

University of Nebraska - Lincoln

DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln

Great Plains Quarterly

Great Plains Studies, Center for

2009

Review of *Out of the Shadow: Ecopsychology, Story, and Encounters with the Land*. By Rinda West

Tom Lynch

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly>



Part of the [Other International and Area Studies Commons](#)

Lynch, Tom, "Review of *Out of the Shadow: Ecopsychology, Story, and Encounters with the Land*. By Rinda West" (2009). *Great Plains Quarterly*. 1218.

<https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/greatplainsquarterly/1218>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Great Plains Studies, Center for at DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Quarterly by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska - Lincoln.

Out of the Shadow: Ecopsychology, Story, and Encounters with the Land. By Rinda West. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007. xii+ 247 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$65.00 cloth, \$24.50 paper.

The postmodern era of critical theory has not been kind to Carl Jung. As Rinda West suggests, many postmodern critics denigrated Jung's notions of the collective unconscious and of archetypes as "essentialist and Eurocentric." Drawing on recent ideas in ecopsychology and neurobiology, however, West seeks to rehabilitate Jung for the post-postmodern era. She proposes that, based on current understandings in such fields as the biology of cognition, these ideas of Jung serve "as a way of acknowledging the power of our biological history and of talking about powerful tendencies to respond in certain situations common in human life."

Such a position is not the thesis of West's book, however, but one of its starting premises. In fact, *Out of the Shadow* is a wide-ranging book that has something to say not only about Jung and ecopsychology, but also about postcolonial literature, bioregionalism, and restoration biology, while also making some connections to the literature of the Great Plains.

As West summarizes, "this book traces a story of hope that emerges from the damage that has been done to people, cultures, and the land by an attitude of conquest." She begins "by looking at two nineteenth-century stories of adventure and exploration [Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* and Francis Parkman's *The Oregon Trail*] that illustrate how the Western attitude toward nature helped to rationalize the conquest of land and the people who lived on it." Emerging from these shadowed texts, West turns "to two novels of precolonial life that reveal the worldviews of people living as members of the natural community [Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and James Welch's *Fools Crow*]." After this look at the colonial past, West initiates "an examination of contemporary novels that speak to processes of healing, to ecological, psychological, and cultural restoration [Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing*, Marilynne Robinson's *Housekeeping*, N. Scott

Momaday's *The Ancient Child*, Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, Barbara Kingsolver's *Animal Dreams*, and the complete corpus of the Anishinaabe novels of Louise Erdrich.]"

In addition to the obvious Great Plains connection through Parkman, Welch, and Erdrich, the book is also relevant to students and residents of the Great Plains for a more crucial reason. In the Plains and prairies, the major ecological task is not preservation—alas, too little of original nature has been left to preserve—but restoration. And, while scientific land management treatises are important to restoration efforts, dwellers in the Plains and prairies must first and foremost imagine a new, a postcolonial relationship with their place, an act of imagination that is deeply psychological and spurred both by works of creative imagination and by scholarly studies such as this which examine and further that imaginative endeavor. Imagining a new relationship with nature is an urgent matter in the Great Plains. *Out of the Shadow* will help us to do so.

TOM LYNCH
Department of English
University of Nebraska–Lincoln