

## Solving the Mystery of “A Day Saved”

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In February 1934, Graham Greene flew from Croydon airport to Paris on assignment for *The Spectator* magazine.<sup>1</sup> The flight made a great impression on him; in a letter to his brother Hugh on 28 February he declared, “I have now become passionately addicted to flying,”<sup>2</sup> and shortly afterward he would draw on his experience of air travel when he wrote “A Day Saved.” The story was created for radio and first broadcast by the BBC on 22 June 1934<sup>3</sup> before being published in an anthology of *Nine O’clock Stories by Fourteen Authors*,<sup>4</sup> but has received little attention since.

Rooted in the genres of detective and spy fiction, the plot of “A Day Saved” is deceptively simple: the narrator, named Robinson, follows another man in order to take something from him. Robinson sticks to his quarry “like a shadow” (even when the man decides to take a plane instead of a boat, thus saving the titular day) and openly admits that he is prepared to commit murder to get what he wants. Yet ultimately, Robinson’s quest proves a futile one. He never

discovers what the “thing” he seeks is and takes no real action to obtain it. Nor does he ever learn his target’s name although he speculates it could be “Jones or Douglas, Wales, Canby, Fotheringay.”<sup>5</sup> (For ease of reference, we will subsequently refer to the man as “Fotheringay” as this is the name Robinson most often gives him.) As a straightforward tale of detection therefore, the story seems unsatisfactory; no mystery appears to have been solved, there is no obvious revelation. As a “John Buchan style” chase, “A Day Saved” fails too; there is quite simply not enough action. Robinson’s mission begins in the shadows, comes to nothing, and remains shrouded in shadow at the end. Yet Greene is rarely superficial; there are always depths to his shadows, and he knows very well that a detective story must contain clues leading to a solution. In this paper we will follow the clues Greene embedded in his narrative to discover that, far from being unsatisfying, the story contains a very dramatic revelation: Robinson and Fotheringay are not in fact two separate characters but one and the same man.

Neither of the previous two academic articles that address the story penetrate the mystery sufficiently to reach this conclusion. Mengham<sup>6</sup> makes an interesting comparison between “A Day Saved” and “The Man of the Crowd,”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Graham Greene, “Strike in Paris,” *The Spectator* (16 February 1934); reprinted in *Reflections* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 30-33.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Hugh Greene 28 February 1934, *Graham Greene: A Life in Letters*, ed. Richard Greene (London: Little, Brown, 2007), 53-54.

<sup>3</sup> Jon Wise and Mike Hill, *The Works of Graham Greene* (London: Continuum Books, 2012), 19.

<sup>4</sup> Graham Greene, *Nine O’clock Stories by Fourteen Authors* (London: Bell & Sons Ltd, 1934), 69-79.

<sup>5</sup> Graham Greene, “A Day Saved,” *Nineteen Stories* (London & Toronto: Heinemann, 1947), 146.

<sup>6</sup> Rod Mengham, “The Making of the Outsider in the Short Stories of the 1930s,” *Dangerous Edges of Graham Greene*, ed. Dermot Gilvary and Darren J. N. Middleton (London: Continuum Books, 2011), 53-56.

<sup>7</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, “The Man of the Crowd,” *Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe* (London: Wordsworth, 2009), 207-13.

Edgar Allan Poe's short story in which a detective who prides himself on being able to tell any man's character from his face is defeated by a man with such anonymous features that nothing can be read in them. In *Fotheringay*, Greene creates a character of similar blandness, and "A Day Saved" does echo aspects of Poe's tale, but far from declaring his own story's secrets insolvable, Greene gives us the answer to what lies behind Fotheringay's face in his last line. In an earlier article, Steven E. Colburn<sup>8</sup> comes tantalizingly close to solving the mystery, understanding that Greene is playing with concepts of identity and suggesting that the point of the story is how easy it is to blur perceptions of self and other, but he does not take the final step and see that Robinson and Fotheringay are one.

In this paper, we will trace our own steps to that conclusion. We begin by looking at "A Day Saved" in the context of Greene's preceding work, arguing that the short story represents a distillation of the theme of the divided self that had preoccupied Greene in his first three novels. We then examine how the medium of radio might have impacted the story's message before coming to our main thesis: when Greene applied the word "shadow" to Robinson, he intended it to carry a very specific psychoanalytical meaning, for "the shadow" is the name Carl Jung gave to the hidden and darker side of any psyche.

If we follow Greene's own advice and adopt the shorthand method of looking at his epigraphs to understand what the first three novels are about,<sup>9</sup> we quickly

realize that all of them are ways of exploring the duality implicit in human nature. In *The Man Within*, the epigraph comes from Sir Thomas Browne: "There's another man within me that's angry with me,"<sup>10</sup> and neatly encapsulates Greene's desire to show that man's most primal conflicts are never with an external other but located firmly within himself. "A Day Saved" will continue this theme, but whereas in Greene's first novel the internal struggle determines the protagonist's outward actions, we will see that Robinson ("the man within" within our short story) is angry specifically because he is powerless to control Fotheringay's actions.

The title of Greene's second novel, *The Name of Action*, comes from *Hamlet*, Shakespeare's classic exploration of how a man may be paralyzed by his thoughts from taking action, and the epigraph is taken from T. S. Eliot's "The Hollow Men"<sup>11</sup> whose titular men also represent a "Paralyzed force":

*Between the conception  
And the creation  
Between the emotion  
And the response  
Falls the Shadow*

This epigraph is particularly significant since it, like "A Day Saved," explicitly mentions "the Shadow" and lends itself to a Jungian interpretation, for it is in our creative or emotional states that Jung locates the most obvious signs of the shadow part of the unconscious making itself conscious. The July 1929 edition of *The Criterion* includes a review by Alan Porter of Jung's writings

<sup>8</sup> Steven E. Colburn, "Graham Greene's 'A Day Saved': A Modern Tale of Time and Identity." *Studies in Short Fiction* (Summer 1992), 3.

<sup>9</sup> Graham Greene, *Why the Epigraph?* (London: Nonesuch Press, 1989), 7.

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Browne, qtd. in Graham Greene, *The Man Within* (London: Penguin Books, 1971), 3.

<sup>11</sup> T. S. Eliot, "The Hollow Men," *Selected Poems* (London: Penguin Books, 1948), 75-78.

that serves to emphasize the affinities between *The Hollow Men* and Jungian symbolism.<sup>12</sup> Like “the Shadow” of Eliot’s poem, a shadow does indeed fall between the conception of the journey in “A Day Saved” and its subsequent creation as a story told by Robinson, a narrator whose violent outbursts of emotion toward the apparently autonomous actions of the man he is shadowing seem to exist in a kind of limbo in which, like the hollow men or like Hamlet, he seems incapable of exerting any direct effect. Fotheringay too resembles the hollow men, being so bland he might be “a shade without color.”

The epigraph to *Rumour at Nightfall*, Greene’s third novel, develops the same theme:

*I my companions see,  
In you, another me,  
They seemed others, but are we;  
Our second selves those shadows  
be.*<sup>13</sup>

In this novel Greene experiments with a different way of representing man’s duality, locating it not within a single character but splitting it between two cousins. “A Day Saved” will continue this technique with a difference; Robinson, whose movements literally mirror Fotheringay’s as does the reflection in this epigraph, is not a separate character but one that only seemed an Other.

Thus, in his early work Greene first introduces the concept of the man within who is against us, then he plays on Eliot’s (and Jung’s) idea of the shadow that negotiates the space

between our unconscious self and our acting self, and finally he embodies aspects of the “man within” externally in a “second self” which manifests its traits independently. In “A Day Saved” Greene will bring all these techniques together to personify a second self that is predicated on a Jungian understanding of the psyche.

While the Jungian subtext of the story may have been missed by most of Greene’s original radio audience, we suggest that they would still have understood the final revelation. When the story is spoken out loud, as it was intended to be, the words come alive and would have been far easier to understand.

The text of the story first published in *Nine O’clock Stories by Fourteen Authors* shows how Greene enjoyed the opportunities for playing with his audience that the new medium provided. This text includes several sentences that are cut (for obvious reasons) from later editions, including “You should pull me up, correct me, but how can you with all these waves of air lapping between me speaking and you listening”<sup>14</sup> and “I should like to ask all who are listening to me.”<sup>15</sup> In these asides made by Robinson directly to the listener, we can see Greene deliberately including his audience in the story while at the same time teasing them with their powerlessness to interrupt or answer the question. Further, by inviting the listener to correct his narrator, Greene highlights Robinson’s potential unreliability even as he hides this behind Robinson’s apparent honest

<sup>12</sup> Sarah Kennedy, *T. S. Eliot and the Dynamic Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 193.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Traherne, “Shadows in the Water,” *The Metaphysical Poets* (London: Penguin Books, 1957), 289-91.

<sup>14</sup> Graham Greene, *Nine O’clock Stories*, “A Day Saved,” line 72.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, line 73.

transparency, a transparency implied by both his willingness to correct himself and his desire to seek help from the audience. Listeners will shadow the unreliable Robinson through the story just as Robinson shadows Fotheringay and, if they shadow closely enough, they should spot the final “tell.”

At the very beginning of the story, Robinson tells the audience, “I had stuck closely to him, as people say like a shadow”<sup>16</sup> before immediately refuting that identification: “But that’s absurd. I’m no shadow. You can feel me, touch me, hear me, smell me. I am Robinson”<sup>17</sup> (although, of course, a radio audience can only hear him). At the end of the story Robinson repeats this refrain in words that mirror the original so closely that the listeners will surely remember them. This time though, Robinson puts the words in Fotheringay’s mouth, imagining that Fotheringay will be the man forced to reassure himself that he is not a shadow: “You can smell me, you can touch me, you can hear me, I am not a shadow: I am Fotheringay, Wales, Canby, **I am Robinson.**”<sup>18</sup> [Our emphasis.] The repetition is more than a device of narrative symmetry, it **IS** the reveal. Fotheringay is indeed the name so pointedly added to the end of the list. Fotheringay **IS** Robinson and, on air, the storyteller could have given the word “am” such emphasis that listeners would have understood this immediately.

However even on the page there are peculiarities which should suggest to the reader that this is not an ordinary detective story. Robinson, for example,

does not know what it is that he so “dearly, desperately”<sup>19</sup> wants to take from Fotheringay, but he thinks that it might be carried “in a pouch”<sup>20</sup> or in an incision under the skin or, very oddly indeed, “even closer to his heart than the outer skin.”<sup>21</sup> That the mystery “thing” could be located so close to the heart should alert us at once to the fact that what Robinson is looking for is likely to be metaphysical rather than a literal object. We might posit that this “thing” could be the soul given that the soul is traditionally located in the chest and given the belief of Carl Jung—on whom our analysis rests—that “modern man is in search of a lost soul.”<sup>22</sup> The object is certainly meant to be a clue, but in this tale of shadows and shadowing it is the motif of the shadow and, particularly, the concept of the Jungian shadow that we must follow most closely.

Greene was well-versed in Jungian theory. Following his breakdown at the age of sixteen, his parents sent him to live with a part-time psychoanalyst Kenneth Richmond, a follower of Jung’s, who would certainly have introduced the teenager to one of Jung’s most important concepts—the shadow. In analytical psychology the shadow is an unconscious part of the personality, the unknown dark side. For Jung the shadow personifies “everything the subject refuses to acknowledge about himself,”<sup>23</sup> “all those unpleasant qualities we like to hide,”<sup>24</sup> the hidden, negative, “inferior, primitive, un-

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>22</sup> C. G. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (London: Routledge Classics, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> C. G. Jung, “Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation,” *Collected Works* vol. 9, para. 513.

<sup>24</sup> C. G. Jung, “Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious,” *Collected Works* vol. 7, para. 103.

adapted, and awkward”<sup>25</sup> aspects of the personality. Jung believed that the more these aspects of the self were repressed, the more likely they were to burst out, and the “blacker and denser”<sup>26</sup> the shadow would be. For this reason the shadow could not simply be ignored, but Jung thought it was possible for a self-aware person to integrate aspects of it into the conscious personality thereby partially controlling its negative impact.

If we apply Jung’s concept to “A Day Saved” we can see that Robinson bears an almost textbook resemblance to the Jungian shadow. He is (for most of the story) a hidden presence and, like the hidden part of our psyche, he evinces no values and has no sense of good and evil, prepared to kill his quarry without any qualms of conscience “at night, between two stations ... .”<sup>27</sup> By giving Robinson this murderous intent, Greene makes literal Jung’s warning that the unconscious will turn against us if suppressed, while Fotheringay’s complete obliviousness to Robinson for much of the story suggests his unconscious is very well suppressed. Robinson, in confessing his capacity for murder, also exhibits another characteristic Jung ascribed to the shadow: a lack of self-reflection. He tells us that he would kill the man he is shadowing only “if it became necessary ... for I am a gentle creature.”<sup>28</sup> Greene knows that his audience will hear the irony, but his narrator is oblivious to it.

Robinson’s understanding of time is a further indication of his shadow status. He sees at once the futility of

Fotheringay’s “saving a day” by taking the plane instead of the boat and gives a long explanation of why such a saving means nothing. And he also, in two sentences that were dropped after the first publication, acknowledges that time passes differently for him, saying “I went on and on. I grew more tired every hour, the only thing I knew was this: time was short for him and had been very long for me.”<sup>29</sup> As well as playing with a sense of menace here—Fotheringay’s time will be short indeed if Robinson carries out his plan to kill him—Greene is also referencing the ideas of Henri Bergson<sup>30</sup> who postulated that there is a difference between external measured time and internal, experienced time. We could say that Fotheringay lives in a world of external measured time, while Robinson’s existence is slowly eked out in the internal realm. This also resonates with Jung’s belief that the unconscious points in two directions at once; on the one hand it gazes “back to a preconscious, prehistoric world of instinct, while on the other it anticipates the future.”<sup>31</sup> Thus, if Robinson is a Jungian shadow, his experience of time potentially spans millennia.

In yet another affinity with the shadow, Robinson is awkward and negative, refusing the invitation to enter the house of Fotheringay’s friends. And in perhaps Greene’s most subtle identification with the shadow, Robinson repeatedly tries to rid himself of assumptions not grounded in fact. When he observes that Fotheringay “met a friend,” he quickly corrects himself: “I

<sup>25</sup> C. G. Jung, “Psychology and Religion,” *Collected Works* vol. 11, para. 134.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, para 131.

<sup>27</sup> Graham Greene, “A Day Saved.” *Graham Greene Collected Short Stories* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), lines 27-28.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, line 34.

<sup>29</sup> Graham Greene, *Nine O’clock Stories* “A Day Saved,” line 173.

<sup>30</sup> Henri Bergson, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Online*.

<sup>31</sup> C. G. Jung, “Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation,” *Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, *Collected Works* vol. 9, para. 498.

do not know that it was a friend, I know only that it was someone he greeted with apparent affection,”<sup>32</sup> and he repeatedly insists that in telling his story he wishes “to be exact. All I want in the world is to know.”<sup>33</sup> Jung’s theory was that the unconscious side of the personality can only become conscious by means of an “encounter with empirical facts ... which quicken it to life.”<sup>34</sup> Thus we can read Robinson’s insistence on facts as another of Greene’s jokes; Greene has already personified the shadow; now he gives it the very attribute that Jung says might enable it to leap into consciousness.

In personifying the Jungian shadow in Robinson, Greene not only reveals an acceptance of the reality and presence of the darker aspects of personality (an act that Jung declares essential for any kind of self-knowledge and says requires considerable moral effort)<sup>35</sup> but also appears to challenge the idea of the shadow’s primitive nature. Robinson may exhibit base and primitive instincts, but in his storytelling and in his ideas he displays a greater sophistication than Fotheringay, which we might read as a subversion of the shadow’s traditionally subordinate and compensatory relationship with the ego. Robinson may be an unreliable narrator, but it is Robinson’s story that we hear; it is Robinson whom the reader constantly shadows. Thus, by making Robinson not the unknown, unnamed “Fotheringay,” the real personality of the story, Greene could be said to preempt the ideas of James Hillman, Jung’s most radical

interpreter, who suggested that “the shadow world is this world in metaphor, but our shade is not merely our shadow. From the psychic perspective ... only the shadow has substance, only what is in shadow has substance, only what is in shadow matters truly.”<sup>36</sup> From this perspective Robinson is not simply the repository of the darker aspects of the personality that need to be integrated. Instead, it is Fotheringay (the ego/social self) who is merely the reflection of the deeper essence contained in the shadow, just as Fotheringay’s existence in the story is merely the reflection of what Robinson chooses to tell us about him. Greene, it seems, knows that man does not just cast a shadow, that sometimes the shadow can cast the man. At the very least, the process works both ways, as Robinson implies when he describes his shadowing strategy: “In that I was really like a shadow, for sometimes I was before him and sometimes I was behind him.”<sup>37</sup> We cannot know which comes first, the act or the shadow; all we know is that the shadow and the ego are inseparable.

The fact that the shadow is our closest witness, and in some ways our closest collaborator, is also illustrated in the way the story unfolds. Fotheringay’s journey provides the story’s action; without Fotheringay’s decisive movements—taking the plane, saving a day, and safely achieving his journey’s end—there would be no story, just as there might be no short story had “Greene the journalist” not flown to Paris. Equally, “A Day Saved” could not

<sup>32</sup> Graham Greene, *Collected Short Stories*, “A Day Saved,” 143.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> C. G. Jung, “Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation,” *Collected Works*, vol. 7, para. 299.

<sup>35</sup> C. G. Jung, “The Shadow,” *Collected Works* vol. 9, para 14.

<sup>36</sup> James Hillman, *The Dream and the Underworld* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 55

<sup>37</sup> Graham Greene, *Nine O’Clock Stories*, “A Day Saved,” 71.

exist without Robinson, our narrator or, behind him, “Greene, the novelist” with his Jungian knowledge, telling it.

Like fact and fiction, there are times when Fotheringay and Robinson come close to merging with each other. In the middle of the story, Robinson makes himself known to Fotheringay and they get drunk together. Intoxication is a well-known method of dissolving the barriers between the conscious and the unconscious and, as Robinson and Fotheringay enter this state, Robinson has an absolute feeling of kinship for the man he is trailing, saying “We became for the time being friends. I felt more warmly towards him than towards any other man I have ever known.”<sup>38</sup> But the feeling does not last; it cannot last because the two characters cannot understand each other. They may exist within the same person, but they occupy separate realities. When Robinson, for example, tells Fotheringay he is desperate, Fotheringay can only think that his companion is asking for money. And despite the fact that they are together for hours, Robinson can never even manage to learn Fotheringay’s true name. After they travel to Fotheringay’s final destination together and Fotheringay invites Robinson into the house, Robinson point blank refuses: “I said no”;<sup>39</sup> “I stepped back and he went in.”<sup>40</sup> The moment of drunken kinship has passed and with it the possibility of integration.

Standing outside in the cold, watching Fotheringay and his friends make what seems to be “a deliberate display of their unity and companionship,”<sup>41</sup> all Robinson’s hatred for the man he has shadowed for so long

returns. He feels his own isolation, feels his own paralyzed “shadow-ness.” Furiously, he turns “the day saved” into a curse, “praying” that Fotheringay “suffers its eighty-six thousand four hundred seconds when he has the most desperate need”<sup>42</sup> (this curse-prayer is yet another indication that he lives in the inverted world of the shadow) and prophesying a day when Fotheringay will be the shadow. With his failure to make good the threat to kill Fotheringay, we may assume that Robinson has at some point realized that such an action would be self-slaughter, but nothing can prevent him from falling into self-hatred as he stands an outsider in the garden and an angry man within.

Greene ends the story leaving the two characters deliberately and dramatically separate. Fotheringay has become slightly conscious of his shadow, but the shadow has refused integration. As we have seen, it is only now, in the last line, that Greene reveals the two characters’ single identity, telling us, “I am Fotheringay, Wales, Canby ... I **am** Robinson.”<sup>43</sup> And, we might suggest, “I am all of you listeners/readers,” for Greene understood that the psyche is made up of a fragmented multiplicity of selves, a multiplicity that will always include a shadow, but a shadow that may perhaps turn out to be Fotheringay, not Robinson.

In depth psychology, all consciousness begins in what we might term “the night,” and only by penetrating the night’s shadows can we gain a true insight into the nature of reality. What is particularly interesting about “A Day Saved” is that Greene does not merely personify the concept of the

<sup>38</sup> Graham Greene, *Collected Short Stories*, “A Day Saved,” lines 6-7.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, line 6.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, line 10.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 17-18.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 27-28.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 32-33.

shadow, he also embodies the hidden presence of the shadow world in the very structure of his narrative to show that only by penetrating that world will we truly understand what he is doing in the story. Thus, “A Day Saved” operates on several levels. We can, like most of the radio listeners would have done, hear only an uncanny twist at the end; we can add to the story’s depth by recognizing Robinson as a second self, as the shadow part of the psyche; and we can take it even deeper by recognizing the truth of what Greene is telling us: it is in the shadow world that the most important things happen; it is the shadow world that shades in life and gives it meaning.

Greene, we are sure, must have seen the parallels between the shadow and his own creative process. As Robinson remains outside in the garden, observing everything in minute detail, Greene too was capable of regarding life with the precision and detachment required to take the material it gave him and turn it into magnificent fiction. Over the next few years, as his writing evolved, he would continue to explore the breadth of the human psyche, but he would do so within the more accessible paradigms of Christianity, marrying the ancient dilemmas of faith with his understanding of modern psychology to create some of his most successful novels. Yet regardless of whether his writing ranged between the old poles of good and evil or chose to explore the twilight land between the ego and the shadow, Greene, like Robinson, was in constant pursuit of something, a thing hidden and secret but worth pursuing: the mystery of what makes us who we are.

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