

Practicing Loreology: Weaving Stories Reenchanting and Humane



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Note: This paper continues but expands upon various online articles, including [“What Is a Loreologist?”](#) and [“The Wisdom in Enlivening Fiction.”](#)

Imagine you’ve been practicing a vocation most of your life, but under titles that name only pieces of it.

In my case, writing tutor and instructor. Psychodynamic psychotherapist and group facilitator. Depth psychologist. Mythographer. Ecopsychologist. Terrapsychologist. Higher ed administrator. Graduate teaching trainer. Therapist trainer. Qualitative research advisor. Dream worker. Professor. Author. Presenter. Consultant with clients ranging from individuals to corporations.

I have been paid to work as all of these, but none captures exactly what I do.

New professions come into being in various ways: companies or governments make room for them, disciplines form around them, bold souls imagine them and try them out... In the case of my profession, that of loreologist, I practiced it and made a living at it long before the right word for it occurred to me. In a sense, it dreamed itself into being. Like all other professions, however created, it began as an imagining.

Students and clients undergoing rapid change often ask me how I do my kind of work. In response, this article calls for and outlines the development of loreology as a new vocation. My hope is that its practice in hands other than mine will take it in entirely novel directions, and by doing so contribute to the varieties of deeply transmutational storytelling we must undertake to adapt and flourish as a species.

What Is a Loreologist?

A loreologist is a mentor with resources for exploring the limits and possibilities of the personal and collective lore we navigate by to deepen, expand, or replace it. Why? So we can move from being confined by our stories to authoring them. Instead of the stories having us, we retell them in ways that confirm and empower, finishing old business so we can transition to what’s new.

We tend to think we make our way through life and work via our attitudes, values, beliefs, convictions, decisions, facts, and plans, sometimes including ideas and aspirations in the mix. And that is true. What often remains unconscious, however, is the extent to which all of these are embedded in stories. No fact, no belief, no plan stands by itself without some sort of narrative explanatory context.

Stories we tell ourselves explain us to ourselves. They frame our relationships, guide our work in the world, suggest which values matter most to us. We are wired for story. Quite a lot of research shows that the tales, books, shows, movies, and games we prefer not only influence us directly, but help us understand how to live and get along with one another. Instead of being passive consumers, we use the stories washing through us to create and recreate ourselves. Our health, healing, and sanity depend largely on quality of this creation.

We can get leverage for change via attitude, symptom, behavior, or goal, but why not go directly to the guiding stories themselves? We all have them; they are foundational. Change our primary stories and our life paths too.

Introducing Loreology

***Loreology** is the craft, study, and philosophy of how we use fiction as compelling lore, with varying degrees of consciousness, for weaving our web of guiding stories, personal or collective, with all their limits, enchantments, and possibilities.*

“Fiction” (from “to form, to build”) to a loreologist does not mean “stuff I just made up.” As many authors testify, the characters come in, the plots unfold surprisingly, the fabulous realms shimmer into presence. Tolkien keeps writing to find out who Boromir is; Le Guin keeps writing to discover the world of Earthsea. Deep in reverie, C. G. Jung tries to intellectually interpret two imaginary figures, only to hear them unexpectedly push back: “We are real and not images.” Because he welcomes these and other “inner” figures, they teach him things he never suspected about human nature.

We tend to contrast fictional with real, as though they were opposites. We say that someone trying to deceive us is peddling fictions. They are not: they are peddling lies. Stories written to push a belief are not fiction either: they are propaganda. Real fiction has its own kind of imaginal reality. The opposite of “fictional” is not “real,” therefore, but “unimaginative.”

A long tradition of imagination as *gnosis*, as deep intuitive knowledge directly perceived, stretches back through Jungian psychology, Romanticism, Post-Impressionism, alchemy, Sufism, Hermeticism, Gnosticism, Taoism, Shinto, Egyptian religion, shamanism, and other wisdom traditions around the world. From every land bursts forth magnificent folklore, the great dreams of a people: sacred stories (“mythology”), folktales, rituals, legends, fairytales, and entire cosmologies and creation tales.

In other words, fiction represents a noble dreaming forth from the deepest levels of the psyche, whether personal or collective. Even cheap fantasies, plots of dated sitcoms, ads that tell a tale, and cartoons drawn just for money emanate from these hidden wellsprings.

The psyche (conscious and unconscious experience taken as a whole) draws on all of it, sublime or silly, documented or dreamlike, in fashioning the lore by which we live.

What is lore? **Lore** is a blend of specialized fiction and practice usually taken as authoritative. "Lore" can refer to knowledge or tradition handed down, whether communally, professionally, or more exclusively (e.g. initiatory or esoteric lore). That includes folklore, but, more recently, it can also mean the backstory of a game or fantasy world (baseball lore, Star Trek lore) and even fictional cosmologies and wisdom paths (Discworld, the Bene Gesserit Way). As a family therapist, I often saw family lore at work: influential origin stories and emotional legacies handed down the generations but seldom inquired into.

Some of us hold our lore literally. The New Testament or the Vedas become the actual word of God, for instance, although both have been heavily rewritten by human hands down the centuries. Scientism, the belief that only scientifically acquired knowledge counts, is lore; scientific discovery involves facts with explanatory stories attached. Holding lore literally leads to conflicts with people who hold a different lore literally: where we are absolute, Jung observed, there you see our religion. Even if we identify as atheists or believe we prefer facts to fancies.

We concentrate our compelling fictions into many kinds of lore: that of nature, career, "tradition," nationalism, discipline, subdiscipline, philosophy, religion, esoteric cult... If we hold our lore literally, it becomes a defining tale of Truth for us, foundational to how we see life, ourselves, each other, the world.

We then direct that foundational lore into **keystone stories**: *the applied lore that guides us.*



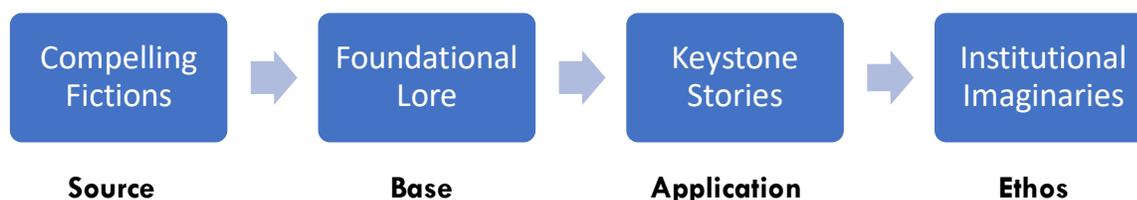
Keystone stories too come in many flavors, always individually created whatever their cultural overlays. They serve as shorthand tellings about what our lore *means to us* in specific situations.

When I was young, for example, my fund of lore included the intergenerational family story of how working hard would always advance you in the world. This meant obeying a keystone story of having to settle for soul-destroying work because all work was good. Although this story made my dad miserable throughout his entire career, a career of prolonged emotional suffering, he refused to question it. When I dissolved the lore behind it with counterimages of productive people happy with their work, I dropped the old keystone story and went back to school to study psychology. This triggered family pushback—keystone stories die hard—but I persisted, fortunately.

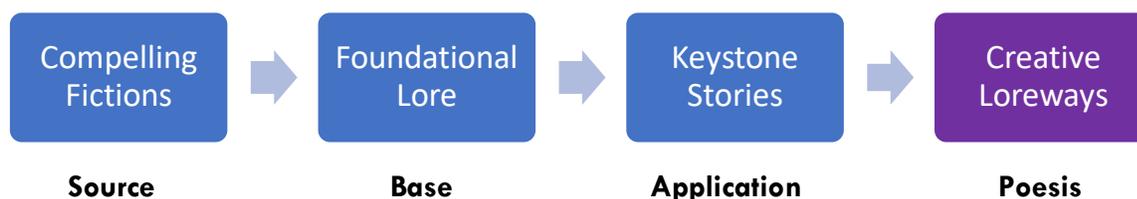
It's fairly common for people who share similar lore to devise very different keystone stories with it. One rights advocate might wield her feminism to destroy male self-esteem wherever she finds it; another, to educate men about the exciting possibilities within lasting systemic change. How we apply our lore depends on the usually unstated and often unconscious emotional agenda behind a particular story.

Keystone stories in turn coagulate into institutionalized forms of imagining: creeds, philosophies, patriotisms, political systems, countercultural blocs, grand doctrines... most of which would lose

their authority if seen through as framed by fictions. Then they would have to rely on attraction, interest, and inspiration, a level of honest appeal many of them could not sustain. Can you imagine how much religion would have to change if no longer driven by fear and obedience? Or law, if not permeated by judgmental good-vs-evil absolutism? Or work, if we refused to do any that did not satisfy? Or science, deprived of its unchallenged hierarchical pecking order?



There is an alternative. Instead of taking our guiding tales so literally, demanding of them absolute Truth, Authority, or Proof, what if we did all this perpetual storying and restorying consciously and playfully for once? How might the outcome be different?



A **loreway** is a consciously woven web of humane and fulfilling keystone stories by which we step further into our humanity and maturity. An institution can encourage that too, but many do not. The corrupt ones pretend to.

For people who don't need a Big Story like a religion, mythology, philosophy, or ideology, could a set of fascinating working fictions suffice for guidance, support, and gnosis? Fictions not to believe, but to believe in?

I've known people for whom this was true. Speaking for myself, the more I learn about myself, other people, and the living world, and the more I cherish the diversity of life and feel at home in the cosmos, the less I care about big systems, totalistic narratives, or supposed absolutes. The fables, myths, and wisdom tales are enough: their value to me does not depend on authentication from outside by self-appointed authorities of divine or scientific validation.

A personal loreway involving reenchantment of some important dimension of living is a **charmway**, a path of inspiring wisdom and practical inspiration. Picture assembling a new worldview that makes love and work exciting again. One form of this is clarifying one's life philosophy through fiction and the arts. A colleague, for example, is building herself a worldview, path to gnosis, and root of community around disco. She grew up with the Persian version of it and loves it. She hopes this path will serve others too as a playful terpsichorean spirituality. If you like to dance, you're included.

A collective loreway is a **loreosophy**, an imaginative body of fictionally framed narrative and personal practice that fills out a mythic-feeling story arc and provides life guidance through ideals, a

sense of play, fun, and meaning to participate in. In other words, archetypally rich tales told for guidance and vision. And fun. More on that below.

Note that loreology is both loric and metaloric, within a story and observant of it, especially in how it steps back from and understands its central practice: loreologizing. If we look for an archetype at the heart of practicing loreology, we might glimpse the busy Mage with a dash of Bard mixed in, accompanied by Muses. We work toward stories that enchant and inspire.

Loreologizing in Five Phases

We come to loreologizing, the craft of the loreologist. **Loreologizing** explores possibilities for deepening, expanding, replacing, or reinterpreting the lore from which we assemble our guiding keystone stories and imaginaries. The goal is to learn from the stories we navigate by, understand their deep structures, and move them away from constriction and unconsciousness and toward flexibility and openness.

To grasp loreologizing, let us walk briefly through five phases of my own work, with individuals, groups, or large organizations, and whether with sense of place, family roles and legacies, charmway assembly, training and education, life myth discovery, conflict resolution, applied folklore, nature reconnection, dream resource work, or deep research.

Phase 1: Exploration

This means investigating the stories by which people currently operate. What are they? Where did they come from? How well do they work? Which are conscious and which not? More specifically: Why does a client remain in the role of martyr, and how does this impact others? What archetypal images inform a company's creation story, the tale of its origins? What stories go unvoiced beneath the storied heroic armor we wear? What aspects of religious teaching does a family literalize to disrupt a family member's relationship with an outsider? What do dreams say about all this?

Phase 2: Integration

In this phase we offer our clients or learners the results of our Phase 1 exploration. These should be translated into terms that can be assimilated. Also, in terms of lore, what underlying motifs, myths, archetypes, or legacies have come to light? What has been learned about the value of the current keystone stories? What purposes have they served in the family system? At work? Elsewhere? How do these learnings enable the learners to consider alternative tellings? Unsatisfying stories repeat until their underlying messages are understood.

Phase 3: Transmutation

Questions asked in this phase include: How can the images and remnants of the old stories and its lore serve a new, more expanded and more satisfying set? What underlying vision, idea, archetype, or strange attractor seeks new expression? When someone stuck to the Hero image tires of it, worn out at last, what other figures in the story are available for guidance? How might a work team reimagine what it stands for? What necessary losses can be alchemized into new pathways forward? What strengths would a new or transmuted story bring?

Phase 4: Application

New lore, or old lore differently held, leads to new keystone stories—or stories remade from previous ones—which bring new goals, values, and actions. The tellers now follow specific self-determined steps to launch the new or revised keystone story (vision, idea, life path, career, core aspiration), drawing on whatever support is available. The new story should be announced and celebrated as a rallying hub for whatever creative actions follow.

Phase 5: Evaluation

After a suitable amount of time has passed, an initial evaluation checks on how the new story is unfolding. What lore powers it? Where is it working? What are its unexpected shadows and pitfalls? In what ways might it need adjusting, whether within the story or in its implementation? What new stories does it engender? How does it confirm and empower people near and far? How does it align with natural cycles, bring healing where needed, challenge injustices with alternatives? How does it incorporate elements of prior keystones?

Here is a brief way of understanding loreologizing: We explore the lore that guides actions and worldviews, looking at the fictions comprising it and the keystone stories grounded in it, bring underlying images, assumptions, themes, etc. to the surface, and give people tools for refashioning their lore or finding new lore for new stories to move forward with.

Points to bear in mind along the way:

- We get stuck when our stories cannot envision necessary change. Conflicts break out at the intersection of stuck stories and changing outward circumstances. Conflicts signal a need to reassess guiding stories.
- Moving to a new guiding story parallels the departure-sacrifice-return structure of the archetype of initiation.
- The pull of future possibilities works more persuasively than the push of can'ts and shouldn'ts.
- No interventions work that do not blend somehow, at least at first, with the current dearly held keystone story, whose value must be validated, as well as the lore it comes out of.
- Although big mythologies are in dissolution, mythic images and motifs persist and must be recognized and worked into stories that move things forward.
- We generally can't move to a higher or deeper level of consciousness without someone already there to greet us.

Implicit in loreologizing is an attitude of *noetic hope*: *the firm expectation, based on history and experience, that things don't have to be this way, that what was done yesterday need not determine the story of tomorrow.* We can do better because we can restory ourselves to be better.

Loreology as Vocation and Avocation

The liberating aspect of embarking on a new vocation is also, in a culture ruled from above by the threat of material scarcity, the scary aspect. How to make this work financially?

Making an unrecognized vocation—a soul calling—work as a viable career can be challenging. Elias Lönnrot, Finland's preeminent tale collector and epic author, worked as a regional health

officer while assembling the renowned *Kalevala*. Sir Isaac Newton oversaw the royal mint. Toni Morrison taught and edited. Most of the authors, filmmakers, and artists I know derive at least some of their income from elsewhere. If you must do that while keeping your creative-transformative work as an avocation, you're in excellent company.

In my case I've worked for decades as a loreologist, but for some of that time under other roles and titles. I know a poet who teaches children, a philosopher who sells real estate, and a therapist who sings in a virtual band. Most of us live in societies that do not value creative work as such unless it makes money at the box office. We must make do.

Nevertheless, we need not get stuck in the limiting old keystone story of "It's Worthless Unless It Pays the Bills."

Developing a new vocation is an entrepreneurial adventure. Questions arrive as challenges: Why is this kind of work needed? By whom? What efforts are needed for practitioners to receive training, support one another, and receive recognition? What should a loreology curriculum consist of? What are the goals and ethics of the field?

Here is a start on some of these:

Goals of Loreology:

- To serve clarification and deep understanding of the stories that guide us, personally and collectively, and the lore in which they are rooted.
- To encourage our clients and learners to move from stories that limit, blind, imprison, or self-mutilate to stories that open, clarify, liberate, and humanize.
- To critically educate the public about the influence and power of stories and the inappropriate authority wielded by those who impose stories on other people.
- To make available the kinds of stories that lead to full humanness, fairness, compassion, equity, and maturity.

Ethics:

I have referred elsewhere to managing eco-anxiety through an ethic of Fivefold Caring, a model also useful for loreology:

- * Care of Self: e.g., health, nature contact, support.
- * Care of Others: allyship, activism, future generations.
- * Care of Earth: simplicity, ecology, climate, place.
- * Care of Vision: big dreams, intuition, inspiration.
- * Care of Story: enchantivism, nature folklore, hope.



“If the world is to be healed through human efforts, I am convinced it will be by ordinary people, people whose love for this life is even greater than their fear.”

— Joanna R. Macy

Additionally:

- People craft their own guiding stories. Tools and ideas provided by loreology facilitate that, not infringe on it.
- A loreologist must never help craft stories to deceive, manipulate, or dominate (e.g., lieways).
- A loreologist must be mindful of scope of practice. For example, some people are so deeply troubled that a psychotherapy or medical referral is needed. Loreology is often healing and deeply transformative, but it is not therapy or coaching, although it can accompany them.
- Loreology is not and cannot be religiously or politically partisan, although it can resist clear injustice by supporting those who are afflicted. When doing so, the loreologist should never target or attack individuals or groups, only actions that need to change.

As for its prospects, loreology as vocation and field of study will gain recognition if enough practitioners get behind it and demonstrate its effectiveness.

And it is effective. Here are a handful of examples from my work:

- A student who realizes that her “self-sabotage” at school contains a hidden tribute of loyalty to the women in her family who got no schooling is able to honor them and graduate as the first woman in her family to earn a college degree;
- A researcher with writer’s block discovers the inner self-protective presence behind it and converts it into a writing ally;
- A business unit stuck in an old story about how to write contracts saves itself during a downsizing by inventing a time-saving shortcut that triples departmental productivity;
- A company revamps its mentoring branch by going back to what the old stories, including folktales and myths, have to say about inclusivity, passion, teamwork;

- An executive working for a shady real estate company uncovers her deep love of nature and Earth and transitions into a fulfilling career aligned with her true passion;
- A certificate participant with a chronically sore back realizes that the pain is pushing him to go outside and reconnect with the natural world, after which his back improves and his life changes for the better;
- A former sergeant emerges from guilt and depression after realizing that making a “better” decision during a deadly firefight would have multiplied casualties and not reduced them;
- A workshop participant learns that the names she was given connect her to an ancestral legacy in need of healing and justice;
- A man with a long history of violence and jail time fashions for himself the life path of a nonviolent warrior;
- A graduate psychology class takes note of the water imagery in the architecture of buildings near their school and learns of a hidden spring flowing underneath the streets;
- A class of environmental science students practices exercises for increasing one’s sensitivity to the self-organizing intelligence of the natural world;
- A nonprofit manager gains a new sense of mission by understanding the old stories that first drove the business and the deeper story of change waiting below them;
- A graduate student learns to interpret life transitions with the tools used to interpret dream symbols.

We have yet to touch on what might be the most important task of the loreologist: to help people dream together about a future of inclusive joy they can move toward.

Loreosophy as Practical Dreaming

We have defined a loreosophy as a collective loreway: an imaginative body of fiction (lore) and practice, with a mythic-feeling story arc. Why would such a thing matter?

First, record numbers of serious people have stopped signing up for religion. Pew Research Center poles and other sources record a long-standing drop in religious membership and attendance in the United States and elsewhere. Spectacles like a pope calling for justice while refusing priesthood to women, the married, or the queer land no better now than a literalized a Middle Ages cosmology. In the U.S., Christian facades for political maneuvering go almost unopposed. Seekers have had it; more than ever before consider themselves “spiritual but not religious,” agnostics, or atheists.

Philosophy as a formal study is out of reach for most. Although each of us has our own philosophy, with varying degrees of consciousness, a long line of White thinkers have killed the appeal of philosophizing for all but a handful of the analytically inclined. The terminology alone is enough to cause mental indigestion. We need a new kind of philosophizing: embodied, playful, imaginative, practical, and many-colored.

Psychology tends to reduce everything to itself (called “solipsism” in philosophy) and so disqualifies itself for a worldview that takes nature, place, and planet seriously.

What about storytelling cycles and franchises? Jediism is practiced as a religion now. Trekkers, Otherkin, Tolkien followers, cosplayers at Comic Cons: in the age of the internet, such groups proliferate and overlap. However, franchises aim primarily at profits (which for Marvel, Star Wars, and Star Trek are astronomical), and legendaria focus mainly on the past, although environmentalists with a turn for fantasy have declared their intent to stop the green world from degenerating into Mordor.

A loreosophy can include the most resonant of such fictions and bodies of practice to offer a visionary path akin to what Joseph Campbell called “creative mythology”: art and craft that draw on mythic symbols and motifs and characters to convey deep life truths, frames of aspiration, and realizations that resonate. Although known by many for his early Hero’s Journey schema, Campbell observed in his later work that mythic systems were fragmenting and increasingly unable to provide guidance or meaning.

Instead, take a loreway, dreamed up by a group. Add performance, drama, ritual, music, movement, personal practices, celebration feasts marking special times of the year. Emblems and artwork. Rites of passage. Ethical values and ideals, including service. Ingredients not normally found in formal religion: comedy, collaboration/ support circles, games, health routines, donations instead of tithes, non-missionary social justice outreach, nonauthoritative works of fantasy... and voila! A viable, energizing loreosophy, with no creeds or clergy required.

Examples of this so far are partial. They include kinds of theater that involve the community in ceremony and the arts, the franchises mentioned above, alternative spiritual paths like Wicca that lean on inspiring fiction, celebrations to honor the Finnish *Kalevala* (including Feb. 28th, Kalevala Day), Hermeticism and Gnosticism as underground wisdom paths with ancient roots, the cosmic scope of creative work like that of William Blake, the delightful world of Sherlockiana, communities built around online games and world-building, the Society for Creative Anachronism, mythopoetics such as the Cthulhu Mythos in film and literature...

My fictional and free [Assembling Terrania Cycle](#) is one attempt to dream up a loreway that could be expanded into a loreosophy if creative contributors like the stories and wish to add to them. “Terrania” is my dream word for the just, delightful, diverse, and Earth-honoring civilization waiting for us to assemble from the pieces and practices that already exist. The Cycle moves from Big Bang to Terrania to showcase historical and fictional characters working toward collective human maturity.

Let’s dream even bigger and ask: What would a *Kalevala* for humanity be like? What if creative tale-shapers from everywhere dipped into their traditions to dream up stories about the kind of world they most desired to live in? What kinds of communities of practice might grow from such daring visions? How much real change might they inspire?

It would help to have some trained loreologists on hand to encourage and advise.

A Basic Curriculum and Areas for Growth

Although I have my own background to draw on when thinking about how a loreologist should be trained, I will try to imagine a bit beyond it.

To take this first by topic area:

- How stories influence us. To get started, books like *Science Fiction and Philosophy* by Susan Schneider, *Such Stuff as Dreams* by Keith Oatley, *Finding Truth in Fiction* by Karen Dill-Shackelford and Cynthia Vinney, *The Stories We Are* by William Randall, *Fantasy and Belief* by Danielle Kirby, and *Deep Play* by Diane Ackerman.
- Books, films, essays, etc. on the art of good storytelling. Martin Shaw, Ursula K. Le Guin, David JP Phillips, Levar Burton, Emmanuel Dzotsi, Alice Walker, and so many others. Search across cultures.
- Collections of folklore: myths, folktales, fairytales, legends, fables. Tolkien's essay "On Fairy-Stories." Read mythography too: writings about myth, [including my own](#).
- Your own favorite teaching tales to have on hand for various occasions.
- Comparative religion; world religion. Know at least the basics.
- Wide reading in literature: world, classical, contemporary, fantasy, science fiction.
- Any Family Systems psychology training you can get to understand how roles, rules, themes, repetitive interactions, alliances, coalitions, and emotional legacies permeate social systems from the family on up.
- Systems dynamics in business: Margaret Wheatley, Peter Senge, etc.
- Any depth psychology training you can get to help identify mythic and archetypal images and motifs surfacing inside and between people and behind collective events.
- Education in working with dreams, preferably in groups.
- Personal psychotherapy with someone good.
- Personal myth, starting with C. G. Jung, who wrote in a letter about identifying his "life myth" as Faust the legendary alchemist. See my book on exploring one's personal myth. We need to know the deep story we live in.
- The science behind why we tell stories, how fiction influences us, how fantasy can lead to practical results, why creativity and inspiration matter, and why play remains important for adults.
- It's impossible to ignore the accelerating threat of climate chaos. We will need old and new stories of how to adapt. Know the science and the planetary and social repercussions we face. They already reshape our future.
- [Terrapsychological Inquiry](#) is for different kinds of Earth-honoring exploratory research on how the things of the world—not only lands and seas, but cities and machines—get inside us. The ideas of T. I. apply whether or not the research is academic. Terrapsychology also includes a set of nature-reconnective practices known as Earthdreaming.

Other educational tasks to undertake:

- Collect examples of [enchantivism](#): stories and their enactments that begin in lack or injustice but allow spacious imaginings of how things could be. Most examples of enchantivism include bold steps for bringing a vision to life.
- If you plan to loreologize professionally, be knowledgeable about how to consult as well as teach. Get the training you need.

- Take a course or two in critical thinking.
- Beware of Jungian “opposites” like The Feminine vs. The Masculine, spirit vs. matter, primitive vs. modern. These outdated essentialist tropes need to vanish.
- Monitor accurate sources of current news so you stay up on the events impacting all of us.
- If you wish to write for an audience, make sure you have the training to. Some of the writing seen online is inexcusably terrible.
- If you wish to be a presenter but feel shy in front of groups, start small and train with larger and larger audiences until you feel more comfortable.

You will also need to acquire knowledge of what you plan to specialize in. I’m interested in how Hermeticism, the Way of the Mage, has changed down the centuries, and in its possibilities for giving us [terragnosis](#): a wisdom tradition that honors our place on Earth and calls for appreciation of its living beauty and intelligence. To that end I’ve studied widely through the Hermetica (the literature), read all extant Gnostic gospels plus a lot of commentary on them, and studied and taught ecopsychology and my own version, terrapsychology.

I also recommend engaging in some kind of story-making creative practice of your own, however modest. This can be combined with a sustained self-reflective practice: watching your dreams, journal work, meditation, movement. Also, staying connected and aligned with nature, season, and place is important. We are Earthly beings, even when we act otherwise.

Here are some examples of where I would like to see loreology grow:

- Creating humane loreways and loreosophies that bring out the best in all who participate.
- More research on related fields: effective storytelling, creativity, etc.
- A training circle of expert educators.
- An online journal plus a community of interested participants. The journal might contain an academic section but should reach a wider readership.
- A pool of updated story science and best practices.
- Enchantivist applications to social and environmental justice concerns.
- Does loreology need its own kind of theoretical/qualitative inquiry, or is Narrative Inquiry expansive enough?
- A study of loreology’s ancestor fields and figures back through history.
- A gathering of resources for seeing through, challenging, and creating alternatives to malignant stories and their divisive ideologies (lieways).
- Virtual reality (VR) exploration. Much potential there!
- Conferences both inside and outside academia.
- A *Kalevala* for humanity project.

For most of our history, seeking gnosis—enchanted insight into lived reality—has been held as a pursuit of individual awakening. Can loreologizing serve as a form of collective enlightenment? This last section will give us some room to imagine and speculate.

Loreologizing as an Enchanted Gnosis

In the comedy *Stranger than Fiction*, Harold Crick consults a psychiatrist because a feminine voice only he can hear is narrating everything he does. Disagreeing with the doctor's diagnosis of schizophrenia, he asks her: Hypothetically, if I was part of a narrative, what would you suggest I do? She suggests going to see a literature expert.

Not a bad suggestion in the absence of a loreologist, although, as in our kind of work, it is Crick who uses the tools of story and image to figure out what tale he is in before deciding to alter its course. Although self-realization is certainly one aspect of that path, it also holds discoveries for his close relationships, his work, his authorship of his own story, and his membership in and influence on his society.

Loreology as a path of wisdom and larger consciousness reveals not only the sense in the story and the meaning in its message, however uncomfortable the tellings we enact, but the imaginal presences inhabiting our larger story with us. Start with any situation or dilemma, and if you loreologize it for long enough, you come to the underlying mythic motifs and, behind those, archetypal figures moving below the surface of events: stubborn computer as literal-minded Golem, Gaia and Freyr harvesting clean food, Invisible Hand market divinization, ascension into heaven as uploading of virtualized selfhood no longer human.

Here we lean a bit on Jung, who showed how working consciously with mythic and archetypal occurrences could turn their literal and often dangerous reenactments into creative beginnings. Instead of oil extraction igniting rivers and darkening upperworld into Underworld, we could direct passions extracted from the inner depths and piped into where we need to die and be reborn. The move is from literal to symbolic.

Which is fine as far as it goes. Mainly, it goes inward, with the gods of old recast as living archetypal presences. They exist all right. We see them moving about in dreams, fantasies, even attitudes and styles of relating: Mars aggressiveness, Isis nurturance, a sudden feeling of possession. Active imagination can access them; so can psychedelic journeys. Like Jung, we soon discover that these psychical beings bring their own perspectives, values, and styles, all of which might be very different from those of our conscious self. Part of individuation—becoming a conscious individual—is learning how to negotiate and coordinate this internal democracy.

As Jung got older, he spoke in letters about how archetypes won't stay in the human psyche. Naturally: the human psyche evolved from the natural world. Spirit as an archetype can't be just a kind of psychical breath: it is also wind, motion, effervescence; animation at large all around us. The spiral path of individuation repeats the longevity of evolving spiral galaxies. Go outside and look for such primary patterns; Nature makes everything out of only twenty or thirty, fractally and endlessly creative.

From the Hermetic perspective which so informed Jung's, imagination serves as a conduit to these sentient-seeming natural forces. In terrapsychological work, it never surprises us, for example, when the felt presence of a place—its basic geological forms, its ecological weaknesses and strengths—show up in dreams as a character who tells us interesting things about the place where

we sleep. Imagination can take any presence, no matter how subtle, and costume it so we can interact with it.

What this means is that we live not in a barren world of mute objects, but in an enchanted world of lively influences we can converse with—but only to the extent we are imaginably open to what we receive. When we are not, we get painful symptoms instead of storied gnosis.

Instead of hardening these insights about psyche, the imaginal, and archetypes abroad into a doctrine, we can cast them into an initial attempt at fiction to share with one another, just for fun. For example:

In the beginning, the newborn cosmos, emanating forth from a mysterious Source, unfurled a potent array of primal Powers, all, at bottom, one: Time and Space, Light and Dark, Attraction and Strife, Diversity and Unity, Life and Death. Other Powers assumed the aspect of foundational forms, shapes, or events: spirals, spheres, branchings, flows...

This cosmos, one of many, unfolded itself in a luminescent triple layer of being: Potentiality, the energetic background from which all arrives and returns; Materiality, its expression; and, between them, Imagination, the realm of symbol and dream.

The animate Powers partook of all three. From Potentiality, a surge of emerging particle fields; in Materiality, a black hole consuming a star; in Imagination, the archetypal presence of Death come calling. From Potentiality, forces that rushed together; in Materiality, nuclear fusion; in Imagination, Oshun, Venus, Lakshmi, and other storied images of love's universal attraction.

As an outflow of ceaseless cosmic creativity, Attraction joined efforts with other Powers to give birth to vast profusions of species. Each was capable of coming of age and fulfilling its role in the scheme of things.

Like everything else in the cosmos, Earth too was sentient after its own fashion. One of its species, called human, used its imagination to perceive the storied shapes of the Powers and the intelligence of their homeworld. Over time, the humans worshipped both so much that any desire to grow beyond themselves disappeared.

Now, one of the Powers was Chaos. It was their role to stir things up that had settled too much. Joining forces with Strife, Death, and Craft, Chaos disrupted things on Earth, where the ambitious and immature had assumed the status of authorities over the complacent too reverently stuck to the Powers to notice.

Insisting that they alone held access to the Powers, these ambitious chiefs hid the most important connection of all: that of every human to the Source through storied vision, creativity, fantasy, play, and dream...

Going on with that story might be one kind of guiding fiction: the [Assembling Terrania Cycle](#), for instance. Another fiction might be to draft a series of principles for a new kind of loreway, the storied philosophy of Terrania:

1. The nature of this cosmos is constant creative diversity.

2. Imagination links us experientially to the Source of the cosmos and to its archetypal Powers.
3. Everything is alive in its own fashion.
4. Humanity is on a long and difficult adventure toward full humaneness and maturity.
5. Our human journey includes studying and learning to appreciate the beauty of Earth and cosmos.
6. Humanity must learn to relate as adults to the Powers of the cosmos instead of subordinating ourselves to them.
7. The basis of all morality is care; each of us is of immeasurable worth.
8. Whereas harming others diminishes us, supporting each other reflects our full humanness.
9. Only modest, wise, and emotionally mature leaders should ever lead, and even then should be carefully monitored.
10. Humanity is capable of creating a just, equitable, delightful, and Earth-appreciating civilization worthy of our hard-earned maturity, but only if we relearn how to dream together.

And so on. To prompt new stories we might include the founding [Terrania Charter's](#) Preamble:

Preamble to Planetary Renewal

The time has come for the species of Earth to live on the planet of our deepest desire: a planet free of violence, greed, hatred, poverty, and ecocide, governed by wise collaboration, committed to equity and justice, celebratory of diversity, rich in free education, and devoted to the truth that every living being possesses ineradicable worth.

To this end, we pledge ourselves to design a truly democratic and Earth-honoring civilization in which no one controls what others need to live, no one is left behind without resource, and everyone is welcome to participate as we learn together how to feel fully home on our homeworld.

Whatever terminologies and ideas we dream up, loreologizing highlights dreaming together across all borders to rise to our greatest possible stature.

If you are interested in more discussion about loreology, contact me via [Chalquist.com](#).