



TWO WORLDS & INBETWEEN

TECHNIQUES OF MODERN SHAMANISM VOL.II

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Introduction

Two Worlds & Inbetween is a companion volume to *Walking Between the Worlds*. Whilst the latter dealt primarily with enhancing sensory awareness and the induction of trance states by various methods, this present work provides a simple schema for partitioning aspects of our experience, and suggests exercises within a broad conceptual framework for self-exploration and development.

Once again, many of the techniques proposed in this book are geared to group exploration, since undoubtedly, our best teachers are friends and fellow-travellers. Of the fellow-travellers with whom I have walked and talked these paths over the years, I would like to thank Sheila Broun, Neil McLachan, Robin Turner & Alawn Tickhill, and the scattered members of *Invoking Earth*, the *Theatre of Voodoo*, and current members of *Circle of Stars*, to whom this book is gratefully dedicated.

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THE THREE WORLDS

Our life experiences can be seen to fall into three interwoven arenas; the worlds of Social experience, Mythic experience, and Personal experience. These are of course, not separate realms, but areas of experience which mesh together all the time. Separating them into three regions allows us to examine them, and in turn, gain insights into how each contributes to the other.

The Social World

This is the everyday world of consensus reality - the conventions that we more or less agree to uphold with each other. In this world we take on various roles and play them in situations which are laid out to a set of ground rules. Understanding these social rules and games enhances our ability to manage in the social world. Poor understanding or awareness of the subtleties of the social usually results in poor performances. The exercises given in the section on the Social world look at different ways of expressing and sharing our experiences, through group activity.

The Mythic World

This is the realm of metaphor and symbol; the larger-than-life world of theatre, fantasy, legend and television culture. In every era, stories & legends have provided a mythic reflection of our hopes, fears & aspirations. Our ancestors had the deeds of heroes & goddesses, while we have the daily diet of film and television soaps. This is the world where magick is perhaps at its most obvious, in which the shaman stands as a mythic figure, interceding between personal visions and social cohesion, between the worlds of spirits and gods, and the people for whom those spirits are a reality, yet remain mysterious. The section on the Mythic world looks at different approaches to exploring the Mythic, through innerworld journeying, Center-

ing yourself, and working with Power Objects.

The Personal World

This is the most intimate arena of our experience, the intrapsychic world of the self. Of the three worlds, this one holds the most mystery for us, and it is through the mythic world that we may plumb the depths of our personal experience. Knowledge of self is a key to all magickal development, and the exercises in this section begin the process of learning to look at ones self and develop intuitive faculties.

Of course, working in one realm is not enough, and you should be looking at your development in terms of all three worlds. The Personal and the Mythic will begin to merge through continued analysis and experience, but the Social - how we relate to other people; how we empathise with others - should be the world in which we look for signs of change and development. If you do not have any companions to explore this work with, you should still bear in mind how the work you do changes how you feel and behave socially, and what, if any, changes other people perceive in you. You may have a very high opinion of yourself, but if everyone else thinks you're a prat, then it might well be time to sit and think where you're going wrong.

The shaman is an archetypal figure who mediates between the most intimate aspects of our experience and the social conventions of community or peer group. The Mythic World is that which stands 'inbetween' the Social and the Personal. Myths in all forms refer not only to historical (social) events, but draw deeply upon aspects of common human experience. Listening to a story-teller, or watching a film can 'move' us emotionally, so that we are transported momentarily into the Mythic world. In this world, the conventions of social reality can be challenged or overturned without threatening disaster. At the same time, the secrets of our psyche may be brought forth & articulated without threatening the sense of being a stable self. Myths have their roots in the 'Deep Mind', and provide the rationale, or psychic drive, on which societies run.

Myths provide us with meaning and motivation, from the cultural fantasies of becoming a rock'n'roll star, or President of the United States of America. Or becoming a shaman, for that matter. Dictators in every era have learnt quickly that if you want to weaken the will of a people, then you have to destroy their dreams, making their myths meaningless and replacing them with your own. The Dream-worlds of the Red Indians And the Australian Aborigines were destroyed this way by the white invaders. Their psychic freedom was removed and they were literally bound into a limited space, in which they were poor, ignorant, second-class citizens. Myths affect us all, so much of the time that we are not even aware of their effect. They become most dangerous (and insidious) when metaphor is mistaken for literal truth, and when stories become fixed dogmas.

By entering the Mythic world for a time, we learn to change ourselves, and by so doing, bring about change in the world around us. Participation in this world may be shocking or disturbing, but above all, it can be healing. By enacting stories which give experience a Mythic stature, we can reintegrate the contents of our psyche; come to see ourselves and our situation from different angles, grow away from conditioned habits and beliefs, and adapt to new courses of action which grow from new insights. Once we enter the Mythic world, the normal rules to which we abide may be suspended, and we are free to converse with angels and dance with half-forgotten gods. The myths act to intensify the changes we pass through - birth, growth, rites of passage, loss, death and renewal. Participation in the Mythic experience, whether as actor, mediator, or audience, returns to us a sense of the dynamic vitality of life, which is all too easily forgotten in the day-today routine of living, and can revive our sense of the extraordinary, within the ordinary.

The medium of the Mythic is our imagination, which knows no barriers except those which we impose upon ourselves. All ideas have their source in the imagination, which springs from the Deep Mind, beyond Personal awareness or the Social world. There is always a certain amount of tension between the para-

mount reality of the Social world, and individual wishes, dreams, and fantasies.

Many people become interested in finding alternatives, spiritual growth or magickal reality from a growing dissatisfaction with the “normal reality” of western culture. Many of us are seeking change and renewal and, rather than accepting the limits of paramount reality, we are beginning to voyage beyond the existing maps and pathways of living.

A modern definition of magick is that it is an organisation of the imagination. Once we begin to explore the inner world of the Personal, and how it affects that of the Social (and vice versa), using a set of Mythic symbols and images, then we will begin to have experiences which are meaningful within those myths. By assimilating ideas until they become familiar, we clothe our imagination into distinct forms, so that the Deep Mind throws up images which accord with those myths.

To go into the Deep Mind, we need signposts & maps to help us in our first, faltering steps. This is the task of visionaries, artists, shamans, magicians, indeed anybody can become a ‘scout’ in this way. In modern western culture, we are no longer bound by a dominant series of Mythic images. Instead, our culture abounds with myths, from those of magickal reality to that of Marxism, and we may adopt many such Mythic maps of the world during our lives, knowing at any one time, that the current one we hold is truer than the others. There is a myriad of sects, philosophies, belief systems & religions who can provide different sets of Mythic images. Some of us are happy enough to accept an established mythic map, while others seek their own ways into truth. It is the growth of an unrestrained imagination which encourages us to transform our deepest longings into our highest aims, and thereon into achievable reality.

An advantage, and a problem, for the would-be shamanic practitioner, is this myriad of myths. We can draw from the mythic pools of many different cultures across history, and can also draw from fictional sources. The mythic power of fiction is often undervalued because people persist in thinking that it “isn’t real”. Yet once we enter the Mythic world, his-

torical validity is irrelevant. If a story moves us, and can give us a valid and powerful experience, re-connecting us with deep aspects of our experience, then does it really matter whether it is 'true' in the historical sense? In recent years, writers on popular shamanism like Lynn Andrews and Carlos Castaneda have both been criticised by people saying that they are writing fiction disguised as fact. Whatever the case, their work has allowed shamanic techniques to be much more accessible to people, proving that they can act as an entry point for those who wish to explore the as yet uncharted realms which lie beyond the boundaries of the known world. Shamanism, at least for me, is less about doing things in a certain way, but more of an essence, a thread which runs through everything I do. Thus all my magick has a shamanic quality to it, since, regardless of the flesh, it is the bones which are important. It works in a way which satisfies me and through me, appears to satisfy the other people I work with as clients or colleagues; and in using shamanic techniques, I do not aspire to anything greater.

EXPLORING OUR PERSONAL WORLDS

The exercises in this section relate to the Personal World as an arena of our experience. The aim is to direct awareness towards the inner dynamics which shape our self-image; the half-heard (and often forgotten) internal dialogues out of which grows our story of who we are, and where we are going. Of the exercises in this book, these are written specifically for solo work, although they can be used, with a little modification, as group exercises or points for discussion.

Stories & Conversations

A great deal of our behaviour, beliefs and attitudes are continually shaped by the inner conversations and stories which we have with ourselves. They are often of the nature that “I cannot be/do because of “. Many of them originate in our early learning experiences, or arise out of intense emotional situations. A common conversation is based around the idea “I can’t succeed at anything”, which of course means that as long as I act from such a basis, I won’t try and overcome anything that fulfills that prophecy. Some of the inner conversations are easy to recognise, while it is likely that others have been repressed, so that while we may be aware that something is going wrong in our lives, we can’t see the why.

It’s essential that we begin to look at these conversations, and if possible, revise them or challenge them. Awareness of your own faults, weaknesses and blind spots is essential if you are attempting to develop yourself so that you can act more effectively. At times, a period of initiation will force upon you the realisation of what a prat you’ve been for the past few months. This is never pleasant, but you must try, at such a point, to do something about it. Of course the more embedded the conversation is in your mind, the harder it is to change it. Often this is because you have something invested in upholding that conversation. For example, if I “know” that I’m never

going to succeed in anything, it's easy to give things up, and of course, much harder to break out of that conversation by actually getting something done. However, these conversations serve to limit the range of possibilities open to you. If, on the other hand, you do manage to break away from the limits you've imposed on yourself, it's like being brought into a new world, where to your vast surprise, you may find that you can do that which you thought impossible. I'm not talking about things like flying or becoming master of the world, but the truly impossible things that we've long ago convinced ourselves can never happen, like getting on with your parents, paying off your overdraft, or managing to hold a job down. Sure, it's pretty mundane stuff, but it's usually this sort of problem which has the most effect on our lives. Now these problems can't be tackled all at once, but they can be approached, so long as you're aware of them, and prepared to act on them. All 'Impeccable Warriors' will find their worst foes in the realm of the ordinary worlds (Social & Personal), rather than the Mythic. The foes are, of course, the barriers which we set up ourselves, and then cling to, all the while becoming tenser and tenser about doing so.

Shields

This is an exercise from *The Shamanic Development Course*, but it comes up in many different forms and styles. The basic idea is that you produce a symbolic representation of yourself and the things most important to you, ideals, directions in which you wish to travel, etc. This can be as complicated or as simple as you wish, and designs can follow a wide variety of patterns such as free-form paintings, collages, a wheel divided into the four quarters (with yourself standing at the centre), or a mandala. These shields are useful in group 'sharing' discussions when members are discussing personal feelings and ideals with each other. In many ways, they are 'maps' of our own field of experience, displaying territories, high points of interest, hopes and fears. Elaborated, the shield may become a 'life plan' - where you wish to develop, in the various 'segments'

of the shield, for a given period. How long this is depends on how much you make your shield an 'overall view'. I have heard of people doing fifty-year life plans, and if you think that's a long time, there are two hundred and fifty year life shields! Not that many people plan to live that long, but the idea is that you create a vision of what you want to happen in the world as a consequence of you having lived. Which is good, positive thinking; that no matter how small the change, you will have contributed something to the development of your tribe - the human race.

In a group setting, you can work together to develop 'Group Shields', which are an expression of the group becoming a collective entity. In designing and making a group shield, you are drawing on the power of banners, coats of arms, clan tattoos etc, that all reinforce the group's identity, and become attractants for the group's energies. Over time, group and individual shields can become powerful magical devices, which can be drawn upon in various exercises and activities. Groups who perform seasonal rites and celebrations sometimes evolve "Year Wheels", which at once both reflect and remind members of how the group has grown and evolved through the year, with appropriate symbols, images, and "talismanic" objects from each seasonal rite represented on the wheel.

Scrying

Scrying is a basic divinatory technique which helps to develop one's clairvoyant abilities. It can be performed using any reflective surface, such as a mirror, preferably a shiny black surface, or a bowl filled with dark fluid. Gazing into the embers of a fire is another common method. Scrying requires that you be able to enter a light trance state where images arise in your mind, rather like day-dream visions, or the pictures that you see before falling asleep. The 'trick' of scrying is to try and relax, and let any images appear before you, gazing steadily into the medium that you are using, without staring too hard or intensely concentrating. This only comes with practice. At first it should be enough to let random images well up, and later on

to try and answer specific questions.

The area in which you are practicing should be dimly lit, and lights (candles are excellent, being less harsh than electric lights) placed so that they do not reflect in the medium you are using. Incense can also be a useful aid, particularly those resins & oils which act as relaxants. You may find it useful to perform a meditation or relaxation exercise prior to attempting to scry. A Centering ritual, performed before and after scrying, is also recommended.

Pathworkings designed to relax and stimulate the Deep (sub-conscious) Mind to throw up images can be used. Scrying can lead to drowsiness, and it is a good idea not to make your initial practice sessions go on for too long.

Divinatory techniques such as these help develop the intuitive and psychic faculties, and the trick of relaxing and letting images arise in your mind is also a key to other talents such as psychometry and aura reading. Once you have tried the basic method, then regular practice will help you develop it.

Smoke Mirror

This is a meditative/reflective exercise developed from a Dramatherapy exercise (originally by Marsha Robbins). It should be performed sitting or lying down, and preceded by Centering or a few minutes of relaxation & deep breathing.

“Try and become very quiet inside. As you breathe, imagine the breath you exhale gradually becoming smoke, which forms a billowing cloud before you. The cloud clears, forming before you a full-length mirror, in which you can see yourself. Examine yourself slowly and calmly, and at first, pay attention to your posture, and how the mirror reflects your body - it may exaggerate some part of your body, such as your head, or your hands, for it reflects aspects of yourself that you are not always conscious of. Once you have examined yourself to your own satisfaction, you will find that the mirror begins to cloud over. As it does so, try and think of a time when you were very young, preferably under the age of twelve, and see an image of yourself forming in the mirror before you. What do you look

like? What are you wearing? What is it like to be that age? Who are your friends? What do you like to do best? What stories do you tell yourself? What makes you angry? What scares you? What would you like to change? Now, as you turn these questions over in your mind, you find that the Mirror is becoming a doorway to your past - that you are able to speak to your younger self and have a conversation back and forth - is there anything special which you need to say? Make contact in any way that you wish (allow time for this).

Then, as you regard your younger self in the mirror, it begins to cloud over, turning slowly into smoke again, billowing and growing thinner, and you know that as you breathe in, you are drawing the experience inside you again, and retaining the awareness of your encounter with your younger self. When the smoke has vanished, count backwards from 10...9...8...7...6...5...4...3...2...1... And Awake!”

For maximum effect, this guided fantasy (not a pathworking) should be taped onto a cassette recorder. I find that it helps to follow the “Awake” instruction with some light bell tones. Any insights you have can then be committed to paper or cassette tape. This exercise can, of course, be used in a group situation. Meeting ourselves in younger “incarnations” is therapeutic - aiding memory and self-awareness, and it also reminds us that much of our “adult” self has grown from earlier experience, although we do not always like to acknowledge this.

Power Spots

This section was developed from the ideas of Stephen Mace, an American magician whose work is worth much scrutiny (if you can find it - see the Resources section at the end of this book). It is all too easy, when attempting to set shamanistic practices within a modern context, to resort to an overly psychological attitude, and place much emphasis on inner-directedness. We are encouraged to find our power from within, but at the same time, should remain mindful that power is all around us. In addition to the power within us, there are the vast, cosmic tides within, and around us, and also, there are Power

Spots. These may be considered as magickal vents on the surface of the earth, or pores in the skin of Gaia. If found and made knowable, they can be tapped, supplementing your own power, or providing points of contact with the innerworlds through which we gain access and knowledge of the other entities with which we share the biosphere. The discovery of such Power Spots is a personal process, requiring intuition, critical insight and common sense. Here, the Personal World derives from your own interaction with the surrounding landscape. Writers such as Carlos Casteneda and Lynn Andrews both place emphasis on the importance of discovering spots that for you - have personal power, and both warn that, just as power may pour out of a place, so too a place can suck power down into itself - to the detriment of the unwary. All too common is the assumption that all stone circles or ley points are appropriate places for ritual or other forms of magickal work. A more prudent approach is to try and suss out the “vibes” of a place, by allowing yourself to become receptive to fleeting impressions (see *Walking Between the Worlds*), or using dowsing or scrying.

A “traditional” type of power spot is the place where roads cross, associated with deities such as Hecate (Greek), Odinn (Norse), Ganesha (Hindu) and Papa Legba (Haitian). There are also numerous folk tales about meeting “the devil” at crossroads. If this holds true for the modern age (and why not?), then tangles of motorway such as the Spaghetti Junction must be sources of strange power indeed!

In general, there are two types of Power Spot. The first is a place that is associated with a specific type of power. A contact point where, if we enter trance (the techniques of which are described in *WBTW*) and project ourselves into an appropriate innerworld, we can gain some understanding, or feeling of, a specific element. Thus, if you wish to enhance your rapport with the earth, then a cave or narrow valley may suffice. To call upon the powers of the sea, some vantage point around which the tide surges will engender the appropriate mood. To feel the brooding energies of a city, the roof of a multi-storey building may be the best vantage point. One of my favourite

routes for contemplation was a walk through miles of deserted factory buildings - a hollow testament to the industrial decline of the Colne Valley, populated only by rats, cats, and the ghosts of the Industrial Revolution.

The second type of Power Spots are more difficult to discover, and rely much more on your personal openness to clairvoyance, omens, and sensory awareness. The easiest way to recognise the more specific type of Power Spot is to look for incongruities of terrain. Examples of this are a single rock sticking up out of acres of grass or marsh, or a solitary spring or tree on a whole mountain. Any element which is a stark contrast to the rest of the surrounding landscape can be a potential source of power. Only personal discovery and experimentation will discover the affinity the spot has with any particular activity. Some spots are conducive to trance work, whilst others may diffuse an energy that helps you center yourself. Now while some spots may feel weird, this doesn't automatically mean that they are good to use. Some spots you will encounter will have a definitely malign feel to them, and shouldn't be messed about with. It doesn't mean that they're "Evil", or even that they're sources of 'negative energy' - all powerful places should be treated with respect, and it is worth bearing in mind that we don't automatically have the right to use any place we want to, just because it feels strange. A common piece of lore in many lands is that of a Genius Loci, or 'place spirit' - the idea that certain spots have their own guardians. It is worth bearing this in mind when you approach power spots.

Omens are harder still to spot, but again, depend upon how aware you are of fluctuations in your personal landscape. They may come in the form of meetings with animals, unusual cloud formations, or coincidental meetings with friends. If you go out with the attitude that you are prepared to be led by omens, you will often obtain interesting results. Much depends on being open to the possibilities of an adventure. I was once led to a power spot by a cat who insisted that I follow it across fields to a tree stump, whereon it promptly shot off into the undergrowth. The important thing is to start to behave as though

these things are real - and who is to say that they are not? In turn, this mindful wandering about, whether it is through fields or city streets, enhances our awareness of surroundings, both physically and psychically. It also gives a greater awareness of our personal relationship with the 'scapes through which we move. Each place has it's own pulse and beat, and by becoming open and aware of it, we can immerse ourselves, at a very personal level, with the life around us. This can allow us to sense the subtle changes in patterns of life that constantly swirl around us. Haitian shamans say that each person of power has their own "garden". Your sense of "garden" may not extend past your front gate, or on the other hand, it may cover an entire region of the city in which you dwell. The sense of this is harder to convey, but is an essential feature of magickal living - being open to omens, signs and imports - feeling the ripples in your garden, whether through dream or vision, as changes and visitors appear.

A related exercise from the Shamanic Development Course, developed by Sheila Broun, is called "Finding your Place of Power". To do this we chalked a nine-foot circle in a room, then asked group members to walk around it, trying to "feel" what was the most appropriate place for them within it, and when they had decided, to sit on that place. When all had chosen their spot, a compass was produced and the four directions identified. This exercise was then used as a starter for a discussion on the role of the circle, and the four cardinal points in magick.

EXPLORING OUR SOCIAL WORLDS

The exercises in this section are a variety of group exercises, chosen for their value in demonstrating the value of group experimentation. I believe that one of the main strengths of group shamanic exploration is the sense of the communal. In creating a space where we can inspire each other, and experiment with relatively simple exercises that nevertheless bring about amazing results, we can learn that there is little need to acquire lots of “knowledge” from books or “teachers”. Shamanic techniques are not bound up with concepts such as “spirituality” or “personal transformation” - shamanic magick is firmly rooted in the social world of meetings, dramas, and gatherings. Whether you are undertaking identity work or investigating the worlds of the Mythic, you must eventually return to the world around you.

Soundscapes

Soundscapes are a group exercise in exploring how to use words, tones and sound patterns to build up a “picture” - creating the atmosphere appropriate to the chosen theme. My favourite example of a vocal Soundscape is one produced by an experimental drama group, when asked to express the theme of “Sweets”. The group members each chose “mantras” used in advertising jingles and developed individual rhythms, so that the resulting Soundscape was a mix of:

1. “Only the crumbl-iest, flaki-est choc-late, tastes like chocolate nev-er tasted bee-fore!” (drawn out, sung high)
2. “Hot chocolate, Drink-ing chocolate.” (Chanted fast).
3. “Skit-tles” (repeated with a pause inbetween)
4. “Mars-Bars” (Bass chant, slower than No.2)
5. “Smartie-People-are-happy-people” (light refrain)

Get the idea? It’s useful to get people to brainstorm ideas about a particular subject or theme, and then to choose one word or phrase to use as the beginnings of a chant. You can

also use soundscapes to evoke and exaggerate moods, and develop groupgrown chants for rituals and spellcasting.

Dreamscapes

I was introduced to the idea of Dreamscaping while participating in an experimental drama group - The Theatre of Voodoo (now sadly defunct). The basic idea is that as groups go through the process of forming, people obviously become more intimate with each other, and this can be reflected by shared dreams, or dreams where members of the group are in a particular situation. As a group develops, it also develops a shared psychic space - the Gestalt (a German word meaning 'more than the sum of its parts') mind. Dreamscaping is a development of role-playing where one person describes their dream, and the group works to turn the elements of the dream into a dramatic event, where the originator of the dream takes on one of the dream-figure roles, and someone else becomes the 'dreamer'. One of the examples that we tried was that using the theme of "nightmares", we all shared recurring nightmare experiences, and then scripted out a play that used imagery from each group members' dreams. The dreamscapes were built up using a combination of soundscaping, tapes, lighting effects, masks and other props. We found that working with each others' dream images helped develop a kind of group mythic world, which could be accessed through dreams and group activities.

Acting out dreams is also very beneficial in terms of understanding your own dream-symbolism, and we found that as we began to work with each others dreams, then images from each others dream-worlds would begin to 'bleed' into each others' dream-experiences. Dreamscaping can give rise to emotional surges, and it is wise to go carefully with it. It would be interesting to find out if it is possible to enter a sleeping person's dreamworld using this kind of practice. We think of dreams as highly personal, but they can be brought into the social world - and likewise, the social world can provide us with a backdoor to them.

Mime

I think that my first awareness of not knowing what to do with my hands came to me during one of my first attempts at public speaking. They were suddenly transformed from manipulators of tools to inconvenient things which, no matter what I did with them, didn't make me feel very comfortable. It was only when I began to look at how stage performers used their hands - in either emphasising speech or giving out another message entirely, that I began to realise the potential and power of mime and gesture. Being able to mime messages is a useful skill, which is very much part of the shamanic repertoire, used by tricksters, sacred clowns and performers in every age and culture. For example, a man sits cross-legged, eyes closed and face impassive. A woman approaches carefully, exaggerating her movements. Squatting beside him, she appears to be carefully extracting something wormlike from the mans ear - he grimaces with pain, while all her movements suggest that the worm (if such it is) is resisting her efforts to withdraw it. Finally, with a flourish, she yanks it out, and as the man relaxes, she rubs her hands together, as though cleaning something slimy from herself. Now depending on the circumstances, this scene could be a comedy acted out for amusement, or the description could equally well apply to a shamanka healing a client by extracting a bad spirit. The point I'm making is that while we can use mime while clowning or communicating, its also an important part of other magick, such as healing or wrestling with spirits.

Miming is also a useful technique because of its elements of being a physical language. Spoken language, is for the most part, directed to our waking awareness. Physical languages, on the other hand, speak directly to the Deep Mind. Look around you and see how we all utilise gestures, and you will begin to understand that a great deal of their power comes from our almost unthinking reactions to them. We can, quickly and simply, convey a message with a few gestures in less time than it would take to speak or write them. Gestures also reinforce the

'power' of a spoken phrase. An easy way to demonstrate this is to have people try out giving conflicting spoken messages and gestures, such as telling someone to "come here", while at the same time gesturing for them to stay where they are or even go away!

It can also be useful to look at sign languages, such as those developed for people who have no, or impaired speech. Experienced users can 'sign' much faster than if the same message was spoken aloud, and sign languages are also used in situations where the need for silence is paramount - such as in hunting or warfare. This leads on of course, to the idea of sacred gestures - such as used by sacred dancers, those performing Bodymind disciplines, and ritual gestures.

In *Walking Between The Worlds* I mentioned Shape-Shift-ing as an example of using mime, but of course any recognisable figure from folklore to television soaps could be suitable, providing they have a base characteristic which can be worked on. Here are some Mime exercises which I have used in groups:

Elementals

The set-up of this exercise requires the group to be lying down, with plenty of space between each person, and the facilitator perched on a chair or stool in the middle. The facilitator explains that s/he is a mighty wizard, whilst the group form the base for elementals, of different natures, and that the wizard is going to allow them to take on the shape of the elemental natures. The 'wizard' gives images using phrases, whilst the group mime, in their own ways, the feelings and thoughts which those phrases evoke. A sequence might go on the lines of:

1. Earth - tectonic plates shifting, continents drifting, granite hills grinding against each other, earth tremors, rumblings, volcanoes belching forth...

2. Fire - flames dancing, reaching forth, consuming, writhing, growing, spreading, whipped by the wind, becoming...

3. Air - gentle breezes, sudden gusts, rising, falling, clouds dancing, tornadoes swirling, storms bending low above the water, reaching lower across the waves...

4. Water - the depths, gentle swirls, currents, trickling, flowing, gurgling, crashing, storms at sea, breakers, surf, pounding against the rocks...becoming rocks again

At this point you could go back to earth, and bring everyone to rest again, or you could go further, and mime the growth of trees, or even cities.

Another development of this exercise is, when performing rituals, to have people acting as elementals, and to dance or mime their particular element, to add its power to the ritual. This kind of group activity can be enhanced by each individual exploring their own personal relationship with each element.

Mime Games

Group games involving mime can range from sitting in a circle and miming an action to one's neighbour - who must then guess what the mime was, to miming each other's characteristic postures and gestures. While these are games, they act as a useful (and fun) introduction to the power of mime & gesture. Once we begin to look at the everyday power of these physical languages, then we can start to work around them. Two-minute playlets can be useful here, for example, quick mimes of various creation myths. Mimes can also be acted out in slow motion - when combined with other techniques, it can be very effective in enhancing group trances.

EXPLORING OUR MYTHIC WORLDS

The bulk of this booklet is concerned with techniques and concepts related to working in the Mythic arena of our experience. The following exercises should be taken as guidelines for beginning such an exploration. Where possible, I have attempted to explain the underlying structure beneath an exercise or concept, and to relate them to the Social and Personal Worlds.

Innerworld Explorations

The 'Innerworlds' are the mindscapes which we can travel in, encountering various entities, and moving through transformative experience and learning, using stories, legends, and cycles which have Mythic proportions. But are they real? you might ask. That really depends on who you ask, and answers will probably range from one extreme - yes they are real, to no, they are no more than imaginary fantasies. Either extreme is a misunderstanding of the nature of imagination. In any case, when you approach magick, the whole idea of subjective and objective realities becomes obsolete. We tend to think of the imagination as a passive quality, not as a medium through which we can affect the world. Yet through the imagination, given structure and meaning by being clothed in symbolic images, we can tap the release the energies of the Deep Mind to change our selves - to perform identity work, to influence our bodymind complexes, or to bring about changes in the 'external' reality around us.

The innerworlds are real in so far as we invest belief in them. The innerworlds are mindscapes which reflect and reinforce particular transformative learning experiences, so that we can focus awareness onto one set of experiences, isolating and intensifying them, out of what Austin Osman Spare called "the chaos of the normal." Our relationship to them is much like our relationship with the worlds we enter when we watch "the

silver screen” of film or television. Despite knowing that these worlds are illusory, we still get caught up in the plot of TV soaps, get frightened by horror films, stirred by drama - it’s not unknown for periods of initiation to be triggered by a film or television programme. It is the quality of belief which allows these worlds to become real, and a lot of people, investing an innerworld with belief over a long period of time, give it power so that it becomes Mythic - a reflection of our psychology; our hopes, fears, aspirations, through stereotypes - entities which embody particular qualities or facets of our experience. The main difference between the electronically-generated innerworlds and those magickally generated is the intensity of transformative experience that they afford us. A TV soap opera like ‘Eastenders’ has many points of contact with our Social & Personal worlds - the stories are those of social relations and there is little that is inherently esoteric. The intensity of fantasy is low, and so the world of Eastenders seems just within reach.

Let’s look at something a bit more fantastic - the world of ‘Star Trek’. More people are familiar with the universe of Star Trek than any of the mystery religions. It’s a fairly safe bet that more people are going to know who Mr. Spock is, than who know who Lugh is. The Star Trek universe has a high fantasy content, and seemingly few points of contact with our ‘everyday’ worlds of experience. Yet Star Trek is a modern, mythic reflection of our psychology. The characters embody specific qualities - Spock is logical, Sulu is often portrayed as a martial figure, Scotty is a ‘master builder’, and Kirk is an arbitrator, forever seeking resolution of conflict through peaceful means. As we “get into” the Star Trek universe, we find greater depth and subtlety. We find that the universe has its own rules which the characters are subject to, and is internally consistent. Each episode, we may find that we are being given insights into the Personal world of a key character. Like our everyday worlds, the universe of Star Trek has a boundary beyond which is the unknown - the future, unexplored space, the consequences of our actions - whatever wild cards that we may be dealt. So we watch TV, and enter, as an observer, the

unfolding of a Mythic event. We can increase this sense of participation through a role-playing game, where group belief allows us to generate, for a few hours at least, the semblance of the Star Trek universe, in the comfort of your sitting room. It's relatively easy to generate the Star Trek world, due to the plethora of books, comics, videos and roleplaying supplements which are available to support that universe.

Now this is all very well you might say, but after all, it's only entertainment. The magickal innerworlds are concerned with spiritual development and bringing about a change in consciousness, and doesn't television stifle the imagination anyway? The answer of course, is that it depends how you use it. The world of magick & shamanism abounds with experts and authorities on every subject. Sooner or later you're going to have to develop a sense of discrimination as to what is useful for you and what isn't. As you've probably guessed by now, I'm well into Star Trek. While I'm entertained by entering the Star Trek universe, I could also use it (with some modification) as a Mythic world in which to enter into to bring about change.

What I'm saying is that I don't favour one set of innerworlds over the others - Star Trek, Celtic Myth, Tarot trumps, Alchemical images, Greek creation stories, Amerind worlds - it's really a case of whatever turns you on. Some people might argue that the older a Mythic cycle is, the more powerful it is. This isn't necessarily true though - it seems more important that the clarity of the essential nature of the cycle is reflected, rather than muddled, by the images and symbols used. Old myths have very often, been messed about with. Much depends on who's writing them down, and from what angle - myths can be bent by politics.

When approaching innerworlds, it is the underlying structure that is important, rather than the surface details. It's useful to bear in mind the following points:

1. The symbolism & imagery should be internally consistent. If you are going to use Celtic symbolism, then the intru-

sion of something patently non-Celtic, like a laser gun, isn't going to reinforce your belief in that innerworld's 'realness'.

2. *Don't go overboard on detail.* People who have played fantasy role-playing games should appreciate this - you can't make an innerworld too detailed, as it'll take you hours to work through it. The imagination works best when it has free areas in which to flow, where symbols and images arise organically from the Deep Mind. No world is complete in itself, and the innerworlds are a means of approaching the unknown. The most powerful symbols are often the simplest, clearly stated or momentarily glimpsed. A recent example of this I experienced was during a pathworking designed to create the appropriate mood for scrying. It was a simple walk through a desert, until we came to two vast pillars of rock. Standing between them was a guide - a Jackal-headed god who led us into an underground temple which was to be the place where the scrying took place. The imagery was vaguely Egyptian, but very loose. Instead of giving a full description of the guide (Anubis) as a traditional Egyptian God-Form, he was merely described as "...jackal-headed God...opener of the way". The image I saw was that of a jackal-headed humanoid, wearing a complex suit of body-armour, with pipes and circuitry visible, and with laser-light beams penetrating the darkness. It may have not been exactly traditional, but it was appropriate for me, which is what counts.

3. *Allow yourself to enter different situations.* You can devise an innerworld where everything is nice and pleasant and relaxing - if relaxation is all you require. If however, you are seeking change, such as in identity work, then you will have to enter situations which are challenging, daunting and even frightening. By focusing on different aspects of the self, reflected through the Mythic images, an innerworld working can trigger the transformative process in us, which enables us to adapt and change in the ways that we desire. Many innerworld journeys are feints at death - threatening the ego with breakdown, so that we may slowly transform ourselves into more vital and

dynamic patterns. The more potent the images and symbols, the further they reach into the Deep Mind.

4. *A map is very helpful.* Want to go somewhere you've never been before? Easy, you get a map. The map isn't the territory itself, but it's a tool to help you find your way in, about, and out of the territory. The same is true for the innerworlds, and this is why there is such a multitude of cosmological and psychological maps abounding in different cultures, from the maps allowing us to enter fictional worlds to the shamanic cosmologies and the more formal structure of the Qabalah. These maps are not merely arbitrary concepts, but act to focus and direct the energies tapped through entering the symbolic structures. The maps are in a sense circuit diagrams, allowing us to differentiate between different aspects of experience. By creating patterns of ordered experience, we can harness the powers of the Deep Mind. Thus we enter different innerworlds for different reasons, and can enter into different Mythic structures to achieve particular goals. As you develop, you will tend to find that you will discover 'secret routes' to territories not marked on the map you are following, or, as a result of your exploration, find territories which have never been mapped before! All sacred maps have "hidden doors", tunnels or portals through which only those who know the "sacred alignments" may enter. You must learn to know your way around the well-trodden paths before you can start taking chances with the invisible routes.

5. *Don't overdo it.* Innerworld journeying can be a very useful technique, but it has its limitations and even dangers. The most obvious danger is that it is habit-forming. You can get to the extreme where you prefer your innerworld to what's going on around you, and it is easy to lose your sense of balance and discrimination. Innerworld Journeying is popular - you can do it alone, using a book or tape, and it doesn't take much effort. It can serve to reinforce the division between mind and body which is so prevalent in our culture. It is at this point that you should call your attention to why you are doing this in the first

place. Innerworld journeying is a means - to enhanced awareness, insight, and to connect strings of symbols and associations in the Deep Mind - and not an end in itself. Bear in mind that they can trigger powerful transformative experiences, and should be approached with caution. Some form of Centering exercise (described later) is useful as a prelude, and follow-on, to pathworking.

6. Keep a record of all journeys. This has to be stressed, time and time again. I know that our ancestors didn't write things down, but nor did they live in a culture that is fast approaching information overload, where so many signals jostle for attention that it's all too easy to forget things. Keeping a record is a discipline - it helps ground your experiences, and gives you a means of assessing your progress. Describing images, sights and encounters also helps embed the images in our minds, and people often find that, when writing down a pathworking, they remember things that they had forgotten, or not noticed, earlier.

How are Pathworkings Useful?

The number of mindscapes are infinite - limited only perhaps by your own notions of the worlds you want to enter. Pathworking provides us with a way of entering larger-than-life situations where, in participating in a mythic cycle, meeting with goddesses, spirits, beings from all aspects of reality, you may gain new insights about ourselves and the world, or can initiate new cycles of change and activity. You can explore symbols & myths which arise from the Social world - from the past and from fantasy, and you can also explore images which arise from the Personal world. Through them, you can explore dream imagery consciously; re-enter your personal past and discover the forgotten or hidden oaths or promises which we make to ourselves. You can explore other senses, using music, incense or tastes, and "see" what associations and images well up from the Deep Mind. You can take on the shapes of animals, real or imaginary, and discover qualities which might lie beyond other people's writings and correspondences. You can

“die” periodically, and be reborn, altered subtly by the experience. You can form relationships with spirits of all aspects, which can then be further worked into other magickal activities. Perhaps most importantly, they can help in developing both the intuition and the sense of discrimination. Not everything you’ll encounter in your mindscapes will be benevolent, nor will it necessarily be telling the truth. We have an amazing capacity for lying to ourselves, making out we know things we don’t, trying to impress others, and these qualities, just as any others, can be found in the innerworlds. All magickal systems have stories about this, about spirits who lie or distract the unwary. Ghosts are notoriously capricious, and you need to develop a sense to recognise the validity of an experience. This is difficult, especially in a society like ours when most information comes out of books or a screen. This, like many other times, is where it is beneficial to have someone else around to talk to.

You can begin experimenting with pathworkings by performing simple journeys based around the images of what you know about yourself. You must be willing to explore and map the areas of self - likes, dislikes, habits, fears, past experiences and dreams, translating them into images from which you can base a journey on; otherwise, the mindscapes you consciously decide to explore may serve only to further distort the story of how you would like to see yourself as, and how you actually are.

AXIS MUNDI

The Axis Mundi, or central axis, is the centre of the shamanic universe. It is the point from which the shamanka can begin all journeys, and is found, in different guises, in all shamanic and magickal systems. The Axis Mundi is the place “where all the spheres meet”, from which the shaman can move into any of the innerworlds, and perform magickal feats and tasks. It appears, in different cultures, in many forms. For example, for the Warao Indians of Venezuela, the hub of the universe is the the sacred rattle. In Haitian Voudou, the crossroads is the central point “where all roads meet”. A contemporary practitioner of Voudou has described New York City in terms of every crossroads being a place sacred to the Gods, and references to crossroads as places with magickal virtue can be found in British folklore. Elsewhere, the axis mundi appears as a sky ladder, world-tree, post, pillar, or sacred mountain. The image of the world-tree is a very enduring one, which appears in shamanic cultures all over the world, and it is likely that the Biblical tree of knowledge, and its esoteric counterpart, the ‘Otz Chaim’ of Qabalah have been developed from shamanistic sources. Remember, shamanism is the root of magick, as well as art, dance, theatre, and philosophy. All magickal systems have elements of the shamanic in them. The world-tree image also appears in alchemical texts, is depicted in cave-paintings that date back to the Palaeolithic era, and in tantrik iconography as the tree on which the sacred letters of the Hindu alphabet hang.

It is important to recognise that, for practitioners of magick (whatever approach you adopt), that the Axis Mundi is not only a physical object or place, but also an internal condition - the axis, as it were, of your inner life and experience. It is a matter of poise or equilibrium - developing inner balance. At first, this statement seems to be paradoxical, after all, much of shamanic activity often comes across as incomprehensible to

the outsider, and as I pointed out in *Walking Between The Worlds*, shamanic work can be very taxing, both mentally and physically. A popular misconception has arisen is that the shaman is an outsider figure, because of some form of insanity which is seen as 'sacred'. There is little evidence to support this. Although shamanic experience does involve periodic bouts of psychic crises, vocational illnesses, and descents into the underworld by means of some form of creative derangement, these are but necessary transitions, or 'peak' periods of initiation. It is through these trials that the shamanka develops the poise and balance necessary to journey between the worlds and work with spirits. Mircea Eliade, in his classic work on shamanism explains the relationship between the shaman and the initiatory trials:

"That such maladies nearly always appear in relation to the vocation of medicine men is not at all surprising. Like the sick man, the religious man is projected onto a vital plane that shows him the fundamental data of human existence, that is, solitude, danger, hostility of the surrounding world. But .. the shaman, is not only a sick man; he is, above all, a sick man who has been cured, who has succeeded in curing himself."

Don't forget that it is the shaman who acts to mediate between community and cosmology - between the tribe, and the world of spirits, omens and ancestors. Another popular misconception is that if you are using shamanic techniques, then you don't have to perform any long-winded or rigorous magickal exercises such as yoga or visualisation. Some people seem to think that because shamanic magick is seen to be 'spontaneous' or 'intuitive', then you can get away with a haphazard approach. This, to put it bluntly, is foolishness. You can be this kind of 'shaman' in the safety of your bedsit, but in the wild world, sloppy shamans wouldn't last very long! If you look at legends from differing shamanic cultures, they all tend to emphasise that not just anybody is a shaman; that to be a shaman requires a sense of inner balance or poise, whether

you are running up a ladder of knives or crossing a chasm which is spanned only by a single strand of hair.

Centering

Having emphasised the need for balance, let's have a look at some exercises that will help you develop it. This sort of work is generally known as Centering. In Western (post Golden Dawn) magick it is also known as banishing. The most well-known form of banishing is the short ritual known as the "banishing ritual of the lesser pentagram" which involves tracing pentagrams in the air, invoking archangels, and calling on divine forces. Hold on, you might think, this isn't very 'shamanic' is it? Well don't worry, I'm not going to describe it (see Further Reading for more details), nor am I going to foist a 'shamanic' counterpart onto you. What is important, however, is the principles behind this exercise. In Western ritual magick, a banishing is performed at the beginning and end of every working, whether this be full-scale ritual, an innerworld journey, meditation etc. The first banishing acts to help you prepare yourself in the following ways:

1. It focuses your attention on the work you are about to do, and helps you close off from thinking about everyday concerns - bills, what you're having for dinner, etc.
2. It allows you to begin to take up your 'role' as a Mythic figure yourself - however you like to see yourself when working magickally.
3. Most importantly of all, it acts to Center yourself within your magickal universe.

So what does Centering involve? Most Centering exercises, whatever tradition or culture they originate from, share similar elements. These are:

1. Marking out or otherwise defining the area being used as 'sacred space'.
2. Symbolically ordering, by identification, the main zones, gates, or dimensions of the chosen magickal universe. The

centerpoint of which becomes the Axis Mundi - a physical reflection and reinforcement of one's inner poise.

3. Identification with a chosen source of inspiration - merging the macrocosm (total universe) with the microcosm (self).

The first part of the exercise is known generally in Western Magick as "Casting the Circle". Here's Sheila Broun describing how she creates her circles:

"By formally creating a circle, you define the boundaries in which you are working. I like to create my circle by decorating it. I place incense or feathers in the east for air, along with an appropriate colour such as blue. Candles and red things in the south for fire, water and shells in the west, and rocks and crystals in the north."

Other ways of defining the space include sweeping it out, setting up staves carved with the heads of totemic animals, marking out the territory with ash, chalk, flour or cords, or laying down cloth with patterns traced on them.

The second part is to symbolically order your magickal universe. The sacred space is a reflection of the wider universe, so by moving to what is in effect the Axis Mundi, you can access or influence any part of the universe. This can be done by marking out the basic elements of the universe. This can range from the simple - The four cardinal directions of east, south, west and north, to complex arrays of gateways and tunnels. In the standard Western Centering, the magician stands at the centre of the four directions, having focused on each as physical direction, inner qualities, and spiritual force. Again, this takes various forms, such as calling upon the four winds (Greek mythology), the four great archangels of the qabalah, the elemental stewards of Hindu myth, or the four 'watchtowers' in Wicca (which originates from the Enochian magick of Dr. John Dee, an Elisabethan magus). Some systems, such as Chinese or Tantrik magick, divide the circle into eight directions. It also helps to place any elemental Power Objects that you have at the appropriate points of the circle.

The third part of the exercise sounds abstract, but is quite simple. In effect, you adopt the stance of being "at one" with

whatever image or symbol you have of the primal source energy - such as “the Great Spirit”, a Goddess or God, Tao, Void, etc.

The symbols & images which are adopted to enact the exercise are, generally, up to you. The most important thing is that they be meaningful, and consistent with whatever symbols and images you are working with. If you are exploring Celtic shamanism, then a Qabalistically-based centering ritual will be a bit incongruous. It is important to use symbols & images which are powerful for you because centering stirs the Deep Mind, triggering associations and images. If you focus attention on the east for example, calling a chosen spirit to stand before you and become ‘part’ of the circle; what you are effectively doing is to link a series of associations: the physical qualities of the relevant element - the psychological qualities of the element - the spiritual energies associated with that element - any associated myth or legend. These links form a chain that binds experiences from the social, mythic and personal worlds; that reaches down into the Deep Mind, drawing upon archetypal experiences, and stimulating the release of energy. Each part of the Centering exercise is enabling you to balance the different aspects of your self into a more dynamic whole. Each time you do this, it is increasingly effective.

This first centering exercise, is a preparation for magickal activity, though of course, it can be done as an exercise in itself. If you have a power spot as described earlier, then this can be used as your Axis Mundi, and the centering exercise can be a lot simpler - this is a matter of individual taste and confidence. Personally, I started out using fairly complex centering rituals & exercises, such as the Lesser Pentagram Ritual mentioned earlier, and then moved to more simpler exercises as my confidence increased. I’ll go into the use of Power Objects as central axes shortly.

After you have performed the main focus of your activity, it is essential to repeat the Centering exercise. Why is this necessary? Well, just as when you are doing your trancework, innerworld journey, etc, the last thing you need is being side-tracked by thoughts such as “I wonder what’s on TV later

on?"; its equally undesirable to have a sudden vision from your work crop up during your everyday activities (unless of course, you specifically want this to happen). This part of Centering is known as Grounding yourself - i.e literally bringing yourself 'back to earth'. A clairvoyant friend told me of a rather extreme anecdote which illustrates why grounding is a necessity. She had been performing some scrying exercises, but had neglected to ground herself afterwards. Whilst driving to work the next morning, she glanced briefly into her rearview mirror, and suddenly her mind was flooded with a rush of images rather like the hypnagogic images you sometimes see when you are very tired. Fortunately, she retained control of the car and pulled up, but had she been in rush-hour traffic, the outcome could have been nasty!

Any kind of magickal work stirs the Deep Mind. Many exercises and techniques allow you to bring one aspect of your psyche into the forefront of your awareness. Grounding serves to restore equilibrium, so that you retain your sense of poise and balance. Periodically, you will probably enter periods of imbalance - its impossible to grow without doing so. Its important to recognise this when it occurs and open yourself to it, at the same time, there is a difference in totally "drowning" in such an experience, and knowing that it a necessary time to go through - and come out at the other end.

POWER OBJECTS

Most magickal systems have physical objects to aid the practitioner. In Western magick these are known as Magickal Weapons or Tools. In the terminology of modern shamanism, they are known as Power Objects. They include quartz crystals, instruments such as drums, bullroarers, rattles, and anything else the individual shaman uses as an aid. Some Power Objects may be “traditional” - part of the culture, while others may be “found objects”. As shamanism has captured the popular imagination, there’s a market been created for “authentic-looking” shamanic artifacts. Which is fine in itself, but can easily be taken to extremes - like the news recently that some rare species of birds in America are being ruthlessly hunted so that New Agers can have shamanic objects that look the part. Some people clamour to buy crystals without realising that they are imported from third world countries, having been dug out of the rock by underpaid and poorly protected workers.

There’s also an assumption that shamanic objects should look ethnic, when in fact, there is much to be said for making them yourself, out of what’s available round you. I once saw a picture of a Venezualan shaman’s altar. Amongst the collection of objects was a second world war vintage bayonet, an eighteenth-century cutlass, and a rattle made from an old tin can! We tend to develop fixed ideas about what things ought to look like. This was illustrated during the Shamanic Development Course when we came to look at improvised musical instruments. When we declared that the next project was to make at least one musical instrument by the next weekly meeting, at least one person turned round and said that this wasn’t possible - this being, because of their ideas about what constituted a musical instrument. And much the same is true of Power Objects. It doesn’t really matter what they look like, so long as they work for you.

Some types of Power Objects serve specific functions. The

following examples are taken from different shamanic cultures:

The Rattle

The Rattle, as mentioned earlier represents, in some cultures, the central axis of the shamanic universe, and is used by the shaman to summon spirits and Gods. The vertical handle of the rattle is another version of the world-tree, which the shaman ascends during trance. The head of the rattle represents the skyrealm of spirits and ancestors. For some shamanic cultures, the rattle also symbolises fire, as a purifying and invigorating element, used in healing rituals to counter the heat of fevers. An interesting example of the importance of the sacred rattle in a shamanic culture is the Warao Indians of Venezuela. Their sacred rattle (usually a community only possesses one rattle), is not only made out of sacred wood and a gourd which has mythic properties and legends associated with them, but the association with fire is made all the more dramatic as the rattle, when whirled vigorously by the shaman, actually emits a shower of sparks! The wood of the handle is highly combustible, and the pebbles and crystals that the rattle's gourd head contains rub off fine particles of wood, which are ignited by the friction of the crystals in the gourd, the sparks flying out of the rattle's mouths.

The Flute

The flute turns up in almost all shamanic cultures, made from a variety of substances such as bone, bamboo, reeds and sacred woods - often by burning out the inside of a dry stick. They are seen as channels for the voices of spirits and are often associated with bird-spirits. In some shamanic cultures, flutes have phallic associations (with similar associations to the wand in Western Magick) and are used in male initiation rituals and rites of passage. For some of the aborigines of New Guinea, the male-only association of flutes is so strong that it is taboo for women and children to even look at them. In contrast, for the Thompson River Tribe of North America, the whistle was a sacred instrument for women, and featured promi-

nently in the rites of passage. Sometimes flutes are five or six feet long, and take a great deal of effort to play. Some flutes are paired as ‘male’ and ‘female’, and played against each other in tribal ceremonies. The ancient Greeks regarded the flute as an instrument of healing, and Democritus recommended that the flute be used to cure a whole host of ailments including snakebite!

The Drum

A great deal has been written about shamanic drumming. It is one of the most popular ways of entering ecstatic states (apart from sex and drugs, that is!). Drums come in all shapes and sizes, made from a wide variety of materials. The rhythms produced can propel listeners (and beaters) into trance states, and changes in drum-beats can shift trance awareness to different parts of the ritual. Shamanic cultures that employ drumming usually have a battery of specific rhythms for ceremonial use. Haitian Voudou, for example, has distinct “schools” of drumming associated with particular rituals and deities.

Rhythms carry our consciousness along, from heartbeats, to cycles of breathing, sleeping, night-day and the passage of seasons. Rhythms promote associated body movements and adjustments, and act as a signal to begin movement without conscious effort, so that less energy is expended when you begin; for example, it has been shown that soldiers can march further, and in better form, with less fatigue, when accompanied by a marching band. The feeling of being “carried” comes from the structure that rhythm gives to our time-sense, and the pattern gives a sense of continuance. It becomes a motor attitude, and one’s attention is freed (if this is desired). Rhythms also become “mirrored” by our brain activity, and they also affect heart rate.

Crystals

Again, there’s a lot of material available about crystals, and like shamanism, they’re very popular at the moment, having been incorporated into therapies and the general lore of the

“New Age”. In Western Magick, crystals are mostly used for ‘putting things in’ - the things being, for example, troublesome entities. Unstable energies can be successfully contained within a crystalline structure, and crystals can be easily ‘charged’ to accept specific energies. Incidentally, this is why salt is used as part of cleansing rituals. Salt easily picks up psychic energy, and when dissolved in water, enables the water to be more readily charged with energy.

For the Huichol shaman, the crystal is an ancestral shaman, returned from the skyworld as solidified light, in order to dwell amongst his kin as a guardian and guiding spirit. This idea, of the crystal as condensed spirit is common in many shamanic cultures, from America to Australia. The crystals used in the sacred rattle of the Warao are known as the shaman’s “family of familiars”.

Bone

It is a common shamanic belief that the essential life force or soul resides not in the flesh, but in the bones. This makes bone a sacred substance much used for the creation of Power Objects, and hunting rituals involving bones are found in all shamanic cultures. Skeletal figures appear in shamanic underworld myths and can be found carved or painted onto instruments and costumes. Indian Tantriks made great use of bone, turning it into headresses, bowls, and trumpets made from human thigh-bones.

Found Objects

The examples given above should give you an idea about the complexity of Power Objects. What is obvious is that the shaman is prepared to utilise any aspect of the environment, giving it a sacred purpose. The philosophy underlying this approach is that the shamanka is on an equal footing with all aspects of her environment - animals, plants, spirits. Humanity is a participant in the world, rather than being perceived a separate from it. It is difficult to conceive of the Westerners acting from a similar premise, since part of the attraction of

shamanism for some of us is its promise of return to a primal naturalness, as opposed to the rampant advance of modern culture, many aspects of which we tend to find abhorrent. Can we see machines as imbued with a spirit? Can Acid House propel us into trance states? We tend to associate shamanism with the great outdoors (what's left of it), but since most of our people live in cities, how does being a shaman help the community? These are questions that it's easy to shrug off or avoid, but if using shamanic techniques means adopting a shamanic outlook, then that involves looking for the sacred in every possible place. One way of starting this is by considering Power Objects - things which you either make or find, and in which you place (ceremonially or otherwise) spirits.

The most basic form of Power Object is of the lucky rabbit's foot variety. This sort of object builds up a talismanic association - you could say that it holds a spirit which increases your personal power or luck. I used to have a small ceramic pisky figure, and one day, after reading about Gnomes, decided to imbue this figure with the ability to find things. Rather than doing a formal ritual, I began to treat the figure as though "he" was a person; politely asking him to find things for me - gratefully thanking him when the things I'd lost turned up (which they invariably began to do), and occasionally giving him bits of metal, small chips of rock etc, so that a small shrine was formed; I also greeted him in passing, and kept him dusted. Eventually, when other people started losing things, I'd say to them "Go ask the Gnome", and if they humoured me and did so, and the lost item appeared (as it usually did), then I'd tell them to go and thank him. If they didn't, he'd get mischeivous and hide things so that they disappeared, turning up later in odd places.

If you can adopt the habit of treating what we usually think of as inanimate objects as independent entities - perhaps as homes for spirits, then you might be surprised as to how your relationship to them changes. The example above is only one way of 'placing' a spirit into an object. Different schools of magick have different approaches, depending on the complex-

ity of the cosmology, but it's generally held to be a good idea that if you're going to place spirits into objects, then treating them with due respect and reverence is the way to go about it. Try treating all the tools you use as though a spirit inhabits them, and see what difference it makes to how you use them. Don't be dogmatic about this - burning incense near a computer for instance, will not give pleasing results! Of course, not all tools need a spirit in them - perhaps just the ones we tend to personalise - like cars, for instance. The tools you use as Power Objects are extensions of yourself and your chosen cosmology, and you will benefit greatly from treating them as living entities, imbued with a certain amount of their own volition. It is not unknown, for example, for Power Objects of great antiquity to have their own familiars, having acquired a great deal of Mythic significance from their owners, and years of use. Shamans around the world often sing and offer gifts to their Power Objects, and it is a good habit (and one that pays off!) to get into.

DRAWING THREADS TOGETHER

All the techniques in this book can be used as separate exercises, but to draw things to a conclusion, here is an example of how different ways of exploring each world can be combined into a process of exploration - drawing threads together and weaving them back and forth to form a whole. The following example is developed from the as yet unpublished work of Neil McLachlan.

One of the simplest, and yet profound explorations is the understanding of how we relate to the basic elements of the universe: Fire, Air, Water, Earth, and that which is known variously as spirit, tao, or void. On the circle (itself a symbol of totality) the four elements are related to the four cardinal directions - South, East, West and North), and the fifth element, to the centre. What follows is a series of exercises, working in each of the three worlds, to develop an awareness, and understanding of each element, and of the whole.

The first steps would be to gather together the correspondences of each element, given in books. After which, you could meditate upon each element, attempting to recognise in which ways, by what qualities, each element contributed to you as a person - how do you relate the element of air and its qualities for example, and so on. In so doing, you are relating the concept of the elements to your Personal world, and you might find the technique of Scrying useful in helping you meditate on the elements. From these insights, you could develop a Shield (or even a series of shields) showing how the elements relate within you - for example, a circle divided into 4 elements with spirit at the centre and beyond the circumference. The shield(s) can be as simple or complex as you wish, and you may want to keep developing them.

The next step is to get to know each element in turn, and for this part, you will need to be aware of Power Spots. You could find places where one of the elements is predominant, such as

an exposed place on a windy day for air; a beach or spithead of land where you can feel the power of water; a place where you can build a fire undisturbed for fire; and for earth, a mountain, hillside or fertile valley. The fifth element void, is a little abstract, but a quiet indoor place, or an outdoor place where you can see the night stars should suffice. These are the places to open yourself to the elements, to let drop all your preconceived ideas about them (what elementals look like and so forth) and let the feeling of them flood through you. Try and 'become' the element, soaking yourself in what you feel to be its qualities, and let your mind wander to find all the ways in which that element appears, all the ways you know of, your earliest recollections of them. For example, look into your fire and recall candle flames, garden bonfires, volcanoes, factory flames. Everything from primordial fire kept alive in a cave to the nuclear fire caught within a reactor. Be aware, again, of how the element appears in your life. For spirit, or void, think of all the various ways in which this element is expressed, in world religions and icons, and feel it as a deep centre within yourself and everything else. the source of all. Do this at each place you have chosen as being appropriate.

The next step is to seek a Power Object to condense your experience of each element into a solid form. To do this, you might return to each of your places of meditation, and ask each element to provide you with a token or gift. Again, you should be open to Omens here. The token may appear as a 'found object' or be given by someone, or attract your eye from a shop window. How it comes doesn't matter, but that you are aware that this is something special. An earth token might be, for example, a pebble or a bought crystal, while you might find some bird feathers lying across your path one day for air. A lump of fire-charred wood (which can be varnished later) might be your token for fire, while a seashell or piece of driftwood may be given to you for water.

For the void - well, a unique or black object might turn up, or your token could be a meditative state - a feeling of calmness, which you come to recognise, and learn to feel drawing upon you.

Once you have your five Power Objects, the next step is to return to your elemental places and fuse the experience of the place with the object. You can do this by again letting the experiences of each element flood through you, but holding the token so that the energies pass through you into the token.

From now on, the five Power Objects will act as gates between yourself, and the five elemental energies. You could utilise each token by creating a Pathworking based on some of the feelings and images that are compressed into each token. You can use them as the points markers in a Centering exercise, or by selecting two complementary qualities for each element, such as gentleness and strength, for earth, incorporate them into your self as qualities which you wish to express. Finally, in group work, you could use your enhanced perception of the elements in devising means of expressing them - through dance, games, playlets, mimes, and soundscapes. In doing all of this, you will not only balance yourself in terms of those elements, but also increase your awareness of the worlds about you, within you, behind you, and beyond you. You can go on to explore the relationships between elements in the physical world, in the world of human society, and in the myriad of myths which we have access to. And that is only the beginning...

FURTHER READING

Shamanism - Mircea Eliade
The Elements of Shamanism - Neville Drury
The Adventurer's Way - Alawn Tickhill
Flight of the Seventh Moon - Lynn Andrews
The Gentle Arts of Aquarian Magic - Marion Green
IMPRO - Keith Johnstone
The Aquarian Conspiracy - Marilyn Ferguson
Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth - James Lovelock
Stealing the Fire From Heaven - Stephen Mace