impulse (the Shadow), and another oriented toward self-control, truthfulness, and empathy (the Superego). Such stories thus reflect a deep inner movement in tune with the collective unconscious, laying the foundation for a prototypical ethical structure reproduced across generations.

In light of this, the study of collective unconscious symbolism in Arabic children’s literature necessitates a deeper deconstruction of narrative structure. The archetypes should not be viewed as decorative motifs but as structural elements that shape the psychological development of the child-reader. Despite their apparent simplicity, these texts contain intricate narrative frameworks embedded with collective symbols, guiding the child often unconsciously toward psychological adaptation to existential and social change.

Consider the recurring archetype of the wise old man, frequently appearing as a crisis-time savior or bearer of wisdom. In the story “Nader’s Journey to the Mountain,” an old mysterious man gives Nader a “password” to open a secret cave. This is not merely a narrative solution but a symbolic gesture representing inherited wisdom. The old man functions as an inner guide, reconciling the young protagonist with the unknown.

Similarly, the shadow archetype embodying what must be faced is represented in dragons, monsters, or strange beings. In the illustrated story *The Monster in the Closet*, the child fears a

lurking creature at night. Eventually, he chooses to confront it, only to discover it is a projection of his own fears. This transformation marks a psychical turning point, mirroring stages of Jung's analytic model of individuation.

On the spatial level, the forest as in Zina in the Black Forest is not merely an external setting, but an unconscious metaphor for chaos, uncertainty, and trial. The child undergoes a non-literal psychological struggle within the forest and emerges more resilient. The forest here becomes a necessary ordeal symbolizing the self's passage from innocence to awareness.

Analyzing these archetypes is not about imposing predetermined meanings on texts, but about uncovering the mechanisms through which children's literature intersects with the psychic structure of the Arab collective. Cultural symbols such as the orphan, the homeland, locked doors, sacred water, or the number three recur across illustrated tales, children's theatre, and even school chants suggesting that the Arab child is raised not only through overt instruction but through symbolic immersion in a shared unconscious tradition.

We conclude this axis by emphasizing that the Jungian approach does not seek to overinterpret the texts or load them with unintended meanings. Rather, it aims to liberate their depth from rigid pedagogical molds, affirming that Arabic children's literature is no less profound than adult literature. It is deeply rooted in unconscious symbolic structures, making it fertile ground for collective psychoanalytic interpretation.

The true significance of collective unconscious symbols does not lie in their repetition or visibility, but in their long-term psychological impact on the young recipient. Symbols deeply embedded in cultural memory the mother, the hero, the shadow, the guardian, the totemic animal, the cave, the mountain, the tree transcend textual signs to become channels through which the child constructs their worldview, identity, imagination, and value system.

When the shadow appears in the form of a wicked wizard or a terrifying creature, it does not only represent external evil. It also allows the child to engage in symbolic exercises of confronting fear, embracing the unknown, and discovering their darker dimensions. In this way, the shadow activates implicit cathartic mechanisms akin to Jung's concept of the individuation journey a path of self-integration and psychological wholeness

Maternal symbols such as the nest, the lap, the garden, or the wise grandmother do more than instill a sense of security; they are embedded within the child's unconscious as patterns of comfort, care, and cosmic embrace. Over time, these become hidden points of return, silently evoked whenever the world grows too heavy or hostile.

Conversely, heroic symbols such as the journeying hero or the rescuer help structure the idea of self-agency in the child. They affirm the possibility of transition from weakness to strength, or from ignorance to understanding. As these symbolic figures recur in stories through varying forms, they give rise to what may be described as a deep semantic field an internal symbolic universe through which the child constructs meaning and interprets experience.

Thus, the child's imagination is not a random or chaotic space. Rather, it develops as a structured symbolic fabric, interwoven with culture, experience, and myth. Within this symbolic order, collective images grow silently but act as powerful undercurrents guiding behavior and thought.

The story, therefore, is not merely an educational tool it is a profound symbolic practice, simultaneously a mirror and a catalyst.

5. CONCLUSION

Tracing the representations of the collective unconscious in Arabic children's literature reveals an implicit symbolic depth through which these narratives reproduce deeply embedded cultural matrices within the Arab societal mind. While such stories may appear educational and didactic on the surface, their narrative structures and symbolic systems convey enduring mental archetypes: good and evil, forest and city, animal and human, father and authority, mother and protection. These are not merely textual elements but formative structures of Arab collective consciousness, continually reconfigured and reinforced in the minds of younger generations.

It has become evident, through reflective and psychoanalytic analysis, that these narratives do not simply transmit values. Instead, they operate on more profound cognitive levels instilling mental images of self and other, order and chaos, fear and salvation. This underscores the idea that children's literature in the Arab context goes far beyond entertainment or instruction: it becomes a channel for the symbolic transmission of the collective unconscious.

Hence, a pedagogical and critical awareness of these hidden layers is vital, both in the production and analysis of children's literature. Without such awareness, these stories risk unwittingly reinforcing traditional symbolic structures, particularly those that sustain dependency, duality, or cultural closure.

Recommendations:

- Encourage authors and publishers to create stories that engage with the symbolic unconscious critically, rather than merely reiterating it.
- Promote analytical approaches grounded in collective psychology and cultural analysis in the study of children's literature.
- Integrate this type of research into teacher training and child psychology curricula, to deepen understanding of the psychological impact of narrative on children.
- Guide reading activities in schools toward questions of meaning and symbolic interpretation, rather than limiting them to rote comprehension or moral extraction.

Through such a critical-symbolic framework, children's stories can be transformed from conventional pedagogical tools into intellectual and imaginative spaces. These spaces can help reshape the child's relationship with the world and liberate them from unconscious cultural legacies passed down from generation to generation.

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