



## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

### *Making Dream Shields*

**D**ream symbols are like personal energy releasers. A group of symbols from several dreams can arrange themselves into a dynamic map of consciousness. Here we have the rudiments of a personal mythology.

The energizing effect of dream symbols is initially encountered in the context of the dream experience itself. Writing down the dream, reflecting upon it and enacting it are all means of cultivating the energy and consciousness-transforming power of the dream's symbols. Our eyes are especially sensitive to the vibrations of symbols and so it is helpful to render our dreams and their symbols into visual form. Drawing pictures of our dreams and keeping them within our view, such as posted by the bed or over the desk, transforms the dreams into personally suited *yantras*, visual meditations for working on consciousness.

But beyond drawing the dreams themselves, it is also valuable to collect symbols from various dreams and create collages, dream symbol mosaics. And by bringing together symbols from different dreams, a continuity in the dream-

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life is realized. We can begin to tell our story in the language of our dreams and discover the secrets of mythology.

There must be several different approaches to creating mosaics from dream symbols. For example, one may cut out pictures from magazines that are especially evocative of one's dream symbols. These pictures can then be arranged and rearranged, as in a game, to discover possible relations among the symbols. Or they can be chosen and placed at random, as if one had a personally suited Tarot deck for obtaining answers to questions. They can also be organized around a particular theme or arranged to tell a story.

Magazine cut-outs can be beautiful, but there are certain advantages to drawing our symbols ourselves. Our hands will express a certain knowledge of the symbol's meaning and with our eyes we can try to become aware of what our hands are telling us. We are also free to doodle with and around the symbols and join them in specially meaningful ways.

One approach to creating mosaics from dream symbols I call the dream shield. The shield is made in the shape of a circle. This imposes a certain structure, like a force field, so that making a dream shield feels like making a mandala (which means circle of wholeness). The shield is focused at the center and the natural symmetry suggests a situation of opposed but balanced elements. Like a mandala, the circular dream shield says, "These symbols are one."

A dream shield may be created to evoke a sense of identity, to express one's purpose in life, or simply to focus on a particular theme or question. The shield I've drawn here was created to help me understand one of my relationships with the Earth. Symbols related to this theme were taken from various dreams and released into the circle. They seemed to arrange themselves naturally. The finished shield provokes my imagination and prompts me to become conscious of its lesson.



Earth Dream Shield



Four Directions Dream Shield

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Another value of a dream shield is that by collecting symbols from several different dreams, you can rise above the vision of the single dream and begin to see the story of your symbolic life as a whole. Also, the visual nature of the dream shield provides a potent focus for contemplation and further opportunity for you to be moved by the consciousness-transforming energies of your dream symbols.

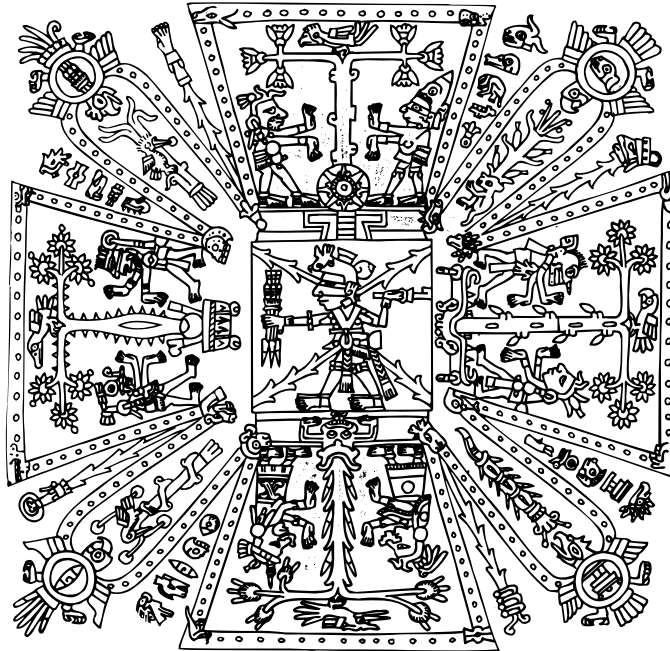
Here I present an approach to making dream shields based on the theme and pattern of “the four directions.” What do you find within yourself at each of the four corners of the world? What is your understanding of the four sacred directions and how do you interpret them in terms of your own life? What symbols from your dreams would you choose to represent your feelings about the meaning of “north, south, east and west”? Try making a dream shield that portrays your own symbolic orientation and relation to the “four directions.” That is, pick symbols from your dreams that you think reflect these four archetypal quadrants of the psyche. Draw pictures of these symbols (or use magazine clippings) and arrange them into a circular mosaic that expresses your individual patterning of these four components of wholeness.

Suppose, for example, that you find the meaning of the four directions reflected in the four *elements*: earth, air, fire and water. You might try to make a dream shield that portrays your particular make-up of these four elements. Find symbols from your dreams that seem to symbolize the activities of these four elements in your life. Experimenting with different choices and combinations of dream symbols might reveal to you how, in some instances, the four elements of your nature work together harmoniously, while, in other instances, they are in conflict. I’ve drawn up a playful dream shield on the theme of the four elements. Not knowing much about the deep meaning of the elemental symbols, I made a set of personal connotations: Air - mind, Water - emotion, Fire - spirit, and Earth - physical instincts. These personal associations enabled me to then find reminiscent symbols from my dreams: book, locomotive, sun and monkey. The shield that resulted teases me with its double message.

Here are two, wonderfully different, viewpoints of the quaternity, “the four directions.” They may suggest additional approaches to constructing dream shields.

A beautiful rendering of a Native American worldview is given in the book, *Seven Arrows*, there are “four great powers” on the “medicine wheel” of life: *North* is the place of “wisdom,” its color is white and it is represented by the Buffalo. *South* is the place of “innocence,” its color is green and it is represented by the Mouse. *East* is the place of “illumination,” its color is yellow and it is represented by the Eagle. *West* is the place of “introspection,” its color is black and it is represented by the Bear. These four “powers” confer “gifts” of

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perception. They are basic attitudes, or orientations, that people can use in perceiving and approaching life experiences. *Seven Arrows* teaches that each person is born in one of the four places and thus enters life with that particular power as their dominant gift of perception. It is then up to the person to "visit" the other three places so that the initial gift can be blended with the other three gifts of perception. Being a whole and complete person means

having all four of the powers available to meet life and serve others. As an expression of wholeness, then, a dream shield can be a story map of your visit of the four places of "power."

Now although there is an archetypal pattern behind the association (as given in *Seven Arrows*) of the four "powers" with particular animals and colors, it is best for our purposes to consider these associations as just one of the many possible choices. For example, in his *Dictionary of Symbols*, Cirlot reports that a traditional association in the Eastern world is as follows: *North* - black tortoise, *South* - red bird, *East* - blue dragon, and *West* - white tiger. For the Western world, Cirlot reports, there are the following animal associations: *North* - the ox, *South* - the eagle, *East* - the lion, and *West* - the peacock. I mention these differences to encourage you to come up with your own personal symbolic associations.

Our second example comes from the work of Carl Jung and his *Psychological Types*. Jung proposed a psychological analogy to the fourfold aspect of wholeness in his description of the four "functions." These four are thinking and feeling, intuition and sensation. They are the basis of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator test, which has become a quite fashionable way of labelling people. In this system, thinking and feeling are complementary, mutually ex-

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clusive modes of *evaluation*. When we evaluate by means of thinking function, we use external, objective criteria, such as logic. But when we evaluate by means of the feeling function, we use internal, subjective criteria, such as personal values and preferences. Often we are confronted with something that “makes sense” but that doesn’t “feel right,” or vice versa. Such apparent contradictions arise because thinking and feeling base their judgments on different sources of information, sources that are appropriate only to the particular function.

Intuition and sensation are the complementary, mutually exclusive modes of *obtaining information*. Their purpose of these two functions is to discover what *is*, not to evaluate it. The intuitive function gathers information through subjective means of perception, such as hunches—it sniffs out the possible. The sensation function gathers information through objectively oriented modes of perception, such as the eyes and hands. For the sensation function, “beholding is believing,” while the intuitive function believes in its dream. A stone, to the sensation function, is a stone; while for the intuitive function, it might also be a paperweight, or even a companion.

Jung noted that everyone has all four functions operative in their lives. One function, however, is usually dominant from birth. Part of the life task is then to develop the abilities of the other three functions so that the four can operate as a harmonious whole. The function that is the most difficult to develop is the one that is complementary to the dominant function, for it is experienced as being opposed to that dominant function. For the person who approaches the world primarily through the feeling function, the thinking function is experienced as a cold and lifeless tyrant whose constant imposition of rationality feels like an irritating irrelevancy. The contrast is strong because the person has not yet visited the “place of wisdom” to learn its positive “gift.” And I purposefully use terminology from *Seven Arrows* here because it contains so many beautiful stories of the struggles and reconciliations of the four functions.

The person who is more comfortable with their thinking and sensation functions would find Jung’s *Psychological Types* to be the illuminating exposition of the fourfold nature of wholeness. But those more comfortable with their feeling and intuitive functions would find the stories in *Seven Arrows* to be the more lucid revelation. I’ve tried to combine the two orientations in the dream shield I describe below.

At a dream workshop I once gave the following instruction for making a dream shield: Find symbols from your dreams that reflect the activities of the four functions - thinking, feeling, sensation and intuition - in your life. Arrange these symbols into a dream shield, with the symbol for your dominant func-

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tion at the top of the shield and its complementary function at the bottom of the shield. Add whatever other dream symbols seem necessary to provide you with a sense of wholeness.

In the shield I drew (a later version is shown here) I began with the symbol of "sun" to reflect my intuitive function, the symbol of "tree" to reflect the most valued aspect of my sensation function, the symbol of "147" to reflect my thinking function, and "heart" to reflect my feeling function. By themselves on the shield, these four symbols seemed isolated from one another. So I began to add other dream symbols to reflect the ways in which the four functions operate together within me. The "dancing clown" touches the earth and also, through expressive movement, transforms his body into feeling. The dream symbol of the "star" reflects how, through geometry, my thinking and intuition functions become partners. And so it goes, around and around. At the psychological center of the shield is the symbol, "Amethyst Krystal." All together, the dance of the symbols on the shield forms a mask, a glimpse of a higher order of integration.

I share this last shield with you as a way of suggesting how you might improvise on the basic, archetypal pattern of the fourfold One. It is worth the time to discover your individual symbols of the universal themes. Arranging your symbols into a dream mosaic also encourages you to begin to make up stories about how the symbols get along and adventure together. A dream shield can thus provide an initiation into your own mythic quest. \*