

## THE SHADOW THROUGH THE CIRCLES OF WOLD

By Art Bollmann

The Shadow is also an interesting character when viewed through Peter Coogan's "Circles of Wold" metaphor. Most Wold Newton characters stay the same in each circle. Sherlock Holmes, for example, is always Sherlock Holmes whether he is in Victorian London or the planet Mars. Like Doc Savage, however, the Shadow changes in each circle of Wold where he is present.

The Shadow is not present in all circles, however. Coogan's smallest circle, Wold-Real World, consists of real people who are the basis for fictional characters. The Shadow is not there, because there was no real person who was the basis for the Shadow. (One could, however, argue that the broadcaster, Frank Readick and various other radio announcers were the real life basis for the Shadow. The Shadow was a name for a character who narrated radio detective and romance before he was ever a fictional character.

This should be kept in mind as we look at a circle of Wold not listed, Wold RW(f). This is a circle for fictional characters that are presented as the real world inspiration for fictional characters. Here, we find the character Lamont Cranston as presented in the 1938 film "International Crime." Here Cranston is a radio broadcaster and amateur criminologist who has the nickname of "the Shadow." Interestingly, a poster of the pulp magazine Shadow is displayed on his desk. It seems to me that the movie is implying that this Cranston is the basis for the fictional character in the Shadow pulp magazine.

The bulk of the Shadow pulp adventures, however, can be quite comfortably situated in Wold-Prime. The Shadow of the pulps might seem to be a fantastic character but there are very few super scientific and no supernatural elements in his adventures. Rick Lai's Shadow chronology is the most reliable guide to this incarnation of the Shadow.

With Wold-PSF we are able to expand the Shadow canon to include, not only the Shadow's pulp adventures, but the additional adventures added by Win Eckert in his "Shadow Chronology." Many of these sequels featured a Shadow with hypnotic abilities for surpassing those of the pulp Shadow. In many of them, he is able to render himself invisible.

The Shadow does not figure prominently in Wold-Great War/Cabal, the next circle of Wold. However, in addition to vast conspiracies, this circle frequently features multiple versions of Wold Newton characters. I think that in this circle, we might find that in addition to Kent Allard operating as the canonical Shadow, we might find Lamont Cranston operating as the invisible Shadow featured on the radio. We also might find Jimmie Gray, an adventurer who used the name of the Shadow in a series of Australian comic books.

In Wold-Planetary, we find a figure probably called the Spider who combines aspects of the Shadow, the Spider and the Green Hornet. He also appears as a member of a group called the Changers, which attempts to change the world, very much against the world's will, until it is stopped by Stormwatch.

In Wold-Superhero, we find the much disliked Archie comics version of the Shadow, who fought super villains in a mask, cape and green and blue superhero suit. The Shadow's hypnotic abilities top out in this circle, with him able to hypnotically subdue most of his enemies. This Shadow also has a huge arsenal of gadgets and super weapons. More conventional versions of the Shadow have crossed over with Batman and Ghost. From this, it is possible to argue that the Shadow is present in the DC Universe and the Dark Horse Comics Universe.

In Wold-Future, we glimpse the Shadow in Cynosure, the city at the center of space and time in the GrimJack comic series. From there, he could conceivably next be seen at any time, or any place.