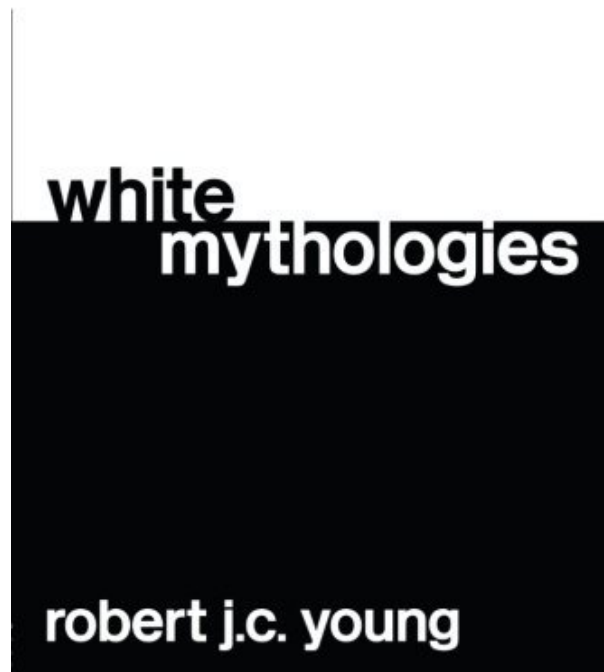
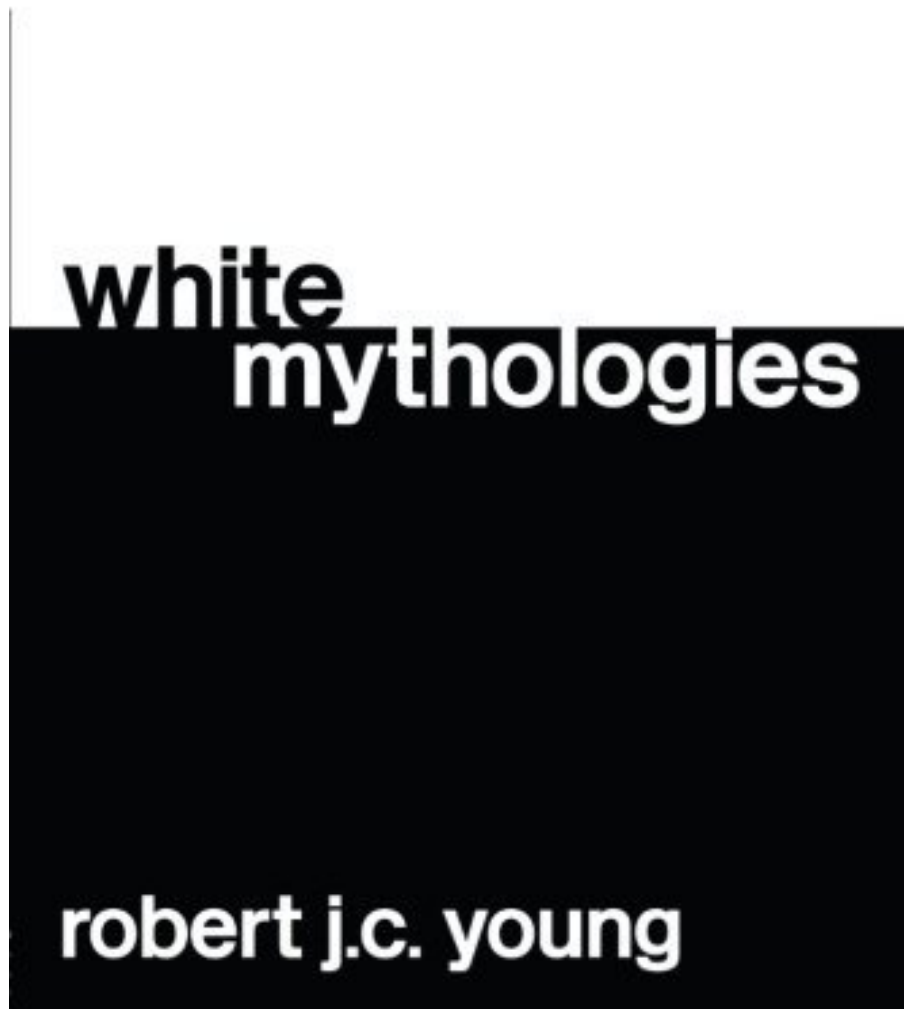


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In 1990, Robert Young's *White Mythologies* set out to question the very concepts of history and the West. Is it possible, he asked, to write history that avoids the trap of Eurocentrism? Is history simply a Western myth? His reflections on these topics provided some of the most important new directions in postcolonial studies and continue to exert a huge influence on the field. This new edition reprints what has quickly become a classic text, along with a substantial new essay reflecting on changes in the field and in the author's own position since publication.

An essential read for all those working in postcolonial theory, literature and history, this book cemented Young's reputation as one of the country's most influential scholars and, as a new preface by Homi Bhabha comments, made an original and invaluable intervention in the field, leading even the most established figures to rethink their own positions. Provoking further re-evaluation with the new introductory essay, this second edition will like its predecessor be a key text for every academic and student in the field.

- Sales Rank: #1505341 in Books
- Published on: 2004-08-18
- Released on: 2004-05-27
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.21" h x .69" w x 6.14" l, 1.02 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 304 pages

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Framing White Supremacy through the Hegelian Dialectic

By Herbert L Calhoun

Dr. Robert Young, the pre-eminent renaissance man of an intellectual, here warms up for his own intellectual tour de force "Mental Spaces" in this trenchant reassessment of the Hegelian/Marxist dialectic as being the most accurate representation to be used to deconstruct Western history as we have come to know it.

My assessment of this analysis goes as follows: There are simple (or piecewise) and complex (holistic reassessment through deconstruction) ways of assessing and referring to broad changes in the history of the world. The most complex and perhaps the most problematic (and now surely the most controversial, intellectually), is accepting, as an unexamined and unchallenged given, implicit meanings and understandings that are left standing as a part of the metaphysic of white supremacy -- which has emerged, de facto, as the only way of framing world culture. An alternative is to review and examine with a skeptical eye all the meanings and implicit ways of conceptualizing and organizing the world that this mystique has handed down to us.

Oddly, other than the Marxist dialectic (following on the heels of Hegel), history does not provide any natural ways or tools for demystifying what has been handed down to us as founding mythologies (or white male hero stories that have been rendered universal). Even to think about "getting beneath" this mystique

amounts to a kind of anti-patriotic (or anti-humanistic) heresy that in fact when viewed honestly constitutes nothing less than a revolution in political thought.

White history simply comes handed down to us "pre-cooked," as already pre-digested knowledge: as "texts" or canons, indeed as a white male generated metaphysic already embedded within a ready-made socio-political and cultural context: What we have bequeathed to us as history, to write and talk about is coterminous with existing white generated history and thus is already prejudged and profoundly biased narratives and texts. There is nothing else? No alternatives for cutting through this conceptual Gordian knot?

The best example of how this phenomenon works occurs in the case of religion (which is pretty much what white supremacy is), where a canon of theology based on a "book" (only in this case "the book" is all world history) existing above the plane of skeptical enquiry, is simply handed down uncritically as the existing unchallenged corpus of knowledge. So long as "God's existence" (however god may be defined), goes unchallenged, everything remains "upright" with the world. Challenging these controlling canonical assumptions however is a kind of deep conceptual heresy that threatens to fragment the edifice of knowledge -- in this case religious orthodoxy -- into the kind of chaos that it actually represents today. And as we know, fragmentation and chaos are not to be allowed as part of founding myths.

On a broader scale, the same theological paradigm applies to the unfolding of history -- the history of ideas and historicity more generally. What this author (and others like him) have discovered (and are trying to tell us) is that the whole of our historical, political and social knowledge - from the feudal, to the modern, and now to the post-modern eras, has been caught up in broad sets of pre-digested narratives that frame our worldview and understanding at a very deep almost metaphysical level. These built-in understandings are little more than mostly false mythologies about the meaning of male dominated white supremacy. As we are slowly discovering, they are "oppressively controlled knowledge systems" that have little or nothing at all to do with the realities that underlie them. Yet, it is these mythologies that "program" the minds of Western as well as non-Western cultures in the ways of the world.

For the most part, and at the same very fundamental level, these "knowledge projects" and their "products" are invariably about "unacknowledged systems of power and the politics" that have come to not so quietly rule the world. But importantly, they also rule the way we produce narratives that would allow us to understand and reassess what has happened in the past? The post-modern theorists refer to these "knowledge projects" as theories because that is pretty much what they are: implicit built-in assumptions about the way knowledge is to be conveyed in order to maintain in a steady state certain systems and "ways of power" and "ways of maintaining social order" - all of which have come to be seen as universal.

An important subtheme of the book is that Marx, by conflating various chauvinisms (like race and sex) into "class struggles," actually missed the trees for the forest. The devil Young claims lies in the details of the grid that slices and dices cultures into their constituent parts, of which class is just one of many overlapping categories. According to Young (now finally donning his Psychologist hat), almost everything in male superiority paradigms can be said to reduce to a phallo-logocentric Hegelian dialectic about Sartre's "Other." That is to say, the process by which the "Other" is made real in male superiority systems is through the "superior alpha male's fear" of the sexually threatening "outsider."

This according to Young is the sole dynamic that defines and controls everything in the white supremacy system. Said differently, the dialectic between "the other" and the "superior Alpha male beings" within the superior defined cultures, is basically a Freudian sex complex, one in which "the other" is both a threatening "object" and a "subject," simultaneously a threat and society's resolution to it. It is this subconscious sexual dialectic lying unacknowledged in the subtext, rather than Marx's class struggle, that is both the controlling

metaphor as well as the controlling dynamic of all cultures based on male dominated supremacy (which is to say all of them).

It should come as a surprise to no one that at least in the modern era (from the post-feudal era onwards) the controlling knowledge system, the controlling mythology, has been the unwritten and unacknowledged (political) theory of white male sexual supremacy. It alone frames and defines what is referred to as Western Civilization which comes to us pre-cooked as the "default culture of the world." As this author, as well as most Marxists analysts tell us, white supremacy has been best manifested and expressed in the pre-colonial era as the Western slave trade, the socio-economic and cultural system that (along with Newton's science) brought us fully into the modern era that gave us slavery as the first global economic commodity, and with it the ideas of progress, social and economic order based on racial hierarchies, the idea that progress means expansion by conquest, Protestantism, capitalism, etc.

But this author tells us that an even more general paradigm underlies this system of mythologies. The history of progress as we have come to know it does not just depend on the white sexual metaphysic, but also more generally on the hierarchical structures in which the social order that metaphysic creates. It is the dialectic in this discourse that defines the parameters of the system of power: the categories and gives them names, structures the rules and power relationships, and assigns meanings to all the processes that constitute the system.

The globalized colonial world that that the system of power called "White Supremacy" brought into being, was (and still remains) a de facto global political and cultural system: "The final "theory" about how the world is to be organized, one that still frames our knowledge about the world and about the way "systems of power "ought to operate." Except that it is all a carefully orchestrated lie. 100 stars

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This book is good for those who would like to have a broad ...

By SV

Young discusses history as an imperial/colonial narrative in this book. He basically traces the philosophical discourse of History from Hegel to Spivak. This book is good for those who would like to have a broad overview about the discourse of History.

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Five Stars

By LSE chap

Masterpiece

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