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Book Review

***The Dark Enlightenment: Jung, Romanticism and the Repressed Other* by
D. J. Moores. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press. ISBN
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This book marks an important development in literary criticism and the culture that sustains it. As well as providing a superb analysis of Romantic literature, Moores offers powerful new insights into its relations with the Enlightenment, hence the title, *The Dark Enlightenment*, where one might expect “Romanticism.” In doing so much, the book makes a distinct and creative contribution to Jungian literary criticism. It does so by showing its value for what some might assume are external issues of cultural studies and historical literary analysis.

Moreover, such a work as *The Dark Enlightenment* joins recent publications by innovative scholars such as Terence Dawson, Rinda West and Inez Martinez, in which Jungian ideas are used creatively to open up the possibilities of the literary imagination. In the past, Jungian literary criticism has suffered from a not entirely undeserved reputation for using Jung’s ideas conservatively. Chiefly problematic has been Jung’s notion of the inherited propensity to certain types of images and meanings (archetypes). So-called “archetypal” criticism of the past tended to assume that powerful images in literature transcended historical signification. Such poor technique is not even Jungian because Jung insisted that archetypal images were also subject to historical, social and personal coloring.

For this reason alone, Jung is a gift to cultural theory. For he adds the potentials of the intrinsically (for him) creative imagination to the ideological pressures generated in every society. Art is co-created by a psyche that is indigenously *other* and engraved by social codes. A truly Jungian literary criticism welcomes the advent of all forms of historicism, new and old, as well as the important contributions made to critical theory by movements such as feminism (on which more later). However, what Jungian criticism also has that other theoretical approaches do not is fidelity to creativity that can never be entirely expunged by the demands of the world. The Jungian psyche retains an *other* that is

never entirely co-optable or appropriated, and is therefore a methodology of psychic liberation.

It is unsurprising that the collection of critics mentioned above exhibit both a common celebration of the imagination while developing diverse and rich scholarly potential in this fertile field. Dawson adds originality to structuralism to give a new vitality to works of art. Rinda West has splendidly welded postcolonial theory and Jung to produce vibrant new readings of literature. Martinez is in turn generating remarkable *depth* in her Jungian “readings for psyche.” She is arriving at a new psychic understanding of literary architectures of feeling via sensitive close readings of texts.

True to this authentic diversity, *The Dark Enlightenment* offers something else. Moores expands upon the notion that the Enlightenment and Romanticism have a dialogical relationship. He shows how canonical Romantic works deal with the “other” formed by the structuring of the Enlightenment upon disembodied reason. Romanticism, therefore, is a vital cultural project of retrieval of projections. These areas are “dark” because they are repressed or cast out. The Enlightenment hoped to save modernity from chaos envisaged as bodily or feminine, religious, natural, or primitive. It achieved new heights of rationality and technological innovation.

Unfortunately, its embrace of the dazzling light of reason was blind to its complicity with the patriarchal religion that had dominated before. The abstractions of the Enlightenment are closely related, as Moores shows, to the traditional Christian God who was held to have created the world *separately* from it. Hence nature was not in itself divine. Nor was nature as feminine mother, the feminine itself, body, sexuality, or cultures that were deemed “other.”

It took a new body of practices, today known as Romanticism or Romanticisms, to begin to explore what the Enlightenment had rejected. This is one great achievement of Moores’s book. For not only is it an original historical argument about cultural change, it is also a profound exploration of literature and psychology -- or, literature as psychology. For it is a real strength here that Moores is deeply aware of the historical nature of his task in arguing that what Romanticism does in art, Jungian psychology of a century later has the best language to describe. Indeed, his book gets very exciting towards the end when he comments that postmodernism is, in many ways, a return of Romanticism. Characterised by the erosion of barriers between art and theory that arguably got a big impetus in Romanticism, Moores’s work impinges upon the way Jung’s so-called psychology is as much a “literature.”

Of course, the heart of *The Dark Enlightenment* is an argument about cultural change hinging upon collective psychic compensation. Here is Moores’s most elaborated critical contribution. Jung saw art as profoundly cultural when it drew upon and suffered the energies of the collective unconscious. Hence while an artist’s psyche was inevitably complicit, what is most significant about a work may

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be its relationship to the collective. Here is the immense untapped potential of a Jungian literary criticism that is also cognizant of other modern critical approaches. Moores superbly taps just this potential and offers exemplary readings of work by Wordsworth, Whitman, Coleridge, Melville, Keats, Byron, Hawthorne, Poe, Mary Shelley and P. B. Shelley.

The consequence of these beautifully crafted readings is first of all the strongest possible evidence for his core argument that Romanticism explored and retrieved what the Enlightenment had thrown into the dark. Secondly, these readings will stand by themselves in the canons of Romantic criticism as strong voices in the ongoing critical debates. Thirdly, Moores's grasp of Jungian theory is detailed and precise. His use of it is nuanced and historically sensitive. Therefore, this book represents an excellent example of Jungian literary criticism for students wanting to learn to use this type of literary theory, not just students of Romantic and Enlightenment art. I will recommend *The Dark Enlightenment* to anyone wanting expert help in using Jung with creative work.

I will end by making some observations that are designed to further elucidate this splendid book. Moores's adherence to Jung's concepts is praiseworthy, but it does exact a price. For example, at the suggestive final section when bringing in postmodernism, quantum physics et al., Moores equates Jung's ideas with contemporary neurobiology "making a forceful case for inherited gender characteristics in their work on the influence of sex hormones as determinants of behavior" and "innate brain differences" between men and women (188).

While, on the one hand, the Jung we know would probably have signed up to all of the above, on the other hand, I would argue that Moores's comparisons here do not fully work for Jung's "anima" and "animus." That is to say, Jung was an essentialist on gender and also he was not. This incoherence in his work (which I have written about extensively) is in part a consequence of his unique combination of social conservatism and cultural radicalism. Put simply, while he assumed a straightforward correlation between sexed bodies and gender characteristics, also for him true gender identity lay in the individuation process. Since individuation is so deeply oriented around coming to terms with the "opposite" gender, so that it is no longer opposite, it is hard to assert wholehearted essentialism on his part.

Moreover, what is *essential* in Jung's ideas is the potency of the creative unconscious as source of being. Given that intrinsic challenge to the ego embedded in Jung's ideas, the ego and its ready adoption of social gender norms must be continually thwarted. The problem with neurobiology, it seems to me, is the same problem as those critical theories that miss out on the psyche, as Moores elsewhere argues. Sex is inherited in bodily shape and that shape will influence psychic gender. However, a Jungian need not agree with a neurobiologist on

“determinants” of behavior because the creative psyche will always offer “other” possibilities. To do Jung credit, despite a number of sexist remarks in his work, his notion of anima and animus does at the core celebrate psychic possibility.

The Dark Enlightenment is an excellent book of cultural analysis, of Romantic revisionism and exemplary literary criticism. In its pushing at the epistemological questions surrounding using psychology as literary theory, it opens up further possibilities. I look forward to them.