

## Featured Book Review

# *The Magic of Shamanism*

Arvick Baghramian, a student of Jonathan Horwitz, didn't set out to write a book, rather to study for a PHD, but her guides had other ideas and *The Magic of Shamanism* is the delightful result. In it the author interweaves her own background as an Armenian, born in Iran but living most of her life in Europe and the USA, with how she found shamanism and her following experiences as a shamanic healer. The book also contains considerable theoretical information on shamanism which is combined well with the author's personal journey.

This is a well written, well referenced and thoughtful book which covers the basic definitions and origins of shamanism, how people are called as a shaman and the initiations they may undergo, shamanic worlds and landscape, the shamanic journey, spirit helpers, shamanism as a spiritual practice, and ancient and modern shamanic healing. The 'Magic' in the title is the magic of the shamanic journey as a means of transformation and a whole chapter is dedicated to this including case studies which exemplify the transformation that is possible.

At several times whilst reading the book I found questions that I didn't know I had being answered, bits of the jigsaw slotting into place as it were and for me this was a wonderful by product of the book. This is a book that I know I will read again and again for there is plenty more in there to find. I would recommend it to anyone interested in shamanism and shamanic healing.

*'The Magic of Shamanism'* was reviewed by Yvonne Ryves [www.yvonnerives.com](http://www.yvonnerives.com)  
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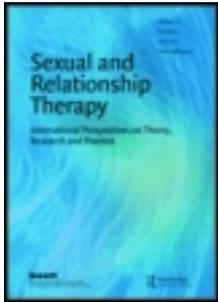
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### The magic of Shamanism: the healing power of the Shamanic journey

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*The magic of Shamanism: the healing power of the Shamanic journey*, by Arvick Baghrastian. Sussex, England: Book Guild Publishing, 2007, 232 pages, £17.99 (hardback). ISBN 978-1-846-24140-6.

This book achieves something very impressive. It is a deep portrayal of Shamanism in its many forms and yet it is written in a completely accessible way for all readers whether they have prior knowledge of Shamanism or not. It gives a thorough overview of Shamanic practices across the world and the similarities in beliefs and methods despite huge geographical distances between the Shamans themselves. Baghrastian suggests that these similarities come about not through migratory transfer of knowledge but through the common development of human consciousness and because the methods are proved effective through trial and error. In this way, the work of the Shaman transcends cultural belief systems and assumptions about reality, rendering them irrelevant. *The magic of shamanism* describes the process of being a Shaman and how they journey into altered states of consciousness in order to access healing power. The distinction is made between traditional forms of practising Shamanism and the modern practice of Shamanic counselling which has been adopted in the West. The author makes links to Jungian and transpersonal psychological theories in explaining how Shamanic healing fits into western society.

A general theme across the book is that all things in this life have a consciousness and a contribution to make and the work of the Shaman emphasizes this beautiful circularity. The Shaman is asked for help, seeks guidance from the spirits and other world advisors, receives this, sometimes directly and sometimes in the form of metaphors, and carries this advice back to the person in need who can in turn then give more to their life and experience through taking that advice. Baghrastian, using case studies, explains how Shamanic counselling varies from this in empowering the client to journey him or herself for guidance with help from the Shamanic counsellor, thus taking a more active role in their growth and development. There are moving descriptions of the power of these journeys and of the transformative nature of using a crisis to aid personal development. The aims of Shamanic healing differ from the reductionist methods of western medicine where there are specialists for each system and part of the body. Medical treatment emphasises ridding the patient of an ailment in an attempt to restore them to a previous state of health whereas healing aims to alleviate the suffering holistically and allow for new improved levels of growth and functioning for that person.

Arvick Baghrastian was originally trained as a social worker and then a therapist before she discovered Shamanism. Within this book she has given a fascinating insight into the therapeutic uses of Shamanic practice and has certainly left me with the desire to know more about this area of healing work.

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*Men's sexual health: fitness for satisfying sex*, by Barry W. McCarthy and Michael E. Metz. Oxford: Routledge, 2008, 214 pages, £12.95 (paperback). ISBN 978-0-415-95638-3.

I took up this book with great anticipation, as a male doctor who has dealt over many years with many male patients with sexual problems. However, I am going to turn