



Smoke Hole

Looking to the Wild in the Time of the Spyglass



Dr. Martin Shaw

Publication Date: May 20th, 2021 (US/CAN)

ISBN 978-1-64502-095-0

\$19.95 USD • \$25.95 CAD

Hardcover • 5 x 7 ¾ • 144 pages

Black & white illustrations throughout

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“Shaw has so much wisdom and knowledge about the old stories. It emanates from his pores. His work is a collection of little symphonies, hitting all the notes of human emotion. It’s Shakespearian. Pin-drop wonder.”

– JOHN DENSMORE, The Doors

Through the smoke hole, we will find beauty in the wild. Through the smoke hole, we will escape the gaze of the spyglass and find ourselves.

At a time when we are all confronted by not one, but many crossroads in our lives—identity, technology, trust, love, politics and a global pandemic—celebrated mythologist, master storyteller and wilderness guide Martin Shaw delivers *Smoke Hole*, a work of literary tonic. In *Smoke Hole* Martin shares three ancient stories that are metaphors for our world today, a world assailed and controlled by the seductive promises of social media. Martin shows us how we are losing our sense of direction, our sense of self.

He encourages us to use these stories as “a commons for the imagination, a place to breathe deeper, feel steadier and become acquainted with rapture.” *Smoke Hole* is a passionate call to arms, to break away from networks, and rejoin and recreate communities. Through these myths Martin helps us better equip ourselves for the complexities of what modern life throws at us: fake news, abuse of power, parenthood, climate crises, addictive technology and more. Interwoven with his experiences as a wilderness rights of passage guide, Martin brings unique insight and extraordinary poignancy to the challenges faced today, and illuminates—through story—a path forward.

He writes: “*In Siberian myth, when you want to hurt someone, you crawl into their tent and close the smoke hole. That way God can’t see them. Close the smoke hole and you break connection to the divine world. Mountains, rivers, trees.*” If we are losing ourselves, we must look up through the smoke hole to find a new vision. He urges readers to use this book as a conduit to the truth found in wilderness and beauty, to use these myths as both guides and allies – to hold them in our pocket.

About the Author



Dr Martin Shaw is an acclaimed teacher of myth. Author of the award-winning Mythteller trilogy (*A Branch from the Lightning Tree*, *Snowy Tower*, *Scatterlings*), he founded the Oral Tradition and Mythic Life courses at Stanford University, and is director of the Westcountry School of Myth in the UK. He has introduced thousands of people to mythology, and for twenty years Shaw has been a wilderness rites of passage guide, working with at-risk youth, those who are unwell, returning veterans as well as many women and men seeking a deeper life. His translations of Gaelic poetry and folklore (with Tony Hoagland) have been published in *Orion Magazine*, *Poetry International*, *Kenyon Review*, *Poetry magazine* and the *Mississippi Review*. Shaw’s most recent books include *The Night Wages*, *Cinderbiter*, *Wolf Milk*, and *Courting the Wild Twin* to name a few. His essay and conversation with Ai Weiwei on myth and migration was released by the Marciano Arts foundation.