

## **Abstract**

### **Shamanic Initiation: Map of the Soul The Actor-Healer Archetype Revealed**

**by**

**Lisa Sloan**

**This dissertation is a theoretical study that makes use of a phenomenological and hermeneutic method to research the question: What is the experience of a shamanic initiation? This study seeks to understand the structure of the human psyche by researching the way a transformation of consciousness can occur through a personal contact with the dream-like symbols and motifs which characteristically make up the shamanic initiation.**

**I have drawn upon my own experience to demonstrate how, with no prior knowledge of its pattern, archetypal symbols of initiation spontaneously emerged from the depths of my psyche, producing an alteration in consciousness. Through a weaving of anthropological studies with depth psychological theory, I demonstrate how a universal pattern of mystical initiation is part of the inherited structure of the psyche accessible to all.**

**Distinct but woven within the study is the following question: How is the archetypal constellation of the actor-healer revealed in the shamanic initiation, and what is its significance? I propose that in order for a transformation in consciousness to take place, the mythic imagery within the initiation experience must be interacted with in a sincere way. The psychic structure which is revealed through this interaction, I call the actor-healer archetype. I conclude**

that this archetype functions within the psyche as a healing, connecting force, by establishing a relationship between the individual and the mythic realms, and that it is this mediating force which enables the myth's regenerative powers to flow forth into consciousness and into the world. This archetype illuminates how, at its core, the psyche is dramatic and theatrical. It also shows that by playing our parts in life, we help to weave the imaginal fabric out of which we and the manifest world arise. Through an awareness of this archetype, which the shaman embodies, a perspective can be awakened which apprehends that we are truly co-participants in creation.

Finally, in the absence of a cultural shamanic image, we are forced to look outside our culture for justification of our shamanic impulses and for verification of our mystical experiences of initiation. In seeking a home for my own experience, I discovered that Dionysos has deep shamanic origins and propose that the awakening of a Dionysian consciousness can give our culture and our psychology back its own shamanic ancestry. This consciousness would have, in addition, important eco-psychological implications for the relationship of our soul to the soul of the world.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission