



Princess Kaguya: A Preexistence Tale

By Noel Joshua Hadley

10/10/2023

EVERY so often I succumb to the unfolding story and shed a tear. I cried at the ending of ‘Terminator 2: Judgement Day’. I cried when William Wallace howled for freedom in ‘Braveheart’. And then there is that home viewing of ‘Dirty Dancing’ when Patrick Swayze and Jennifer Grey had the time of their life. I confess to feeling something wet and moist on my cheek as well as the inner crevices of my eye, but in my defense, I was also in the kitchen cutting up an onion. I am blaming it on the onion and sticking to it. The point that I’m trying to make is that tears don’t happen often in the movies, but when they do, I remember them. ‘The Tale of the Princess Kaguya’ is one such occasion. Maybe it is because my wife had just given birth to our first daughter and my heartstrings were already being pulled upon. But then I can also say with certainty that I’ve watched the entire catalogue of

Studio Ghibli films since her birth, there's maybe 22 or 23 animated features in their vault, and none of them affected me quite like this one.

The story is about **preexistence** and the **divine**. I probably should have given you a spoiler alert because the preexistence element does not come into the plot until the third act. But then it should also be a given by this point in our relationship that the purpose of these discussions are to address the esoteric, and whenever possible, the heavenly Mysteries. FYI, preexistence is something which I have already covered. [Preexistence](#). Boom, there's your link. Give it a read. I reference an assortment of extra-Biblical books at my disposal, which is to say, I am completely sold on the concept. And despite Princess Kaguya, it's not simply a teaching deriving from the far east. Our place in the preexistence narrative isn't exactly a side note either. Grasping our former standing in heaven and likewise our fall from grace brings stunning clarity to the notion that some of us will reclaim our stature as Sons of Elohiym.



‘The Tale of the Princess Kaguya’ is closely based upon ‘The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter,’ a classical story of Japanese folklore. Her name is **Kaguya-hime** in that one as well. I am showing you a couple of illustrations from the whereabouts of the late 1800s to early 1900’s, though the actual story dates back to the **9th** or **10th century**, and its original author is unknown. It’s actually considered the oldest surviving work in the monogatari form. If you’re already familiar with the

Bamboo Cutter narrative, then you'll recognize these prints as the conclusion to the tale. Despite giving away the preexistence element, I'm still holding back a couple of those very important plot points.



[UPDATE 5/5/24: LOOK, I'm not saying a crash course in **Carl Jung** is necessary for an understanding of Princess Kaguya. Jung died in **1961**, fifty years and some change before the Japanese anime movie was released in **2014**. I'm not even sure if 'The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter' landed on his radar though, come to think of it, I would be surprised if it did not. Doing my homework and reading Jung has certainly helped—that's all I'm really getting at. And to the point that my first analysis comes across as somewhat shallow in comparison.

According to Jungian psychology, the archetypal psychology within the greater collective unconscious is a checkerboard of duality in that we have the **anima** and **animus** to contend with. What is the *anima* and *animus*? I'm glad you asked. Let's break them down in an orderly fashion. The animus is the unconscious masculine side of a woman whereas the anima is the unconscious feminine side of a man. Together they make up the two primary anthropomorphic archetypes of the unconscious mind. For clarity purposes, man's collective unconscious has a way of transcending the personal psyche and forming the shadow archetype of woman into his image rather than what a woman actually happens to be. This is the animus. The animus is man's femininity. The anima would therefore be the other dualistic component, whereas woman forms a man into her image according to woman's masculinity.

The reason why Jung believed the anima was the more significant of the two is because man's sensitivity is often lesser than a woman's, perhaps even repressed, and nearly always it is the man telling the story, creating the character archetypes, casting the woman in the light of his anima.

Another way of understanding the anima and the animus is by invoking the cinema as a whole. I will quickly ask you to consider a common denominator between guy movies and chick flicks. Well, for starters, men often find themselves completely frustrated and incapable of relating to the effeminate archetype which the animus storytellers construe for them in the chick flick genre. Often, the emotionally repressed male is cast as the antagonist whereas the seemingly unachievable unconscious masculine side of a woman, the animus, is where the protagonist finds himself.

Well then, what of the woman's misconstrued archetype in the man's anima? I'm getting to it. 'Princess Kaguya' isn't simply a story of preexistence. No, it is the story of the **feminine Divine** which we find before us. Like many notable fairy tales, it is the story of the repressed feminine divine. I'm once more giving away the ending but who really cares by this point? Kaguya's intended purpose was to live the life of the true Divine female, but it didn't work out that way. Mainly because her father the bamboo cutter overrode her animus, crafting her into his own ideal feminine image rather than her own.]



The story begins when a bamboo cutter discovers a glowing bamboo shoot in the forest behind his house, which in turn reveals a miniature girl growing within. As he leans in for a closer look, the petals of a lotus flower blossom, revealing the girl to be in a meditative posture.

Her disposition indicates a divine origin, an observation which obviously doesn't escape the bamboo cutter, as he takes to calling her Princess.



Also evident is that the mystery girl chose the bamboo cutter for a father as well as the bamboo cutter's wife for her mother. Case in point, it is when the bamboo cutter's wife takes the miniature child into her hands that she instantaneously transforms from her preexistent divine soul into an infant baby. Her adopted mother then immediately sets out in search for a wet nurse. Because milk was the order of the day. But even that task is given up when, within moments of their journey through the forest, her breasts enlarge, miraculously producing milk from her mammary glands.

From that moment onward, everything that a baby requires is provided for, but not just her daily needs, either. Upon returning to the bamboo forest behind his house, the bamboo cutter discovers two more glowing shoots. The first contains gold—all the gold that anyone would require for a lifetime of comfort. Though I think a better substitute would be 'purpose'. The gold was intended as a tool, not the end means. The second shoot reveals dozens of colorful silk fabrics which might be sewn into elegant robes. The divine child had set herself up for a perfect existence on the earth which, mind you, is not the same thing as saying carefree. Had the girl gotten her way, then she would have been shaped according to her toil in the mountains. If only her adopted father didn't go about misreading every signpost, ultimately botching the meaning of life, but I'm getting ahead of the story.



To claim that the girl grows rapidly is an understatement. We're talking about a baby's development from a shuffle to a crawl and a walk all within a few short moments. Her progress happens in spurts, nearly always seemingly due to a newfound discovery, in this instance because she wanted to catch a frog.

Observations such as this one earned her the nickname 'Little Bamboo' among the village children. They even begin shouting the new name at her while she proudly bumbles about. Perplexed with wonder at his adopted daughter's godlike skillset, the bamboo cutter finds great insult at the name they have given to her, but why? Calling her Little Bamboo makes all the sense in the world. She not only arrived in a bamboo forest, but she also continues to grow as fast as a shoot. Well, according to his worldview, a backwater bamboo forest may be appropriate for hicks, but it is no place for a Divine being such as the one which came to him, in a backwater bamboo forest of all places.

In turn, the bamboo cutter begins shouting 'Princess', hoping to drown out the playful cries of the children. The toddler is now stuck between the contrasting calls of both parties, and seemingly two opposite worlds. She therefore has a decision to make. Does she waddle towards the children calling her Little Bamboo or the outstretched arms of her father, insisting that her name is Princess? It shouldn't surprise anyone to learn that the innocent toddler succumbs to the bamboo cutter's voice rather than strangers, despite her attraction to the village children, and here-in is the film's first of many misread mile-markers. The bamboo cutter confuses his child's love for her father with a desire to abandon the world she has chosen to inhabit.



While the Princess continues to grow like a shoot, jubilant times ensue in the bamboo forest, if only for a season. Her carefree hours are spent running about with the village children, laughing all the way. Whether she happens upon insects or the fruit of a farmer's field, there is joy in the discovery. These are the happiest moments of her life. Her delight with the world is balanced only by the amazement which the village children find in her. On one occasion, the children begin reciting a song. The girl happens to sing along. Perplexed, they ask her how she could have possibly known the words, to which she replies, she doesn't know.

Her foreknowledge perfectly complements **Plato**'s idea regarding the world of forms in light of preexistence, that nothing created by man, be it a column or a rooftop or a chair, can exist within the present shadowlands had the knowledge not first been carried down from the heavenly realm, via our subconscious memory. But then to add to that, Little Bamboo goes on singing her own lyrics, angelically, as though they were divinely inspired. The children respond as you would expect of any child. Those aren't the words to the song, they explain.



Of all the village children, it is **Sutemaru** whom Little Bamboo bonds with the most. Her development into adulthood is exponential whenever they spend time together, hinting at his status as her soul flame lover. And in fact, it is when the two duck for cover in the hedges to avoid detection from the local farmer (Little Bamboo had no idea taking fruit from the field was stealing) that the girl advances to that of a pubescent, though she is not yet a woman.

During one such forest romp, the relationship between Sutemaru and Little Bamboo takes a stunning leap towards a date with destiny when he stumbles off a ravine in pursuit of a pheasant, bloodying his arm in the process. Little Bamboo removes the turban from her head so as to lovingly bandage his arm, almost as a wife or a mother. Once again, Sutemaru notices the change in her growth as well as her womanly development. He even comments on that fact, sulking that she'll go off and leave them behind, to which she replies that she'll be there with him forever.



Little does the Princess realize that her father had already planned to uproot the family to the capital that very afternoon, given the gold that had been tucked away in the bamboo.

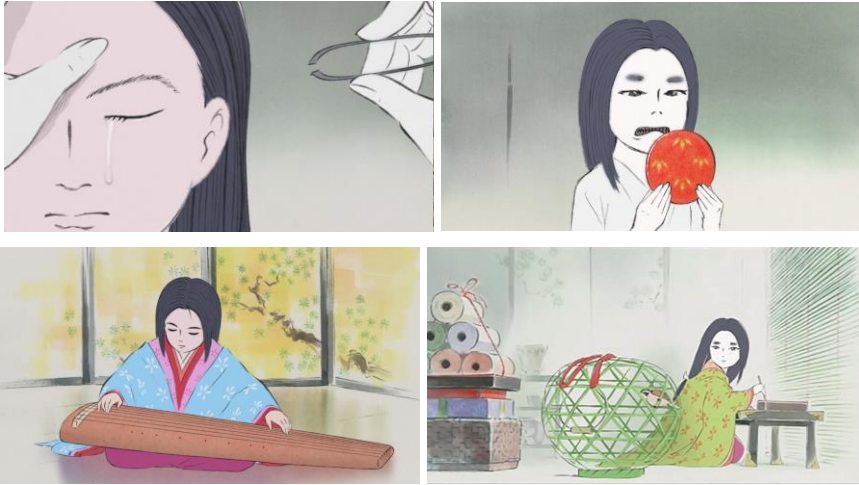
Upon returning home with a basket of mushrooms, her adopted mother and father are seen standing around by the front door, impatiently waiting for her arrival. Little Bamboo protests, stating that she had expected to cook the mushrooms into a stew along with Sutemaru's pheasant on the following day, but that tomorrow never comes.



We next find the Princess in a mansion replete with servants. At first, little has changed regarding her general sentiment towards life. She explores the mansion with the same innocent curiosity which dictated her exploration of the mountainside. She is overjoyed to learn that the palace as well as the room furnished with silk dresses is hers, though we are never once given an indication that her father confessed to the origin of their newfound fortune—the bamboo forest, which he despised. At any rate, her newfound excitement comes to a quick and crashing end when the governess shows up. Tasked with transforming her from a backwoods hick into a noble princess, the governess scolds the girl for frolicking through the palace and desiring to swim like other children.

Moving forward, the girl struggles with the restraints of nobility, yearning for her prior life in the countryside. I won't go over every detail, but with each passing scene, we watch as the governess labors to snuff out the divine spark within her so as to make her into the manmade image of a godlike figure, how ironic. One memorable

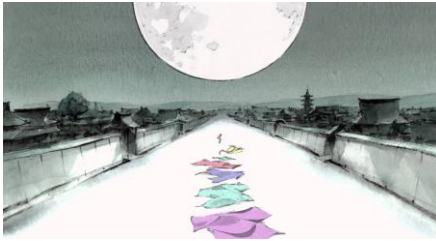
instance involves the governess explaining how she can expect to have her eyebrows plucked and her teeth blackened so as to achieve the noble princess look. The girl then protests, stating that the sweat will run into her eyes without eyebrows, and furthermore, she will no longer smile with blackened teeth, which will in turn cause her to cry. To this the governess replies, a noble princess doesn't sweat, laugh, or cry.



Every single frame in the montage of her life is explicitly designed with deeper meaning, and as mentioned a moment ago, I shan't recollect them all. There's two however which stands out to me. The governess is incapable of teaching any noble traits to the Princess, who has now been granted the name Kaguya. She can't even pluck the string of a Koto right in her presence. It therefore frustrates her to no end to learn of Kaguya's divine gift with the instrument, should she be left to perform on her own. She even quips that Kaguya had to have had another tutor before her. Presently, any attempt to cultivate the young girl to the image of an earthly goddess only seems to quench the heavenly flame within.

There is also the instance when the former bamboo cutter gifts his daughter with a pet bird. He nonchalantly states that he will build Kaguya a bamboo cage for the bird, just like old times, which then

prompts the Princess to release the bird from the palace as if to highlight his hypocrisy. The palace *is* her cage, not the bamboo forest.



Now, you'd think a woman's first period would be cause for celebration, and for Kaguya it *was*, until she learned that her coming-of-age party, by which she would be formally named for the public, would last for three consecutive

days, and that she'd be locked away for the entirety of it. Nobody would see her. Because she's a noble princess, you see. Well, it is at that celebration that she overhears partygoers ridiculing the former bamboo cutters' attempts at turning a peasant girl into a noble highborn through money. In utter despair, Kaguya flees the capital, leaving a trail of silk robes behind her, like menstrual blood under the moonlight.

Running all the way back to the mountains of her birth, Kaguya seeks Sutemaru only to learn that he and the other village children have all moved away. Furthermore, a new family occupies her old home behind the bamboo forest. She also bemoans the naked state of the mountainside which, baren of leaves, appears as though it were dead. A stranger explains to her that it happens every year, and apparently, she has never experienced winter before. I take that to mean she was born in the spring. The very notion that the dead of winter repeatedly gives birth to a new year gives Kaguya some hope, hinting at the cycle of souls but also possibly reincarnation. She then passes out in the snow under the light of the moon, awakening again at the party.



Kaguya grows in beauty, attracting many suitors outside of her palace walls. Her servant girl cannot even maneuver through the street without applicants shoving their resumes into every conceivable pocket. Five in particular are chosen to enter the palace. And though no one aside from her father has yet to see her beyond the veil, they brazenly compare her to various mythical treasures. The short of it is that Kaguya's heart belongs to Sutemaru, I mean, we all suspect that much, though she tells them she will marry whoever can bring her the mythical treasure which they thought to invoke. Two of those suitors attempt to persuade her with counterfeits. The third abandons his quest, the fourth delivers a flower instead of his treasure but then is found to already be married, and the last suitor is killed in his quest.

As Kaguya's loneliness worsens, the Emperor takes notice of her beauty and attempts to kidnap her after she refuses his intrusive advances. We have already seen a multitude of occasions when the moon filled the sky. Well, it is only then, drowning in despair, that Kaguya begs the Moon to help her. The Moon not only receives Little Bamboo's prayer, but it also recognizes who she is, or rather *was*. In doing so, her memories concerning her preexisting life are restored.

As her depression deepens, Kaguya reveals to her parents that she was formally a resident of the Moon. Up until now, she had never experienced life on the earth. Curiosity however got the best of her when observing a woman who had returned to the moon after living life upon the earth. Just before having her memory of everything that she'd experienced in life permanently wiped clean, the woman looked back longingly upon the earth one last time and shed a single tear. The tear was the selling point. And so, Kaguya left her life the only way she knew how. She broke one of heaven's laws, hoping to be exiled to the

Earth so that she could experience what was contained within that single tear.



Kaguya's reclaimed knowledge of her former estate comes with a catch. She is aware of her former existence in the heavens just as the heavens are now alert to her whereabouts. Though she expressed her attachment to the Earth and her reluctance to leave, her Father in the heavens promised to reclaim her at the next full moon, and there was nothing which her earthly parents could do about it.

While her father devotes his efforts to turning the palace into a fort, so as to starve off any attempt by the gods at reclaiming his daughter, Kaguya returns to her former home in the forest, determined to find the whereabouts of Sutemaru. Well, this time she finds him. The two not only profess their love, but they also succumb to such bliss that they fly over the countryside as twin flames, only to encounter the Moon and fall. Sutemaru then wakes up alone and reunites with his wife and child, thinking his encounter with Kaguya was nothing more than a fanciful dream.



The procession of the gods led by a Buddha-like figure, whom we take to be Kaguya's father, will make many of my readers uncomfortable. For what it's worth, I know the elohiyim are real, that they rule over the

nations as part of the Council of Seventy, and that they too are either rebelling against the Creator or are busily engaged in the redemption process, just as some of us are. I will let the Most-High Elohiym be the judge of who makes it through the flames unscathed, mortal and immortal, but I digress. The train of elohiym descend to the earth on the following full moon, as promised, and everyone in the fortress melt like wax before the flame, being incapable of lifting a finger in defense.

The former bamboo cutter and his wife bemoan the loss of their daughter, begging that they might be taken with her, but it's too late. Her earthly father had spent so much time and energy attempting to mold her into the image of his own understanding, and to her own misery, that he never stopped to ponder or understand the true nature of the divine, which surpasses all traditions of men. 'The Princess Kaguya' is a story about failed missions and lost opportunities. Navigating through the gauntlet of lies which assail us from the moment of our birth, in hopes of returning to the divine. Everything that Kaguya wanted and needed and in fact the very meaning of life was provided for her in advance, but the bamboo cutter misread the signs and botched everything. In the preexistence narrative, 'The Tale of Princess Kaguya' is a tragedy which is told far too often.

Before departing, the Buddha figures attendant prepares to dress her in a coat which ensures that she will forget everything she's come to know and admire about the "impure earth", as she calls it. Kaguya asks that she refrain from the coat for another moment so that she can embrace her earthly parents one last time. She then explains to the attendant that the grief and the sorrow which she experienced cannot be separated from joy and happiness.



The robe then embraces her, and the girl's expression is wiped clean. As she looks back at Earth one last time, tears fill her eyes.