

Untravelling The Complexities of Marriage: Fantasy and Reality in Olga Grushin's the Charmed Wife

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ABSTRACT

Literature is the expression of life in words of truth and beauty. It is an art form that can include works in various non-fiction genres such as biographies, diaries, memoirs, letters and essays. Diasporic literature often delves into the complexities of identity formation in a new cultural context. Fantasy literature is set in an imaginary world that often but not always includes real-world places, events and characters. The fantasy reveals the difference between reality and imagination. Olga Grushin is a Russian-American novelist born in Moscow to the family of Boris Grushin a prominent Soviet sociologist. The Charmed Wife explores feminism, love, family along self-identification. Cinderella is the protagonist of the tale. She is referred to as Jane in the fantasy tale and experiences challenges in her life. The writer addresses the reader and highlights the difference between imagination and reality in her writing. It portrays the pain of the woman particularly after her marriage. The main concept that you can learn from this story is that living in an imaginary world will not make your life smoother. This paper focuses on Jane's pain and suffering of the women character who has decided to save their own life.

Keywords: Literature, Diaspora, Fantasy, Marriage, Pain, Suffering.

Literature is an artistic genre that includes creative artistic and creative writing that are defined by their exquisite style or emotional strength. It gives life greater significance and understanding while also bringing justice and sanity again to a crazy and unequal world. It is a group of artistic creations whether they are spoken, written or visual that use creative language to precisely convey thoughts, ideas and experiences of the human condition. It impacts us and helps us comprehend all facets of life. Learning literature is looking at the mirror of life where man's experiences innermost feelings and thoughts are reflected. Literature is a piece of art and a window into a concept and a reflection of human reality. Literature is a method of recording preserving, transmitting knowledge and entertainment. It can also a social, psychological and spiritual or political role. It allows a person to step back in time and learn about life on Earth from their ancestors. It is the expression of life in words of truth and their beauty. It records of man's spirit of his thoughts, emotions and aspirations.

Diasporic literature often delves into the complexities of identity formation in a new cultural context. The diasporic author explores how individuals reconcile their heritage with their present reality grappling with

questions of belonging and alienation. It highlights the fusion of cultures, languages and traditions as individuals navigate between their native and adopted cultures. This hybridity can manifest in language using storytelling techniques and themes within the literature. It depicts the struggles of displacement, the loss of homeland and the challenges of setting in a new country. They explore the emotional and psychological impact of leaving one's roots behind. These works often transcend national boundaries connecting with audiences globally by addressing universal themes such as human rights, social justice and the immigrant experience.

Fantasy literature is a genre of fiction that involves the creation of imaginary world, characters and events that are beyond the scope of reality. It often features magical or supernatural elements such as spells, enchantments and mythical creatures like dragons, unicorns and elves. It can be further subdivided into subgenres such as epic fantasy, urban fantasy and high fantasy. Epic fantasy often features large-scale conflicts and complex world-building. Urban fantasy is set in a contemporary urban environment and often features supernatural elements blending into everyday life. High fantasy is characterized by its focus on mythical and magical elements. Some notable fantasy authors include J.R.R. Tolkien, George R.R. Martin, Ursula K. Le Guin and Neli Gaiman. The theme of fantasy literature often explores the human experience through imaginative storytelling techniques such as mythical creatures, magical powers, alternate worlds, good versus evil or light versus darkness. Ultimately fantasy literature offers readers a chance to escape into a world of wonder and imagination.

Olga Grushin is a Russian-American novelist. She is born in Moscow in the family of renowned Soviet sociologist Boris Grushin. But she spent most of her early years in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Before getting a scholarship to Emory University in 1989, she attended Moscow State University and the Pushkin Museum of the Fine Arts for her education. In 1993, she received her summa cum laude degree from Emory. She kept her Russian citizenship even after becoming a naturalized US citizen in 2002, She worked as a research analyst at a law company in Washington, DC. She served as an interpreter for former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and also worked as a cocktail server at a jazz club. Grushin currently holds the position of editor at Harvard University's Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection. Her first novel *The Dream Life of Sukhanov* was selected by the Washington Post as one of the Top Ten Books of 2006. The notable works of Olga Grushin are *The Dream Life of Sukhanov*, *The Line*, *Forty Rooms* and *The Charmed Wife*.

This fantasy tale navigates themes such as disillusionment, self-discovery, marriage, love, family, friends, feminism, magic women challenge and the power of rewriting one's own story. Grushin blends fantasy with contemporary issues offering a thought-provoking and enchanting narrative. Cinderella (Jane) just tied the knot with her ideal husband. She felt the same tough situation as the law of fairy tales. This tale creates a combination of both fantasy and reality of the life of Cinderella. This tale delves into profound insights into the meaning of life and marriage.

This Fantasy tale analyzes the Cinderella story showing, the innocent girl who suffered in her childhood days and led her life as a maid but it ends at the age of thirteen. Cinderella believes that her life has become normal with joy and wealth in the earlier stage of her marriage with the prince. Finally, she comes to know the truth that her husband Prince Roland has an affair with another girl Esmeralda. "Esmeralda, you may

stop looking for that thumbtack now, my wife is here.” (CW 57). It evokes feelings of betrayal, hurt and a profound sense of mistrust of marriage. Cinderella goes to the forest bravely to find a witch to take revenge against her husband, suddenly fairy god appears and insists she be calm in this situation and asks her to think about her lovable memories with her husband.

“My dear child. There is no other world. There is just this world. And in this world, I assure you, stories never go wrong. All of us get exactly what we deserve. Villains have their punishments, heroes with their princesses, and if your story has a happy ending, then it is simply your matrimonial duty to be happy” (CW 68).

The tale Charmed Wife moves into Cinderella’s past ache. The tale consists of two parts. The first half covers Cinderella’s life she marries Prince Roland and leads a happy life in the palace. Cinderella decides to consult a witch in the first section of the tale. “Magic’s not strictly a science, it’s more of an art,” the witch says as she stirs the cauldron (CW 23). The second half of the tale focuses on the fallout from this choice of revenge. Cinderella’s life is filled with sufferings and pains. She suffered in her past life and she is taking revenge against her husband.

The Charmed Wife by Olga Grushin explores the intricate interplay between fantasy and reality as it delves into the protagonist’s journey, blurring the lines between the magical and the routine. The fantasy intricately weaves themes of love, disillusionment, and the consequences of escaping into fantastical realms. Disillusionment is the feeling of disappointment or a change in perspective. The tale serves as a reflection on the disillusionment that can arise when fairy tale ideals clash with the complexities of real-world relationships. The fantasy does incorporate elements of fairy tales, exploring the complexities of relationships and the consequences of fairy tale expectations. The protagonist Cinderella serves as a symbol, representing societal expectations and the challenges of navigating love and life beyond the traditional fairy-tale ending.

In this fantasy, love is portrayed with complexity delving into the nuances of the romantic relationships of Cinderella. This fantasy discusses the aftermath of the “happily ever after”, depicting the challenges and disillusionment that can accompany love. “Love is like a plant; it grows little by little.” (CW 4). The tale examines the different facets of love, including its magical allure and the harsh realities that often follow. Hence the tale provides a thought-provoking exploration of love in the context of fairy tales and modern relationships.

This fantasy tale describes the complexities in relationships and disillusionment explored through the protagonist’s journey. The fantasy develops into the intricacies of love, mistrust of marriage and self-discovery. As the protagonist navigates her fairy tale existence, she confronts the harsh realities of expectations, unmet desires and the complexity of human emotions. The narrative unfolds with a blend of magical realism, offering a unique lens through which the characters grapple with their own vulnerabilities and the flaws within the fairy tale construct.

This tale plays a significant role and explores the aftermath of fairy-tale endings. The protagonist experiences a sense of disappointment and loss of illusion regarding the traditional idea of “happily ever

after”. The story delves into the complexities of relationships, portraying the challenges and struggles that follow the initial enchantment, proving a nuanced perspective on love and its realistic complexities.

This fantasy tale probes that retreating into a fantasy world can lead to a disconnection from reality, blurring the lines between desire and consequence. “A lady should be better capable of controlling what she imagines. Imagination can be highly dangerous, you know. Deadly, even. And all that mirror business, my dear child, really!” (CW 112). It explores how unrealistic expectations and magical thinking may impact relationships, personal growth and the ability to confront life’s challenges. The consequences of seeking refuge in fantastical realms are portrayed as a central theme highlighting the potential pitfalls of avoiding the complexities of the real world.

This paper shows the contrast between the fantasy and reality of marriage. In contrast, marriage can be a beautiful and fulfilling expression. It is complex and challenging. It also highlights the societal expectations placed on women in marriage which can perpetuate unrealistic and limiting ideas about gender roles.

Reference:

1. Grushin, Olga. “The Charmed Wife”. Publication,2021.