

Brewster, F. (2017) *African Americans and Jungian Psychology: Leaving the Shadows*. London and New York: Routledge.

FOREWORD

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Many people are drawn to the psychology of C. G. Jung because it appears to be multicultural. More than Freud, or any other early psychoanalyst, Jung was interested in trying to meet those peoples and cultures (Africans, African-Americans, Native Americans, East Indians, and Chinese) that might seem to be the most exotically different from Europeans. After all, his work draws on archetypes which are defined as “primary imprints” on the human psyche—unconscious tendencies and dynamics that are universal. He contrasts these with “psychological complexes” that form in the emotional dynamics of an individual’s development and early adaptation and continue to motivate unconscious thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and actions throughout the lifespan. Complexes are personal and archetypes are universal, and yet our unconscious complexes form around the core of archetypes.

To discover whether something is truly universal, we have to study and compare, as impartially as possible, different languages, cultural records, religions, symbols, dreams, styles, human gestures and facial expressions, and other forms of communication. We also have to take into account issues of equality and justice, because social, physical, and psychological oppression change the ways people see and express themselves, as well as the ways they are seen by others. Our own biases, prejudices, and stereotypes (conscious and unconscious) interfere with both our first impressions and our extensive interpretations.

As a student of Jung’s psychology, I hoped that Jung’s intention to be a “phenomenologist” and an objective “scientist” might mean he would be skeptical and careful about his own biases and interpretations of cultural and social assumptions and practices so wholly different from his own European, Germanic, and Greek heritage. Any careful reading of Volume 10 of Jung’s Collected Works (1930/1968)—*Civilization in Transition*—will dash that hope. In my own training to be a Jungian analyst (I was certified in 1986), I was left feeling adrift and alarmed by a lot of what I read in Volume 10. Instead of being tentative or skeptical, Jung

assumed that as a European psychoanalyst, he could know and understand people (because he understood the archetypes of the collective unconscious) who came from cultures and societies very different from his own.

I came to my Jungian training as a feminist, a Buddhist, and a White person from a working class background in Akron, Ohio, where Black children were among my best friends, and Black (then called "colored") families were ones in which I felt very welcome and at ease. Not only that, in the early 1970s I lived for four years in a Black community in North Carolina, where I was on the margins of the Black Power Movement while I worked for Upward Bound at a Black university (A & T State University, as it was known then) and my husband worked at a Black women's college, Bennett College. During that time, I felt privileged to be included in discussions of Black identity (albeit sometimes feeling very "White" among my friends and colleagues) and to come to understand the ways in which the Black Power Movement turned upside down most racist assumptions about African Americans. I witnessed personally how African American people learned to embrace themselves and their culture both in its historical African roots and customs (however much those were disintegrated through slavery and its legacies, they remained) and in the contemporary ways in which Black people created the beauty of art, music, dance, language, politics, and philosophy from their own suffering and oppression in America. They fashioned gold from the lead of their adversity.

My attraction to Jung's psychology in the late 1970s was propelled initially by having read his 1961 memoir *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. Like so many others, I related to Jung as someone who had transformed his own messy and troubled childhood into gold—someone who had known anguish and even mental illness and had worked through those experiences to develop a comprehensive psychology of liberation (individuation) for adults. Initially, I did not know how much Jung was captured by the sensibility of "eugenics" (he was not a eugenicist, but he was taken by the idea that certain "races" embody different "levels" of abilities), which consumed many early psychologists at the turn of the twentieth century and left a destructive and delusional legacy of assumptions about "primitives" and hierarchies of IQ and human consciousness.

When I entered Jungian training in 1979 and witnessed the absence of African Americans in almost every setting (I eventually met Sam Kimbles) in which Jung's ideas were taught or discussed, I was uneasy and wondered what was wrong. Then, when I read and studied Volume 10, I could see what was wrong. I was distressed about Jung's unexamined assumptions of racial hierarchy and his stereotyping of minorities. I was more distressed hearing my Jungian colleagues speak about "the Shadow" being "black" and interpreting Black people in anyone's dreams as "Shadow figures," and assuming that the collective unconscious had a racial hierarchy built into it. When I said, for example, that Black people in my dreams were my friends and lovers, not my Shadow, my words typically fell on deaf ears. In place of a thoughtful critique of the naïve racist assumptions in Jung's writings, there was a kind of professional denial that anything was "wrong." Very often, I heard my elders say that Jung's ideas were "typical of

his time and place." I thought, "That's true, but should we go on repeating his mistakes, now that we know better?"

In 1987, a year after I finished my analytic training, I published a paper titled "The Absence of Black Americans as Jungian Analysts." I wanted to open a discussion into the ways in which racism is a psychological complex organized in each individual around the archetype of Other or Opposite—and the splitting of Good and Bad—that leads to idealizing one kind of trait or person or family or group over against what is taken to be its "opposite." We all try unconsciously to find an "enemy" outside ourselves, onto which we can project what we disavow in ourselves. I also simply missed having African American colleagues. In the immediate years after that paper came out, nothing changed. Over time, though, thoughtful critiques and analyses emerged from Andrew Samuels (1993), Helen Morgan (2014, 2008), Samuel Kimbles (2014), Michael Vannoy Adams (1996), and Fanny Brewster (2013), among others.

And yet, there remained a gap. No major Jungian work examined both the weaknesses and strengths of a Jungian perspective for understanding and combatting the universal human problem of racism in groups, cultures, societies, and individuals. Still, from a larger cultural and social perspective, we do not have trustworthy models or methods for wrestling psychologically with the problems we have inherited from slavery and its transgenerational symptoms, or with the challenges raised by Black Lives Matter, or with our shared human tendency to find an "enemy" (to preserve the "good" in ourselves) outside ourselves. This volume fills that gap.

As an African American Jungian analyst, Dr. Fanny Brewster is knowledgeable and wise about both personal and professional experiences of racism and Eurocentrism in the Jungian and psychoanalytic worlds. She also knows the traditions of African healing methods and African religions, giving her a broad perspective on symbolism and clinical work. She writes from personal experience and she writes from the experience of addressing issues of race and Otherness inside the consulting room, in supervision, in training sessions and conferences, and in both American and non-American (especially European) Jungian thought. What is especially impressive in this book is that Brewster reviews the vast literature on Africanist healing cultures and Jungian healing archetypes with an eye to finding what can be helpful to (1) waking us up to our racism (because it largely comes from unconscious assumptions and perspectives), (2) communicating with each other as psychoanalysts and mental health professionals about how racism functions in treatment and supervision (even if the two people share the same skin color), and (3) applying Jung's psychology, with its emphasis on archetypes and complexes and the projection of Otherness, to provide a way of becoming aware of the legacies of racism, slavery, oppression, and their transgenerational symptoms in our clinical work.

Brewster wants Jungians in particular, and psychoanalysts in general, to stop exempting themselves from recognizing and understanding the roots of their own racism. She wants us to "grow up" and move beyond idealizing our founders and ancestors, feeling that we cannot differentiate from a kind of defensiveness that still

exists about our originators' ideas. She wants us to see that envy and hatred are natural aspects of the aggression of early life for all humans, and then to see how these aspects can be "assigned" to those who seem to be Other, especially people of color, who may have origins different from our own. Whatever our skin color, we must understand that "race" is not a reality but a categorization of people as "Whites" and "Negroes" invented by slave owners to protect themselves and their wealth and to oppress others. As writer and journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates observes in his 2015 memoir *Between the World and Me*, about being Black: "Black" people are bound not by a biological "race" or any uniform skin color. Instead, they are bound by the ways they have suffered and "by all the beautiful things, all the language and mannerisms, all the food and music, all the literature and philosophy, all the common language that they have fashioned like diamonds" (119).

Using any analysis of "race" or "racial differences" at this point in time is an egregious mistake because it is based on a delusional idea—the idea that difference in skin color or facial features translates into some kind of inherent mental or psychological difference. Instead, racism is a defensive projection of something we cannot see or tolerate in ourselves. Brewster gives us all kinds of examples of how we all, no matter our skin color, project our own disavowed sexual, hateful, and aggressive tendencies into those who are vulnerable or appear to be Other. This is a root cause of humans oppressing one another. No psychoanalytic theory or idea should ever provide any justification for hierarchies of human consciousness or intelligence based on the false category of "race." Instead, we psychoanalysts should invite people to see into and analyze their own racist complexes and desires.

Brewster invites us to imagine that we are on the horizon of a new kind of consciousness—one that might allow us to heal collectively from a traumatic past in which surplus wealth came from slavery and oppression and served only those people who controlled power and resources. That past continues now as violence against people of color, as forced labor in prisons, and as racial profiling. How can we use the paradigm of Jungian archetypes and complexes to unpack our collective and individual racist complexes and personal prejudices? We have to begin in our own psychoanalytic backyard and revise our concepts and assumptions, and then extend that process outward. Ever since I grew up in Akron, Ohio, in racially mixed schools and churches, I have hoped for the possibility of healing the pain of racism. Brewster's invitation here to "leave the shadows"—and bring out into the open the whole range of possibility and trauma, of unconsciousness and awakening, and of inquiry and conversation—has given me hope that we might be approaching a new horizon of human consciousness.

References

- Coates, Ta-Nehisi (2015). *Between the World and Me*. New York: Little Brown.
 Jung, C. G. (1993). *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (13th ed.). New York: Random House.

INTRODUCTION

Between me and the other world there is ever an unasked question: unasked by some through feelings of delicacy; by others through the difficulty of rightly framing it. All, nevertheless, flutter round it. They approach me in a half-hesitant sort of way, eye me curiously or compassionately, and then, instead of saying directly, How does it feel to be a problem? They say, I know an excellent colored man in my town; or I fought at Mechanicsville; or Do not these Southern outrages make your blood boil? At these I smile, or am interested, or reduce the boiling to a simmer, as the occasion may require. To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word.

W. E. B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk

The problem of racism in America is complicated, while the central idea of race itself is simple. We are one race with centuries-old constructs and ideas regarding what potentially makes us enemies of one another, due only to ethnological differences.

African Americans have been at the psychological suffering end of America's racial *problem* for centuries. This began with slavery and has continued through until the current time. The psychological effects of prejudice and racial hatred, embedded in every aspect of American life, have been a profoundly painful experience, in every way imaginable, for African Americans.

We continue to live in a social reality where African Americans are considered a problem—if not *the* problem—by other Americans of varying ethnic groups. At the time of this writing, nearing the end of the presidency of the first African American in our history, racial issues and conflicts dominate our media and social dialogues.

The tenor of our society and its institutions, despite laws to create equality and change, continues with an undercurrent of belief that African Americans *are*

America's problem. Racism is not viewed as the problem, only our skin color, simply *because* of our skin color.

African Americans and Jungian Psychology: Leaving the Shadows focuses on a broad and yet deep-running aspect of African American life—our culture, and our psychology as one aspect of this culture. This writing not only seeks to explore how African Americans exist as a cultural group with a particular cultural consciousness; it is also an attempt to go further, investigating C. G. Jung's Analytical psychology, or Jungian psychology as it is better known, looking at its development into an American Jungian psychology with racism as a lingering main characteristic. It is crucially important to explore and deepen our understanding of the historical racial relationship of Jungian psychology to African Americans. This relationship begins with Jung's own exploration and confiscation of African cultural principles and ideologies in the first half of the twentieth century. Jung was able to use African ideologies, indicating the importance of the need for them with Europe's deprived "modern man," while being disparaging of the African—the *primitive* and *savage*, from whom he *took* the ideas.

In my discussion of Jungian psychology and racism, I wish to explore the conscious, and perhaps unconscious, motivations against an integrative model of Jungian psychology that could possibly exist in service to African Americans.

Many more African Americans seek psychological services than ever before. Yet, the number of those who enter Jungian psychology for clinical work, or to be trained as analysts, continues to be exceedingly low. I discuss this as a reflection of the larger issue of American racism in the field of psychology and in American society.

I specifically discuss racism as the inherent problem of a racial divide that has existed since Jungian psychology first came to America as a psychoanalytical practice in the early 1900s. Racism was built into American Jungian psychology regardless of it having European roots.

There continues to be a quiet turning away or absolute silence by many of those practicing within the area of American Jungian psychology as regards racist language and theoretical concepts in Jung's writings and speeches. The irony of this situation is that much of Jungian psychology was built on the basis of an Africanist cultural foundation that Jung termed *primitive*.

Who was C. G. Jung in terms of his thinking as regards African Americans? What is available to African Americans through the act of re-claiming and re-collecting the African cultural attributes and ideas that were used by Jung to establish his form of psychoanalytical psychology? During the time of American slavery, many individuals worked to save the lives of African Americans through the Underground Railroad. Leaving a light in the home window was a signal that it was safe for slaves to approach the house on their escape from plantations. The house offered shelter on the passage from Southern slavery to Northern freedom.

It is my hope that *African Americans and Jungian Psychology: Leaving the Shadows* will provide us with better sight for seeing into the shadowy darkness of an apparent still-present racism. It might perhaps give us a new place of consciousness in which to move as we deepen the practice of American Jungian psychology, making it available for all by the elimination of that which keeps it in the shadow of racism.

Racial relations and racism

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JUNG'S EARLY AMERICA

Racial relations and racism

American Jungian psychology as practiced, and related to African Americans, has barely changed since its inception by Jung 100 years ago. The Eurocentric focus of Jungian psychology, without consideration of a positive Africanist cultural context, continues to hold on to its European roots, which remains alienating to many African Americans. This is largely due to Jung's own early writings from the *Collected Works*, his interviews during time spent on his few visits to America, and his autobiography, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. American Jungians in the practice of Jung's psychology continue, with few exceptions, to teach and train individuals to become analysts with little acknowledgment of current American antagonistic racial lives or the necessity of a cultural context within the American Jungian analytical frame. It almost appears as an unspoken code that if this cultural context continues to be ignored, it will disappear. This is one of the main features of American racism—making and treating African Americans as if we are invisible, as if we do not exist, except to be of service.

Jung initially identified African Americans within his collective unconscious theory as being and carrying the *Shadow*—his principal archetype for all that was negative within the unconscious. The theoretical idea of shadow and the Shadow archetype have grown and been expanded upon in recent writings by some Jungians within the last two decades. Jung's concept of the Shadow was initially discussed by him in the following manner:

Closer examination of the dark characteristics—that is, the inferiorities constituting the shadow—reveals that they have an emotional nature, a kind of autonomy, and accordingly an obsessive or, better, passive quality. Affects occur usually where adaptation is weakest, and at the same time they reveal the reason for its weakness, namely a certain degree of inferiority and the existence of a lower level of personality. On this lower level with its

uncontrolled or scarcely controlled emotions one behaves more or less like a primitive, who is not only the passive victim of his affects but also singularly incapable of moral judgment.

(*CW 9, part II, Para. 15*)

From this early development of Jung's concept of shadow, subsequent Jungian analysts developed a general idea used in reference to people of color. This most specifically occurred in Jungian dreamwork. Jung's words above can be compared with those of Marie-Louise von Franz and Fraser Boa in *The Way of the Dream: Conversations on Jungian Dream Interpretation* (1994: 107); in speaking with a White dreamer who shares with von Franz about one of his dreams, she gives this response:

The black garment represents a typical feature of the undeveloped inner anima figure. Just as we shall see that the animus in women is sometimes destructive and negative, the black anima is relatively negative in a man. The black anima indicates that his whole capacity to love is mostly autoerotic....

The peeling of the skin of the black female and the transformation into a white golden anima is the transformation of the loving capacities of a man, the transformation of his Eros from a primitive autoerotic fantasy into a true human capacity.

(*Author italics*)

Unfortunately, the image of African Americans in Jungian dreamwork as shadow, or the Shadow, was a major component of the work for decades. In changing times, the definition *shadow* was used to include not only the negative qualities of the unconscious but also a psychic location where we store all types of personal material that it is emotionally difficult to accept. This material may be considered by the ego to be positive or negative. However, the initial Jungian understanding of shadow was that it was negative, dark, and primitive and belonged to that of the primitive.

However, within the major teaching institutes, public programs, and literary training tools of American Jungian psychology—the *Collected Works*—the racial, non-multicultural thinking of Jung's psychology continues to survive without any disclaimers or updating.

Jung, a protégé and later colleague of Freud, was present in the beginning days of psychoanalysis. After his separation from Freud in 1912, Jung began the development of his own type of psychoanalysis, which he called *analytical psychology*.

Jung began his career at Burgholzi Hospital in Switzerland as a medical doctor working with schizophrenic patients. He became interested in how they fantasized, their dreams and delusions. In his private practice, Jung noticed that there were similarities between patients in both settings. This eventually led him to explore historical teachings regarding *archetypes*, or what he also later called the *collective unconscious*.

Jungian psychology is but one part of the broader field of American psychology. The establishment of Jungian psychology began in the early days of the twentieth century. Jung saw an opportunity for the creation of his particular type of psychoanalysis as opposed to that of Freud, who did not have the same level of interest as Jung in bringing psychoanalysis to America.

Freud said, after his first and only visit, that "America was a mistake." The context within which he made this statement implied that there was little merit in attempting to bring his psychoanalysis to America. It was a country unworthy of it. Jung may have felt that he could become a pioneer in the more open field that America presented since Freud was already established in Europe.

Jung's early relationships were with men such as G. Stanley Hall, William Alanson White, and Trigant Burrow. Though he had initially come to America with Freud, Jung later made trips unaccompanied by him. As their friendship deteriorated and Jung began to experience the emotional loss of his closeness with Freud, America might have been a way to become more of his own person in being identified with the *new* psychoanalysis—analytical psychology.

When Jung arrived in America in 1912, his main purpose was to engage in activities that would support his collective unconscious thesis: that race was not a factor in the archetypal realm—in the collective unconscious. He believed that he could confirm this idea by "testing" African Americans. Jung had already been exposed minimally to members of this ethnic group on his previous two trips to America. It was his belief that a study with this group would solidify a major point of his argument regarding archetypes.

Jung journeyed to Baltimore where he visited with Burrow. From there, he proceeded to Washington, D.C., where he remained for a month, interviewing and collecting the dreams of several African American men residing at the St. Elizabeth Hospital. Jung states in his *Collected Works* that one of the dreamers had a dream of Xion. Jung surmised that the dreamer could not have known about the Greek myth, nor about the symbolic wheel of the dream, and that therefore the dreamer had had an archetypal dream. He felt that this proved his point that the archetypes of the collective unconscious were not racially inspired energies.

As far as Jung has stated regarding this experience with the dreamers, he did not collect nor was he interested in the related *cultural* or *associative psychological* material from the dreamers. During the time that Jung completed his "study" on these dreamers, it would not have been unusual for patient information to have been collected and used for the purpose of the medical staff without the permission of family or outside governmental authority. This has only been a factor in more recent times with society's recognition of the need for patient's rights and privacy and their advocacy of these rights.

The idea of the collective unconscious was a very important one that Jung was eager to claim as a part of his own theoretical base and as a distinguishing mark to separate him from Freud. In his research, Jung wished to prove that the unconscious was not bound by race. He wanted to show *empirical studies* that everyone, regardless of *racial identity*, belonged to the collective unconscious. Not only were