

**"Symbols in Dreams and Myths:  
A Response to  
The Shaman's Doorway (1976) and  
The Mythic Imagination (1990) --  
Two Books by Stephen Larsen"**

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**The Shaman's Doorway**

When the mythic imagination is cultivated, it is the creative source realm of the highest and best in human endeavor, the inspiration of the finest flowerings of our culture. (Page 7.)

As we work with mythic patterns, we find that they can be catalysts which initiate changes in consciousness. The ultimate dialogue is between consciousness (the undiluted perception of self and world), and those patterns to which consciousness has proven most susceptible: the archetypes that underlie the shape-shifting world of myth. (Page 15.)

Many people have no symbolic vocabulary, no grounded mythological tradition, by which to make their experiences comprehensible to themselves. (Page 81.)

An operative mythology provides structures and expresses otherwise inaccessible inner levels of psychological meaning. Such a mythology constitutes a comprehensive symbolic system which may function both for internal reference and for social dialogue. (Page 88.)

Dreams give access to one's inner life, which is other-than waking consciousness. (Page 89.)

In some traditional societies, it is believed that certain illnesses may best be cured by the interpretation of dreams facilitated by medicine societies during spring, fall, and mid-winter dream festivals. (Page 93.)

During a dream festival, when the dreamer -- or others -- feel that someone has made the right interpretation of a dream, the dreamer must give a gift to that person. A friendship is expected to spring up between them as a result of this psycho-symbolic transaction. (Page 97.)

If a dream expresses a "wish of the soul," everyone takes part in helping the individual to realise his/her wish. ... When a dream is enacted, audience members may play various parts. (Page 97.)

Public "dream interpretation ceremonies" may occur during dream festivals. (Page 98.)

The Senoi, like the Iroquois, value the enactment and making public of messages contained in their dreams. (Page 101.)

... A young person may seek to cross the threshold from adolescence to adulthood by going into the wilderness alone, to fast and await a vision or dream which serves as a psychological initiation. (Page 103.)

The archetypal dimension of such an experience serves to initiate one into a sense of belonging, not only to the social but also to the cosmic order. The initiate may return with a new name. (Page 103.)

To the patient it is a revelation when something altogether strange rises up to confront him/her from the hidden depths of the psyche -- something that is not his/her ego and thus is beyond the reach of his/her personal will. He/she has regained access to the sources of psychic life, and this marks the beginning of the cure. (Page 111.)

Jungian analysts feel the emergence of such archetypal material signals the onset of a natural curative process from within. (Page 111.)

There is a curative magic in finding one's meaningful place in the archetypal, cosmic order. (Page 112.)

Many of us have no training in turning one's attention to the living landscape within, and allowing one's energies to there enact their symbolic play. (Page 121.)

We need to learn ways to deal intelligently and creatively with mythopoetic consciousness. (Page 122.)

We are developing a relationship with the symbolic phantasmagoria that has been released into the collective mindscape in modern times. (Page 122.)

Having been shown by Darwin that the Garden of Eden is most likely not literally true, many of us have discarded our entire mythological orientation, with its psychological guiding functions as well. (Page 126.)

The central and unifying dialogue is between ordinary consciousness and the mythic imagination. (Page 171.)

The scientist is only the magician of the daylight world. He/she has lost touch with the nocturnal world of the imagination. (Page 186.)

Look at a person's soul. (Page 191.)

The visions obtained require the stabilising anchor of enactment. (Page 199.)

Our modern Western culture is a barren womb for the gestation of the sacred and lacks a framework for validating one's visionary experiences. (Page 200.)

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### **The Mythic Imagination**

Dreams break into this world. (Page xix.)

One needs to find one's mythic roots. (Page xxv.)

Knowledge of myths gives one a richly-furnished chamber of the psyche. (Page xxvii.)

Awaken to the presence of mythic themes in your life. (Page xxxii.)

An archetype is an identity larger than oneself. When one consciously plays an archetype, one enters an eternal role. (Page 3.)

Mythological symbols communicate and touch one beyond vocabularies of reason. (Page 4.)

Break out of an isolated human adventure, and participate in a larger social, cultural, historical, and spiritual ecology. (Page 5.)

We often repeat mythic patterns. (Page 11.)

Myths are symbols that contain emotions and ideas. (Page 25.)

In traditional cultures, mythological themes are presented at points of life development -- at stages of emotional, physical, and social transition. These moments are marked by corresponding rituals, which provide a mythic tissue of transformation for the growing psyche. (Page 33.)

Symbols of transformation help us transform. (Page 35.)

A myth may have a magical impact on layers of the psyche which cannot be reached by intellectual talk. (Page 42.)

In psychotherapy, the therapist often traces a destructive personal belief-and-behavior-complex back to an event, or series of events, and "exorcises" the destructive pattern through awareness and emotional release. However, I believe a belief-and-behavior-complex must be understood both in terms of its experiential origin and its mythic meaning for it to be truly worked through and transcended. (Page 61.)

In myth and dream, "impulse is transduced into image and symbol, and an internal plight is converted into a story plot" (Jerome Bruner). (Page 70.)

The individual soul plunges into the depths of his/her own psyche in search of renewed meaning and a sense of belonging. (Page 108.)

Images of animals can be living sources of power within the psyche. It can be a therapeutic encounter to enter into dialogue with imagined animals and discover what they need. Some may be sick, caged, or neglected, for examples. (Page 113.)

To have a richness of outer experience requires an inner wealth of symbolic forms: this is both the legacy and the invitation of the mythic imagination. (Page 114.)

Modern humanity is in search of a soul. (Page 117.)

One cause of "Soul sickness" is being cut-off from one's natural and healthy psychic environment. (Page 122.)

A woman had an impaired relationship with her own instinct and intuition. Her dreams were helping her improve her relationship with her unconscious. (Page 166.)

A symbol connected her with her energy source. (Page 174.)

The mythic world guides and interfuses events in the everyday world. These events may become (in one's perception) timeless, luminous, or intensely meaningful. (Page 181.)

Humanity needs a new sense of mythology, geared to the creative life of the individual who seeks his/her own way in the world and who, through following his/her own path, develops a relationship with the archetypal and mythical powers that inform life. (Page 227.)

It is this individual path to the mysteries, not the collective participation enjoined upon us by all of the religions, that may well constitute the ultimate human adventure and the achievement of personal wholeness. (Page 228.)

The modern mind still thirsts to drink at the well of mythic meaning. It yearns for experience of the world made sacred. (Page 232.)

The responsibility of the conscious mythmaker is to construct an appropriate "frame of reference" into which the powers are invited to show themselves (page 233.)

"Creative Mythology Exercises" (from The Mythic Imagination).

Ask for a dream or vision, and wait. (Page 25.)

Construct a container, a ritual form, to hold the mythic energy. The energies can then be safely and reliably invoked, summoned, confronted, and pleased. (Page 30.)

I invited him to find his inner guide to see what he advised. He said, "I find him in a cave." (Page 219.)

Look into a deep well. (Page 304.)

Look into a mirror. (Page 304.)

In a dream, what is the feeling? Seek to identify and describe colors, objects, perceptions, and themes. (Page 304.)

Stand before a doorway. (Page 308.)

Stand at the top of a spiral staircase that goes down. Go downward, spiraling seven times, to meet your guide. (Page 308.)

At the bottom of the staircase of seven spirals, look into the eyes of the person you find there. Ask this person, "Are you my guide?" Wait for confirmation or contradiction. If the answer is no, ask, "Could you take me to my guide?" (Page 309.)

Tell your guide what your challenging situation is, and ask, "What should I do?"  
You could ask,  
"May I visit my shadow?"  
"May I visit a deceased ancestor?"  
"May I visit ...?" (Page 309.)

Imagine walking in a beautiful garden. There are many plants and flowers. (Page 310.)

If animals are there, move like an animal you see. (Page 312.)

Cross a river. Come to a sacred grove. (Page 314.)

Ask whoever you meet, "Is there anything I could do for you?" (Page 314.)