

CENTRE FOR MYTH, COSMOLOGY AND THE SACRED

SUMMER SCHOOL LECTURES JULY 2021

1. Dr Martin Shaw: Romanticism as Activism (26 July)



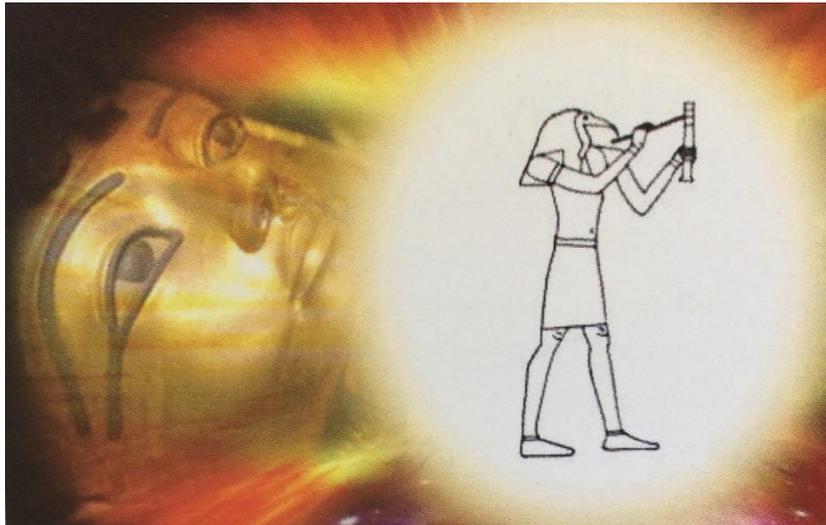
Dr Martin Shaw is a writer, storyteller and acclaimed teacher of myth. Author of the award winning Myhteller trilogy, his essay and conversation with Ai Wei Wei was published by the Marciano Arts Foundation in early 2019. His translations of Gaelic poetry and folklore have been published in Orion Magazine, Poetry International, Kenyon Review, Poetry Magazine and the Mississippi Review. He runs The West Country School of Myth and directs the MA in the Poetics of Imagination at Dartington College, Devon. This is what he has to say about Romanticism as Activism:

“We are a Provençal school of courtly love disguised as a monastery for elegant pirates disguised as a humble Camelot resting in the orange orchards around Lorca’s Alhambra, whilst sometimes showing up on the wilds of Dartmoor. The doors to many centuries and landscapes are open. We believe that it is the vocation of becoming an adult to not let go of the notion of goodness, and bravery, and compassion in the complexity of life. That you earn your name. Unfashionable I know. To not let go of the reality that a grief well curated rides always and forever alongside the snorting pony of delight, that our children’s souls are designed to happily gawp askance at adults who grow more tantalisingly wild as they age, people not folded in by societal trance-states and mesmeric, deadening fictions. Folks who know the story they’re in. We want to bless you and raise you up so you work harder than you ever knew you could to make beauty in the furnace of the world. And that involves not complacency but longing. Tasty, provocative, holy longing. Every single being of substance I ever encountered rides a horse of longing. Rumi says you can spot such folks, and your capacity to spot one means you are one, maybe in disguise ... We risk caring for a sophisticated hope that discreetly gleams in the absolute centre of each teardrop of our necessary sorrow. That our very stories could

contain the knucklebones of wolves and the sweetness of creek water. That barley and aster-flowers may grow in the fragrant acres of our language. If that's grand, well, let it be grand. We don't go easy. This is what we stand for. Romanticism as activism. Is that clear enough for you?" <https://schoolofmyth.com/interview/>

This lecture was originally given on 4 March 2017.

2. Lucy Wyatt: Psychedelics, Cities and a Question of Origins (27 July)

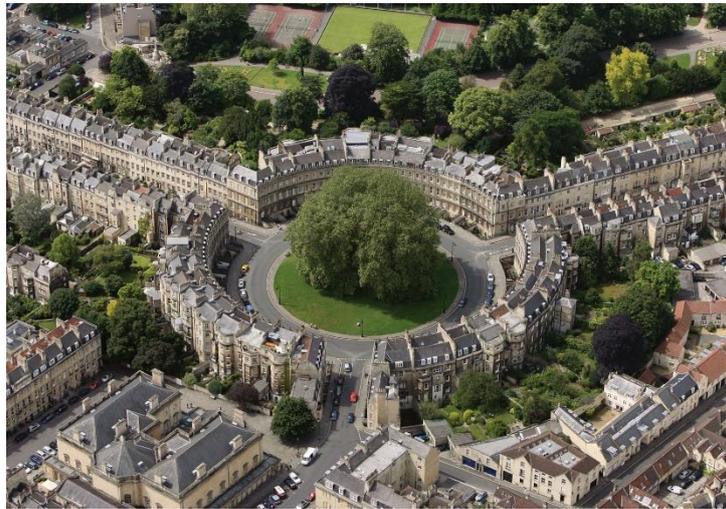


Lucy Wyatt is an independent researcher and writer with an MA in European Studies from the University of Sussex. In 2010 she published *Approaching Chaos – could an ancient archetype save 21st century civilisation?* (O Books), which proposes that cities appeared not from a farming experiment but from a ‘shamanically’ accessed blueprint. She has given talks at alternative events and festivals such as Secret Garden Party and Green Gathering and has run the ‘Eternal Knowledge Festival’ for several years. She is now working on an eco-conversion project in Somerset.

We assume that cities evolved out of a farming experiment at the end of the Ice Age 7000 years ago. What if that isn't so? What if the whole concept of civilization can be seen as the result of secret visionary experiences of an elite priesthood who used certain substances to facilitate astral travel, and access the basic principles of cities? This talk will explore the evidence for suggesting that it is time for shamanism to ‘come out of the jungle’ and be acknowledged in its true context as a possible sophisticated stimulus for the design of original ancient cities.

This lecture was first given on 12 November 2016.

3. Dr Simon Wilson: John Wood and the Cosmological Vision of Albion (28 July)

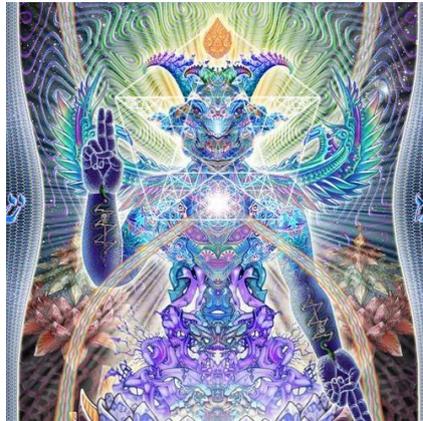


Dr Simon Wilson has a long-standing interest in the spiritual traditions of the West. He is currently a senior lecturer at Canterbury Christ Church University, and has published on a wide variety of topics, including the Palais Idéal, the Grail, colour symbolism, the sublime, John Michell, and John Dee in the Czech Lands. He has been a lecturer and programme director for the MA in Myth, Cosmology and the Sacred, and also supervises PhD students.

John Wood (1704-1754) is best known today as the chief architect of 18th century Bath. Yet he was more more than just a town planner: inspired by Pythagorean cosmology, the rocky vestiges of prehistory, and the stories of King Bladud, he aimed at restoring the ancient enchantment which, he believed, had once held sway over the south-west of England. Bath, in Wood's view, had been founded by Bladud, the legendary tenth ruler of Britain. Bladud, too, was responsible for the great megalithic temples of he south-west, such as Stonehenge or Stanton Drew, which he constructed according to Pythagorean principles, encoding in them, and in their relationship to each other in the landscape, the order and harmony of the cosmos. Wood was not alone in believing that prehistoric monuments reveal the presence of primordial, mystical truths in the fields of Britain. We will compare his speculations with those of his contemporaries, such as the antiquarian William Stukeley (1687-1765). Whatever else these insights may offer, they reflect a level of imaginative engagement with the past which was to be lacking in much of later archaeology.

This lecture was originally given on 28 October, 2016.

4. **Dr William Rowlandson: Swedenborg's angels, psychedelic elves and Bilbo Baggins: a question of autonomy (29 July)**



Dr William Rowlandson is Senior Lecturer in Hispanic Studies at the University of Kent. He has written a book entitled *Borges, Swedenborg and Mysticism*, which examines the relationship between Borges' own recorded mystical experiences and his appraisal of Swedenborg and other mystics. William's published books and articles concern various areas of Latin American studies, including a monograph on the Cuban poet and novelist Jose Lezama Lima and the history of Guantanamo Bay and Gitmo detention centres. He was former co-director, with Angela Voss, of the Centre for the Study of Myth at the University of Kent, and co-editor with her of *Daimonic Imagination: Uncanny Intelligence* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013): available at <https://mythcosmologysacred.com/daimonic-imagination-uncanny-intelligence/>

In a 1926 essay entitled 'A History of Angels' Argentine poet Jorge Luis Borges considers the rich history of angels in art, dating from the Book of Job and other ancient texts through medieval theologians and poets to the present day. He concludes that 'The human imagination has pictured a horde of monsters (tritons hippogriffs, chimeras, sea serpents, unicorns, devils, dragons, werewolves, cyclopes, fauns, basilisks, demigods, leviathans, and a legion of others) and all have disappeared, except angels' Throughout his life, Borges paid close attention to the works of Swedenborg, describing him as an authentic, valiant, and above all trustworthy explorer of other realities. A distinction of sorts is thus established between Swedenborg's angels and the 'imaginary' monsters listed in his essay. The angels are in some measure more real, more autonomous, more ontologically determined, than other beings. Likewise, there are many accounts of people encountering elves on an ayahuasca, mushroom or DMT trip. In particular, many report that they appear to interrupt activities already taking place, that they have stumbled into an elven engagement rather than created it. How might we judge such claims? How do we appraise experience of the daimonic? In this presentation William examines our relationship with this 'horde of monsters' and angels, considering the nature of our investment – or lack of - in such nonmaterial beings as being inseparable from our relationship with fully material beings.

This lecture was originally given on 24 May 2014.

