

**Lecture & Workshop for Idaho Friends of Jung
Becca Tarnas**

**Friday Evening Lecture:
The Synchronicity of the Two ‘Red Books’:
Jung, Tolkien, and the Imaginal Realm**

In the year 1913, both C.G. Jung and J.R.R. Tolkien, independently of each other, began to undergo profound imaginal experiences. They had each stepped across a threshold and entered into another world, the realm of imagination, the world of fantasy. For Jung these initially spontaneous visionary experiences, which he later developed into a meditative technique called active imagination, were recorded in the *Liber Novus*, or *The Red Book*. The experiences narrated in *The Red Book* became the seeds from which nearly all his subsequent work flowered. For Tolkien this imaginal journey revealed to him the world of Middle Earth, whose stories and myths eventually led to the writing of *The Lord of the Rings*, a book he named within its own contextual history *The Red Book of Westmarch*. Although working in different fields—namely psychology and philology, respectively—there are many synchronistic parallels between Jung’s and Tolkien’s ‘Red Book periods’: the style of the many works of art they produced at this time, to the nature of their visions and dreams, and an underlying similarity in world view that emerged from their experiences. All these suggest the two men may have been treading, at times, the same paths through the archetypal realm.

The revelations of this research bring to the surface questions about the nature of imagination and its relationship to the collective unconscious or collective psyche, which hold deep implications for recognizing a re-enchanted world view reborn out of the reductive materialism of modernity. With Tolkien and Jung as preliminary guides, we are offered a return to the depths of an ensouled cosmos in which imagination saturates the very foundations of reality.

Saturday Workshop
The Synchronicity of the Two ‘Red Books’:
Jung, Tolkien, and the Imaginal Realm

*“To give birth to the ancient in a new time is creation. . . . The task is to
give birth to the old in a new time.”*

– C.G. Jung, *The Red Book*

*“Fantasy remains a human right: we make in our measure and in our derivative mode,
because we are made: and not only made, but made in the image and likeness of a
Maker.”*

– J.R.R. Tolkien, *“On Fairy-Stories”*

What does it mean to imagine? What is the human connection to creativity? What is the relationship between imagination and archetypes? Building upon the previous night’s lecture on *The Synchronicity of the Two Red Books*, in this workshop Becca Tarnas will explore more deeply the parallels between Jung’s and Tolkien’s imaginal experiences and their creative works, and apply these findings to our own creative processes and engagement with the imaginal realm.

Jung advised each person to consider making his or her own Red Book from the fantasies that arise through the practice of active imagination, and to return to it like you would to a sanctuary or cathedral, for your soul is within its pages. This workshop will be a bricolage of dialogue and lecture, along with an exploration of art and text, in order to engage with the practice of active imagination and open a discussion of what it means to each create our own Red Book.

*Becca Tarnas is a writer, artist, and practicing archetypal astrologer, as well as a doctoral student in the Ecology, Spirituality, and Religion program at the California Institute of Integral Studies. She is writing her dissertation on the synchronicity between the “Red Books” of C.G. Jung and J.R.R. Tolkien. Becca also received her MA from CIIS in the Philosophy, Cosmology, and Consciousness program, and her BA from Mount Holyoke College in Environmental Studies and Theater Arts. She writes regularly on archetypal astrology and other topics at BeccaTarnas.com and is an editor of *Archai: The Journal of Archetypal Cosmology*. To read an interview regarding Becca’s work, please visit [The Thinker’s Garden](http://TheThinker’sGarden.com), a website dedicated to presenting the arcane and sublime aspects of literature, history, and art. Becca will be presenting this lecture and workshop on the heels of a research trip to England where she will have been able to explore the J.R.R. Tolkien archives in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, which houses original art and textual material that Tolkien created over the course of his literary and artistic career.*