



DEMONS OF THE FLESH

THE COMPLETE GUIDE
TO LEFT HAND PATH
SEX MAGIC

NIKOLAS SCHRECK
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DEMONS OF THE FLESH

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For the Order of Babalon, the Order of Sekhmet and their allies.

Dedicated to the Memories of Baron Julius Evola, who began the work of awakening the left-hand path in the West, and Cameron, who served as avatar for the West's sleeping Shakti force. Our grateful appreciation to the many individuals who assisted us during the research and preparation phases of this book, including D. M.

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Disclaimer

The sexual and magical activities described in this book are intended exclusively for application by adults who have reached the age of majority, and should only be performed on a consensual basis by individuals possessing sound physical and mental health. Recommendations suggesting that the reader undertake proper training in physical activities that might prove injurious are intended seriously.

Neither the authors nor the publisher of this book can assume any liability or responsibility for any harm that might come to the reader as a consequence of the experiments outlined herein.

DEMONS OF THE FLESH

THE COMPLETE GUIDE TO LEFT-HAND PATH SEX MAGIC

NIKOLAS AND ZEENA SCHRECK

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Let's talk about the most mysterious subject of all sex.

Sex is an electromagnetic phenomenon.

William S. Burroughs

Desire is the great force.

– Andre Breton

Das Ewigweibliche zieht uns hinan.

(The Eternal Feminine draws us onwards.)

Dr. Faust, in Goethe's Faust II

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FOREPLAY

The book before you is a guide in the sense that it will escort you on a journey.

The route we will be taking passes through vistas of strange beauty and across perilous chasms. It is known as the left-hand path. Few have traveled this road, and fewer still have reached its final, distant destination.

Unfortunately, most previously available maps of this mysterious terrain have been drafted by those who have never even stepped upon the path. Yet they'll warn you of the terrible dangers confronted along the way, suggesting that its arduous passage only leads to the darkest of dead-ends.

Such faulty cartographers will caution you that the only souls to be encountered on this ill-lit thoroughfare are fools, lunatics, scoundrels, and thieves. (Indeed, there may be some truth to that last admonition, but the born adventurer will not be dissuaded so easily.)

There are other maps, offered by slightly less timid souls, that bear a closer semblance to reality. However, these guides breezily point out only the most comforting tourist attractions on the sight-seeing itinerary. All dark alleys, disreputable neighborhoods, and red light districts are kept safely out of view, deemed unfit for public consumption. Such squeamishness permits the explorer only a carefully expurgated outlook. Furthermore, the specifications found on this sort of map are frequently so convoluted that the

traveler doesn't know which end is up.

Finally, there's the map drafted by those who declare themselves not only as tour guides, but proudly lay claim to this left-turning way in its entirety, hailing it as the very best place to be. However, should the unwary wayfarer consult such maps for even the simplest directions, it immediately becomes apparent that there's been some confusion. This mix-up, it seems, is due to a simple but enduring misappropriation of nomenclature. The area on these maps marked so conspicuously as "the left-hand path" turns out, on closer inspection, to be a different path altogether.

Demons Of The Flesh, designed in part as a corrective to the false leads and detours described above, charts this hitherto misinterpreted path from a very different perspective. On our map, we clearly show you the complete road plan in all of its three-dimensional topography and complexity, starting from its remote ancient Eastern point of origination. We have also broken beneath the visible surface of this causeway to reveal the hidden archeological layers of the sinister current as it has coursed through time. Accompanying you through this voyage, we provide practical suggestions for navigating the leftward road in a contemporary Western world that provides no reliable compass.

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But enough metaphors about maps and paths. Let's face it, you picked this book up to read about sex.

And there's certainly plenty of sex to be found in these pages, chronicling an infinite diversity of erotic experience. From the alchemy of menstrual blood and semen to the ritual worship of the vagina. Sex with promiscuous monks and sacred whores, from Tibet to Babylon. Necrophiliac sex in cremation grounds. Coprophiliac sex in Sicily. Incestuous sex in India. Vampiric sex in China. The orgasm as sacrifice. The orgasm prolonged. Sex with Goddesses. Psychic transexualism. Sex with disembodied beings. Sexual slavery. Sexual mastery. Sexual trance. Ancient Egyptian anal sex between Set and his nephew Horus. Oral sex. Autoerotic sex. Group sex. Telepathic sex. All kinds of sex sects. Tantric sex. Gnostic sex. Satanic sex. Sex with young virgins. Sex with the elderly. Sex with the wives of other men. Even sex with Jesus.

However, the multi-bodied panorama of polymorphous delight that seeps from this book is not presented merely to stimulate the jaded or titillate *ennuyé* voluptuaries with novel deviations they have yet to try out. It's important to establish that there is a significant difference between the profound pleasure of sexuality enjoyed for its own sake as a physiological and aesthetic experience, and sexuality utilized for authentic magical or initiatory purposes – the nucleus of the left-hand path. Taken out of their proper context, the outwardly salacious tidbits pressed between these pages can – and probably will – be misinterpreted if this distinction is not taken into account.

At the same time, it must be pointed out that the whole topic of sexual magic has been hedged about with a tremendous amount of hypocrisy, emanating both from practicing sex magicians and those merely observing their activities. For instance, many a curiosity-seeker has casually poked around the most superficial level of erotic magic, hoping to learn a few sex tips to spice up a lackluster love life. For the most part, this misguided playing at sex magic is merely a waste of time, generating little in the way of physical excitement, and absolutely nothing in the way of magic. But some self-righteous sex magicians have taken the school-marmish position that this fairly common phenomenon is "immoral" or "spiritually harmful", or even that sex magic must be performed without a scintilla of lust or emotion to be legitimate. Conversely, the non-magician may snicker at the whole idea of erotic magic, dismissing it as some sort of dirty joke, refusing to accept that sex magicians are doing anything more profound than satiating their ordinary

carnal appetites under the guise of esoteric doctrine.

Behind these sanctimonious attitudes lays the horrific banality to which Eros has been reduced in the modern Western world.

In this spirit, some of our readers might imagine that a guide to lefthand path sex magic will provide the furtive cheap thrills of thinly veiled

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pornography. Literally speaking, that much maligned word pornography, from the Greek *porno* (whore) and *graphia* (writing) simply means "to write about whores". So for those of you who were fervently hoping that this book would be pornographic, there is indeed enough writing about whores in these pages to technically qualify. Of course, the whores we will be concerned with are the conveyors of that long-lost *ars amatoria* of sacred prostitution. If prostitution once served a noble and even sacred function, then why not a sacred pornography? Such a form would be something far more subversive and powerful than the formulaic repetition of conventions we usually associate with the genre. The British author Angela Carter, whose cruel tales were usually tinged with an unsettling and surreal sexuality, once suggested the possibilities:

"The moral pornographer would be an artist who uses pornographic material as a part of the acceptance of the logic of a world of absolute sexual license for all the genders, and projects a model of the way such a world might work.

His business would be the total demystification of the flesh and the subsequent revelation, through the infinite modulations of the sexual act... the pornographer has it in his power to become a terrorist of the imagination, a sexual guerilla whose purpose is to overturn our most basic notions of these relations, to reinstate sexuality as a primary mode of being rather than a specialized area of vacation from being and to show that the everyday meetings in the marriage bed are parodies of their own pretensions."

In many ways, Carter's description of the taboo-overturning "sexual guerilla" who totally demystifies the flesh makes for an excellent introduction to the work of the left-hand path sex magician that this book illustrates. For the *magi* of the left-hand path, sexuality is even more than "a primary mode of being" – the altered state of extreme erotic ecstasy is a potentially *divine* mode of being, the chaotic dance of two magnetically attracted opposite energies that allows for the creation of a third power transcending the human. The couple that unleashes this hidden, psychically remanifesting power of the left-hand path within their orgasm-yoked organisms to its full intensity will find it difficult to return to the pre-programmed existence they once led. The man and woman who even once taste the freedom of the left-hand path, as expressed through its self-deifying sexual rites, have exited the human game as it is normally played.

If the left-hand path is dangerous – a point both its detractors and its advocates have agreed upon – one of its primary hazards is the peril of freedom in a world almost instinctively committed to crushing liberty in whatever form it might appear. All autocracies have held sway by severely curbing the full development of sexual power in their subjects. The left-hand

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path, a method of consciously activating levels of erotic energy almost unknown in conventional sexual relations, must be viewed as a threat to *any* hierarchy that seeks to bridle the development of man into god. The sexual gnosis of the left-hand path has the potential to forge heroic, self-determined *individuals* from the bleating meat of the human herd.

The eccentric (some would say insane) psychologist Wilhelm Reich's researches into the untapped mysteries of the orgasm on human consciousness partially accord with the ancient teachings of the left-hand path. In his *The Mass Psychology Of Fascism*, Reich recognized the threat that total erotic freedom would pose to any societal control mechanism. In unconscious keeping with the left-hand path veneration of *Shakti*, the divine

sexual power of woman, he wrote: "Sexually awakened women, affirmed and recognized as such, would mean the complete collapse of the authoritarian ideology." George Orwell, in his dystopic novel *1984*, which remains an acute diagnosis for the modern cult of control, also understood that the limitation of sexual power was one of the most insidious weapons of autocracy. Orwell has Julia, the heroine of *1984*, realize the secret of Eros: "Unlike Winston, [she] had grasped the inner meaning of the Party's sexual puritanism. It was not merely that the sex instinct created a world of its own which was outside the Party's control and which therefore had to be destroyed if possible. What was more important was that sexual privation induced hysteria, which was desirable because it could be transformed into war-fever and leader-worship."

The adept of the left-hand path, radically individuated and separated from the delusions of the crowd through systematic transgression of taboo and transcendent sexuality's "world of its own" is unlikely to be swept up in the unthinking passions of the masses. In the first historical manifestation of the sinister current that we will investigate, the *Vama Marga* of India, this element of social defiance becomes evident. The Indian left-hand path initiate's refusal to follow his or her society's religious restrictions against sex between the castes, the drinking of wine, the consumption of certain "impure" foods, is the foundation upon which he or she eventually transgresses the human state and becomes divine. In more extreme left-hand path sects, such as the Aghori, the transcendence of deeply seated internal taboos goes much further. Although this critical factor of societal subversion has been either ignored or whitewashed by more temperate interpreters of the left-hand path than ourselves, you will find that this refusal to play by the rules dictated by others is one of the universally definitive factors separating the left-hand path from milder, less antagonistic forms of sex magic.

It would be easy to misinterpret this defiance of social and religious custom as a purely political statement. However, once freed from one set of psychic blinkers, the left-hand path magician does not simply trade them in

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for a new set. He or she strives to reach a state of mind in which all forms of orthodoxy must be questioned and rejected.

Even at this early stage, the perceptive reader will have realized that when we speak of left-hand sex magic, we are not concerned solely with the workings of the genitalia for some sorcerous purpose. Yes, its central tool of illumination is awakened sexuality. But the left-hand path tradition actually provides an approach to every aspect of existence, a philosophy – or "love of Sophia" – that set into *action* can transform the entirety of the human psychobiological structure, not just his or her penis or vagina.

One might say that left-hand path sex magic is a form of initiation consciously designed for a hopelessly fucked up world. The left-hand path philosophy posits that it is the method best suited for the apocalyptic and out of kilter times in which mankind currently exists, an era the traditional Indian left-hand path discipline recognizes as the Kali Yuga. Exceptional measures are needed to awaken to full consciousness under such inauspicious conditions. Step one is to reject the sorrow and despair such times may inspire and joyfully embrace the chaos of the disintegrating world, this shimmering and illusory spectacle that emanates from the vulva of dark Kali. And one of the great tools of transformation over which Kali presides is the flesh, especially as it is subjected to the flame of desire.

Outside of the left-hand path tradition proper, pre-Christian antiquity clearly acknowledged that the transformative and uncanny states of mind attainable through sexuality partake of the realm of the Gods. In fact, many common terms denoting sexuality in modern language still bear the indelible traces of that ancient appreciation of the magical – even religious – nature of human sexuality. The erotic hearkens back to the god Eros,

aphrodisiac refers to the goddess Aphrodite, just as venereal is derived from Venus. The magical origins of the word "fetish" are also fairly well known – it derives from the Portuguese *feitico*, for sorcery or charm. Who can deny that the powerful hold in which a sexual fetish enthalls the fetishist is anything but a fascination, a glamour, entirely magical in nature? The left-hand path, in all of its forms, consciously returns Eros to the formerly exalted place it once held in human life, recognizing the dormant divinity of sex even in practices recoiled from as sordid and shameful by the profane.

Underneath its sometimes contradictory examination of sex-magical symbols and premises from various cultural and religious traditions, *Demons Of The Flesh* postulates a universal biological phenomenon seemingly hardwired into human consciousness and sexuality. As we shall see, the Indian Tantric phrase left-hand path describes this psychosexual anomaly with great precision. However, we also use the phrase "sinister current", which indicates its non-indigenous, omnipresent existence, not only in a specific cultural tradition, but as *a force* located in the body itself.

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We've now indicated how central a role sex plays to the left-hand path, but presumably, you may be wondering where the "magic" referred to in the sub-title of this book comes in. Just as the god-like power inherent in sexual pleasure has been diminished to its currently debased state, so has the once royal art of magic suffered a similar decline in the modern world. If one does not immediately associate the word with show business trickery and prestidigitation, then it conjures up the vulgar consumer occultist, dressed up in the obligatory "magic" robe, credulously reciting doctrinaire "magic" spells, usually hoping in vain to summon up the money he or she lacks the skills to earn, or to attract a given object of desire without acquiring the social graces to even strike up a conversation. In other words, magic, at least in the Western world, has become an exotic plaything for losers, the acting out of delusive wishful thinking to achieve transient goals more efficiently realized through the mundane development of personal competence.

Magic, from the left-hand path perspective outlined here, is far removed from the crude commodity it has become in the modern occult milieu. We are focused here on the Great Work, the sex-alchemical transformation of human to demi-divinity, not the development of a few parlous parlor tricks. In the Indian left-hand path, the greatest magicians are the *divya* or the *bodhisattva*, who need not resort to anything resembling a ritual to create radical transformation of *maya*, the substance of which mind and matter are both composed. Magical powers, as understood in the West, are sometimes a consequence of erotic initiation, but they are secondary to the radical remanifestation of self to higher modes of being which is the *raison d'etre* of the left-hand path. In the ancient Hellenic and Gnostic traditions we will also consider as expressions of the sinister current, a *divya* is known as a *magus*, a being whose magical power is based on the internal cultivation of the self to daemonic levels of consciousness.

As this state of being is the goal of all sinister current sex magicians, we do not provide the reader with presto-change-o spells, curses or scripted rituals. We also don't furnish you with the names of demons guaranteed to fulfill your every command nor sure-fire charms that will snare the targets of your lust. If you're gullible enough to be searching for such instant panaceas, our emphasis on the importance of self-directed magical work as an internal process of self-deification will probably be extremely frustrating. This book will make clear the perennial left-hand path methods that activate the eternal course of development taken by the *divya* or the *magus* of the left-hand path, but it deliberately refrains from leading the reader mechanically through a checklist of external gimmickry. You won't find anything like: 1) Open vagina. 2) Insert penis. 3) Say the magic word with conviction.

the budding magician. Dogmatic instructions, to our experience, cannot make for great magicians – they only prove that the reader can obediently follow commands. Such short cuts and simplifications provide none of the necessary friction for the student of the left-hand path, without which none of the abrasive effort required to initiate one's self can be sparked. *Demons Of The Flesh*, which we are immodest enough to classify as a Tantra for the twenty-first century, is constructed to provide this friction, rather than to distill the left-hand path into an easy-to-swallow mother's milk for the suckling. For this reason, although practical methods of procedure are suggested, this is not so much a "how-to" book – its focus is on "why-to." In our opinion, one mark of the true left-hand path magician is an ability to integrate complex symbolic systems, synthesize them with personal experience, and create from this synthesis his or her own unique direction on the left-hand path.

One commonly held, but erroneous, belief about sex magic, left-hand path or otherwise, is that its practice consists of nothing more than making a strong wish focused upon during orgasm. If that were the case, one would hardly need an entire book about the subject – that last sentence would suffice for one's complete sex-magical education. This is actually only one of the least sophisticated of sex-sorcerous methods, and while the left-hand path magician may experiment with it as a means of testing the insubstantiality of all mental phenomena, it cannot compare to the far more essential left-hand path methods of sexual illumination, such as *Kundalini*, that reshape consciousness to supernal levels of realization that entirely transcend the puerile "wishing well" model of popular sex magic.

Perhaps the prevalence of this idea, even among those who should know better, is based on the fact that so much has been written about Aleister Crowley's "sex magick", which in his own everyday practice did indeed consist of little more than coordinating wishing and coming. But Crowley, despite his posthumous ascendance as the most recognizable "brand name" in the field of Western sex magic, is not the be-all and end-all of sex magic. The idea of the magical orgasm did not simply spontaneously burst forth from Crowley's loins one day. In fact, as we will show, the now obscure pseudo-Rosicrucian precursors of Crowley, such as the African-American sex magician P.B. Randolph and the German spermophage Theodor Reuss originated many of the ideas the Great Beast 666 is commonly thought to have "discovered", just as several of his contemporaries and antecedents developed those same ideas in more pertinent directions than the Master himself. We shall also attempt to resolve the thorny question of whether Crowley is indeed *a magus* of the left-hand path at all.

In this last regard, it must be said that the practice of sex magic alone does not qualify a magician for the left-hand path. Every occult nutcase who

ever proclaimed his or her orgasm to be a magical event of the first order is not necessarily an initiate of the left-hand path. Likewise, the absence of sexuality in one's magical practice is a sure sign that one is no longer dealing with the left-hand path in its classical sense.

We place left-hand sex magic in a historical context by analyzing some of the colorful historical figures who have practiced orgasmic thaumaturgy in the modern West. But we must make clear that it is not our intention to inspire our readers to emulate the lives and legends of these individuals. The left-hand path is firmly focused on self-deification – the fannish idolization and hero worship inculcated by so much occult literature for the "all-stars" of yesteryear is wholly out of place with the goals of the left-hand path. If there is an appropriate left-hand path attitude to be taken with the famous and infamous sex-magical teachers of the past, it is surely

irreverence, not pious sanctification. In fact, in the process of transforming yourself from human to divine consciousness through erotic initiation, a healthy irreverence directed at your own pretensions is mandatory.

The world is filled with people who have devoured a thousand magical books and yet have never performed a single genuine act of magic. So prevalent is this phenomenon that the syndrome has even earned itself a name: the armchair magician. It is certainly not our intention to breed through this book something even worse – the bedside sex magician. Assuming that you are reading this as an introductory overview of left-hand path sex magic, and not simply as a perverse amusement, the principles outlined herein should be enacted in your own flesh, through action in the real world, as opposed to cerebral abstraction.

Of course, there have been other books that have attempted to communicate something of the mysteries of sex magic. However, from our point of view, the majority of these earlier volumes have missed the mark. We would like to think that our aim will be more precise. For the most part, previously available sex magic texts have softened the piercing power available to the erotic magician into an ooey, gooey froth of insipid romanticism. Most recent offerings have been geared towards the weak, sniveling sensibilities of the so-called New Age movement. Such fainthearted guides have proffered an utterly defanged and domesticated sexual magic to their readers. This volume will sit uneasily on the shelf with those gentler, less direct works. If your understanding of sex magic has been gleaned only from that unsound body of work, we hope that this book serves as a purging antidote to previous misconceptions.

Not the least of the misconceptions we have targeted is the entirely incoherent and historically invalid understanding of the exact nature of the left-hand path that has prevailed for the past century or so in the Western world. One of the challenges in writing this book was to properly define a

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subject which so many already think they understand, but in fact do not – at least, not by any objective standard we can identify. In attempting to set the record straight on what the left-hand path is, we are only beginning the greater task of establishing a congruous working model of the sinister current in the West. Built, as it must be, upon the ruins of the confusion of the past, that working model may well take another fifty to a hundred years to truly take hold.

Although we ourselves are practicing left-hand path sex magicians, this book is in no sense designed as a medium of conversion or as a recruitment device. As we will make clear, the left-hand path is, for all of its anti-authoritarian elements, very much an elitist form of initiation. By this, we do not mean that left-hand path adepts necessarily consider themselves to be superior to the uninitiated – only that the sinister current is not for all, and can never be a path for the millions. Reading this book may well clarify for you that you would be ill-suited for this school of initiation.

Sexuality is the expression in the material world of the metaphysical concept of polarity – the *yin* and *yang*, Shiva and Shakti, the rose and the cross, the union and transcendence of opposites. *Demons Of The Flesh* is the very thing it describes, in that it can be understood as a sex magic working in its own right. As a brain-child created by the polarized erotic energies of male and female sexuality generated by its authors, this book illustrates how the combined sexual force of two magicians can create a daemonic third entity. By shaping the collaborative words and perspectives of two magicians into a cohesive whole, we have aimed to bring into being a magical elemental that takes on a certain life of its own, independent of its creators. Whenever two magicians work together, the creation of such an elemental force is the result; William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin referred to this phenomenon as "the third mind". Just as left-hand path erotic magic

creates a numinous space in which the very different energies of male and female can communicate and see beyond the limits of gender, so does the twofold voice of this book speak from a viewpoint that transcends male and female.

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BOOK ONE:

The Sinister Current in the East

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I.

VAMA MARGA

Foundations Of The Left-Hand Path

The Fucking Buddha: A Left-Hand Path Parable

A left-hand path tale from India's Tantric lore illustrates perfectly the contrast between world-denying religious practices and the ecstatic methods required for liberation in this Kali Yuga. Encoded in this narrative are almost all of the fundamental postulates of left-hand path initiation.

It concerns the adventures of one Vasistha, emulated as the austere epitome of the *yogi* revered by orthodox Hindus. Vasistha, a wise Brahmin, is utterly respectable, sober, and law-abiding, embodying the very essence of adherence to convention and world-negation. For six thousand years, he has lived the agonizing life of a self-torturing ascetic, a paragon of sexless, desire-free virtue, meditating faithfully and in perfect accordance with Hindu rules and regulations. And yet, despite all of his strict asceticism and sanctity, the object of his devotion, the Great Goddess, has never deigned to appear to him.

Exasperated at his failure, Vasistha loses his celebrated composure, becoming so angry that he longs to curse the elusive Goddess who has resisted his faithful and pious entreaty.

Vasistha's Brahmin father compels his son to resist this blasphemous act and to try again, although he suggests that Vasistha has been barking up the wrong tree, and does not even understand the Goddess properly. The Sage perseveres, following his father's advice to meditate on the divine being as the magical feminine substance, illuminating as ten thousand suns, from which the universe is made; the breathtakingly beautiful and tender spirit that filled the Bodhi tree under whose branches the Indian prince Gautama Siddhartha became the Buddha. (The Bodhi tree can be compared to that other mythical Tree of Knowledge from which the serpent gave the forbidden fruit of knowledge to Eve.)

This approach works better. The Great Goddess finally appears to the sage in one of her many *shakti* forms of Sarasvati, only to provide him with the disconcerting news that he has completely wasted the past six thousand years meditating according to the Vedic laws of solemnity and bodily denial. Instead, she tells the bewildered *yogi*, he must learn the *Kaula* teaching of

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illumination (the *Kaula* is one of the earliest known left-hand path sects).

Were he to stick to the traditional methods of asceticism and yoga, the Goddess laughs, he would never become liberated enough to gain even a momentary view of her divine feet; let alone her full divine presence.

"My worship is without austerity and pain!" the spellbinding Shakti proclaims. Before vanishing, She bids Vasistha to journey to the Himalayas, where he will be taught the true way to liberation for this age.

Devoutly following the command of the Goddess, Vasistha voyages

to a hidden kingdom in the Himalayas known as Mahacina. There, the ascetic discovers no less a personage than the deity Vishnu, who has taken the form of the Buddha himself, accompanied by several students. But to Vasistha's horror, the bleary-eyed Buddha and his disciples are visibly drunk, naked, and in an obvious state of sexual arousal.

Vasistha is scandalized to witness the Buddha and his pupils brazenly indulging in perpetual intercourse with a number of ravishing female companions. Beneath their wantonly disheveled long hair, these women wear nothing more than gently tinkling bells which ring with the erotic rhythm of their coupling. They are the graceful *devis*, whose sexual embrace imparts the highest initiation.

Vasistha, outraged, lectures the Buddha on the error of his ways, prissily fussing that his shameful actions contradict every holy teaching of God and man. Had not the Buddha himself taught that *kama* (desire) was the cause of all human suffering? The chuckling Buddha drunkenly refutes this, observing that Vasistha is the one who is in error, for he has confused outer appearance for reality. The intoxicated sexuality he and his disciples are celebrating are ritual tools to illumination, the Buddha explains, and the beautiful women whose bodies they enjoy are actually images of the Great Goddess, consecrated through the secret Kaula initiation.

The Buddha then proceeds to induct Vasistha into the left-hand path, instructing him in the methods of sexual illumination. Through the celebration of sexual rites with the Buddha's enchanting consorts, Vasistha achieves direct contact with the Great Goddess, She who has for so long eluded him. In one flash of protracted, supernal delight, his body yoked to the body of the Great Goddess in human form, the sage instantly attains the liberation he sought in vain through self-denial for so many thousands of years.

Extracted from the quaint imagery and regional specifics, the story of the Sage Vasistha outlines the journey that awaits every magician of the lefthand path. All who walk the sinister way travel from the familiar land of his or her original provenance to a mysterious territory where all known conventions are reversed and sexual ecstasy is revealed as the great awakening force. In defiance of every puritan cult that would bridle the

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exalted power of Eros, the Adepts of the left-hand path embrace unconditioned freedom.

Essential Principles Of The Left-Hand Path

Far from being the vague catch-all one might at first imagine due to so many decades of misuse in the West, the phrase "left-hand path" is very specific in its precise meaning, which will become apparent when we examine the original Sanskrit phrase *Vama Marga*, from which it is translated.

And yet, despite this clear definition, attested to by well over a thousand years of continuous use in India, the historical reality of the lefthand path is commonly ignored in favor of modern fantasies that bear almost no resemblance to the facts. To begin the task of correcting some of the distorted perceptions caused by this state of affairs, we must address the lefthand path on its own terms, by cleaving as closely as possible to traditional sources. This method steers clear of the fashionable postmodern deconstructionism so beloved of contemporary academics on one hand, and the equally obfuscatory muddle-headedness of the typical occultist on the other. Both camps have played their part in obscuring the true meaning of the left-hand path's erotic gnosis.

One of the most basic elements of the perennial magical philosophy, and one that we will emphasize in this book, is that words possess a power of their own. By restoring a more accurate understanding of the words "lefthand path", we aim to revive some of the lost power of this tradition of

sexual initiation. The best place to begin this inquiry into defining the lefthand path is by examining its historical beginnings, and isolating its essential principles. It is to the left-hand path fountainhead in India that we must first turn to truly comprehend the sinister way of carnal self-transformation.

The roots of the left-hand path are very ancient indeed, grounded in dark goddess oriented sexual cults extant in the highly advanced Indus Valley civilization long before the Aryan conquest of that region occurred. After being suppressed by the Aryan occupying force sweeping into India by way of Afghanistan, the methods of left-hand path sexual initiation enjoyed a reawakening within heretical sects in the India of approximately one thousand years ago. Although left-hand path sexual practices are alluded to in some of India's eldest sacred literature, they seem not to have been explicitly shaped into a codified, written teaching until the coming of Tantra. The lefthand path took on more exact form in the secret doctrine of medieval Tantric sects, but by the nineteenth century, another occupying force – this time the sexually repressed paladins of the British Empire – attempted to wipe out the cult again.

So to speak of the Indian left-hand tradition is then to refer to a doctrine of erotic illumination dating back at least 2500 years, to the still relatively uncharted pre-Aryan history of the sub-continent. And to

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comprehend one of the causes of the *Vama Marga's* secretive nature, the modern magician must understand that this is a liberating force that has consistently fought to survive the hostility of repressive authorities made uneasy by a sexual approach to spiritual awakening.

It is possible to narrow our definition of the left-hand path down to a few core elements. These principles are applicable to both Western lefthanded sex magic and its ancient Eastern source. A left-hand path approach to initiation, no matter where it is practiced, or by whom, or under what cultural conditions, will be seen to include certain key factors.

In essence, the left-hand path is:

1.) The transformation of human consciousness to divine consciousness via the manipulation of the sexual currents of the physical and subtle bodies through erotic rites.

For the male initiate, this sexual gnosis is traditionally attained with the collaboration of a female consort-initiatix. The female sexual initiatrix is the presiding *source* of the left-hand path; the motive energy of the sinister current flows directly from her. During the ritualized sexual act, something more than ordinary intercourse occurs – a magical exchange takes place, a transference of power transmitted through the subtle vehicles of desire, attraction and erotic fusion.

Together, the couple celebrates a cult of ecstasy which has no less an aim than their own self-deification. Something of the crucial importance of sexuality to the left-hand path can be gleaned from the fact that the defining difference between the left-hand path and the far more commonly practiced right-hand path is primarily the emphasis on physical sexuality found in the former, and the absence of same in the latter.

Although the left-hand path focuses much of its attention on the physical interplay of erotic polarities embodied in male and female sexuality, it is concerned with the ecstatic transcendence of *all* seeming opposites, including good and evil, death and life, darkness and light, flesh and spirit, the beautiful and the hideous, *ad infinitum*.

2.) A sexual exaltation of the female principle of power in the universe, known in Sanskrit as *Shakti*.

This universal feminine mystique, which we will sometimes refer to in its transcultural aspect as the Feminine Daemonic, is the driving factor for both male and female initiates of the left-hand path. For male magicians, left-hand path initiation includes the attainment of this feminine power within

themselves through a complex system of bodily disciplines, including sexual

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congress. The female initiate strives to more fully become the vehicle of the Feminine Daemonic. In effect, she is at once the priestess of *shakti*, the intermediary between this sacred power and the world of visible appearances, as well as an incarnation of the multiformed Goddess Shakti herself.

It is important to point out early in our survey that this feminine principle exalted in the left-hand path is not the *social* role of woman as self-sacrificing passive wife and fertile mother figure honored by conventional religions. But neither does the *Vama Marga* comply with a contemporary feminist model of reality that considers all women to be victimized saints and all men to be lecherous demons. Although *shakti* harkens back to the now suppressed archaic understanding of essential woman as holy warrior, divine huntress, and sacred whore or *hierodule*, the feminine principle sought by left-hand path initiates ultimately transcends woman as a natural phenomenon altogether, venturing into the non-natural shadow side of her power.

3.) Initiation through the deliberate violation of deep-seated external social and internal personal taboos, the individual separation from tribal normative values, and the radical inversion of convention and orthodoxy of every kind.

A traditional proverb of the Tantric *Vama Marga* sums this principle up succinctly: "Through the very deed through which humans for hundreds of millions of *kalpas* burn in hell, through exactly that deed is the Yogi liberated." This left-hand path method of deliberate inversion is known as *viparit karani*, or opposite-doing.

As George Orwell wrote in his *1984*, "Orthodoxy means not thinking – not needing to think. Orthodoxy is unconsciousness." In this sense, the left-hand path represents deliberate heresy against the dominant culture of the practitioner (whatever that culture maybe), a breaking of sleepwalking orthodoxy in favor of a fully conscious state of wide awake being. Left-hand path initiation, however, cannot be limited to a merely intellectual break with the herd-animal man. As the proverb above makes clear, these transgressions must be deeds, physical actions, taken in the real world to truly effect self-transformation.

It is not only what the left-hand path initiate *thinks* that situates him or her in the sinister current; it is what he or she *does*. The lefthand path is a way of action, not intellectual contemplation, or worse yet, reading about action.

4.) Essentially elitist, in that it must be chosen, is not suited for all dispositions and does not come naturally. It is directed to the individual consciousness, unrelated to collective identity as a social creature or a

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being subject to divine or natural law. Although the modern world is based on democratic notions of full disclosure to all, the sinister current, wherever it has manifested, is based on the proposition that some things can only be communicated to certain individuals, at the right time, and under the right circumstances.

The left-hand path is closed to the common man and woman, who is regarded as little more than a herd-animal (Sanskrit *pashu*). The sinister current is considered fit only for the temperament of the heroic warrior (Sanskrit *vira*) or divine (Sanskrit *divya*) individual. Initiation on the lefthand path always begins with an understanding that all human beings are born into nature as herd-animals. The ultimate left-hand path goal of Awakening (Sanskrit *Bodhana*) occurs through exerting a rigorous effort against the innate low level of consciousness, (*Supta*, or sleep) which is regarded as the natural condition of the human animal.

This awakening is realized through a discipline of mental and physical control, sexual rites, taboo-breaking and exaltation of the Feminine

Daemonic, allowing the initiate to sunder the fetters binding the beast. Through this process the *Vama Marga* adept becomes heroic, that is to say, freed from the conditioning that binds the common human being and experiences reality directly. However, this sought-for coming into being as a "hero" does not mean that the left-hand path initiate seeks the approval or validation of the society he or she lives within. On the contrary, by the time the hero or heroine has crossed all boundaries binding his or her consciousness, it is very likely that those still bound by conventional morality may regard the left-hand path adept as an ignominious villain.

5.) A method of initiation that actively embraces *this life, this world, this physical realm, this body* as the means to illumination and Awakening. The left-hand path is not a route of escapism from reality, but a confrontation with the full totality of physical and psychic existence, encompassing pleasure and joy as well as horror and mortality.

The left-hand path explicitly rejects the practice of abstinence, asceticism, self-denial and the traditional contempt for matter that typifies the majority of spiritual methods in West and East. The exclusively "otherworldly" concerns of the typical *swami* or *maharishi* known to the West in recent decades is alien to the sinister current. Although the left-handed gnosis expands human consciousness to divine states of being outside the constraints of time and nature, this is not a path that leads to some nebulous elsewhere in the great beyond.

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One of the mysteries of the left-hand path is that "elsewhere" is right here in your own body. So, the sinister way aims for liberation in this lifetime and in the initiate's current physical body, rather than in an afterlife state or via reincarnation. This sense of urgency is in marked contrast to the almost infinite time accorded and recommended by most Eastern methods of initiation.

Hindu And Buddhist Branches Of The Left-Hand Path

Due to the very different cultural-historical conditions prevailing in each region, these rudiments of the left-hand path can be observed very clearly in the traditional Eastern model, somewhat less distinctly in its diverse Western derivations. An exploration of the Tantric left-hand path primarily as it manifested as an apostasy within Indian Hinduism – and in variants developed within Tibetan Buddhism and Chinese Taoism – will allow the sex magician to better understand the essential energy of the sinister current. In this introduction to the key concepts of the Eastern left-hand path, we have concentrated on the Indian/Hindu variety of sinister Tantra, which seems to us to be the most adaptable to the Western magician's practice of sex magic and is the dominant influence on our own practice.

Nevertheless, left-hand path Tantra has also had a significant impact on *Mahayana* Buddhism, especially in its *Vajrayana* school, primarily based in Tibetan lamaism, which incorporates a great deal of the shamanic sexual magic of the pre-Buddhist Bön religion native to Tibet. *Vajra*, known in Tibetan as *Dorje*, is a multi-tiered symbol expressing the hardness of the erect penis, the thunderbolt that connects earth to the heavens with its illuminating flash and the diamond-like solidity of the soul made imperishable through left-handed sexual rites. The *Vajra* thunderbolt has also been likened to the intense piercing of the body by sexual energy. *Vajra* can be compared to the attainment of "gold" in Western alchemy, the creation of an absolute individuation of the self as an indestructible force. The word *Vajra* alternately describes the phallic royal scepter of Tibetan theocracy and the powers of sacral kingship which such a staff confers. (In this sense, it resembles the Was scepter carried by the Egyptian pharaoh, which is distinguished by the deliberately phallic shape of the god Set's head.)

One of Tibet's most revered medieval spiritual teachers, Drugpa

Kunley, was an open devotee of the left-hand path, notorious as the "Crazy Yogi" or "Divine Madman" who taught his disciples that the energy of sexual pleasure could be deflected from merely genital orgasm to a way of illumination. According to legend, he practiced what he preached, promiscuously initiating a myriad of women into his teaching during his wanderings through Tibet as a holy beggar. Repudiating the disavowal of desire taught in conventional Buddhism, Drugpa utilized emotion, desire and erotic passion as instruments to awaken his students through delight. Ridiculing conventional mores and applying shock tactics to awaken and

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disillusion his students, Drugpa's straightforward practice of the left-hand path is rare among Tibetan Buddhists.

Usually, the sexual rites are kept strictly secret by the Tibetan monks who practice them, as seems to have been the case with the late Kalu Rinpoche, who allegedly presented himself outwardly as a celibate ascetic despite his life-long use of female disciples as ritual sexual partners. Human nature being what it is, naturally this secrecy can be a breeding ground for sexual exploitation of the most unenlightened variety. For instance, some elderly Tibetan monks persuade naive young female disciples to be their sexual consorts with promises of "good karma" rewarded for compliance. In such cases, one must suspect that the left-hand path mysteries of *Vajrayana* are being used to justify mundane sex lacking any initiatory function. Of course, this type of secular sexual exploitation played out in spiritual guise is hardly exclusive to Eastern cultures; Western occultism has always been rife with such pretense.

The metaphysical premises of Buddhist teaching are based on a desire to completely disintegrate the individual consciousness into nonexistence and a negation of all phenomena as *maya*, unreal projections of the mind. These ideas are obviously less relevant to the goal of attaining an independent divine consciousness inherent in the Hindu-based left-hand path model.

Within the purview of the Hindu-heretic left-hand path, the complex symbolism and artistic expression, sexual rites, gestures and spoken mantras are understood as coded signs of some hidden aspect of reality. This hidden reality, although obscure to waking consciousness, is understood nevertheless to be a substantial phenomenon, something that *exists*. Adepts of the Buddhist left-hand path – although they may utilize very similar sexual rites, symbolism and techniques – are just as convinced that their practices are ultimately nothing more than necessary steps to a great Nothingness, an emptiness concealed behind the world of sensory impressions. For them, *nothing* truly exists. This is a vast difference in approach and should be kept in mind as we investigate the two branches of left-hand path erotic initiation.

That being said, it is possible to interpret some left-hand path Buddhist teachings, such as the aforementioned *Vajrayana*, as a means of generating a sexually created self-deified essence that does not melt into one with the non-being of *nirvana*. This is best exemplified by the tradition of the *Bodhisattva*; the fully awakened adept who is neither reincarnated to further suffering nor consumed into *nirvana* but who follows the left-hand path to continued survival as a transhuman daemonic entity. The adept who has remanifested as a *Bodhisattva* is said to wield the power of illuminating less advanced humans, even from a non-corporeal state.

This concept, in a greatly simplified – not to say frequently

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fraudulent form – was drafted into the Western magical tradition's lore of the "Secret Chiefs" and "Ascended Masters" supposedly overseeing mankind's spiritual development. Such significant occult movements in the West as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, Theosophy, and Aleister Crowley's

Thelema, all of which claimed to derive their spiritual legitimacy from bodhisattva-like entities, can then be said to bear the marks of this Buddhist left-hand path influence. Despite this fact, all three of the above-mentioned occult bodies *were* adamant in insisting that they *were* thoroughly of the right-hand path, condemning *the* left-hand path as a malevolent *force*. This prevalent Western confusion concerning the exact meaning of the two paths will prove to be a recurring theme.

The secretive nature of the Eastern left-hand path always allows for the ambiguous possibility of a *true* inner doctrine, communicated only to certain initiates, concealed by a more conventional outer doctrine presented to the profane. Only such an inner doctrine can explain how the adepts of the Buddhist left-hand path pursue aims so adverse to the precepts of orthodox Buddhism.

Although we will provide a few instances of Tibetan left-hand path sex magic, Buddhism itself actually tends to vitiate the meaning of magic altogether. There is little point in causing magical change in a universe which is thought to be mere illusion. And yet, the techniques of Tibetan lefthand path magic can be applied without necessarily ascribing to the philosophical premises connected to them. Hindu-heretical left-hand path metaphysics takes a radically different approach to reality/unreality, more in keeping with the purposes of the Western sex magician. The form of Taoist sacred eroticism developed in ancient China, the *yin-tao*, also provides several concepts useful to transcultural application in contemporary erotic initiation. It is safe to say that the Tantric left-hand path, in one form or another, has been assimilated throughout the Eastern world, even disguising itself under Sufi garb during the Islamic conquest of India, and flourishing for a time in Japan before the anti-sexual spirit of austere Confucianism neutered its force in that region.

Although this section of the book will largely illustrate the Eastern model of the left-hand path, we will frequently compare these principles to their expression in ancient Mediterranean and European magical practice. By viewing the sinister current through the lenses of different traditions, a more universal vision of the left-hand path can be realized.

A Synthesis Of Two Worlds

Even though we stress that the left-hand path *per se* is undisputedly of Indian origin, we do not wish to encourage contemporary Occidental sex magicians to uncritically embrace a romantic vision of the supremacy of the

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"mysterious East" as being more authentically spiritual and enlightened than the West, a common error in esoteric circles. There is no pure Eastern lefthand path Shangri-La and if there ever was it has long since been subsumed by colonialism and global Westernization.

It is all too easy for modern magicians to imagine a fantastic dreamworld of infallible Ascended Masters guarding secrets that can only be communicated in some distant Himalayan *ashram*. These fantasies, which have permeated the magical tradition of the West, have led more than one Westerner to abandon all critical thinking, often leading to an immersion in exotic trappings and foreign nomenclature for their own sake. That is the route of escapism, a cul-de-sac into which many sex magicians have unwittingly wandered as they walk the left-hand path.

We have often observed magicians make a healthy break with the religious or social orthodoxy that formed them – one of the first steps of lefthand path initiation – only to fawningly follow the dogma of another, perhaps less well-known, religious orthodoxy instead. Westerners are particularly susceptible to this "grass is always greener on the other side of the fence" syndrome, since the post-Christian religiomagical tradition in the West sometimes seems so impoverished by comparison to the more vital Eastern traditions of initiation. Thus, the phenomenon of the Westerner who breaks

from the restrictions of Judaeo-Christianity or atheism only to prostrate him/herself at the feet of an equally prohibitive Eastern *guru*. This can hardly be accounted as progress; it's merely trading one set of pre-packaged regulations for a less familiar oppression.

Rather than opting for this route, we outline the essential sex-magical principles of the left-hand path and apply them to conditions in the urban transglobal world, instead of fetishistically recreating the provincial world of India's past, in which the left-hand path originally developed. Left-hand path sex magic as we illustrate it here can be effectively applied to *any* cultural background – it is most expressly not an exercise in nostalgia for an idealized antiquity in a distant land. We take it as a given that the specific symbolism that worked for a left hand path initiate in a small village in the tightly controlled, caste-ridden Bengal of the seventeenth century cannot be completely applicable to the work of a left-hand path adept operating in the chaotic anti-culture of the twenty-first century. Therefore, we provide a detailed introduction to the historic left-hand path teachings but with the understanding that the contemporary sex magician can – and should – shape these methods to suit his or her own present day desires and circumstances.

Actually, this universal approach coincides with traditional left-hand path practice. One of the tenets of the Tantric left-hand path states that the teaching is suited for all initiated creatures of the Kali Yuga in every culture and is not limited to its Eastern places of origin.

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But, to our experience, the left-hand path, in its traditional Eastern conception, as transmitted through a lineage of initiated teachers and students, is not well-suited for the neurotic psychosexual conditions that fracture the Western mind. The mystical psychologist Carl Jung, himself a clandestine practitioner of sex-magical practices, studied the breadth and depth of Eastern spiritual teachings. Jung concluded that if the average Westerner were to adopt the Oriental disciplines of self-transformation, he or she would risk bringing on a psychotic break. While we would not go that far, it is clear that the Eastern left-hand path does call out for adaptation, if it is to be truly effective in a Western sex magician's initiation.

This approach will strike some traditional Tantric gurus as nothing less than heresy, but since the left-hand path is a heresy to begin with, we consider this to be a logical progression. The left-hand path's art of sexual initiation is not a body of static ceremonial from the past, to be faithfully recreated without change, but a living tradition. Like any living tradition, it is the innovations and adaptations of its current practitioners, rather than the culture-specific and time-bound restrictions of former times, that must determine its viability.

Because this section of the book adheres closely to the traditional left-hand path teachings in their original form, the contemporary sex magician will be struck by several limiting factors. Most glaringly, despite the Eastern *Vama Marga's* reverence for the Feminine Daemonic, female sex magicians will notice that relatively little instruction is actually offered to the female partner in left-hand path rites. The Tantras speak almost entirely to a presumed male initiate, a one-sided perspective we must expect in a tradition that was largely recorded in medieval India and Tibet. Obviously, the contemporary female practitioner of the left-hand path is free to apply these methods to her course of self-transformation in very different circumstances than prevailed in the Eastern world of centuries ago.

So, in tracing some of the most important aspects of the Eastern *Vama Marga* in this chapter, it is not intended that the modern Western sex magician should blindly obey the ancient ways of the left-hand path. To devoutly follow tradition in such a doctrinaire manner would be deadening and sleep-inducing, running counter to the eternally transformative and remanifesting essence of the left-hand path itself. Even if it were possible to

transplant the exact practices of the Eastern left-hand path to a Western environment, it would not be magically desirable to do so. Many of the outer manifestations of the Eastern *Vama Marga* are simply not relevant to a magician working in the modern Western world, although the eternal esoteric principles are relevant to all times and places.

This is why this book urges the way of creative synthesis rather than strict observance of archaic tradition for its own sake. It would be foolish for

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the modern left-hand path sex magician to act without first gaining a sound understanding of the basic principles that inform the left-hand path tradition.

But one should not fall prey to the common magical error of assuming that just because some practice is condoned by tradition, it must be just as valid today.

Ancient is not a synonym for *good*; much that is ancient is worthless in a contemporary context, save for historical interest. Separating the effective from the irrelevant is the discerning task of each individual magician. Thankfully, left-hand path Tantra lends itself to individual application; few esoteric methods are so free of dogma. Despite the sometimes forbidding esoteric terminology of the Tantric *Vama Marga*, its actual teachings are primarily of a practical and experimental nature, rather than the rigid agglomeration of regulations common to many initiatory schools.

Furthermore, even though India provides us with the richest, most intact and continuous model of left-hand path initiation to study, it would be a mistake to imagine that the sinister current itself is of exclusively Indian provenance. In fact, the left-hand path is actually located in your own brain, spinal column and genitals, waiting to be switched on. Many magicians have activated this current within themselves entirely by accident, with no knowledge whatsoever of the historical left-handed tradition. Those who have stumbled upon this power spontaneously, usually through an experience of intense sexual ecstasy, certainly have an advantage in having inadvertently come to this realization. The fact that this event has occurred at all would indicate a great deal of potential – many humans are never able to awaken the sinister current that can be made to flow through the bodymind-soul complex.

But calling oneself a traveler on the left-hand path without first attaining a solid understanding of its long-established methods and principles is somewhat like saying you're an astronaut because you once saw a space shuttle on TV. Similarly, simply reading through this (or any) book on a strictly intellectual level will not place you on the left-hand path; that can only occur when you've applied the theoretical postulates to the many aspects of your being, directing sexual ecstasy towards alteration of those deceptive phenomena most readily categorized as inner self and outer reality.

A very common misunderstanding that we have come across among Westerners eager to learn the ways of left-hand path sex magic, is an assumption that in "enlightened" India its practice is surely widely known and accepted. This imagined openness is pitted against what is assumed to be Western ignorance. It is true that Hinduism allows for a different degree of dissent and heresy than Westerners might be accustomed to observing in

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their own society regarding sex-magical practices. Nevertheless, the *Vama Marga* remains little known and little understood even in India. When it is mentioned, it is usually in a disdainful and uninformed manner. M. Krishnamacharya in his *History Of Classical And Tantric Literature*, typifies this ignorance, when he writes: "It is a licentious worship, and leads to cruelty, self-indulgence, and sensual gratification. Hence it is a blot upon the 'Modern Hinduism'. The sect goes under the name of the Bahm Marges (*sic*),

or the secret sect." Not surprisingly, Krishnamacharya was of the Brahmin caste, the sexually ascetic and world-rejecting higher caste in Indian society for whom the left-hand path is an abomination. Because of the Tantric association with sex magic, the popular press in India continues to report Tantric activity with the same bias, inaccuracy and misgivings one finds in Western journalistic accounts of Satanism.

To meaningfully recreate the constitutive elements of the left-hand path tradition within the unique reality of your own initiation requires a wakeful, dynamic approach. A static, dutiful playing by the rules is poison to the sinister current initiate. The left-hand path is unique among metaphysical traditions in that it deliberately repudiates all and any sacred cows that lumber into view. Whether left-hand path initiates are located in Bombay, Manchester, Sydney, or Cincinnati, a mutual discipline is to keep a sharp eye out for one's own sacred cows, slaughtering them ruthlessly as a means to personal power.

The *Vama Marga* – A Path Of Many Roads

The phrases Tantra and left-hand path have been used so indiscriminately in recent years – especially since their relative popularization in the wake of the so-called sexual revolution of the 1960s – that they've practically become allpurpose descriptions for *any* kind of metaphysically inclined fucking. So prevalent are these simplifications that we can't begin to define Tantra and the left-hand path within any kind of authentic context without first briefly weaving our way through some of the most enduring of these Western popular trivializations. We've even seen enterprising call girls with an eye on the mystic market advertise themselves as Tantric Escorts, adepts in Tantric Massage, and experts at Tantric Lap Dancing. Pleasurable as these diversions might be, it would be ridiculous to consider them Tantric except in name. As we shall see, the sacred whore has actually played a long and distinguished role in left-handed Tantric tradition but this recent mercenary development has only served to confuse an already misunderstood subject.

The Tantric phrase "left-hand path" has likewise been adopted by two quite contradictory Western spiritual subcultures spawned at roughly the same time during the 1960s search for alternative religion. Its use can be found most abundantly within the populist New Age movement, which

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includes among its many sects a goodly number of Neo-Tantric teachers and groups who describe themselves as left-hand path simply due to their use of sexual rites. However, although a tentative link exists between actual lefthand practice and the Neo-Tantrics, it is often an extremely superficial one, typically ignoring most of the essential principles of the left-hand path outlined at the beginning of this chapter, while emphasizing the *Vama Marga's* more acceptable – and marketable – elements.

At the opposite pole, the less numerous groups comprising the modern Neo-Satanic movement and its offshoots also commonly describe themselves as left-hand path. Contrary to popular opinion, practically none of these Satanic societies include even the rudiments of left-hand path sexual initiation among their almost entirely cerebral and really rather prim practices – thus excluding the single most important feature of any definition of the left-hand path.

We will return to the New Age "left-hand path" and the Satanic "lefthand path" in a subsequent chapter, in which we will examine the curious importation of the *Vama Marga* to Western culture. For now, it's sufficient to mention their existence as contemporary phenomena that have contributed to the perplexity preventing an understanding of the left-hand path in the West.

Leaving these aside for now, let us unravel the puzzle of the phrase *Vama Marga*, the left-hand path, as it was originally understood.

The vast ocean of loosely defined doctrines that fall under the umbrella of Hinduism – a cluster of creeds that lack the unifying hierarchy

present in most religions – has led to a proliferation of sects, of which the

Tantric left-hand path is only one of the best known outside of India.

Although Tantra in the West is commonly thought to be synonymous with sex, erotic rites actually form a very small part of the vast tapestry of Tantric practice. The respected Tantric authority Agehananda Bharati has pointed out in his *The Tantric Tradition* that only seven percent of Tantric material is of a sexual nature. In fact, sexual magic and erotic mysticism is almost exclusively the province of the relatively small number of left-hand path Tantric adepts.

The fallacy that the entirety of Tantra partakes of the sinister sexual rites of its *Vama Marga* was current in the Western world as long ago as 1914, when Arthur Avalon (Sir John Woodroffe) felt compelled to write in his introduction to the *Tantratattva* that this particular Tantric text "may have proved a disappointment to those who, at the mention of Tantra, always expect to hear of rituals with wine and women, the midnight circle (Cakra), black magic in the cremation grounds, and so forth." Of course, our attention *will* be unabashedly focused on these little understood activities. However, these are solely the ways of the minority left-turning path. They are not practiced in the much broader body of the Tantric tradition as a whole, which is primarily of the right-hand path.

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This more widespread right-hand path of Tantra, the *Daksini Marga*, is by far the most socially acceptable of the two paths, as it abjures the physical sexual rites and taboo-breaking intrinsic to the left-hand path, utilizing primarily intellectual and symbolic means of initiation. Furthermore, the right-hand path emphasis on the male principle is less controversial in patriarchal Asian countries traditionally oppressive of women. The *Vama Marga*, devoted to erotic initiation through the feminine as both eternal, spiritual entity and physical, sexual being, is decried as much more heretical by ordinary Hindus and Buddhists.

There is not simply one unambiguous reason why the left-hand path was given that name; the answer to this question is split into several layers of physical, semantic and religious meaning. Like many Sanskrit words, *vama* can be translated to mean many different things – there are at least four relevant definitions that concern us. By merely examining the different strata that can be read into its name, most of the essential principles of the left-hand path can be observed. In this sense, the very phrase *Vama Marga* is a coded magical communication, a symbolic sigil or *mantra* revealing its own essence to the magician who unlocks its message. The fact that the phrase itself can impart so much of the initiatory approach unique to the left-hand path may account for its potent durability and appeal, even among those who have never looked beyond its surface.

First, let us consider the two Sanskrit phrases that are commonly translated into English as "left-hand path." The eldest of these two terms is *Vama Cam*, literally the left way. The (relatively) more recent *Vama Marga* simply means the left path; the "hand" appears to have been added by later Western interpreters, although it has now become generally accepted, even in India. In fact, *Vama Cara* is often used interchangeably with *Vama Marga*, although for clarity's sake we will stick to the latter phrase throughout this book. The essential root of both is *vama*, most often interpreted as meaning "left".

The Sinister Direction

... beware of the left, the cult of Shakti.

—James Joyce, *Ulysses*

The leftwardness of the left-hand path is such a seemingly obvious part of our subject that it's often simply overlooked or taken for granted. But every once in a while, we have been asked, "So, why is the left-hand path *left* anyway?" Like many an apparently easy question, the answer is surprisingly

complex. Since it has frequently been wondered if there is any link between the leftwardness of the *Vama Marg* and the political designation "left-wing", we should first establish that there is no connection at all between the two.

The specific numinous significance of leftwardness can be traced

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back to man's earliest known religiomagical symbolism in ancient Mesopotamian Sumer, but seems to be an almost universal concept. Tellingly, the ancient Sumerians unflinchingly spoke of "right and left" in that order, believing that it would invite bad luck to mention the left first. In the modern world, this idea survives in such superstitions as that of placing one's right shoe on before the left. Mesopotamian figurines of protective deities were always portrayed striding forward with the left leg, the better to move against the left-dwelling monstrous creatures that populated creation's shadow side.

In Sumerian divination, the right side of the moon was thought to be fortunate, while the left was ominous. In this earliest of documented human civilizations, greetings, blessings and eating were always carried out with the right hand, which was associated with purity, a tradition that still survives in India. The Indian goddess Kali, the darkest spectrum of Shakti in her many-armed wrathful form, is most frequently depicted as making ritual gestures of blessing with her right hands, while brandishing a sword and decapitated head in her left hands – the simultaneously purifying and terrible nature of the sinister current.

It has been speculated that the ancient association of right with good and left with evil may simply mirror the fact that most people are righthanded – a primitive assumption that what is normal must be virtuous, while what is unusual must be wrong. Parents whose children are born left-handed will often take measures to assure that this anomaly is corrected, or "set right". Shaking hands with the left hand is still actively avoided, even by people normally untouched by superstition. Therefore, to *deliberately* turn left is to deviate from what would seem to be the body's natural course and tempt fate. Simply going left, when tradition tells us that right is the only way to go, is the first taboo violation of the left-hand path, the initial separation from the habitual inclinations of humanity.

Symbolically, to incur upon one's self the powers of the left is to embrace the adverse side of existence instinctively shunned by the preponderance of humans. The left is the Other, the unknown, a direction that is everywhere known as the "wrong" way to go, in contrast to the welltrodden path of the right.

Many of the world's languages reflect this deeply rooted aversion to leftwardness. The modern English word "left" derives from the Old English *lyft*, which meant weak or palsied, connected to "leper", among other unpleasant associations. Another Old English word for "left" was *winestra*, which meant "friendlier". This word provides us with an interesting case of the magical use of words. By euphemistically referring to the feared left side as friendly, the speaker hoped to magically appease the destructive forces of leftwardness, a practice akin to calling a snarling wolf "nice doggy."

The Latinate word "sinister", of course, suggests much more than

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literal leftwardness – it carries distinctly negative connotations of its own.

It's also a common synonym for the malefic, a meaning it has held since ancient Roman soothsayers first interpreted phenomena situated on the left (*sinistrum*) to be unfavorable omens. Those on the right (*dexter*, whose etymological connection with the Sanskrit *daksina* is obvious) were thought to be benevolent. No doubt the ancient association between the words left and sinister has increased the impression that the left-hand path is intrinsically evil.

So, is the left-hand path only to be understood as one half of a

duality, the contrary complement to a dexterous twin? Are the right and lefthand paths truly just different streams of the same spiritual river? Several Tantric historians have suggested that *Vama Cara* and *Vama Marg* originally conveyed something far more descriptive of its techniques than leftwardness, a meaning that may actually predate the leftward interpretation altogether.

Shakti And The Feminine Daemonic

Perhaps even more essential to the left-hand path than its sinister direction is the fact that the word *vama* carries an alternate meaning of "woman". The *Vama Marga* is actually "the Path of Woman". In fact, the *Vama Marga* seems to have been known as the path of woman long before it was interpreted as the way of the left, the opposite of the right-hand path. This definition gets at the heart of this approach to initiation, focused as it is on the Feminine Daemonic of *Shakti* in all of her forms. Some Tantric scholars have surmised that the sexually oriented left-hand path was actually the *first* Tantric school, while the right-hand path only developed as a much later watered-down non-sexual version of the older system of initiation.

Some of the earliest Tantric texts, or Tantras, do not speak of a right-hand path at all, but describe all of Tantra as the way of woman, *Vama Cara*. Therefore, many Tantric teachers continue to refer to the entire Tantric tradition as the left-hand path. This idea has been advanced, among other Tantric historians, by N.N. Bhattacharyya in his 1982 *History Of The Tantric Religion*. Supporting this theory of the primacy of the sexual lefthand path to the chaste right-hand path is the fact that the word "Kaula" was originally used to describe the entire Tantric school – Kaula is also the name of one of the very oldest left-hand path sexual clans, originating in Northern India.

As we have already stated, crucial to all Tantric doctrine and practice – but especially to the *Vama Marga* – is the recognition of *Shakti*, the eidolon of cosmic femininity as the central initiatory power; indeed, the very word means "power." *Shakti* is not conceived of as a remote goddess inhabiting some distant sphere or an abstract philosophical archetype. Rather, she is understood to be a divine force that incarnates in living

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women. For left-hand path adepts, the female body is the temple of the divine force quickening the visible universe. Her vulva, or *yoni*, is regarded as the altar in which *Shakti*'s electrifying energy is most vigorous.

However, this feminine principle is by no means limited to biological females alone. Tantrics regard the level of personal force and power demonstrated within an individual of *either* sex to be a consequence of the quantity of *shakti* they possess. Furthermore, an important aspect of Tantricism for male Tantric adepts is the endeavor to arouse the spiritual female within them.

To a certain extent, the entire physical universe of transient matter is the manifestation of *Shakti*. Consequently, the left-hand path adept does not disdain the physical world, as is so common in standard spiritual practice – the physical world is viewed as the very route to illumination, most directly through sexual veneration of *shakti* in the form of a human female. Based on this premise, left-hand path sexual Tantra teaches that the actual manipulation of carnal ecstasy in the physical body is the *principal* tool of initiation.

Male initiates of the left-hand path so emulate *Shakti* that they seek to literally awaken her within their own bodies and psyches. The left-hand path adept understands that women are gifted with a mysterious innate talent for magic, for divination and other black arts. The bridge between the Scandinavian tradition of the *volva*, the female seer and the serpentine female oracles of ancient Greece reveals the archaic understanding that magical power is intrinsically feminine in nature. Consequently, males of the

left-hand path strive to integrate some of this feminine essence within themselves, a practice not confined only to India. Shamans in almost every culture, for instance, traditionally take on certain female attributes to propel them on their visionary journeys, a striking example of the universality of the left-hand path's working principles.

The Italian magician-philosopher Julius Evola, the most erudite twentieth century Western interpreter of the left-hand path, analyses this universal essence of feminine magical force in his 1958 magnum opus *The Metaphysics Of Sex*, when he observes that:

"...in China the character *wu*, used to designate a person who exercised the arts of magic in a strict or 'shamanic' sense, was originally applied only to females. The techniques employed by the *wu* to contact supersensual forces were sometimes ascetic and at other times orgiastic; in the latter case it seems that in the beginning the *wu* officiated wholly naked. The *wu* had to have youth and fascinating beauty as preliminary qualifications for her work, and

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the meanings of the characters *yao* and *miao* as 'queer', 'disquieting', and 'mysterious' refer to the type and qualities of the *wu*."

This archaic Chinese equation of feminine power with both the magical and the genuinely "weird" energies in the universe reveals how the archetype of the left-hand path makes itself known again and again in unconnected esoteric traditions around the world.

Learning of left-hand path exaltation of the Feminine Daemonic might lead those of our readers indoctrinated by the omnipresent feminist cant and dogma that slants much modern esoteric thinking to falsely assume that the left-hand path's alternate definition as the Way of Woman allows it to be interpreted as some sort of feminist movement with spiritual trappings. It must be made clear that these mysteries have nothing to do with the politically correct vision of Woman promulgated by most feminist ideologues, nor can ancient magical and initiatory principles be credibly forced to serve any modern political creeds.

The awe-inspiring dark goddess who flows through the sinister current is far removed from the idealized image of the gentle, nurturing pacifist beloved of modern day feminists. The Woman of the *Vama Marga* does not fit comfortably into the imagined utopia of a wondrous prehistoric matriarchy ruled by wise, peaceful women posited in the wishful thinking of feminist pseudo-historians.

Nor is the left-hand path exaltation of Shakti a mystical argument for the complete equality of men and women – the left-hand path is actually based on a deep recognition of the essential *differences* between male and female which are central to every aspect of *Vama Marga* practice. This is in

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no way a question of inferiority and superiority. It's simply a recognition that the masculine and feminine principles are unique phenomena in their own right. The left-hand path act of sexual alchemy that creates the spiritual androgyne is based on a deliberate conjunction of opposites; such an alchemy would be impossible to achieve if it were conducted between forces that were basically identical, as modern gender politics insists.

One need only behold the manifold Shakti in her form of Kali, blood dripping from her lips, wearing a necklace of decapitated human heads and brandishing a formidable array of death-dealing devices, to understand that the Feminine Daemonic informing the left-hand path is not a poster girl for feminism. Even less is She a suitable role model for the woman who accepts the submissive domesticated roles of traditional wife/mother/daughter.

Immensely powerful though Shakti in her many forms may be, it would be a mistake to confuse this feminine strength with feminist jargon of "empowerment"; the left-hand path cannot be politicized so crudely.

The left-hand path principally honors the night side of feminine

power, even in its most extreme *bharaivi* force of creative destruction.

Shakti is often said, for example, to possess the force unleashed in hurricanes, which are traditionally given women's names. This violent quality can be understood in an archaic sense as the savage she-huntress red of tooth and claw, or in the more up-to-date cosmic energies of devastation witnessed in an atomic explosion. Kali, in one Tantra, is described as "shining with the light of ten million suns, although black in color like a fresh cloud." The Black Light sought by some Islamic heretic sects in Iran, or the Black Flame revered by some modern left-hand path cults in the West can be compared to the dark side of *Kali-shakti* – she is often described as an all-devouring black flame.

European variants of this same *bharaivi* principle can be found in the grim depictions of feminine divinity that haunt ancient Nordic religion. The great modern scholar of Northern mythology, Hilda Ellis Davidson, describes the Valkyries, or *waelcyrge*, "the choosers of the slain", in a very different light than the familiar Romantic vision of neatly coiffed, blondbraided beauties sporting quaint helmets. Davidson paints a grim picture of the wild-haired Valkyries haunting the gore-drenched battlefields after combat "weaving on a ghastly loom composed of weapons, entrails and skulls." The similarity to Kali is striking.

Lyn Webster Wilde, in her study *On The Trail Of The Women Warriors* provides us with an astute description of *Shakti* from a feminine point of view:

"*Shakti* ... evokes a sense of this power that is at once erotic, inexhaustible, captivating, terrifying, sensual, annihilating – the divine female in action ...

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it is an *active* power, and you can see it very clearly in the figurines of the snake-goddesses of Crete, or the dancing Parvati statues in your local Indian restaurant. It is *not* the fecund, sleepy, peaceful earth-mother energy beloved of sentimental goddess-worshippers. It is the bright, burning, vital power of the archetypal feminine, whether expressed in divine or human form." Related to this specific aspect of the Feminine Daemonic revered by the lefthand path is a very common misapprehension that should be clarified early on in our discussion. Many casual practitioners of sex magic in the West might erroneously assume that the left-hand path's sexual rites are a remnant of the once omnipresent magical utilization of sexual energy to increase the fertility of the land, or of the tribe. But these fertility rites, which often took the form of orgiastic festivals, once widespread in all pagan cultures, actually have nothing to do with the distinctive mode of sexuality activated in the sinister current. The primary difference is that such communal sexual magic was ordained by religious authorities as a sacred obligation, a kind of sacrifice of one's erotic energy for the good of the community. Eros in the left-hand path is diverted entirely from its socially approved outlets of breeding, perpetuating the human race, and maternity. These nature-bound forces of reproductive generation are consciously *redirected* to the strictly personal and psychic goal of individual self-initiation.

The world's religions have always sought to restrain female sexual power to these very limited procreative purposes. Even a cult of sex-hatred like exoteric Christianity will allow that female sexuality constrained to baby-production is healthy, wholesome and respectable, although any other expression of feminine eroticism is condemned as demoniacal. The suppression and subduing of *shakti* energy and its neutralization through matrimony and motherhood, is one of the many bonds that the left-hand path deliberately breaks. Some women new to left-hand path magical practice have trouble clearing the conditioning that would define their principal sexual personae as wife and mother, an obstacle which stands in the way of their cultivation of the sinister sexuality needed for *Vama Marga* sorcery and initiation. The fertility goddess plays no part in the left-hand path's

veneration of the Feminine Daemonic. Yes, Kali is the Dark Mother. Yet what she gives birth to is the *maya* of the universe itself, not only biological babies. Kali's creation is principally of a magical nature, a non-natural generation of the sexual shadow, or *khabit*, recognised by ancient Egyptian soulcraft. (Without the strength of sexual energy amassed in the *khabit*, the Egyptian dead were not believed to be able to cross beyond mortal existence – a tenet that mirrors left-hand path practice.)

The female initiatrix of the sinister current incarnates that otherworldly facet of Woman that Man can never possess, subdue or even entirely understand. Woman Deified as harlot and virgin, *maenad* and

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amazon, Valkyrie and succubus – the many masks of the Feminine Daemonic. Her sexuality, as unrestrained as it is, is of an ultimately inviolate and unattainable *magical* character, rather than the simply biological carnality of Woman as property, that humble creature of the kitchen and the nursery. This glorification of the dark side of femininity is so essential to the left-hand path, that the reader will have noticed that we listed it as one of the most important criteria of the universal sinister current – without woman, there can simply be no left-hand path.

Like all truly numinous powers, the raw *shakti* energy radiated by the female initiatrix cannot be faced easily by the male adept in the beginning stages of his initiation. Something of the overwhelming power which *shakti* is afforded in the *Vama Marga* can be found in other mythological systems. The Hellenic Medusa, she of the serpentine head, whose essence is too strong for even a hero to gaze upon directly, is a pertinent illustration of the most extreme manifestation of the Feminine Daemonic. For that matter, the contemporary female initiate in the Western world may well have difficulty harnessing the dark side of her femininity essential to the sinister current. Pervasive conditioning inculcating the notion that the ideal woman is a mild, ladylike, docile creature is not easily reconciled with the fierce power of Kali unleashed in the left-hand path.

All of this reverence for Shakti may seem somewhat abstract. In fact, its primary expression is enacted through direct sexual exchange with a living female embodiment of the sinister force. Traditional left-hand path initiation is always transmitted to a male initiate via ritual intercourse with a female preceptor, a link in the chain of an initiated lineage of women embodying the vital power of the dark goddess. Underlying this method of genital energy transference is an esoteric science teaching that certain powerful properties unique only to the aroused female body are secreted in her sexual fluids. The power attributed to this female sexual potion is comparable to the "medicine of the wise" sought by the European alchemists.

Coupled with this tangible feminine essence absorbed during sacralized coitus is a more subtle flow of *shakti* flowing from her ecstatically galvanized nervous system.

This form of erotic initiation, in which the male adept is commonly coupled with a woman from another caste than his own, frequently breaks with India's rigid caste system, increasing the literally "outcast" nature of the *Vama Marga*.

Above and beyond this breaking of Hindu socioreligious taboo, the very centrality of women to left-hand path practice is commonly regarded as abhorrent in India. Westerners who have idealized the realities of Indian spiritual life have imagined that because of the proliferation of goddesses in Indian religion that the feminine principle is more honored in India than in the Western world. This is not true; misogyny is rampant in all levels of

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Indian society. In some rural areas, the birth of a girl child is considered to be a terrible misfortune and ill omen; female infants are routinely killed, as they are considered a worthless blight on the family. The left-hand path's elevation

of the normally despised female to a role of initiatory power is viewed as nothing less than sacrilege. This is especially true in a society that most revered religious scriptures allow women only the most subservient of capacities, as meek help-mate and breeding device.

Tantric teaching was the first to condemn the rite of *Sati*, in which widows were religiously obliged to burn themselves upon the death of their husbands, because they had supposedly been "polluted". In opposition to Vedic tradition and Hindu orthodoxy, the *Mahanirvana Tantra* states that "a wife should not be burnt with her dead husband. Every woman is thy image. Thou residest concealed in the forms of all women in this world. That woman who in her delusion ascends the funeral pyre of her lord (husband) shall go to hell." Also, only the Tantras, of all Indian religious texts, allows for a woman to be a spiritual teacher or *guru*. As one astonished medieval Islamic author noted of Tantra, the teaching "favors both sexes equally, and makes no distinction between men and women ... this sect calls women *shaktis* (powers) and to ill-treat a *shakti* – that is, a woman – is held to be a crime."

This authentic left-hand path veneration of the female, though understandably constricted by the overwhelmingly female-negative bias of Eastern culture, stands in direct opposition to the frequent phenomenon of misogyny observed among many male Western sex magicians, even those who call themselves "left-hand path".

The Right And Left Sides Of The Body

The double meaning of *Vama Marga*, as both left-hand path and the path of woman is further reinforced in the Tantric understanding that the left side of the human body is inherently feminine. There is a standard explanation offered in most sources for the meaning of the right- and lefthand paths. In right-hand path ritual, a clothed woman symbolically honored as the goddess power Shakti is seated to the right of the male initiate. During left-hand path erotic rites a partially naked woman venerated sexually as Shakti is seated to the left of the male initiate. This is true, as far as it goes, but there is much more to the terminology than this oft-cited detail.

Tantra also recognizes the existence of a non-physical subtle body within the physical body, which is said to be driven by the flow of life force through three vertical energy channels, the central *Susumna*, flanked by *Ida*, on the left side of the body and *Pingala* to the right. *Ida* is also known as the moon channel, just as *Pingala* is the sun channel, reflecting very ancient traditional associations of the left with the feminine power of the moon and the right with the masculine energy of the sun. The left-sided *Ida* is red, the

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right-sided *Pingala* is white, an important color symbolism in the Indian lefthand path which resurfaces again in the ritual intermixture of white semen and red menstrual blood in Tantric sexual alchemy.

There is one significant factor here relevant to the essence of the *Vama Marga*. Tantric teaching states that the energy enters the body through the lunar left-channel – the feminine, sinister current – and exits the body through the right-solar channel. Traditional left-hand path adepts seek to reverse this natural flow through breath control and the strength of their wills. The sinister current of dark lunar femininity is considered to be the negative polarity (—) while the dexter current of solar masculinity is regarded as the positive polarity (+). The sexual rites of the left-hand path are traditionally performed in accordance with certain phases of the female partner's lunar cycle, based on observation of the relation between menstruation and sexual sensitivity.

The right-hand path initiate is content to preserve the harmony of nature. The initiate of the sinister current deliberately causes this river of energy to stream in the opposite direction – a god-like action that takes control of universal laws and bends them to his or her volition. The body is magically understood as the microcosm; by altering the normative course of

somatic energies, the initiate can also exert a similarly profound influence on the macrocosm of the universe itself. By reversing the flow of this subtle energy current from masculine right to feminine left, the male left-hand path initiate is also said to awaken the feminine divinity within him.

A Tantric left-hand path understanding of the left side of the body as feminine, and the right as masculine was depicted by the ecstatic Tantric poet Ramprasad Sen: "the inward River Ganges flows through right-hand regions as molten sun, inward River Jumna through left-hand regions as liquid moon". Although attempting to reconcile ancient metaphysics with modern science can lead one down a slippery slope, it is interesting to compare what we currently know of left brain and right brain functions with the Tantric map of the body. The right brain, which effects its opposite left side of the body, seems to be the seat of the traditionally "feminine" attributes of creativity, intuition, ecstasy and magical/poetic thinking – the lunar characteristics most associated with left-hand path consciousness and the energy of Shakti. The left brain, controlling the right side of the body, is apparently the location of reason, logic and analysis – the functions of solar "masculine" consciousness.

It is not irrelevant that left-hand path sexual rites are most commonly performed at night by the light of the "feminine" sinister moon, while the right-hand path adept is more likely to attend to his spiritual work by day, reigned over as it is by the "masculine" sun. In the time when left-hand path initiation was a closely guarded secret, some adepts of the *Vama Marga*

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would practice traditional, socially acceptable Hindu ceremony during the day, reserving their left-hand path workings for the cover of night. To this day, *Vama Marga* invocations of the Shakti Kali traditionally take place at midnight in abandoned cremation grounds, as specified by Tantric texts. The erotic rites of the Chinese left-hand path or *Yin-tao* (hidden way) were always celebrated after midnight. Not surprisingly, the Western Black Arts are typically consigned to the hours of darkness as well. Thus, the cliché of the Western black magician summoning forth demons in a desolate graveyard under a full moon is not out of keeping with the practice of the Eastern lefthand path Tantrika.

A thirteenth century kabbalistic text brought to our attention by a colleague makes manifest that the association of leftward-flowing energy with female sexual power is not at all exclusive to Tantric sexual magic. Rather, it is a ubiquitous feature of the timeless, worldwide sinister current. This document, entitled *Treatise On The Left Emanation*, promises that "I shall now teach you a wonderful innovation. You already know that evil Samael and wicked Lilith are like a sexual pair who, by means of an intermediary, receive an evil and wicked emanation from one and emanate to the other."

Beneath the diabolic symbolism of the arch-succubus Lilith and her consort, the angel of death, it's easy to see that this "wonderful innovation" appears to be identical to the transference of left-streaming sexual energy at the center of *Vama Marga* sexual initiation from "one ... to the other". This text reflects the fact that the Tree of Life that stands at the heart of the Kabbalah is also divided into a right/masculine side and a left/female side.

The Path Of The Deliberate Outcast

Tantric texts also place emphasis on a third definition of *Vama* as "contrary". This essential aspect of contrariness clarifies that the left-hand path in its purest form is always characterized by radical opposition. Its method of initiation is based on cultivating estrangement and deliberate alienation from divine, natural and human rule. Through an active and positive sacred glorification of the radically Other, the walker of the *Vama Marga* steps outside previously secure borders, a self-exiled, self-determined creation of his or her own autonomous will. Although many previous authors have

attempted to whitewash or otherwise downplay the genuinely subversive

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aspect of left-hand path initiation, the aspirant who takes these contrarian teachings to heart has engaged on a course of deliberate, even methodical, iconoclasm from which there can be no turning back.

This sacralized separation from established law and custom, particularly sexual convention, is not to be confused merely with the empty acts of the social rebel – it is instead a god-like disdain for the restrictions that bind the uninitiated, a taking of supreme responsibility for one's own actions.

Because of the freedom from strictures afforded to the sinister current initiate, Tantric tradition is adamant that the left-hand path cannot be the way for the common person; it demands a heroic constitution. A feeble or unprepared mind that briefly tasted the terrifying sovereignty of a semidivine consciousness would not be transformed by the experience – at best, he or she might become nothing more than an everyday criminal, an

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ultimately powerless identity bound to self-destruct. The aim of the left-hand path's contrary nature reaches to a more sublime level of being; the conscious separation from familiar boundaries is designed to awaken transhuman consciousness. To place this in a perhaps more familiar Western context, it might be recalled that Lucifer does not rebel from God's tyranny to simply become branded as an outlaw; he is determined to *become* God instead.

If *Vama* is contrariness and the *Vama Marg* is the elevation of contrariness to a spiritual principle, it should be understood that the left-hand path can never be a way for those who seek enlightenment through tranquillity and serenity. The sinister current is conflict incarnated and its illumination is provided by friction – and not just of a sexual kind. Part of this spirit of conflict is the intrinsic connection of the left-hand path with the ethos of the warrior.

The Indian left-hand path tradition exalts the black goddess Kali, both for her all-consuming erotic power, and her destructive capacity as warrior and destroyer of the universe. Outside of that tradition, it is no coincidence that many deities venerated by contemporary left-hand path magicians, among them the Egyptian Set, the Mesopotamian Ishtar/Babalon, the Aztec Tezcatlipoca and the Nordic Odin are principally divinities of war – the ultimate expression of contrariness. To go any further into the left-hand path's connection with the *cultus* of the warrior would take us outside the erotic parameters of this book. Still, one last point is worth making: there is a vast difference between the good soldier who follows orders as a servant of the state and the left-hand path Warrior, who fights for his or her own illumination.

Another of the associations of the word *Vama* and leftwardness in India that is often daintily overlooked is its correlation with excrement. In India, the left hand is used to clean the anus and has traditionally been connected with all that is "unclean". This notion of uncleanness is extremely important to the fastidious Brahmin caste in India and a deliberate incorporation of the taboo against shit would be a powerful provocation, a typically left-hand path exercise of contrariness in action. It also symbolizes that the left-hand path initiate includes – and even actively embraces – aspects of existence that orthodox spiritual teachings reject as worthless and harmful. The generally prohibited nature of human excrement in almost every society emphasizes that the left-hand path has often been regarded as something loathsome throughout its history. Along these lines, the radically left-hand path Aghora sect has long been notorious for ritual coprophagia – the consumption of shit as a sacrament. The left-hand path works within the realm of physical matter, seeing the transitory phenomena of "this world", including the human body and its pleasures, as fundamentally connected to

"the other world" of the eternal and divine. Related to the understanding of

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Vama as excrement is its commonly understood meaning of "ejecting". The Sanskrit word *Vamati* = "he vomits" gives us our English word vomit, so *Vama* is also the expulsion of waste products in general. The concepts of following the path of leftwardness, the path of woman, the path of contrariness all have their appeal – but who wants to follow the path of shit and vomit? It has even been speculated that this deterrent quality may be the point of this designation, a way of keeping the insincere away from the teachings.

More importantly, although a god-like consciousness is sought on the left-hand path, one method of attaining this is by embracing that which is despised by conventional morality, deliberately crowning oneself with a disgrace that makes it impossible to return to commonly approved standards. As the Tantric historian Philip Rawson has commented, "a pride in social identity and virtue is the most insidious and crippling of all the mental blocks on the road to release. The Tantrika has to commit himself to acts which destroy any vestiges of social status and self-esteem."

To Western psychology, with its simplistic cult of self-esteem, the left-hand path adept's systematic eradication of these much cherished hindrances must of course seem like madness. But these acts are the very steps that lead to left-hand path sovereignty. A crucial phase in seeing through the flimsy nature of *maya* that is the magician's working material is experimentation with the arbitrary social roles and standards of status through which human animals submissively learn their place in the pecking order. The low man or woman on the totem pole must slavishly work to impress his betters, struggling to prove what a good citizen and member of the tribe he or she is, hoping for a crumb of praise from the master. But the sovereign being, the master of his or her fate, can surmount the rules of good behavior and respectability that regulate monkey psychology. To challenge these social conventions can never be without risk; it is the unflinching confrontation with these risks that partially determines the heroic *vira* character of the advanced stage of left-hand path initiation.

A more recent European interpretation of this aspect of left-hand path practice is presented by Peter Tracey Connor in his *Georges Bataille And The Mysticism Of Sin*. Writing of the French mystical pornographer Bataille's spiritual inspiration in those "unruly elements ... [that] society rejects in order to constitute itself as an orderly and productive body," Connor notes that "Everything that is considered abject, from trash, vermin, and excreta ... finds its way to the surface in [Bataille's] essays as in his fictional works ... the objects he describes, precisely because they have been sacrificed to social values, are touched by the 'sacred'." Connor's description of Bataille's focus on that zone of being "where the rejected and the undesirable dwell", ruled by a "force that disrupts the regular course of

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things" allows us to interpret Bataille as a contemporary Western visionary of the left-hand path, to whom we shall return.

The lowest stage of *Vama Marga* transformation is the herd-animal or *pashu*, who is as bound by the fetters of "proper conduct" as a beast of burden is yoked to its forced labors. The *pashu* strives to please its owner.

The hero of the left-hand path has cut the fetters that bind absolutely.

One of the other enduring reasons for the relatively disreputable and subversive position of the left-hand path in the spectrum of Indian spiritual teachings is partially a social one, again related to caste. The Tantric *Vama Marga* originated primarily in the ancient traditions of the indigenous Dravidian population of the Indian sub-continent, with far less influence deriving from the Vedic philosophy of the Brahmanic Indo-European conquerors of India. Its apparent historical origins among the lower castes

has lent this initiatory tradition a socially transgressive character it has never wholly lost, which make the heretical female and contrary aspects of the sinister current even less palatable to the orthodox.

Shiva and Shakti, the central divine figures of Tantricism are atavistic survivals of deities that predate the Aryan invasion of the Indus Valley. As such, despite the reverence accorded them, there is still a certain dishonorable aspect to them in the eyes of the average Hindu, especially as they are understood in left-handed Tantra. Shiva is a later development of the fearsome Rudra the Howler, a turbulent figure presiding over such undesirable phenomena as storms, disease, and thieves. Even today, Shiva is understood as a patron of all who have stepped outside of society's boundaries – from the holy man to the outlaw. In some archaic texts, Shiva is referred to as *Vama*, which could possibly be yet another meaning of *Vama Marga* – the path of Shiva. His connection to a prevalent phallic cult censured by the Brahmanic conquerors of India as a loathsome heresy, survives in Rudra's remanifestation as Shiva. In Shaivism, the cult of Shiva, the *lingam* is the symbol of the phallus, revered as the principle of formless, bodiless consciousness. The Aryan scriptures, known as the Vedas, explicitly condemn phallic worship.

Similarly, Shakti's cult of the *yoni*, honoring the vulva as the embodiment of the kinetic secret power that charges and animates all things can be traced to the pre-Aryan sexual veneration of local goddesses in the Neolithic age. The imposed religion foisted on the Indus Valley by Aryan invaders was centered almost entirely on abstract celestial male divinities. The introduction through force of this male pantheon forced the adherents of Shakti underground for many centuries, until their revival, first in Hinduism, and then in dynamic Tantric form, emerged. As opposed to the masculine, solar sky gods revered by the Vedic faith, the most important divinities for the original Indian civilization were chthonic goddesses, the multi-formed

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predecessors of *shakti*.

Coming and Going – Sex Within Death

One rejected, unwanted substance that plays a part in traditional Eastern left-hand path practice is the dead body, which is accorded a special status in Indian culture. Just as much as the left-hand path is concerned with the human body at its most vital and creative, during peaks of erotic ecstasy, it also teaches an intimate knowledge of the body at its lowest ebb, in the decay of death. The antipodal contrast of Sex and Death are just one of the many juxtapositions of opposites that constitute the Tantric web, along with its most obvious antithesis, the sexual energies of Woman and Man.

In India, the task of disposing of the dead is given only to the very lowest caste. For all other castes, even touching the dead, especially corpses of a caste lower than one's self, is considered a spiritual defilement of the first order. Those undesirables who are given the dirty work of handling human remains are also expected to dispose of the excrement of the castes above them.

Therefore, the left-hand path adept, the gleeful transgressor of all accepted boundaries, often makes the "unclean" burning grounds the place in which magical rituals and meditation are accomplished. It is not uncommon for left-hand path initiates to perform their spiritual work within enclosures constructed from human skulls. Such scavenger animals as jackals, vultures and ravens, those eaters of the dead that haunt the crematory grounds, are frequently associated with the left-hand path, playing a role of magical mascot similar to the bestial "familiar" known to European witchery.

The *Vama Marga* sexual rite is commonly held at night in the presence of charred, partially cremated corpses, near the exterminating heat of the open funeral pyres. As an exercise in transcending duality, the male

initiate in this gruesome atmosphere is sometimes instructed to envision himself and his perfumed and desirable sexual consort as foul, disintegrating corpses, even in the midst of the most delirious physical pleasure. Another meditation involves the visualization of one's ritual lover as the fierce Black Kali of the graveyards, with her skirt of severed human hands, tearing the adept apart during the "death" of orgasm. As Tantrics frequently say, "all colors are absorbed into black just as all beings enter into Kali".

Any attempt to provide a strictly rational explanation for the lefthand contemplation of death-within-sex must fall wide of the mark. To an extent, these actions are intended to break through the mind's endlessly rationalizing tendency to categorize opposing forces into tidy, discrete departments, allowing an understanding that such contrasting phenomena as sex/death and desire/disgust are actually not the opposites they normally

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appear to be. Beyond this, the sinister current's mingling of the morbid and the erotic is designed to build up the adept's fearlessness in the face of all sensory manifestations. Beauty and horror, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow are perceived as interwoven strands in the tapestry of *maya*.

Notably, Westerners who have been eager to adopt the pleasant sexual aspect of left-hand path rites into their practice rarely incorporate the equally important focus on death that characterizes the authentic left-hand path. Initiation through physical joy and ecstasy is an important part of the *Vama Marga*. Nevertheless, it is ever balanced with the initiatory ordeal of terror through close confrontation with death. It is the radical expression of dissent from normative, socially acceptable values that this *Vama Marga* embrace of the rejected aspects of existence must entail that separates the intellectual dilettante attracted to some of the left-hand path's more fashionable outer features from the genuine initiate dedicated to radical transformation.

The Kali Yuga

Tantra, and especially its left-hand path, are thought to mark such a radical departure from previous initiatory teachings that it is said that the *Vama Marga* is a form of illumination suitable only for the specific historic conditions that prevail in this period of time.

Specifically, the left-hand path is geared to the unique demands of this present age of darkness and dissolution – Kali Yuga, or the Aeon of Kali. According to the *Vishnu Purana*, the world will have fallen under Kali Yuga's shadow "when society reaches a stage where property confers rank, wealth becomes the only source of virtue, passion the sole bond of union between husband and wife, falsehood the source of success in life, sex the only means of enjoyment, and when outer trappings are confused with inner religion." From an exoteric perspective, taking things at face value, the established goal of the Tantric sinister current is to provide a method of illumination suitable for the era of chaos, violence, massive social breakdown and spiritual ignorance in which we undisputedly find ourselves.

Left-hand path metaphysical chronology would have it that mankind has already been operating under such diminished spiritual circumstances for many thousands of years, with no end in sight for at least another 200,000 years. Only then will Kali's sinister era run its course to ultimate destruction and unthinkable terminal horrors. Shiva's alldestroying eye will then open, awakening from the absurd nightmare of history. However, this doom is not to be understood in a linear manner; from the ashes of the cremation grounds will come an eventual renewal; and the whole cycle will begin yet again, as it has for eternity.

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These harsh observations of life in the Kali Yuga are not made by

Tantrikas in the spirit of moral condemnation. They are primarily a practical acknowledgment of the character of our time. Under such severe circumstances, the Tantras ask, what methods of initiation could possibly be effective? Their answer is that only Tantra and the radical measures of the left-hand path can provide an appropriate way of illumination for those who live in Kali's dark age. So tenacious an epidemic demands strong medicine; extreme times call for extreme measures. In this sense, it is often said elliptically by Tantrics that poison is the only cure for poison.

In this spirit of the Kali Yuga, what past orthodoxies have banned as dangerous, the left-hand path Tantrika cheerfully brings upon his or herself. Thus, it is often said of left-hand path adepts that they "work with the venomous snake", "ride upon the tiger", and "walk upon the sword." But characteristic of the multi-layered Tantric approach, nothing in the swirling inconstancy of *maya* can be perceived only from one perspective; there are – at the very least – two ways of looking at the Kali Yuga; the outer exoteric, and the inner esoteric, the bipolar interior and external forms that manifest so frequently within left-hand path thought .

Kali Yuga is thought to be the last era, an Iron Age concluding a cyclic succession of four Aeons which began with the long-forgotten Satya Yuga, or Golden Age, many millennia ago. For the Tantracist, the divinely ordained teachings of austerity, asceticism and self-denial which informed the Golden Age are now devoid of meaning, and the holy scriptures which once guided mankind's spiritual development are nothing more than dead letters on a page. The *Mahanirvana Tantra* tells us that in this Kali Yuga, all of the sacred texts of the past are "as impotent as venomless snakes, and are, as it were, dead." Furthermore, the refined spiritual teachings of the Golden Age would be useless for humans of this Aeon, who are pitilessly described as "without restraint; maddened with pride, ever given over to sinful acts; lustful, gluttonous, cruel, heartless, harsh of speech, deceitful, short-lived."

The doorway to illumination in the Iron Kali Yuga is only through the very actions that were previously condemned. Thus, the left-hand path initiate frequently seeks liberation in forlorn places haunted by death, and through deliberately confronting that which inspires terror and fear. He or she who knows that this is Kali's time embraces what the unawakened mind would recoil from as "negative", transforming such rejected phenomena into holiness itself. The adept attuned to the reality of the Kali Yuga realizes that the Absolute and divine is manifest in the *totality* of experience, including – perhaps especially – those worldly delights and pleasures of the senses castigated by ascetic paths of initiation. This includes the erotic reintegration of the male and female polarities. More precisely, Woman *herself*, who is the living incarnation of Kali-energy on the planet, is now the gateway to

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initiation. The initiate in the Kali Yuga cannot attain the supreme state of consciousness by turning away from this disintegrating and disordered world, or dismissing *maya's* manifestations as senseless illusion, as previous spiritual schools recommended.

Orthodox Eastern spiritual teachings have insisted that *moksha*, or liberation, can only be apprehended when the initiate has rejected all experiences of this physical world as delusive traps to be avoided at all costs. This is often accomplished by a deliberate dwelling on the supposedly dreadful state of things in the human sphere. This negation is frequently expressed in Buddhist writings that bemoan this wheel of suffering with the happy refrain that *sarvam dukham* – all is misery. Most miserable of all, we are led to believe, is the ravenous demon *Kama* (desire) which causes us to be attached to this illusory shell of flesh. Traditional Buddhism and Hinduism utter a furious "No!" to *maya*, seeking total obliteration in the blinding white light of *nirvana*.

This creed of oblivion is countered by the Tantric left-hand path,

whose adherents positively exult in the play of *maya*, whether that play takes the form of the intense delights of erotic initiation or the horrors of the cremation ground. Rather than repudiating the world, the Tantric initiate of the Kali Yuga makes active use of every aspect of its phenomena, transforming all facets of existence into fuel for illumination. This joyous acceptance of all spheres of reality – including those conventionally judged to be harmful or delusive – as equally valid, is Kali Yuga's antidote to the sickness of world-negation, an affirmation of *maya* that condones the previously denounced cultivation of magical powers and sexual ecstasy.

What the uninitiated draw from in loathing or shame, the *Vama Marga* adept regards as the fascinating dance carried out by Shiva and his *shakti* Kali. It is often mistakenly presumed that to accept the reality of Kali Yuga is to sink into the powerless pessimism of the doomsday fatalist. On the contrary, the attitude of the walker of the left-hand path in the Kali Yuga is one of sheer delight. Consider the image of Kali herself in this regard; violent, chaotic, bejeweled with skulls and decapitated heads, her lolling tongue promising both blood thirst and carnal abandon. And yet, the walker of the *Vama Marga* loves this vision of incarnate chaos with the same passion with which he or she embraces her age of terrors.

Even when confronted with the sometimes nightmarish nature of existence in the Kali Yuga, the left-hand path adept never loses a deep sense of sacred play, mirroring the play of the gods. The Sanskrit word *lila* (play) is often used in Indian mythology to describe the spirit of divine play which informs the erotic liaisons of the gods and goddesses, as well as the aloof but always *light* touch they maintain when creating and destroying whole universes through their deft toying with *maya*.

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The Western mind can grasp something of the affirmative attitude of the Kali Yugic left-hand path to existence by comparing it to Friedrich Nietzsche's declaration in *The Gay Science*, that he wants only to be a "*Ja-Sagender*", a "Yes-sayer". Nietzsche's injunction in his *The Twilight of the Idols* to "[stand] in the midst of the universe with a joyful and trusting fatalism" accepting that "in the totality everything is redeemed and affirmed – *he no longer denies.*" is a fundamentally Tantric philosophy. Nietzsche, interestingly, anti-christened such an attitude "Dionysian", invoking that androgynous god of ecstatic dance and divine intoxication whose striking concurrence with left-hand path metaphysics we will explore later.

One of the open secrets of the Kali Yuga is that those initiated into its inner mysteries welcome it as the *true* Golden Age, seeing beyond its despised Iron veneer through an act of visionary alchemy. The lowest conceals the all-highest.

To contrast the Kali Yugic approach to initiation with its antithesis, the Tantric left-hand path specifically repudiates the Buddhist teaching that Desire (*kama*) is the greatest obstacle to spiritual freedom. On the contrary, deliberately awakening the full intensity of erotic desire and lust whilst in a state of willed lucidity is perceived as a key to self-deification in the Kali Yuga. It is important to understand that we are not speaking here of the everyday, somnolent sexuality which fetters most human beings in its compulsive grasp. The left-hand path adept seeks a transcendent Eros yoked to the control of an awakened mind.

After all, millions of creatures in the Kali Yuga indulge in a thousand forms of pleasuring themselves. And yet the common pleasures of the uninitiated cannot be said to lead to liberation or self-deification – these acts, no matter how ecstatic, merely provide a temporary release or distraction from the human condition. As we shall see when we examine the traditional qualifications required for induction into the Tantric left-hand path, the *Vama Marga* is not suited for the merely bestial condition of most human beings,

who react to their lusts and appetites like so many Pavlovian dogs.

And yet, despite these qualifications, this is an amoral vision utterly transcendent of such dualities as higher and lower, good and bad, body and soul; the energy of Shakti is viscerally experienced through sexual rites as the ground of all being. Mastery of sexual energy, understood as the core constituent of the human lifestream in the carnal vehicle, is regarded as the hidden passage to liberation. This ceaselessly transforming erotic energy is manipulated by left-hand path sex magicians in their quest for total, god-like autonomy in this world. It is taught that harnessing this energy would be impossible for most human beings, who would only be overwhelmed by an encounter with the terrifying nature of the principal divine energy who

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presides over the Kali Yuga – the goddess Kali. During this Aeon, the lunar, sinister current of the Feminine Daemonic is at its zenith, a spiritual condition which allows for the breaking up of all boundaries and the free play of creative chaos, unrestricted by the male ordering principle.

Western magicians first approaching the left-hand path frequently find the Sanskrit terminology and culturally alien form of the Indian *Vama Marga* and Kali Yuga to be overly abstruse. However, visionaries in every culture and in every era have spontaneously recorded revelations demonstrating the universal and transcultural omnipresence of the left-hand path, even though they have no awareness of the Tantric teachings. In the

Western world, we have found that the most relevant transmissions of authentic left-hand path initiation have been conveyed not from occultists but through the mediumistic abilities of artists. Consider the following passage from the British poet William Blake's *The Marriage Of Heaven And Hell*, written in 1790. Although it is unlikely that Blake knew anything of the traditional left-hand path concept of *shakti* energy, he luminously illustrates the essence of the sinister current all the same, providing us with a genuine

Western Tantra:

"All bibles or sacred codes have been the causes of the following errors:

1. That man has two real existing principles: viz: a body & a soul.
2. That energy, called evil, is alone from the body: & that reason, called good, is alone from the soul.

But the following contraries to these are true:

1. Man has no body distinct from his soul; for that called body is a portion of the soul discerned by the five senses, the chief inlets of soul in this age.
2. Energy is the only life, and is from the body; and reason is the bound or outward circumference of energy.
3. Energy is Eternal Delight."

It is interesting that Blake describes the five senses as the "chief inlets of soul in this age"; Tantra also specifically acknowledges that the senses are the tools of initiation best suited for the current Kali Yuga. Two Tantric texts, the *Kalivilasa Tantra* and the *Mahanirvana Tantra*, indicate that the tremendous surge of wild feminine erotic energy that

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is incarnated as Kali can only be openly applied to initiation in her shadowy Aeon. In previous Aeons, according to these Tantras, the sinister teachings of illumination and self-deification via the flesh were concealed to prevent mankind from abusing these potentially dangerous procedures. Now, the veil can be lifted, for the once secret and forbidden left-hand path is seen to be the most germane method of awakening in this era of darkness. The ancient prohibitions have been rendered null and void by the advent of Kali's time of chaos – what was once considered unholy is now sacred; all prevailing standards are reversed.

Such is the strictly exoteric meaning of the Kali Yuga. The left-hand

path magician, however, penetrates deeper than these outer appearances, pursuing the direct apprehension of the interior significance of the traditional symbolism of all mythologies. From the initiatic point of view, transcendent of time, the Kali Yuga of dissolution and the earlier Golden Age of perfection are understood as symbolic forms representing levels of initiatory being, rather than actual periods located within time. This is true of all of the Aeonic eras posited by the world's mythologies.

In the Apocalypse of Christian tradition, for example, we find a time much like the Kali Yuga, which is said to be ruled by chaos, discord, and the breaking of divine law. Just as Kali is the presiding divinity of the Tantric Aeon, the Whore of Babylon, another nightside symbol of the Feminine Daemonic, is said to reign over the Apocalypse, or *apokolypis* (time of revelation). Primitive, literal-minded Christian sects have been awaiting the prophesied end times – with its foretold advent of the Whore and the Antichrist – for thousands of years, failing to understand that exactly like the Kali Yuga, the end of the world they so fearfully anticipate is an initiatory state of mind.

Other mythologies provide us with analogous ages of darkness and destruction, accepted as historical incidents by the literal-minded, but fathomed as inner transformations by initiates. The Ragnarok or Fatal Destiny, of Nordic tradition – perhaps more commonly known as the *Gotterdämmerung*, or Twilight of the Gods – tells of a time when the dread Fenris Wolf will be unleashed by the sinister Loki to swallow the sun, thus destroying the world of men and gods, who await their fated doom with horror. Like the Kali Yuga, the Ragnarok is described as a time when men break all bonds of honor, brother fights with brother, and the time-honored spiritual laws of truth are neglected. Just as Kali and other wrathful and terrifying deities achieve their fullest power in the Kali Yuga, so does Ragnarok free the fettered monstrous brood of the disobedient trickster Loki to subvert the established order of the gods.

Similarly, the Aztec priests of Mexico taught that in the fearful time of the Fifth Sun, the cosmos itself would be exterminated. From an esoteric

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left-hand path vantage point, all of these seemingly external periods of desolation are welcomed, and even enthusiastically brought about, as they are recognized as *internal* processes of extreme self-metamorphosis, destroying established realities to willfully create new states of being.

The Sanskrit word *Yuga*, like the Greek word *Aion*, used within the Gnostic tradition, can superficially be understood as an era of time. Even more fundamentally, it is a psychic phenomenon, an eternal state that actually exists outside of time. Aleister Crowley's Aeon of Horus, proclaimed by him in 1904 CE, has created some confusion on this point in Western magical circles, since Crowley literally – and incorrectly – understood an Aeon to be a chronological era, a particular juncture in linear time.

Furthermore, to accept the notion of the Kali Yuga as an *objective* event hardly seems supported by history. Humanity appears to have been equally dead set on its own destruction in all periods of time – and no evidence of a wondrous Satya Yuga, or Golden Age, seems to present itself. The good old days never happened – any study of humanity's relatively brief transit on this planet will reveal that *homo sapiens* is no more spiritually ignorant, violent, insane or chaotic in this current period than in all of the bloodstained pages of history that have preceded us. Therefore, when the left-hand path magician acknowledges that he or she is living in the Iron Age of Kali Yuga, and that the left-hand path is the most appropriate means of initiation for this Aeon, this must be understood as esoteric truth, transmitted in the language of mythological symbolism, rather than the kind of "truth" one might read in the morning newspaper. Something more profound than

historical actuality is being invoked.

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II.

AWAKENING THE SERPENT

Initiation In The Left-Hand Path

Playing With *Maya* – Left-Hand Path Magic

One of the most welcome aspects of the left-hand path philosophy to the Western sex magician is the bridge it provides between sorcery and initiation.

It seems unlikely that anyone with a gift for sexual sorcery would not eventually be confronted with the essential existential dilemma of the mystic, just as a mystic of any profundity cannot but help to awaken a talent for sorcery as a side-effect of his or her search. Most traditional Eastern spiritual schools teach that these magical side-effects should be strictly ignored as unessential to the goal of illuminated apprehension of reality, since they are dismissed as mere distractionary illusion. Likewise, many Western magicians prefer to totally disregard any mystical implications raised by their work, concentrating exclusively on the material results of their sorcery.

The mystical and the magical both have their place in the left-hand path approach to initiation, since it is a unique aspect of the Tantric philosophy that there is no real difference between the transient manifestations of the physical world and the eternal world of absolute reality.

These seemingly different dimensions are understood to be intrinsically connected, flip sides of the same phenomena, which is why the *Vama Marga* teaches liberation through the things of this world, including the pleasures of the flesh. But Tantra, unlike other initiatory disciplines, is not restricted to the pursuit of spiritual liberation. The practice of magic, the playful manipulation of the universe-creating substance known as *maya*, and the cultivation of those supernormal mental powers known in Sanskrit as *siddhis*, are all accepted as perfectly legitimate initiatory pursuits within the left-hand path discipline. None of the moral judgments against magic that inhibit other teachings taint the Tantric approach, which is one of the reasons Tantrikas are eyed with some suspicion by orthodox Hindus to this day. Tantric magic, especially sexual left-hand path magic, is condemned as *Abichara*, which carries the same connotations that "black magic" suggests to the Westerner.

Magic, through Tantric eyes, is the exclusive domain of the feminine.

Not that only women are capable of magical prowess but that magicians of both genders draw on a feminine *shakti* power thought to be especially potent at night when altering *maya* through their sorcery. Shakti, when seen as the physical universe, can also be thought of as *maya* itself, the uncanny material

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with which all magicians work to create their realities. As creatrix of all the forms composed of dynamic shifting energy that make up seeming reality, Shakti is known as *Maya-Shakti*. The eternal concepts of feminine enchantment, fascination, and seduction thus play a crucial role in all lefthand path magic, regardless of the gender of the magician. *Maya-Shakti* – in one of those mind-boggling juxtapositions of seeming opposites-in-one that radiate from the Tantric stream – is both the liberating force that awakens the initiate to absolute reality and the "all-bewildering" enchantress who veils that reality with her captivating, seductive, and horrifying dance of infinite appearances. The worldwide archetype of the witch casting her enchantments at midnight is a universal symbol reflecting the Tantric left-hand path connection between nocturnal sorcery and *shakti* – midnight finds the sinister feminine power at its height of intensity.

Adepts of the *Vama Marga* claim that sustaining and "riding the tiger" of bliss created through the repeated performance of sacred sexual union in the *Panchatattva* rite – which we will explain in detail in the next

chapter – eventually bestows upon the adept certain *siddhis*, or magical abilities. These sorcerous skills are said to be engineered within the interconnected complex of the physical, subtle and causal bodies by drawing *kundalini* energy into the brain during extended orgasm, and absorption of the female sexual partner's erotically heightened *shakti* power. Or, in simpler, more prosaic terms, the specific altered states of consciousness attainable through prolonged ritual sex open the mind to magical ability.

Among these are the ability to bring other minds under one's own mental control, and an ability to fascinate which Westerners have often compared to hypnotism and mesmerism. The power of telepathy, and the transference of thoughts into the mind of others is also commonly engineered through sexual rites of the left-hand path. Spontaneous telepathy is commonly experienced between left-hand path sexual partners, and celebrants who enjoy an especially good rapport can often develop this talent by practicing on each other.

Readers familiar with the Western caricature of "egoless" Eastern spiritual practice may wonder how an egoless being can – or would want to – perform magic. This misunderstanding is often based on a common Western assumption that what is referred to in English as the "ego" is equivalent to the self. In fact, the destruction of the illusory aspects of socially conditioned personality actively sought through *Vama Marga* procedures is intended to clear the dust away from the will of the true self, allowing awakened action in the world. It does not mean that the initiate is left as a zombie without a will, as has been so frequently misreported.

Exercise and control of the personal will through magic is one aspect of the left-hand path adept's effort to fully understand *maya*. Granted

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to the sexual adepts of the sinister current are such magical abilities as *maranam*, the power to destroy, *ucchatanam*, the power to banish magic cast against the adept by hostile magicians, and *vasikaranam*, the establishment of psychic control over other humans. Traditionally, the left-hand path recognizes six "malevolent rites". Obviously, the spectrum of *maya*-shifting operations open to the left-hand path *magus* is not limited to these six modes of sorcery. The necromantic use of recently deceased spirits for magical purposes is also frequently observed, especially among the Aghori sect of the *Vama Marga*, of whom more later. The yoking of the wills of a male and female adept during the shared altered state of consciousness created by ritual copulation is the primary medium through which these – and many other acts of erotic sorcery – are accomplished.

Probably the most commonly encountered Western model of the magician's relation to the universe posits the active, living will of the magician manipulating a cosmos which is fundamentally dead, mindless and inert. In this prototype, the magician is merely pulling the strings of a static creation, a sterile concept inherited in part from the Biblical concept of the human being as the great master of a world utterly alien – and wholly inferior – to him.

The left-hand path practice of sexual magic suggests a very different connection between *magus* and cosmos, one that ecstatically rejects the theory of a simple causal relation between the magician's kinetic force and the immobile object he or she wishes to transform. Left-hand path sex magic is based instead on the concept of magical creation as the joyful process of play or *lila*, in which the magician seduces, – and is seduced – by *maya* to create the desired alterations of reality he or she desires.

Left-hand path sexual magic creates play in the universe, understood not as a fixed, perfected and inert creation but as an incessantly adaptable living force, a work in progress that can be endlessly adjusted, subject to the sport of the sorcerer. The *Vama Marga* sex magician transforms this force primarily through ritualized orgasm and recreation of the act that sustains

the universe. Diverting the physiological and spiritual life-force which is usually expended in procreation or momentary sexual relief into prolonged rapture is the method through which the *mayin* of the left-hand path effects this god-like ability to change the seemingly unchangeable. Key to this fluid interaction between the mind of the perceiver and that which is perceived is an understanding of endless, cyclical time that transcends the limits of the straight line into which mundane consciousness is locked. But the magically charged orgasm is only one of the left-hand path techniques of opening the door to this time outside of time in which *maya* can be most potently modified.

The outside observer watching a rite of traditional left-hand path

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magic would see almost nothing to indicate the all-important *internal* process of maya-alteration taking place. To be sure, the sexual union that this theoretical voyeur would witness is carried out with far more deliberation than the ordinary satiation of lust. The chanting of unintelligible *mantras* by the sexual partners would clearly not be the usual expression of endearments associated with sex. The systematic breathing (*pranayama*) engaged in throughout the rite would not be the uncontrolled panting of the normal couple hurtling toward orgasm. But what could *not* be observed is one of the key factors of *Vama Marga* sorcery: the disciplined mastery of the human image-creating function generated by the feminine maya-stuff of mind.

Maya, imagery and magic – these three interconnected words come together during the activation of sexual sorcery. Left-hand path magicians perform the divine deed of recreating the world according to will through mental image alteration empowered by enhanced sexual bliss. To call this process "visualization" is to trivialize the absolute realism that is attained, an inner realism which is then reflected in the outer mirror of *maya*. We will return to the development and application of this integral *Vama Marga* technique in Chapter Nine. For now, it suffices to say that left-hand path magic is based on the theory that the seemingly ethereal and subjective electrical impulses of thought brought about during heightened sexual ecstasy form an energy that can take on mass in the objective universe.

In defiance of the religious edict that only the Gods have the right to change the universe They created, the left-hand path magician takes on the role of co-creator. Although only great discipline can train the bodymind to effect magical change through the application of Eros, the sex magician never gets very far from the idea of divine play, the *lila* through which Shiva/Shakti's endless copulation creates and destroys the world of appearances. The grim, austere magic practiced by many initiatory groups is quite foreign to this idea. Even Kali, the most terrifying of the deities revered by left-hand path adepts, is often portrayed in the throes of wild laughter, as if she is infinitely amused by the cosmos. The darkest manifestations of the Kali Yuga are only the forms of her ecstatic game of *lila*, a consciousness the magician can attain in the joy of the sexual rite.

The force of controlled orgasm during the *maithuna* rite of sexual union may also be used to temporarily release the subtle body from its physical sheath, allowing the adept's consciousness a deliberate "out-of-body experience." The subtle, or etheric, body is described as leaving the physical body from an aperture at the crown of the skull known as the *brahmarudhra*, "the gateway of Brahma". This cranial passage is sometimes thought to be related to the opening in a newborn's skull which closes in the first three years of life, known colloquially as the "soft spot." This notion is not unique to left-hand path magical practice; the Sikhs also consider this area to be a

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conduit to the spiritual realm, just as the Middle Eastern custom of covering the head in places of prayer derives from an ancient idea that demonic forces

can enter the body through this orifice.

Many a non-magician has accidentally experienced the detachment of the subtle body from the physical body as the result of a powerful orgasm, or any shock to the system, an experience which can be profoundly unsettling for a consciousness unprepared for such a violent breach of mind from body.

As the magician's dense body enters a state of post-coital death-like trance, his or her subtle body – sometimes known as the astral body in Western lore – is free to explore the realms beyond waking awareness. Perhaps the most fantastic of the *siddhis* performed in this state is the reputed ability to project the sorcerer's subtle body and consciousness into the physical body of another human being.

Most frequently, this practice is attempted with the sleeping or the magically unprotected. However, a necromantic form exists in which the sorcerer strives to enter the bodies of the dead. During such operations, the sexual partner of the magician is given the task of guarding the physical body of the adept who has departed. One of the supposed dangers of this procedure is a likelihood that unwelcome discarnate entities, – or the subtle bodies of other magicians – may enter the "unoccupied" body left behind whilst the magician's consciousness is wandering. The result of such a possession, according to tradition, would be that the departed magician would be barred from returning to his or her own physical body. The outward result of such an obstruction can be madness or physical death.

Left-hand path practice in Tibet – at least before the Communist Chinese invasion forcefully disrupted the lineage of teachers instructing initiates in these arts – uses the altered states of consciousness accessed through erotic junction with the *shakti* for the development of magical skills condemned by conventional religionists and right-hand path Tantricists alike as being of a "black magical" disposition. The power of *dragpo*, or "the wrathful", is especially notorious, as adepts possessing this *siddhi* profess to be able to cause unendurable pain or physical death in a chosen subject from a great distance. Of the sexual sorcerer using *dragpo* is in an especially good mood, he or she may only choose to remove the targeted individual's ability to speak.) *Bangwa* allegedly permits the sorcerer to attract desired partners, among other skills, by gaining control over hidden forces revealed to him or her during ritually machinated ecstasy. *Gyaispa* is concerned with the traditional Faustian goals of attaining riches, knowledge, and fame – material gratifications of *kama* or desire scorned by traditional Buddhist teaching in Tibet. There is no doubt that such sorcery is often performed by Tibetan Tantrics for the sole purpose of simply fulfilling personal desires. But these *siddhis* are also exhibited to students at certain stages in their initiation as a

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traumatic lesson in the flexibility of reality.

As Buddhists in particular seek to expunge their attachment to worldly things, thus freeing himself forever from rebirth into this world, all of these left-hand path *siddhis* are considered extremely harmful to the adept practicing them by orthodox Buddhist monks from the Tibetan lamaist tradition.

Although the attainment of magical powers through sexual initiation in Buddhism is customarily associated with the rise of Tantra in medieval Tibet, it is almost certain that such sex-magical operations were already known to the indigenous and shamanistic Bön religion of pre-Buddhist Tibet. As in India, many atavistic magical traditions of a supposedly amoral or anti-social nature are rather arbitrarily assigned to the left-hand path. Bön, shrouded in mystery and condemned by Tibetan Buddhists as a "demonic" practice – much as the Catholic Church vilified survivals of European paganism as the work of the Devil – actually seems to be a survival of the Mithraic cult, which reached Tibet by way of Iran.

As we have seen, the majority of Eastern spiritual teachings insist

that the initiate must recognize the deceptive and negative nature of *maya*, and break from its hypnotizing snares. In contrast, the left-hand path magician is encouraged to partake of the same god-like powers of the *mayin*, transforming the stuff of reality in accordance with his or her will. *Maya*, then, is the medium with which left-hand path magicians practice their art. With practice and discipline, the magician, a juggler of reality, can learn to play with *maya* with the same dexterity that a sculptor shapes clay, molding the elusive material of manifestation according to will.

After a few years of demonstrating just how malleable this medium is, you would think that the magician would come to realize just how illusory the substance of the world he or she continually alters – and even the mind of the magician itself – really is. And yet this moment of awakening rarely comes – the psyche clings so dearly to the reassuring solidity of phenomena and thought that even the jolt of magic cannot always free the tenacious grip.

Many Western magicians do not progress beyond the results-oriented play of sorcery to the deeper regions of initiation, in which questions of identity and the nature of core reality itself become essential.

Once sorcery is mastered, most Western magicians remain fixated on playing with seemingly external reality for decades, as if the data that is delivered to their senses can actually be considered an "objective" reality, in the traditional scientific sense so beloved of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Even though he or she has demonstrated that willed manipulation of that same sensory data can radically transform reality, very few are willing to take the next step of initiation.

This would be as absurd as if those who had come to see that the shadows on Plato's theoretical cave were nothing more than shadows

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continued to stubbornly treat them as reality, even *after* their release into the light outside the cave. In the early twentieth century Tantric text *Tantratattva*, we are provided with a relevant metaphor suitable for a lefthand path understanding of magical reality. The author compares the awakened initiate's perspective to a theatergoer. The other members of the audience react to the events they perceive occurring on the stage as if they were really happening, having no awareness of the art of acting. The lefthand path magician knows that what he or she observes on the world's stage is only an elaborate make-believe, although it is a make-believe interpreted with utter seriousness by those watching it. Beyond the border of the *obviously* magical, this common human inability to differentiate between the *maya* of "theater" and "reality" has been infinitely exploited by politicians, advertisers, propagandists and other professional deceivers.

It is a keystone of our understanding of magic's underlying identity with *maya* that magic is not a comfortable niche to be settled into forever.

Instead, it is a transitional vehicle, a means to an end. Magic can be the awakening agent that frees its practitioner from certain illusions, allowing the flash of insight that transcends all philosophical inquiry. Through magic, the mind can learn that there is not *one* indisputable reality. There is an endless multiplicity of realities, none of them ultimately subject to categorization or label. The direct confrontation with *maya* that sorcery allows might be said to be magic's primary objective. It is this confrontation that permits the sorcerer to viscerally understand how deeply his or her own shifting subjective overlays influence that which he or she perceives – an understanding that may hasten the transformation of human sentience to divine consciousness.

Just as likely, it must be said, magic can become a self-delusive trap of its own, an addictive activity binding the magician ever more deeply to the *maya* mirages he or she projects. This is the double nature of *Maya*, who blinds and reveals with each alternating step of her sinuous movement through time.

Mantra – A Form Of Sonic Magic

Traditional left-hand path magic in both its Indian and Tibetan branches is intrinsically bound up with the mantric science, and each phase of the lefthand path sexual rite is accompanied by the vocalization of appropriate mantras. The word mantra has been translated as "thinking tool", which provides an apt technical definition of these sounds or words, provided by guru to student as an aid to consciousness alteration.

It is believed by both left-hand path and right-hand path Tantrikas that specific sound vibrations spoken (struck sound) or merely *thought* (unstruck sound) can transform internal and external reality – a concept not dissimilar to the Western magician's incantations. Indeed, the mantras known

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as *dharanis* are often thought of as "spells". Tantra teaches that the fabric of this entire material universe is formed from the utterance of certain primordial vibrations or tones.

Our emphasis throughout this book on the importance to the lefthand path magician of understanding exact word meanings can then be understood as a fundamentally Tantric concept; the precise manipulation of sounds and words is a magical tool that controls the seen and the subtle dimensions. So important is mantra to Tantricism that the Buddhist variation of Tantra is often known simply as *mantrayama*.

As the sexual rite unfolds, the *Vama Marga* yogi or yogini traditionally intones specific mantras suitable to each juncture of the operation, either speaking them aloud or thinking them internally. Many of these mantras convey coded sex-magical symbolism. For instance, the Tibetan *Om Mani Padmi Hum*, probably the Tantric Buddhist *mantra* best known throughout the West, translates as "the jewel is in the lotus". The jewel symbolizes the penis or *lingam* and the lotus symbolizes the vagina or *yoni*; their union in coitus represents the divine intercourse of the masculine and feminine principle so important to sinister current initiation. Another mantra of special importance to the Indian left-hand path is the vocal vibration *Klim*, which embodies the hidden power unleashed through sexual coupling. The repetitive *Ajapa mantra* is uttered by simply inhaling and exhaling, a process which is said to vibrate "hung-sah, hung-sah"; the preverbal sound of the breath being drawn in and out. This mantra is a magical recreation within the body of the inhaling and exhaling of the universe-creating force, an act of merged creation and destruction.

Readers familiar with the Hermetic tradition of ceremonial magic may profitably compare the left-hand path use of mantras with the uttering of "barbarous names" in the rituals of that tradition, or the Enochian language developed by Dr. John Dee. All are forms of sonic magic that work upon the hidden interstices of mind and matter, their potency all the greater for their very unintelligibility to the waking consciousness. Dismissed by non-magicians as nonsensical noises without meaning, the mantra speaks to levels of reality impenetrable to rational expression. Aleister Crowley, whose poetic pursuits made him more sensitive than most magicians to the magic of the word, commented that "the long strings of formidable words which roar and moan through so many conjurations have a real effect in exalting the consciousness of the magician to the proper pitch."

Much of the force of the left-hand path mantra is generated by the conditions of secrecy in which it is transmitted to the initiate. Like the intimate transference of erotic power conveyed through touch in the *Vama Marga* sexual rite, the whispered sharing of the mantra from guru to adept cloaks the word of power in its own air of conspiracy. According to *Vama*

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Marga tradition, the mantra entrusted to the student by one's preceptor cannot be effective if it is simply read from a book. The ritual act of being personally provided with the mantra within an intimate initiatory context is

the factor that grants the mantra its dynamism as a consciousness-changing agent.

The Curse Of The Tantras

Like all Tantric concepts, including *Vama Marga*, the Sanskrit word Tantra is a kind of mantra in itself, open to many interpretations. Tantra can be most clearly defined as meaning "tool for providing expansion" or alternately, "liberation through expansion". Tantra is often translated to mean "web", "weave", or "woven together" which allows for some idea of the interconnectedness of the Tantric methods, which can metaphorically be thought of as a gigantic spider web of interrelated strands. The weaving together of the sexual energies of male and female is also suggested.

Attempts to definitively categorize the complex weave of the Tantric web into terms suitable for neat and tidy Western concepts of rationality usually miss the point; Tantra simply defies distinct perimeters. Many well-meaning scholars have attempted to assert that "This is Tantra."

Others, just as firmly, have insisted "No, *that is* Tantra." And yet the ultimate core of the subject in question remains evasive, something to be experienced passionately as a living entity from within, rather than coldly observed as an object from without.

The Tantras themselves are a corpus of once forbidden teachings said to derive from the primordial secret conversations conducted between Shiva, the creator and destroyer of the universe, and his beloved consort, the manifold Goddess Shakti, – sometimes in the form of the beautiful Parvati, often as the nightmarish Kali – while engaged in their ceaseless divine coitus. Historically, some of the earliest surviving Tantras are Buddhist in nature, dating from approximately 600 AD. It is almost impossible to provide a reliable date for the majority of them, which appear to have been adapted from earlier works. Tantric lore maintains that these conversations, revealing the hidden techniques of magic, sexual sorcery and selftransformation, were supposedly overheard by powerful yogi *siddhas*, or magicians, who developed the system of Tantric initiation for human consumption. These written Tantras only reveal a small portion of the *gupta vidya* (secret doctrine), which can only be fully communicated privately from teacher to student. As all sacred books of the past are considered to have lost their value in the current age, the Tantras are considered to be the only useful source of spiritual instruction for the Kali Yuga by Tantric initiates.

The illuminated *siddhas* taught some of these interdicted techniques

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to a few select pupils of proven talent and discretion. Legend has it that the Tantras were then passed down from initiate to initiate through incalculable periods of time, an oral tradition transmitted slowly from one magician's mouth to another's ear, which continues to be the truest form of initiation among Eastern and Western left-hand path initiates to the present day. The secrets of the Tantras were encoded in aesthetic form by initiated artists working as painters, musicians, sculptors and dancers. The creative urge of the artist, a drive that usually separates the creator from the mores and values of society, is a symbol of the unorthodox energy required by the Tantric magician. To create stirring art of any kind is to become a world-maker and a god, and creativity of this kind has always been linked to the Black Arts, in the West and in the East.

Eventually the Tantras were transcribed by hand on fragile palm leaves, usually in "twilight language" or *sandhya-bhasa*, that only initiates could comprehend. The lessons in these Tantric texts do not form a coherent whole by any means; they are a dizzying intermixture of thousands of different approaches and methods of initiation, ranging from profound philosophical insights of the highest order to rather crude recipes for love spells and curses that are similar to Western folk witchcraft. Indeed, many of

the Tantric practices, which include the drawing of magical symbols (*yantras*) and the previously described uttering of invocatory words of power (*mantras*) are similar to the ritual procedures of the traditional Western Black Arts, providing a link between the magicians of both cultures.

The sheer volume and diversity of the Tantric teachings makes it impossible to speak of one authoritative Tantric way – instead, the Tantric tradition offers a multiplicity of often contradictory teachings united by certain overriding themes. The variegated and decentralized nature of Tantra's magical and mystical teachings has had the advantageous effect of discouraging orthodoxy in its practice, which is why even the most extreme and heretical forms of Tantra's left-hand path have survived without too much persecution.

Some of the Tantras were slowly adopted into the established practice of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Jainism, while the more subversive teachings were scorned as dangerous lessons only worthy of the practitioners of the left-hand path. Although many of the Tantric teachings are in written form, it must be emphasized that sinister Tantra is primarily a way of dynamic *action* manifest in an initiate's vital existence. It is not a passive form of knowledge accessible simply through scholarly study. The left-hand path is a physical discipline that must be personally taught by a male or female guru from a lineage of teachers competent to instruct the initiate. The aspiring student of the left-hand path often spends many years in the quest for the teacher most suited to personally initiate him into the lineage of adepts.

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Indeed, Tantra is adamant that initiation can never be learned from books, and that second hand knowledge can never lead to direct realization of the self. The Tantric left-hand path mistrust of book learning, or *pustake likita*, goes so far as to warn that the goddess Shakti, the informing divine power presiding over the practice, curses all who try to take a short-cut to initiation through the written medium. For all of the value placed on the Tantric texts, the left-hand path initiate rejects the great importance placed on reading and strictly intellectual pursuits favored by many Western magicians. The left-hand path is defined by its manifestation in worldly deeds, and as such is better understood as a way of life rather than a faith or an abstract belief system.

This threat of divine malediction has not stopped any number of do-it-yourself Tantra manuals from being published in the West. We cannot enthusiastically recommend any of these. While we provide a certain amount of historical perspective on the left-hand path of Tantra in these pages, we agree with the traditional approach stating that the actual *work* of self-transformation is best conducted under the face-to-face guidance of a qualified instructor. This may seem like the height of inconvenience to most Westerners, who have learned to expect all information to be delivered in handy bite-sized chunks, especially from such questionable sources as popular media and perhaps worst of all, surfing the so-called information highway for instant illumination. The folly of assuming that any tradition can truly be learned by merely reading about it, rather than experiencing it, seems obvious.

The Universe As Divine Copulation

Returning to the sexual basis of the left-hand path, Tantra revolves around the axis of the ecstatic union of the god and goddess Shiva/Shakti, exalted as the sacred copulation of the cosmic male principle in its purest form as Consciousness, and the cosmic female principle, that primordial Power or sheer Energy that both drives and devours the material universe. Shakti, the feminine essence, is always perceived as an *active* all-creating force in the universe. Shiva, the masculine essence that penetrates her, is portrayed in a state of immutable stillness. This sexual resolution of the opposite poles of invisible male consciousness and visible female power also reflects the

radically holistic vision of Tantra.

Unlike other esoteric schools, Tantrics view the world of inconstant material appearance (*maya*) as identical with the eternal core reality that lays beyond the perception of waking consciousness. Among Shakti's many dual functions, she hides the nature of reality from the bewitched perceiver in her spellbinding form of *maya* while simultaneously serving as the force that reveals reality to those illuminated through her.

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The epidemic syndrome that compels so many mystics and magicians to recoil from the physical world as if from a loathsome and impure contagion is alien to the left-hand path. Rather than condemning the illusory nature of *maya* as a destructive delusion that adepts should assiduously detach themselves from through ascetic purification, *maya* is delighted in as an enchanting manifestation of the female power. In fact, the dream-like but paradoxically *real* substance of the world is approached with the previously mentioned attitude of play, or *lila*, a disposition that encourages the prevalent practice of magic in Tantric circles. This understanding transcends the body = bad, consciousness = good duality, freeing the Tantric of the left-hand path to operate the carnal body as an agency of illumination.

The stationary male/active female dichotomy of left-hand path sexual polarities is most dramatically illustrated in depictions of Shakti in her destructive guise of midnight-black Kali, squatting with necrophiliac lust to absorb the erection of the dead corpse-white Shiva, prostrate upon a funeral pyre. Tantrics say that Shiva without Shakti is a corpse; male consciousness, without female power, is inert. The *Kamakalavilasa Tantra* states that "Bodiless Shiva, being of the nature of pure consciousness, must have Shakti for his body." Her body, which transfixes Shiva during their blissful coupling, is really Shiva's consciousness made visible. *Kamakalavilasa Tantra* means "Tantra about erotic joy in the movements of love"; the fascinating delight of these magnetic cosmic forces as they come together. Ultimately, the left-hand path initiate seeks to become this bisexual twin godhead, activating a state of perpetual sexual ecstasy within his/her own consciousness. In Western Hermeticism, the idea of the inner androgyne is a direct correspondent.

In left-hand path metaphysics, the real and secret power of *any* male initiate is his *shakti* as incarnated in his female consort and as a living force within him. This essential left-hand path concept is not limited to India; it can be observed clearly in those legends in which a powerful male magician draws his hidden force from a female companion, or dark muse, possessed of extreme erotic sex-magical energy. In the modern Western sexmagical tradition, perhaps the figure of the Scarlet Woman, a human *avatara* of the Whore of Babylon, or Ishtar, is the best-known approximation of this idea.

Christianized Western spirituality has been content to assign womankind a limited repertoire of a few supposedly antithetical roles: madonna/virgin, worshipped from afar as a untouchable vision of purity, and whore/seductress, condemned as the source of all sin and the cause of all of man's maladies. The left hand of Tantra, the way of woman, views the feminine principle of Shakti as a infinitely complex living principle; virgin

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and whore at the same time, hideous hag, ravishing beauty, alternately creative, annihilative, merciful, fickle, cruel, loving, and indifferent – an endless surge of transformative female energy, a matrix from which all matter is emanated as well as the mysterious night into which all matter is consumed.

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In many ancient cultures, even those commonly described as

"patriarchal" the male king's magical power to rule is traditionally bestowed by a supernatural female being, a universal manifestation of *shakti*. The Celtic tale of the mysterious Lady of the Lake who provides King Arthur with Excalibur, the sword of sovereignty, is one familiar example of the magical female power behind the throne. Other Celtic myths are less ambiguous about the sexual nature of the power exchange – many a legendary Irish king is compelled to have sex with a local feminine elemental or goddess who grants the royal right to rule the land only through erotic transmission. Like any contact with suprahuman entities, these sexual coronation rites were often presented as a possibly dangerous ordeal which only the destined king could survive. This *shakti* archetype is also embodied in a less supernatural form in Arthur's mortal queen Guinevere, whose sexual abandonment of the king in favor of the knight Lancelot heralds the spiritual and physical downfall of his kingdom, Camelot. Arthur's magical advisor, the immortal wizard Merlin, also has his own *shakti* in the guise of his half-sister, the demi-human sorceress Morgan La Faye. The elusive object for which Arthur's knights so ardently seek – the Grail – is yet another icon of the *shakti-yoni*, symbolized as a bottomless cup from which flows hidden wisdom.

An understanding of a masculinity that strength is expressed through stillness and contemplation and a violently active femininity clashes so dramatically with Western stereotypes of the aggressive male and the submissive female that this has often proven to be one of the most difficult left-hand path tenets for Westerners to grasp. The male principle as understood in the sinister current – and actualized during the sexual rite – draws its power from the *containment* of inner force, embodied in the demonstrable control of both the biological and psychic mechanisms. The common left-hand path practice of restraining the ejaculation during orgasm is perhaps the clearest example of masculine stillness and self-containment. Masculine control over the self is an expression of order in the universe. This order is a static, immovable energy complemented by the female's dynamic, sinuous display of ceaseless movement, a demonstration of Shakti's vital chaotic energy.

In the later manifestation of Tantricism in the Buddhist *Mahayana* school, these polarities are reversed; the male is the active, while the female is quiescent. Our application of the left-hand path tends to favor the older Hindu model. Those familiar with Taoist Chinese metaphysics will see the resemblance of this dual Godhead to female, dark *yin* and male, light *yang*, polarities eternally different but magnetically drawn to each other. By whatever name, these are the energies that left-hand path sex magicians work with.

This sinister current desire to bring the opposites of male and

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female together into magical fusion, thus creating a third god-like entity, is also touched upon within a non-Tantric context in the *Symposium* of Plato.

In that work, Aristophanes relates the legend that women and men are actually separated halves of what were originally wholes in some primordial epoch. These hermaphroditic early humans rebelled against the rulership of the father god Zeus, and were punished for their *hubris* by being split into two genders. This bisection created the never entirely fulfilled longing of man and woman to return to the original condition through sexual congress with his or her lost other half. It has been speculated that many of Plato's symbolic tales, which were clearly intended to convey esoteric truths rather than actual history, were learned from the mystery cults of Ancient Greece.

The sexual fusion of opposites symbolized in the erotic opposites of Shiva and Shakti is not only realized through sexual rites; as we shall see later, the techniques of *kundalini* seek to create this fusion *within* the individual adept's body.

During two-person magical workings, sinister current sex magicians incarnate these divine hypostases of cosmic masculinity and cosmic femininity in a constant state of metamorphosis, taking on a multitude of forms. The couple's magic flows into the world from the erotic interplay of masculine and feminine currents, creating or destroying phenomena in the world just as Shiva/Shakti's never-ending coupling, sometimes known in Tantric lore as "the great rite" creates and destroys the universe.

Although many modern left-hand path sex magicians in the West are drawn to the Indian symbolism and pantheon of gods, the initiatory coitus of divine male and female essences is not at all restricted to the mythological symbolism of Shiva/Shakti. The sex-magical rite may be effectively manifested on the terrestrial plane using the symbolism of *any* cultural tradition. The Nordic Wotan and Freya, Set and his bride Astarte (Babalon), the succubus Lilith and Samael, and countless other divine couples representing aspects of the transhuman male and female essences in their myriad of forms are equally appropriate. Ultimately, left-hand path sex magicians are not obliged to incarnate the forms of any known divinities, the elevation of their own consciousnesses to divine states can be accomplished without recourse to any mythological prototypes. Left-hand path sexual magic is not devoted to the submissive worship of deities; the final objective is the transformation of the human magician into a divine force through erotic initiation. The selection of a particular god-form to incarnate as a step towards his or her own self-deification is the prerogative of the human adept undergoing initiation, not a matter of blind faith in the supernatural.

Despite Tantra's integration of the male and female polarities into its worldview, the feminine pole is accorded by far the most importance. The

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extent of Tantric devotion to the goddess Shakti is illustrated by the fact that male Tantrikas are commonly referred to simply as *shaktas*. It is Shakti, the feminine manifestation of the dual Godhead, who is especially accentuated by adherents of the left-hand path as she who gives birth to, sustains, permeates, vivifies, and ultimately annihilates the cosmos. The leftward current is often referred to as "the better half", a saying reflected in the modern Western custom of referring to one's wife, the *shakti* power, as "my better half". This avowed superiority of the left over the right is not a matter of moral superiority; the sinister force of Woman is primarily deemed better in the left-hand path because it is perceived as *stronger*, and is in fact the only power dynamic enough to create initiation.

A concise explanation of the willed overcoming of the rightward male properties of the body and universe by the feminine sinister force is provided in the *Mahakala Tantra*. Although the Sanskrit terminology may be daunting at first to those unfamiliar with it, the following passage clearly outlines the underlying process of all left-hand path operations, albeit in poetic terms not instantly accessible to the rational side of the brain:

"*Purusa* [pure consciousness] is called right (*Daksina*, because he is the right side of the body) and Shakti is called left, (*Vama* because she is the left side of the body). So long as the right and left, the male and female, remain equally powerful, so long alone does the bondage of *samsara* [the world of appearances blocking core reality] endure. When by dint of intense *sadhana* [spiritual practice] the left *shakti* has been awakened, when the left has overpowered *Purusa*, the right *shakti*, and lost herself in gracious joy on his body, that is to say when both the right and the left are filled with her power then she who is bliss unalloyed grants highest liberation to *Jiva* [the individual consciousness, perhaps comparable to the Western 'soul']."

Opposite Doing

As we have seen, a celebration of inversion and opposition is keyed into the very phrase *Vama Marga* – the contrary path. Accordingly, the method of

Viparit Karani – "backward doing" or doing the opposite – is a central tenet of the left-hand path tradition. This is not only expressed physically by willfully causing the energy flow of the body to be reversed, as we mentioned above – the sinister current magician is constantly working with the paradoxical union of opposites.

In every way, the left-hand path initiate makes sacred that which is customarily considered to be unholy or profane. This sinister current inversion of normative values includes the sanctification of sexuality, lust and pleasure which are ordinarily castigated by established religious orthodoxy but which are used by the *Vama Marga* initiate as keys to self-

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divinity. However, the practice also extends to adopting ethical stances and behavior which often evoke stigma, alarm, and even loathing among the followers of conventional social and religious teachings.

These inversions are not engaged in simply to shock the ignorant – that's all too easy to do, and would become rapidly tiresome, not to say reactionary. The practice of *Viparit Karani* ultimately seeks to recreate the initiate as an entity outside of known and accepted frontiers, a necessary step in the process of coming into being and remanifesting as an independent divinity.

In the traditional *Vama Marga*, one of the most frequently observed physical forms of this deliberate embrace of inversion is the *Viparit Maithuna*, or opposite ritual intercourse. In this technique, the seated male adept is entirely immobile, while the female adept energetically rides his erection. In one sense, this erotic action inverts "normal" sexual activity, which usually finds the male forcefully thrusting into the passive female. Particularly in the overwhelmingly anti-female context of Indian society, this erotic rite tends to symbolize the supremacy of the feminine principle, Shakti, incarnated in the female initiate. However, above and beyond this symbolic inversion, there is a much more pragmatic and universal purpose behind this practice, typical of the multi-tiered character of the sinister current. The male initiate remains perfectly still the better to control his breathing and thought processes, so that an altered state of consciousness can be more easily achieved during the rite. The *Viparit Maithuna* is also a human recreation of the divine coitus of the voracious and active Shakti mounting the immobile, seemingly dead Shiva, who lays in bliss beneath his consort's ministrations.

Perhaps one of the best-known aspects of left-hand *Viparit Karani* in the West is the practice of deliberately causing the semen to flow backwards through the body at the moment of orgasm when it usually jets forth. This is not simply a mundane athletic exercise, or a simple means of extending the duration of the sex act, as is sometimes wrongly assumed. Tantricism maintains that semen contains the spiritual substance *bindu*, the very essence of the male principle Shiva. The loss of *bindu* in ejaculation is said to weaken the initiate. Causing it to flow in the opposite direction upwards through passages in the subtle body to the so-called crown *chakra* is presumed to strengthen the center of consciousness, and even foster immortality. A belief in the spiritual power of semen is widespread throughout the East; one commonly reported bit of folk wisdom claims that yogis who abstain from sex altogether, and never ejaculate, would bleed semen rather than blood if their skin were cut.

Something of this Eastern cult of semen-hoarding was echoed in the early Western sexology of the last century, which taught young men that

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ejaculation through wet dreams and masturbation was grievously harmful to the male, depleting his strength and weakening the constitution.

Buddhist Tantra is particularly concerned with not emitting a drop of semen, which holds the essence of *thig-le*, Tibetan for *bindu*. Hindu Tantra

often allows for its emission, regarding the ejaculation as a sacred sacrifice. In some teachings, if the male initiate ejaculates in his *shakti's* vagina, he is urged to reabsorb the *bindu* through his penis, redirecting it upwards through his body. Alternately, the male adept may orally ingest the intermingled male and female fluids, which is also thought to reintegrate the *bindu* back into the initiate (Chinese Taoist sexual rites also call for the ingestion of the mixed elixirs of *yin* and *yang*.) In both the Indian *Vama Marga* and Chinese Taoist sex magic, it is not the physical substance of the fluids that is thought to be beneficial. Rather, it is the indwelling *subtle* energies, which are theoretically reintegrated into the spiritual body.

The essential principle here is more than the containment of the spiritual power of the seed. Of equal significance is the inversion of natural sexual processes – the willful backwards action of currents in the physical organism mirrors the adept's increasingly god-like ability to shape the world of matter through contrary action.

While we do not believe that learning this technique is absolutely necessary for the practical accomplishment of left-hand path sex magic (in fact, ejaculation is very often a useful tool for sex magic) it should at least be understood philosophically as one of the many backward-flowing actions of the left-hand path's *Viparit Karani*. The reversal of the male ejaculation also creates a profound state of rapture in the initiate which can greatly contribute to the attainment of a deified psyche.

As always, every action taken in left-handed erotic rites can be seen to possess many layers of meaning. For the practical magician, by far the most important is the effect that a given action will exercise upon in his or her consciousness, a factor that can easily be divorced from less relevant cultural overlays. This obsessive guarding of the precious seed seems to us to be the least useful aspect of traditional left-hand path practice.

However, the application of opposite-doing to other aspects of the magician's life, inclusive of his or her erotic sphere, is extremely relevant to left-hand path initiation in any cultural background. We have already described one dramatic example of *viparit karani*, the Tantric juxtaposition of the body's sexual pleasure with thoughts of inevitable decay of that same body. The possibilities for opposite-doing are infinite, exemplified by the left-hand path adept's frequently described determination to "turn day into night". Perhaps the most commonly utilized method of initiatory inversion in a sexual context is the practice of transmuting the adept's initial repugnance for any given sexual act into a tool of ecstasy. In such cases, opposite-doing serves to deprogram one's own sexual conditioning while viscerally

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demonstrating the fragility of seemingly fixed aspects of *maya*. Once sexual boundaries are broken, expanding the established perimeter of the magician's being, others can follow, eventually reaching into the boundary between human and divine consciousness.

Kundalini – The Many Faces Of The Fire Serpent

On a sexual level, the male Tantric left-hand path initiate's most supreme act of opposite-doing is the awakening of the goddess Shakti within his own body, a psychosexual transmutation that allows him to actually *become* the goddess. One Tantric proverb states: "What need have I of an external woman? I have a woman within me." The walker of the *Vama Marga* seeks to become that sexually opposite being, creating a fully integrated androgyne, facilitating the universe-creating coitus of Shakti and Shiva within his or her own consciousness. One of the many forms of Shiva venerated by Tantric adepts is known as Ardhanarisvara; in this guise the deity is depicted as an androgyne; the left side of his body is female, the

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right side is male. (The mysterious Western hermaphroditic egregore called Baphomet symbolizes the same principle.) The left-hand path magician

comes to know that the *daemon* inhabiting the physical organism is truly his or her other erotic half. Kundalini, manifest to human consciousness in the form of a serpentine tutelary female divinity, is often seen and heard as one's inner Feminine Daemonic come to life.

Perhaps the most accessible way for Westerners to first approach the sinister current tradition of a spiritual being of the opposite sex located within one's body and psyche is through the concept of the *anima* and *animus*, popularized by the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung. In his *The Development Of Personality*, Jung wrote: "Every man carries within him the eternal image of woman, not the image of this or that particular woman, but a definite feminine image. This image is fundamentally unconscious, an hereditary factor of primordial origin engraved in the living organic system of the man, an imprint, or 'archetype' of all the ancestral experiences of the female."

This image, which Jung called the *anima*, is supposedly unconsciously projected by men on the women they know, just as women project their inner male *animus* upon males. Jungian theory posits that psychic wholeness cannot be established until this inner alter ego of the opposite sex – a being Jung described with his coined word "contrasexual" – was fully integrated, usually through dreams. In *Vama Marga* terms, the *anima* is both the hidden internal *shakti* that is the source of the male adept's magical power, as well as the physical externalization of *shakti* in his sexual initiatrix. The female *anima* as an uncanny animating force is not unlike the alchemist's *Anima Mundi*, thought to be the living soul of the world – a world-soul imagined as a female spirit, with obvious resemblance to the lefthand path's *shakti* power.

As Richard Noll has established in his biography of Jung entitled *The Aryan Christ*, behind the image of the mundane psychologist stood a not-so hidden sex *magus*, whose private teaching included the endorsement of sex-magical polygamy. The psychologist was also a life-long student of the German author Goethe, whose left-hand path celebration of the *Ewigweibliche* (Eternal Feminine) in *Faust* was clearly an influence on the very Faustian Dr. Jung. There is no doubt that Jung, although he presented himself as a scientist, developed his philosophy of esoteric gender through a deep immersion in alchemy, Gnosticism and Germanic sex magic. His *anima* and *animus* recalls the ancient Northern tradition of sexually based *seithr*, an ecstatic shamanism with left-hand path overtones. These rites were presided over by the feminine energies of the goddess Freya, also known as Frigg. Freya/Frigg's connection to sexuality still endures to this day in the word "frigging", a common Anglo-Saxon euphemism for fucking.

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The *seithr* magician entered an altered state of consciousness to search out his or her double in the form of a supernatural mate known as the *fyjgya*, or "fetch." Jungians, drawing from the same Indo-European cultural matrix of *seithr*, would perhaps recognize the female daemonic double of the male sorcerer as a form of the *anima*, just as the female adept who experiences her double as a male being might be said to have encountered her *animus*. (The *fylgjya* also sometimes appeared to the magician as an animal guide, very much like the magical animal totems still sought in Siberian shamanism or Native American visionary rites.)

This awakening of the internal sexual opposite in the *Vama Marga* tradition is most powerfully effected through *Kundalini*, an inversion of natural processes in which a subtle power said to slumber at the base of the spine is awakened and caused to rise like a serpent up the spinal column. For the left-hand path adept, the serpent force is most commonly awakened in the body through sexual rites with a partner of the opposite sex. During the *maithuna*, or sexual rite, the physical transference of the *kundalini* energy from one partner to another can be experienced with all the force of an

electrical shock. Indeed, a jolt of electricity is an appropriate metaphor for this tangible transmission of power, as those who have undergone the flow of the sinister *kundalini* current from one gender to another have often testified.

Like electricity, the full manifestation of the Kundalini energy is extremely difficult to control once aroused, a potentially dangerous operation which permits the practitioner to confront reality as it really is – it is the most dramatic of the physical mechanisms that allow the initiate a state of awakening.

This potentially devastating experience is known to have caused permanent psychic disruption in many who have attempted it. Fittingly, a metaphoric comparison is made to the dangers involved in disturbing a sleeping cobra from its slumber: Kundalini, it is said, "awakens from her sleep as a serpent, struck by a stick, hisses and straightens itself". What normally descends is caused to ascend by the will of the initiate. Kundalini, which means "She Who is Hidden" is the literal presence of the dormant goddess within every human body. Through controlled breathing, or *pranayama*, combined with the ritualized sex act, the feminine-lunar and masculine-solar streams of energy are merged, resulting in an orgasmic flare of radiance that illuminates understanding, and activates dormant energy.

Coiled at the seat of Shakti at the *muladhara chakra*, Kundalini rises from there, passes through the *chakras* (or wheels) that line the spinal column, to be united with Shiva at the *Sahasara chakra*, where the seat of Shiva is located. At the crown chakra, the *kundalini* energy opens the *ajna* chakra, or third eye, a subtle organ radiated from the area of the pineal gland

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in the physical body, allowing the initiate to *see* for the first time. The feminine *kundalini* force, like *maya* itself, is said to hypnotize humans and keep them in thrall to unreality when it lays asleep at the base of the spine, only serving as an awakening power when it rises.

This spiritual coupling of Shakti and Shiva within the body through Kundalini-Yoga mirrors the sexual coupling of male and female left-hand path adepts. In the language of Western theurgy, Kundalini can be understood as an act of invocation, conjuring the goddess within the magician's own body. As with all yogic procedures, it is not uncommon for magical powers, or *siddhi*, to develop during this process, particularly *siddhi* related to the feminine principle, such as enhanced intuition and clairvoyance. On an archetypal level of consciousness, the symbol of the *kundalini* serpent is an enigmatic mixture of male and female imagery, a hermaphroditic creature that simultaneously brings to mind the common phallic associations of the erect snake secreting its life-producing venom, and the feminine nature of the concealed goddess it is said to incarnate.

We can find telling echoes of the ancient Sanskrit word *kundalini* in other Indo-European languages. The old Anglo-Saxon "cunt", and the modern English "cunning" are only two of the most pertinent examples. Another is the name and character of Kundry, a sinister sorceress in the Grail saga of Parsifal. The wild Kundry, described as a "she-devil" and "hell-rose" is said to have learned her black art in "far Araby" – a hint at the tale's Persian origins. Her affinity with the malefic wizard Klingsor is clearly that of initiatrix; she is Klingsor's dark *kundlini-shakti*, his *anima* externalized. Through Kundry, Klingsor hopes to seduce the pure fool Parsifal and gain control of the Graal, enduring symbol of the Feminine Daemonic. The minnesinger Wolfram von Eschenbach embedded his tale with a wealth of esoteric references; many of them suggestive of the cult of the Feminine Daemonic hidden within the troubadour tradition.

Kundalini, understood as a hidden feminine power, is nearly identical with the Germanic Goddess Holda, whose name can also be translated as "She Who is Hidden". This heathen goddess survived well into the Christian

era, transmogrified into Vrowe Hulda of medieval Germany, a tangle-haired sexual demoness sharing many of the grislier attributes of the Indian Kali or the Mesopotamian Lilith.

Kundalini's ascent to open the third eye at the crown *chakra* has been compared in a Western context to the dazzling emerald that falls from Lucifer's crown during his mythical War in Heaven. According to von Eschenbach's telling of the Parsifal legend, Lucifer's fallen emerald was eventually fashioned into the Graal sought by Western adepts. The Holy Grail, cup of never-ending plenty, wisdom and eternal youth quested for by European initiates for centuries, is clearly a desexualized emblem of Shakti's

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yonis. The Grail legend of Parsifal underscores a common mythical symbolism that links European and Indo-Iranian magical veneration of the vagina. The initiatic regaining of Lucifer's crown jewel in the form of the Graal – that enigmatic symbol of boundless feminine wisdom – can be understood as an analogue of the Kundalini experience.

Contemporary New Age distortions of Kundalini have often degenerated into banal methods of simply increasing normal levels of energy or alertness; a harmless diversion for wearied housewives with time to kill. This is all well and good. But such simplified Westernized derivations, like so many latter-day versions of left-hand path techniques, miss the point. The awakening of Kundalini, whether through sexual rites or otherwise, is at its most profound level, a world-shattering initiatory experience.

Kundalini-like ideas circulate throughout the world's esoteric traditions, indicating that Tantricism is but the local recognition of a universal phenomenon. Intimations of the *kundalini* phenomenon were recorded in Western hermetic literature long before knowledge of the Indian left-hand path had reached Europe. The Caduceus serpent is a well-known symbol of serpentine sexual power in hermeticism and alchemy. More specifically, Gichtel, a disciple of the German mystic Jakob Böhme, wrote in his 1696 occult treatise *Theosophia Practica* of an illuminating "serpentine fire" located at the base of the spine. Such specific European references to a snakelike consciousness-expanding anomaly located in the human body reveal that experience with *kundalini* extended far beyond the borders of India. Gichtel described this spinal fire as taking the form of a mighty dragon. The dragon as guardian of hidden feminine wisdom is a mythic symbol that can be traced beyond European folklore into the Mesopotamian legend of the goddess Tiamat, which later developed into the Biblical shedragon Leviathan, the Beast of Revelations.

Tantric symbolism envisions Kundalini as a feminine serpent revealing secret, potentially dangerous knowledge. The same symbolism is also apparent in the heretical Gnostic interpretation of the myth of the snake in the garden of Eden. The serpent thought to be the Devil by orthodox Christians was understood by some Gnostics as the divine Sophia taking on the form of a serpent to bestow immortality and the ability "to be like gods" upon mankind. Part of the female serpent's teaching is that *gnosis* can be attained through non-procreative sexual ecstasy – the forbidden fruit of the perennial left-hand path.

The vertebral bone above the pelvis where the *kundalini* fire serpent is thought to lay coiled is still known in English as the sacrum, which derives from the Latin *os sacra*, or sacred bone. Exoterically, the sacrum's proximity to the genital organs is generally thought to be the reason for its sacred status. However, a knowledge in pre-Roman

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culture of the sacrum as the seat of some power approximating that of *kundalini* cannot be ruled out.

In ancient Egypt's cult of Set – a violently dissident outsider god

notorious for his insatiable sexuality and his occasional transformation into feminine form – we find that the back, especially the spinal column, is thought to be under Set's control. The mystical Egyptologist Isha de Lubicz described "Sethian power" as an "active power of the fire whose channel is the vertebral column ... That is why the back is said to belong to Seth." Similarly, the uraeus serpent depicted uncoiling from the god-like Egyptian pharaoh's double crown is practically indistinguishable from much later Indian drawings of the awakened Kundalini fire serpent rising from the initiate's crown chakra.

These Egyptian hints of an awareness of Kundalini on the African continent are supported by magical activities of the present-day !Kung, a tribe of the Kalahari Desert. (The ! in !Kung is pronounced as a click of the tongue.) The !Kung hunter-gatherers describe a mechanism of ecstatic trance experience achieved primarily through ritual dance that conforms strikingly with the Indian Tantric model of *kundalini*, although there has never been any known exchange between the two cultures.

In ancient Greece, the orgiastic cult of the wine god Dionysus, which actually originated in Crete, is rich with Kundalini-like symbolism, providing us with evidence of a once vibrant tradition of the Feminine Daemonic in pre-Christian Europe. The deity of the mostly female Dionysian cult was a divine androgyne. Dionysus, born within nature as a boy, is transformed through a non-natural magical process into a female, finally becoming a god integrating both genders – a narrative that mirrors the phases of Kundalini. Born with the auspicious female signs of horns on his head (symbolising the shape of the womb and the feminine crescent moon but later demonized into the Devil's horns) and depicted with a crown of archetypically Kundalinic serpents, the child Dionysus was torn apart by the monstrous Titans, and boiled in a cauldron.

The goddess Rhea, sometimes depicted as a Kundalinic dragon, reassembles him, and he is raised as a girl. This provides him with the serpentine *shakti* power of femininity, although he is sexually irresistible to his raving cult of *maenads*. The destruction of Dionysus and his recreation as a borderline androgynous entity is reminiscent of *kundalini*, in which the initiate tears himself apart psychically only to re-manifest as a goddess, just as it resembles the initiatory ordeal of the shaman who magically "dies" to be reborn as a woman to gain feminine magical power. The followers of Dionysus were primarily women, transported into an atavistic state of being through sexual excess. In the genuinely patriarchal culture of classical Greece, such behavior on the part of women was generally regarded as an

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anti-social violation of woman's established role as obedient household prisoner.

Rhea, who supernaturally transforms Dionysus from male to female, is a form of the goddess Cybele of Asia Minor, the sinister-lunar goddess whose male followers ritually castrated themselves during altered states of consciousness in ecstatic initiatory rites. This drastic measure served the same purpose as *kundalini*, the awakening of female magical power in the male votary. The rite of self-castration was a mandatory phase of initiation into the priesthood of Cybele; once mutilated, Cybele's priests donned female clothing and adopted female hair length as outer symbols of their inner metamorphosis.

Such extreme procedures may shock modern sensibilities. But even the celibacy of the Catholic clergy is in effect a form of initiatory castration, allowing them to perform their magical rites of transubstantiation, just as the sexually ambiguous clothing worn by Catholic priests after their ordination echoes the age-old shamanic adoption of feminine magical power. Even though these Catholic recognitions of the Feminine Daemonic are based on severely sublimating the same sexual energies that the left-hand path

deliberately intensifies, from an esoteric perspective, the magician can recognize a hidden awareness of operant *shakti* initiation.

A complete analysis of the sometimes maddeningly inconsistent approaches to Kundalini that exist would take us far afield from our task of describing the basics of left-hand path sexual initiation. Furthermore, no book could possibly transmit a valid comprehension of *kundalini*, which must ultimately be experienced within the physical organism rather than read about through the strictly rational screen of the left brain. Like all suprarational events, those who claim to have undergone the uncoiling of the fire serpent have returned with conflicting reports of how it was done, and what exactly occurred to them.

Some Tantrikas, at one extreme, teach that sexual ecstasy is the single most important trigger for the *kundalini* experience, while right-hand path adherents insist that only conditions of strictest celibacy will permit its arousal. Traditional teachers maintain that *kundalini* always draws its energy from semen, literally transmogrified into *ojas*, a fiery elixir absorbed from the genitals into the spinal column and into the brain, where it supposedly revivifies the entire body. Female initiates who have been transformed by *kundalini* disagree with this semen-oriented theory, for obvious physiological reasons. Others prefer a less literal school of thought altogether, describing the energies involved as being entirely non-physical manifestations of the subtle, or etheric, body.

The *chakras*, the energy centers through which the kundalini force are said to rise, are grounds for other controversies. Many modern kundalini yogis consider the *chakras* as little more than subjective, symbolic reference

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points with no physical reality, while the more conservative practitioners insist that they are absolutely objective realities. Customarily, a system of seven *chakras* is widely accepted but other sects recognize as few as six, and as many as thirteen.

Uncanny auditory phenomena are often heard by those who have undergone Kundalini, sometimes taking the form of ethereal music. The crashing of cymbals and bells, the piercing tones of a flute, an incessant droning sometimes compared to a hive of bees: these are only some of the sonic sensations accompanying the rising of the serpent.

Although the awakening of Kundalini can lead to altered states of joyful consciousness, the signs of its physical manifestation can also be initially disturbing to the unprepared. Frequent symptoms of the Kundalini phenomenon include extremes of bodily heat and cold, and a peculiar "fluttering" in the abdomen and heart area, sometimes accompanied by a general tingling sensation in the limbs. Involuntary twitching, difficulties with breathing, and an illusory sensation of expansion, as if one is actually growing larger, have also been known to attend the phases of transformation. Headaches, and other physiological pains, are not at all uncommon. All of the senses can become almost painfully acute when Kundalini stirs.

But the most commonly reported feature of the Kundalini experience is the physical sensation – sometimes painful, sometimes blissful – of a burning electricity channeling up the spine. This distinct vertebral stimulation has been described even by individuals with no prior awareness of the Tantric "fire serpent" symbolism. Pandit Gopi Krishna, in his classic *Kundalini: Path To Higher Consciousness*, gave this account of his own spontaneous awakening of *kundalini*:

"Suddenly, with a roar like that of a waterfall, I felt a stream of liquid light entering my brain through the spinal cord ... The illumination grew brighter and brighter, the roaring louder ... [I] felt myself slipping out of my body, entirely enveloped in a halo of light ... the point of consciousness that was myself growing wider, surrounded by waves of light ... the body, normally the immediate object of its perception, appeared to have receded into the

distance until I became entirely unconscious of it. I was now all
consciousness ..."

The sensation of the feminine *kundalini* energy rising up the spine, or "piercing the chakras" if one prefers, is commonly accompanied by a purifying feeling of emotional blockages being set free – a sense of liberation. Just as with very intense genital orgasms, the "mental climax" of *kundalini* can cause the initiate to uncontrollably laugh or cry as superfluous aspects of self are jettisoned. Such an experience can appear to be

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indistinguishable from Western concepts of madness, and has led many unprepared solo practitioners to doubt their own sanity. This is only one of the reasons that we recommend that anyone seriously interested in pursuing this method of initiation should do so under the guidance of a teacher who has already gone through the ordeal.

Another commonly reported side-effect of *kundalini*, the frequency of which accounts for its reputation as a psychically dangerous practice, is the sometimes extreme conditions of spiritual dislocation it can give rise to.

Gopi Krishna describes these disturbing altered states of consciousness, particularly evident among those upon whom *kundalini* appears out of the blue without warning or preparation as "Black Kundalini". He left this record of his own excruciating experience of this unexpected numinous turmoil, an ordeal he remembered as a "prolonged nightmare", a drug-free displacement of consciousness some Westerners may have only encountered in their worst "bad trip":

"A feeling of the horror of the supernatural ... a sudden distaste for work and conversation with the inevitable result that, being left with nothing to keep myself engaged, time hung heavily on me, adding to the already distraught condition of my mind. The nights were even more terrible. I could not bear to have a light in my room ... Whenever I closed my eyes I found myself looking into a weird circle of light, in which luminous currents swirled and eddied, moving rapidly from side to side. The spectacle was fascinating but awful, invested with a supernatural awe which sometimes chilled the very marrow in my bones."

Traditionally, *kundalini* is said to radiate from the *svadhisthana chakra*, which Tantra describes as the sexual center of the human body, located right above the genitals. Whether this is a physiological fact or not, another commonly described effect of *kundalini* is its powerful impact on human sexuality. This may range from extreme sexual arousal, including spontaneous orgasm, to a dramatic diminishing of sexual desire. Swami Muktananda's account of his personal experience of Kundalini in his 1974 book *The Play Of Consciousness* describes the erotic trauma he experienced during the arousal of the Kundalini: "All the love and intoxication I had felt in meditation left me ... Instead, in their place came a powerful sexual desire ... I could think of nothing but sex! ... My whole body boiled with lust, and I cannot describe the agony of my sexual organ ..."

Once this concupiscence subsided, Muktananda concluded that, "When the *Svadhisthana* chakra is pierced, sexual desire becomes very strong, but this happens so that the flow of sexual fluid may be turned upward and the sadhaka's lust destroyed forever." This interpretation, it

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should be clarified, is from a right-hand path perspective; the left-hand path initiate would not necessarily share the Swami's conviction that lust is a negative energy to be destroyed. Pandit Gopi Krishna, although far from the left-hand path, takes a less condemnatory view of Kundalini's impact on sexuality, asking rhetorically: "Is the creator... of such limited intelligence that he should build man in such a way that the sexual urge is the most awful impulse in him, attended by such an intense pleasure, and then rule that he is not to touch it?" On the contrary, he maintains that the "unbelievably

rapturous sensation" of Kundalini's ascent "is nature's incentive to the effort directed at self-transcendence, as the orgasm is the incentive to the reproductive act."

Despite these profound physiological transformations, materialist detractors of *kundalini* argue that it is, at best, nothing but a subjective psychic experience, with no tangible physical component. Dr. Lee Sannella, one of the very few Western physicians to make a serious study of the clinical nature of *kundalini*, concluded that the process is inextricably linked with the body's sexual functioning, observing that it did not manifest in humans who had not reached full sexual maturity. This theory accords with our own opinion that the initiatory effect of the left-hand path's erotic operations can only be activated in a body that has undergone complete sexual development.

This concise outline of some of the principles of Kundalini primarily illustrates how the Tantric concept of sexual polarities is brought to bear not only in sexual interaction with others but as an *internal* process of selftransformation.

Kundalini is the *hieros gamos*, or divine marriage, played out within the body's microcosm, just as other left-hand path actions consecrate the numinous wedding of Shiva and Shakti as a carnal union of sexual opposites between two physical bodies.

Attempts to make sense of *kundalini's* contradictions through a traditionally scientific approach are ultimately fruitless, as such an analysis fails to accept the innate *mysterium* involved in this initiatory ordeal. The ancient language of rousing the sleeping serpent, or awakening the inner goddess, more precisely addresses the mythic, transhuman strata of consciousness where this initiation actually takes place. The creation of the spiritual androgyne that is *kundalini's* goal intentionally transcends logic, as do all of the deliberate opposite-doings of the left-hand path, magical actions designed to short-circuit conditioned cause-and-effect thinking and reprogram a new reality.

One variant of Kundalini that has increasingly gained sway with Western sex magicians is the Chinese Taoist energy manipulation known as the microcosmic orbit. Rather than directing the body's dormant energy stream up the spine and to the head region, as in Indian Kundalini, the Chinese microcosmic orbit aims to create a full circuit throughout the body, ultimately bringing energy into the solar plexus area. As the authors have had less experience with this form, it will suffice to state that the microcosmic orbit appears to be an equally useful

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technique of sexual energy circulation, although it is not specifically a lefthand path practice.

The Breaking Of Taboo

Closely related to left-hand path *Vipariti Karani* is the more general violation of taboo – derived from a Polynesian word, *tapu*, meaning prohibited or marked – within a sacred ritual setting, one of the central techniques informing all lefthand path initiation. Paradoxically, although the left-hand path is a tradition in its own right, it is a tradition based on the systematic *breaking* of tradition. By disrupting habitual, mechanical modes of thinking through transgression of the forbidden, the left-hand path *sadhaka* seeks liberation and illumination, allowing transformation of consciousness into a divine state. The sexual sorcerer will discover that the breaking of taboo allows access to blocked energies powerfully unleashed.

The thing about taboos that must be said, of course, is that your taboos are not necessarily ours, and vice-versa. What is forbidden in one culture or time, or among persons from one class or level of education, would hardly raise an eyebrow in another. In fact, a dominant taboo in culture A might be considered entirely conventional or even mandatory in culture B.

One need only think of the homosexual rites of passage for prepubescent boys that are still compulsory religious ceremonies in some Pacific

islands. The same sexual activities accorded sacred status in that region are strictly criminalised in the West. In most Muslim countries, the drinking of alcohol is taboo, while hashish, outlawed in many Western nations, is readily available. Dietary taboos are some of the strongest. In several Asian lands, human consumption of dogs is considered a delicacy, although few Westerners would break this taboo. Lest the reader get too self-righteous about this one, it should be remembered that the Western habit of consuming cows is regarded as equally offensive by many Hindus, for whom the cow is a sacred animal. The once Papally ordained Catholic prohibition against eating meat on Fridays in symbolic honor of the dead meat of Christ's body probably wouldn't work up much useful energy these days but it typifies religious/social restrictions on diet.

Menstruating women are subject to taboo and tribal shunning in many parts of the world, and even in the "civilized" West, a fairly prevalent unspoken taboo discourages many men from having sex with a menstruating woman. Indeed, ritual consumption of menstrual blood plays its part among many left-handed Tantric sects. Vedic Hindus of the so-called *pashu* disposition are traditionally only allowed to have sex – even with their spouse(s) – once a month, from the fourth or fifth to the fifteenth day after the menses. Otherwise, they are expected to refrain from sex altogether. The *vira* of the left-hand path is permitted to break this taboo, having ritually broken with convention and

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seeking to reconstitute himself as a divine being operating outside the laws and restrictions of man.

Death is fraught with a myriad of culturally variant taboos. In some religious traditions, displaying a photograph of the deceased for a proscribed time period after the death is the gravest of taboos. The presence of a corpse in an unembalmed state is a taboo in Occidental culture; the West prefers to confront the physical reality of death at the safe remove allowed by sanitized preparation at a mortuary.

In this brief survey of taboo, we have yet to mention the so-called sexual "perversions" and "deviations" that are welcome pleasures for some but would cause unspeakable revulsion for others. Not only is there no such thing as normal sexuality, definitions of normality are almost always confined by a local cultural bias that blocks out facts uncomfortable to territorial reality. For instance, most Westerners would probably consider monogamy to be the normal state of sexual relations. In fact, anthropologist Melvin Konner tells us in *The Tangled Wing* that monogamy is the norm in only 16 percent of the approximately 849 human societies known to ethnography. Polygamy is much more common, being the customary mode in 83 percent of societies. (Polyandry, the marriage of one woman to more than one man, is represented in only the remaining 1 percent of the 849 societies.)

All over the world, among poor families living in one-room dwellings, it's entirely commonplace for couples to have sexual relations in the presence of their parents, siblings and children. Among the Western Euro-American middle-class, however, sex in such a communal environment would be considered an unthinkable taboo, as Freud's absurd theory that children accidentally viewing their parents fucking inevitably leads to a "primal trauma" makes evident.

Particularly when it comes to the left-hand path violation of erotic taboo in the modern West, the vast diversity of "normal" sexual behavior accepted makes it impossible to specify any particular regimen of taboobreaking.

You must be self-aware enough to know how far you must go in what areas to transcend your present state of being. Ultimately, as with the deliberate inversion of *Viparit Karani*, each individual magician must target his or her own taboo threshold to go beyond. As with all of the above examples of taboo, it is never the taboo *itself* that possesses magical power. Rather, it's the individual psychological significance such a transgression

exerts in each individual magician's consciousness that is the source of potential energy.

To fully comprehend the meaning of left-hand path taboo violation in India, something of the importance of the concept of pollution and purity in Hinduism must be discussed. Innumerable actions are deemed to pollute the orthodox Hindu, who is restricted by strict religious law from eating,

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marrying, or even socializing with members of other castes – just a few of the many deeds which are said to contaminate one's purity. The intricacy and arbitrariness of these laws beggars description, keeping every aspect of the orthodox Hindu's life regulated, especially for the high ranking Brahmins at the top of the hierarchy.

The left-hand path initiate deliberately performs such polluting acts, inverting them as consecrated rituals, thus transcending divine laws. He or she who breaks the restrictions laid down by the gods is effectively transformed into a god-like being. Even in the social chaos of our own Kali Yugic time and culture, which lacks the strict concept of spiritual pollution known on the sub-continent, there are actions beyond the pale that possess the same kind of liberating power for the contemporary lefthand path initiate.

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III.

IN THE TEMPLE OF THE NINE GATES

Ecstatic Rites Of The Left-Hand Path

Left-handed rituals derived their force from the deliberate reversal of the established morality. The explicit aim of the Five M's ritual is to raise the worshipper above praise, censure, shame, pride of family, and caste as a step toward liberation from the bonds which keep one from the supreme bliss; at the same time the ritual testifies that the prevailing morality forbade such things as wine, meat-eating, and sexual intercourse outside of wedlock.

Geoffrey Parinder, *World Religions*

The Five Secret Things

The Indian left-hand path celebrates many sacred rites of taboo violation, the severity of which differ from sect to sect and region to region. The bestknown is probably the *Panchamakara*, or the "five things" also known as *Panchatattva* the five *tattvas*. Once strictly guarded from non-initiates, the act of erotic theurgy sometimes called "the secret rite" has long since ceased to be secret. The *Panchamakara* is also commonly known as the rite of the "Five M's", as it involves the ritual consumption of five elements taboo to ordinary Hindus; the names of these elements all begin with the letter M .

Although the secret rite may now seem rather tame to the modern

Western reader, hardly deserving of its once secret status, it was extraordinarily transgressive for its practitioners, living as they did in a society surrounded on every side by the most scrupulously observed taboos.

An in-depth analysis of the many layers of the meaning hidden in this notorious but often superficially explained ritual will allow the magician to access something of the complexity of the left-hand path's most well-known sacred act, and to view it from an initiated perspective.

There is a veiled mantric symbolism to the sound of M and the number five involved with the names of these forbidden elements, the first four of which are *matsya* (fish) *mamsha* (meat) *madya* (wine) and *mudra* (parched cereal, alternately beans). The fifth element is *maithuna* (ritual coitus). These edible elements represent Water, Air, Earth, Fire, united by the

omnipresent Ether, which is symbolized in the sexual act. Thus, the forces

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that compose the universe are taken into the celebrant's bodies, a practice Western magicians will see as comparable to the summoning of the four elements traditional to Hermetic ceremonies. Tantricists of various sects have accorded other esoteric symbology to the five elements, above and beyond

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their literal meaning and obvious taboo status. The eating of *matsya*, or fish, prohibited to vegetarian Hindus, has been thought to represent the feminine principle essential to the left-hand path. Alternately, the "fish" might be interpreted as the transformative currents that "swim" through the left *ida* and right *pingala* channels of the subtle body, and the element of *prana*, or air, that also swims through the ether and the physical body.

The ritual ingestion of *Mamsha*, or strongly spiced meat, not only breaks the Hindu taboo against flesh-eating. It also symbolizes the initiate's recognition that left-hand path initiation occurs during his/her lifetime within the *flesh*, rather than in a life-after-death state. The word for meat, *mamsha*, is also decoded according to twilight language as meaning *ma* (tongue) and *amsha* (speech), representing the proper pronunciation of *mantra* so important to left-handed rites.

Mudra (parched grain, or dried beans) has been interpreted as a coded reference to the withholding of bodily energy and essence manifested in some male Tantrika's retention, or reimpibation, of semen for metaphysical purposes. As a symbol of vegetable life, *mudra* can be thought of as the element earth. The female partner in left-hand sexual rites is often known as the *mudra*, a designation connected to the yogic ritual hand gestures also known as *mudra*, or "that which gives delight".

Madya is more than wine; it is the liquid symbol of altered consciousness and the spiritual intoxication of the visionary, a divine drunkenness. As an elemental symbol, wine is related to fire. The drinking of wine in the *Panchamakara* ritual celebrates the application of joy to initiatory ends, breaking with the sober-minded orthodoxy of the established priestly class of Brahmins. John Woodroffe, the pioneering Western scholar of Tantra, mentions in his *Shakti and Shakta* that the Tantric texts state that the difference separating the left-hand and the right-hand paths can best be compared to the contrast between wine and milk. Significantly, wine and intoxication are considered to be of a feminine *shakti* nature in Hindu lore, and many Hindu goddesses are understood to be incarnated in the material world as the elemental spirits of intoxicating, *maya* substances.

Drunkenness, universally prohibited by ascetic, pleasure-denying creeds around the world, can be found as a symbol for many other divine beings representative of the left-hand path values of disorder, creative chaos, and Eros. For instance, in the relatively puritanical ancient Egyptian society, the sexually insurgent storm and war god Set and his Priesthood were strongly associated with drunkenness; an especially powerful desert wine was known as the Gift of Set. Set's striking similarity with Shiva in his fearsome, atavistic guise as the previously described Rudra the Howler is not without relevance. In the later Middle East, Sufi heretics within Islam of a left-hand path bent continued this tradition, composing poetry comparing their visions to the tempestuous intoxication stirred by wine and beautiful women or boys.

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However, it must be remembered that this ritual drunkenness – like all of the sensory pleasures of the left-hand path – is entered into only when the adept has already trained his or her mind to transcend normal waking consciousness. In the milder left-hand path sects, only a token amount of alcohol is consumed during the rite, merely enough to break the taboo and symbolize the esoteric principle inherent in the wine. In others, especially the extreme Aghori school, copious quantities are quaffed from skull cups to

deliberately test the initiate's ability to control consciousness under any circumstances.

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The taboo status of these four substances in Hindu society confronts the practitioner with the transgression of the forbidden so important to the left-hand path – but there is also a practical reason recommending their consumption before the actual sex rite. These three foods and wine have long been thought to possess aphrodisiac qualities likely to enhance the erotic union of Shakti and Shiva in *maithuna*. For Hindus who have spent their lives on a strictly enforced vegetarian diet, abstaining from alcohol and an excess of sexuality, one can easily imagine that even this seemingly mild rite would be heady stuff.

Much of the disrepute which Tantric ritual held in the eyes of the British rulers of India – and among the abstemious higher castes of Indians – was inspired by more than the scandalous Tantric celebration of sexual ecstasy. The traditional use of drugs in the practice was also worrisome to the guardians of public morality.

In mentioning the Rite of the Five M's, many a modern apologist for left-handed Tantra has selectively ignored the frequent use of the hempbased drugs *bhang* or *ganjam* – potent preparations of marijuana and hashish – commonly used in the rite as an aphrodisiac. The master yogi, Shiva, who rules over all altered states of consciousness, is frequently portrayed brewing *bhang* and other hallucinatory potions. Although the use of *bhang* augments sensations of physical pleasure and intensifies the desire of the two celebrants for each other, it is also used to help the beginning initiate develop the ability of inner visualization. Eventually, the adept is expected to create these mental results without external stimulation but there is no condemnation of this practice by left-hand path Tantrikas on moral grounds.

Unfortunately, the precise use of *bhang* and other stimulants as an initial opener of perception by traditional *Vama Marga* sects has sometimes been taken as a green light for self-destructive drugged excess by Westerners. The life of Aleister Crowley serves as an instructive example of the dire consequences of this phenomenon.

On the Two Paths

The *Panchamakara* provides us with a clear example of the exact differences between the left-hand path and right-hand path approaches to initiation. Whereas the left-hand path truly breaks the socioreligious prohibitions, the right-hand path practice of the rite of the five M's is in fact entirely symbolic. No taboos are actually broken at all by the *Daksina Marga* adept, who only safely acts them out using metaphoric substitutes for the forbidden elements. Thus, the right-hand path practitioner will eat the usual ordained Hindu vegetarian meal, substituting ginger for fish, milk for wine, and so forth. When the time comes for the sexual rite incarnating Shiva and Shakti's ecstatic union, the right-hand path rite replaces cock and cunt with the representative union of two flowers, one *a* lingam-shaped

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floral protuberance, the other *a* yoni-formed blossom.

The right-hand path reliance on symbolism alone rather than actual sexual rites is more than reminiscent of the sublimated sexual elements of the Western magical tradition. It is quite common, for example, for Western magicians to replace a real sorceress's vagina with a chaste sip from a symbolic "chalice" or "grail", and use the magical sword as a surrogate for the penis. Occult historians have theorized that these symbolic instruments of Western magical ceremonial magic are but latter-day echoes of an earlier sexual tradition. When one compares the symbolic and cerebral form of the right-hand and the actual and fleshly left-hand performance of the Five M's rite, it is hard to believe that we are not seeing a similar development. A further indication that Tantra began as *Vama Marga*, the way of woman, and

that the right-hand path was a later desexualised, socially acceptable imitation of much older initiatory mysteries.

The secret rite can be successfully performed in any type of surroundings or environment. No special ritual chamber or temple is required; indeed, the physical bodies of the celebrants themselves are literally considered to be the temples of the left-hand path. The human body is often spoke of in left-hand path tradition as "the temple of nine gates" – the nine gates being composed of the two eyes, the two ears, the two nostrils, the mouth, the anus, and the penis/vagina. Through the nine gates of the body do all the sensory impressions of material existence become real to us, and through those same nine gates do we create the personally materialized worlds we live in.

The traditional left-hand path initiate in India frequently selects a location of suitably "sinister" aspect for the rite, favoring places possessed of some forbidding atmosphere. Abandoned temples and graveyards, cremation grounds burning with the eerie incandescence of funeral pyres, and any spot popularly imagined to be haunted, are all places traditionally associated with the carrying out of left-handed rites. Such sites are considered to be imbued with *shakti's* dark energy, and we can often recognize in these wild and inhospitable locations the *Vama Marga's* desire to bring the vital and lifeengendering nature of sexuality into conjunction with its polar opposite, the shadowed domain of death. This conscious welcoming of danger typical of Kali Yugic erotic initiation is yet another factor at play in such considerations. A more practical consideration for performing the left-hand path sex rite in haunted or desolate locations must also be considered. The ritual would be less likely to be interrupted by curious onlookers if held in a place likely to scare away the superstitious.

By now, the reader will understand that *shakti is* taught to be most active by night, a property of the lunar rather than the masculine solar principle. Therefore, the hours between seven and midnight are most commonly chosen to celebrate the five secret things.

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Initiates of both paths celebrate the rite of the five M's while seated in a circle, which usually includes the intricate symbol known as the *Shri-Yantra*, a psychogram composed of interlocking triangles – the triangles pointing upwards represent the *lingam* and the consciousness of Shiva, the triangles pointing downward, in the universal symbol for the female genitals, depict the *yoni* and the power of Shakti. The initiate paints this *yantra* himself from red sandalwood paste or vermilion, extending his consciousness into this self-created form of sexual union during the deepening meditative process of its generation. At the center of one of the triangles is a dot, the *bindu*, which is the hidden source of all creation, the esoteric power of semen. The meditating *shakta is* thought to enter into the process of creation itself by creating this image, even as a ritual space outside of waking time is created in which the five secret things can be celebrated. As with almost all Tantric rites, whether they be of the right- or left-hand paths, the breath control discipline known as *pranayama* begins the process of mental mastery that underlies the *Panchatattva*.

The male adept then assumes a yogic *asana* or posture known as the *yoni mudra*, or "the sealing of the vulva", which suggests the concept of sealing an electromagnetic power source that is an important physical aspect of the sacralized sexual contact. While in this position, the initiate repeatedly contracts the muscles of the perineum, located between the genitals and the anus, a procedure designed to awaken the *muladhara chakra* located there.

This begins the ascent of the *kundalini-shakti* serpent energy in the body, and is accompanied by visualization of the coupling of Shakti and Shiva as a prelude to the recreation of their divine, world-creating copulation in human form.

Right-hand path rites situate the female – almost always fully clothed – to the right of the adept. In the sinister school, the female initiatrix who serves as the erotic incarnation of Shakti, sits in the circle to the left of the male. As one Tantra mentions, "on his left he has the woman skilled in the arts of love, on his right the drinking cup."

Even among the liberated ranks of left-handed Tantra, the female participant in the *maithuna* is not always entirely naked; only adepts who have reached the highest *vira* states of being are thought strong enough to handle the pure *shakti* energy emanated by an entirely naked woman. To the modern Western mind, inured by constant media exposure to the naked female form, such a condition must seem ridiculous. However, this stipulation is based on an esoteric understanding of nakedness as a symbol of the magical power of the Goddess unveiled. The female partner is elevated to divine status during the rite, and the male adept approaches her as the living incarnation of awe-inspiring *shakti*, not simply as a human being. For many modern practitioners, numbed to the erotic mysteries by a lifetime of

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indoctrination in secular rationalism, it is nearly impossible to make this leap of experiencing one's sexual partner as a divine being. But without this crucial transformation, the left-handed sex rite is bereft of its power and is really nothing more than an empty ceremony.

The Five Senses

Color symbolism is as important to the *Panchatattva* as it is in some Western magical practices. Scarlet, in particular, a shade long associated with the vital force of Eros, and the power of blood that animates living beings, is practically the official color of the *Vama Marga*. We have already seen that the *shri-yantra* symbol is painted in red. The scarlet hibiscus flower, or *Java*, is often found in the chamber in which the rite of the five M's is performed. The *mudra*, or female initiatrix, is sometimes adorned with the scarlet flower, or she may wear a scarlet robe. When the *Panchatattva* is deliberately performed with a menstruating partner, as it often is, scarlet may represent the *mudra's* menstrual blood, thought to be potent with her ovular energy, counterpart to the male semen. The "blood of the female in blossom" is regarded as especially rich with pure *shakti* power, physically radiating in the form of estrogenic substances possessing magical properties in their own right.

All of the five senses are engaged in the sinister rite of the five things. The taboo foods **and** wine stimulate the sense of taste, and are consumed in a formal, ritualized manner; this is not **the** everyday meal some Westerners have imagined. Each of the foods are consecrated with declaration of specific mantras before being shared by the *shakta* and *shakti*, and subsequently washed down with small amounts of the wine. It is within the circle that the taboo food and wine, said to feed the subtle body of the hidden goddess Kundalini within the physical organisms of the male *shakta* and his *shakti*, is ingested.

The optic sense is made more vivid by the use of appropriate visuals like the *shri-yantra*, and the striking color scarlet utilized throughout the rite. Modern Tantrikas also make subtle use of colored lights to softly illuminate the rite, which is often carried out in near darkness. One tradition of the lefthand path insists that the sexual rite should not be held in complete darkness, since this prevents the total stimulation of the senses considered necessary. The mantras being chanted and droned by the adept are directed to the sonic realm of creation. Finally, the senses of touch and scent are fully activated as prelude to the sexual union that consummates the *Panchatattva*.

From Woman To Goddess

The body of the human *shakti*, as part of the act of transforming herself into a divine being, is ritually washed and cleansed. These sacred ablutions, as

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with so many aspects of the rite, are also held to be carried out for practical purposes; the washing of the body is thought to allow for the electromagnetic energy of the sinister current to course between the sexually locked bodies more freely. For this reason, the male adept also bathes thoroughly before the secret rite. Of course, the aphrodisiacal aspect of the

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cleansing of the erogenous zones and genitals also comes into play.

The *shakti* is then carefully massaged with minute amounts of essential oils, fragrances chosen for the magical significance and influences induced by their aromas. The use of these scents varies widely within the actual practice of Tantric cults, although even modern practitioners tend to avoid synthetic perfumes. The male frequently anoints his alter ego's hand with jasmine, her breasts and cheeks with patchouli, sandalwood on her thighs, saffron on the soles of her feet, and musk for the vaginal mound. Although the use of these scents on the female's body is directed on one level to the full arousal of the senses, each fragrance, as any modern maker of perfumes would know, are also highly stimulating aphrodisiacs. Specifically, these scents are aimed at awakening the dormant powers of the root, or *muladhara*, chakra, the lowest of the *chakras*, where the serpent fire sleeps coiled near the base of the spinal column.

During the meditative process of the *mudra's* living deification, vermilion is daubed on her forehead, a clear dot is placed between her brows, and her feet and toes are colored scarlet. A small amount of sandalpaste, often found on statues of goddesses in India, is placed on her face.

The *shakti's yoni* is worshipped, no longer merely as one particular human's vagina but as the impersonal mysterious source and matrix of all that exists, the fountainhead of creation itself. In revering the *yonis*, the adept contemplates a portal leading to the core of the universe, the very heart of reality in the *sanctum sanctorum* of the Temple of the Nine Gates, from which all manifestations of *maya* must enter this plane of reality. Ritual adoration of the vulva, or *yonis puja* is completed with application of flowers and vermilion, traditional Indian modes of honor to divine forces. This act of literal *veneration* – a word that once exclusively described the ritual devotion to the goddess of erotic passion Venus – is designed to awaken in the *mudra* a sublime awareness of her incarnation as the Feminine Daemonic in human form, lifting her above common mortality for the duration of the rite. This aspect of the rite is probably an archaic remnant of sexual worship dating back to the earliest form of religion in the Indus Valley.

Other parts of the *mudra's* body are also consecrated by the male partner, which are enshrined with divine presences through vocalization of the appropriate *mantra*. This phase of the rite, known as *nyasa*, is also directed to the glands that radiate the hidden endocrinal power known as *ojas*, and the *chakra* points, the seven vertical lotuses of the subtle body through which *kundalini* rises. The *ojas* is that subtle energy that deliberate build-up and cultivation gives a person his or her ability to command personal authority, and is the bodily powerhouse from which an individual's magical ability derives. During this complicated operation, the consciousness of both the male and female practitioner alike is altered to a higher state of being. For him, his partner is the goddess, and she herself is convinced of her

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own transhuman *shakti* power, just as the male is transformed into Shiva during the timeless span of the rite. This self-deification of the human organism is an essential aspect of left-hand path initiation.

Despite the *Vama Marga's* emphasis on the Goddess, the male principle is the focus of other erotic ceremonies. In some autoerotic rites, the male adept worships himself as a god, anointing his erect penis as the living godhead. The sacred courtesans, the *devadasi*, or temple dancers, performed an invocation of Shiva enacted through ritual fellatio of a consecrated male.

Awakening through sexual ecstasy to god-like consciousness, the adept experiences the divine as manifested in the physical body, rather than bowing to the external deities of traditional religion.

One Tantra makes clear that the male practitioner of the secret rite of the five things, in sexually exalting his *mudra* as the living incarnation of the dark goddess, should see in her no

s a being than *Bhairavi*, the awesome force of destruction that annihilates all obstacles, the cruel Mother Kali: "He who sees wine, fish, meat, woman should salute the *Bhairavi Devi* and say: 'Om! Salutation to the beloved of Shiva, the remover of all obstacles, Salutation to thee the giver of boons, adorned with a garland of severed heads, stained with streams of blood. Thee I salute for the destruction of all obstacles and the well being of *Kaula Cara*.'" (The *Kaula Cara*, or Way of the Clan is, synonymous with the left-hand path as an initiatory school of knowledge in general.)

Within The Temple

Once fully aroused, the partners now lay down together, again with the female *shakti* situated to the left of the male. He breathes through the *pingala*, or right-flowing channel of the body's air passages, and slowly penetrates her *yonis*. Having previously performed the outer veneration of the *yonis*, the adept has now gained passage into that consecrated place, the seat of *maya* from which all comes into being. The act of one body physically entering another is a liminal act – the crossing of a threshold which consciously opens a sacred space in which the rite can be celebrated. The two temples of the nine gates are linked.

The pace of intercourse in left-hand path rites is customarily long and drawn out, not the agitated rush to orgasm that so often epitomizes Western sex. This is not only true in left-handed Tantra but is an integral aspect of India's approach to sensuality, which has long made an art of erotic pleasure. As has already been stressed, the adept's aim is not the quick relief from sexual tension ordinarily sought by the *pashu* but the buildup of that tension to almost unbearable levels – and then the surpassing of normal sexuality altogether. Indeed, this concentration of desire into an applicable force of consciousness transformation is sometimes achieved by deliberately

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sleeping naked in the same bed as the *shakti* for many nights before proceeding to even the slightest touch. This creates a palpable bioelectrical charge of desire between the two consorts that greatly magnifies the effectiveness of the eventual consummation.

Tantra classifies even visual contact with one's consort as a form of erotic expression. One traditional preparation for the secret rite includes gazing silently into the eyes of the contrasexual *alter ego* before advancing to a single caress. This unwavering glance is sustained for a much longer period than human animals are accustomed to maintaining, allowing for another break with the body's natural conditioning. Recent studies conducted in Germany have shown that merely *looking* at the photograph of a sexually desirable person of the opposite sex releases a attention-sharpening cocaine-like agent in the part of the brain that recognizes "reward" stimuli. At least some of the remarkable psychic results caused by deliberate prolongation of the left-hand path sexual rite must be rooted in similar changes in brain chemistry. Technology will eventually determine the neurological reality of what transpires in the brains of a couple celebrating the union of Shiva and Shakti, knowledge which will make the methods of the left-hand path more precise.

Through a veritable science of subtle glances, caresses, and postures designed to maximize the erotic experience to the level of divine ecstasy enjoyed by Shiva and Shakti themselves, the couple transcend sex within time. The intonation of mantras, controlled breathing techniques, systematic stimulation of the senses, and the preparatory meditation has already created

a profoundly awakened state of consciousness transforming their sexual pleasure into a celebration of their own divinity.

To extend this atemporal period of mounting rapture, a number of pragmatic physical techniques are used by both partners that have only recently been rediscovered by Western sexologists. For instance, the female *shakti is* often trained to manually squeeze the base of her consort's penis to prevent his orgasm for as long as possible, allowing for a consciousnessaltering perpetuation of ecstasy. Current practitioners of the left-hand path utilize cock rings for the same purpose.

The word "ecstasy" is currently used so casually to describe any kind of transitive pang of pleasure, that magicians who have yet to experience this state for themselves will only have a vague idea of the trance of joy lefthanded sexual rites aim to activate. However, when we refer to ecstasy, we are using the term in its authentic religious sense, not just as a synonym for any sensation that "feels good". As important as the hedonic impact on the body is to the left-hand path, it must not be forgotten that it is the effect on one's consciousness that is paramount. Once an adept becomes competent in the techniques of ritual sex, the time/space of the erotic exchange can unleash

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kundalini, including the deliberate attainment of visions, out-of-body experiences, or simply serve as a springboard for manipulation of *maya* – the work of the sorcerer.

Ultimately, the wedding of sexual polar opposites realized through the *maithuna is* intended to awaken the initiate to the direct perception of reality. But every magician's personal experience of the rite must be grounded in his or her own individual universe of meaning. Transcending all imaginable verbal constructs, the ecstatic apotheosis reached through sacralised sex can never be standardized, ultimately resisting all attempts at description. Therefore, the beginning student of the left-hand path should not presume that he or she should be aiming for some sort of pre-packaged or pre-ordained outcome – dogmatic concepts of a "right" or "wrong" result are inconsistent with the radical individuation of the *Vama Marga*. Although the methods of the left-hand path sexual rite are age-old, each new experiment with them allows the couple celebrating the rite to experience the primal force of sexual creation as if for the first time.

The Body Of Light

The nature of erotic interactions possible during the *maithuna* varies widely, according to one's teacher, or the particular sect into which one is initiated. Tantric ritual coitus rarely leads to the frenetic thrusting of ordinary sex. Often, the erect male simply remains positioned within the *shakti*, allowing the opposite energies of male and female to flow into each other, whilst the *kundalini is* made to rise through mental control. This contact is prolonged for a long period of time, at first ranging from a half-hour to an hour. Experienced practitioners eventually sustain this hierogamic coincidence of opposites for hours, building up a powerful electromagnetic field from the contact between the male (+) and the female (—) fusion.

Some second-hand texts on Tantric sexuality, often simply misguided, others driven by a puritanical agenda to gloss over the pleasure factor essential to the left-hand path, have described the actual *Vama Marga* sexual rites in such a muted manner as to thoroughly confuse the beginner. If one were to base one's understanding of Tantra on some of the writings on the subject, you would come away with the odd idea that the left-hand path initiate performs the sexual rites only obligingly and begrudgingly, in the same mental attitude as one might submit to dental surgery. And heaven forbid that the left-hand path initiate might actually derive any physical pleasure from fucking!

Such hypocritical texts do a disservice to the ecstatic fundamentals of the left-hand path, attempting to dissolve the necessary physiological

pleasures that actually drive Tantric initiation in a cloud of abstract spirituality. The importance of intense biological delight to the left-hand path

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is essential. In fact, it is a traditional left-hand path precept that the presence of sexual desire in the human body is thought to be a portent that the universe-creating divine energy has manifested within the initiate – the presence of an erection is thus honored as a physical sign of divinity in fleshly form. Although sinister Eros is very different from the exclusively orgasm-focused sexual interaction that characterizes sex *ordinaire*, that is not to say that it is absent of passionate desire for the sexual consort. If the weirdly asexual sex rites suggested in some modern texts were even physically possible, one must wonder how such requirements as erection and vaginal moisture are accomplished in the complete absence of lust and desire recommended.

It is true that the erotic pleasure enjoyed by the Tantric consorts is partially understood as a manifestation of the greater ecstasy of divine consciousness on the physiological level of experience. However, the delights of the flesh are to be valued and enjoyed in their own right during the left-hand path ritual.

The adept of the sinister current alchemically transforms the naturally occurring properties of sexual desire into precise tools of consciousness expansion. Since the first poem of erotic longing was first sung, human beings have observed how strong desire has the ability to sharpen attention, slow down one's sense of time, cause flashes of inspired thinking, and radically increase energy, among many other unique neurophysical phenomena. The left-hand path sex magician extends these useful qualities of desire from the fleshly sphere of existence and generative reproduction to the daemonic realm of being.

One of the many reasons that sex makes for such an effective consciousness altering device and magical medium is an extremely practical physical phenomenon: the mind experiencing extreme sexual arousal for a prolonged period is able to focus into a one-pointed beam of clarity. This heightened state of attention, achieved even during non-initiatory coitus, was noticed by the pioneering sexologist Alfred Kinsey, who commented that the firing of a revolver would not intrude on a copulating couple's ecstatic exertions. This perfectly normal physiological event of erotic attention is known to any sexually active human being but is usually allowed to dissipate with orgasm. The left-hand path adept seizes upon this laser-like clarity of desire, prolongs it as long as possible, and consciously directs it to initiatory ends.

The intense, one-pointed pleasure that makes so many the compulsive slave of Eros, is subjected to the initiate's discipline, and allows him or her to become the master of this most primordial and elemental of energies. Through controlled breathing and vocal intonation or mental concentration on focusing *mantras* during the sexual act, the run-away wild

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horse of desire is yoked to the magician's will, connecting the powerful engine of protracted erotic ecstasy to the adept's self-transformative operations.

The *mantras* droned to call down Shakti and Shiva into the subtle bodies of the celebrants continue to be uttered during the sexual *maithuna*.

When the celebrants have achieved the highest level of intensity of their incarnation of the gods, actually separating from a human state of consciousness to experience their *own* divinity, the orgasm can be activated, a peak of energy that magically transcends personality and allows the adept to confront – and become – the integrated expression of pure consciousness (Shiva) and pure energy of power (Shakti).

Theoretically, the repeated performance of the *maithuna* at ever

more intense levels of willed desire is thought to continually strengthen the enduring, eternal element of the couple's spiritual bodies, ultimately creating imperishable psychic beings that cannot be destroyed by the inevitable deterioration that must befall all natural creatures. It must be clarified that this psychic immortality is not sought for the *physical* body that is the instrument of the operation. It is the subtle body within the physical shell that is conjectured to be ever more fortified by the primal, creative *shakti* energy activated through the sinister sexual rite.

Sexual Vampirism

As a digression, it is worth mentioning in passing the Chinese Taoist variant of the left-hand path rite, initially limited to the Chinese Emperor and his court. In Taoist sexual alchemy, attaining immortality is in fact the sole purpose of the sexual exchange. The Emperor would endeavor to perform sex without undergoing yang-diminishing ejaculation with as many of his harem as possible in one evening, willfully absorbing the young female's *yin* energy from their vaginas. Although the male was forbidden from ejaculating, the operation was only considered successful if the female was brought to many powerful orgasms in one session. The benefit of absorbing so much female sexual power without losing any of one's own male energy was believed to prolong physical life, unnaturally extend youthfulness, and create a reservoir of limitless energy for the male adept that would extend beyond the existence of the physical body to an after-death state.

In contrast to the Indian and Tibetan forms of the left-hand path, in which the female sexual consort is at least theoretically revered as a living goddess, the Chinese *yin-tao* was entirely centered on the male adept's goal of immortality; the female was regarded simply as a sexual battery to be drained and discarded. In fact, she was generally thought to be useless for magical purposes after one such procedure – new additions to the harem for this purpose were constantly sought. One instructional text, the *Yu fang che-*

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yao, advises us that the common man destroys himself by repeated sexual congress with his one spouse, who supposedly depletes all of his *yang* energy. Here we have as clear a historical example of sexual vampirism as can be imagined; the conscious, one-sided depletion of one partner's youthful sexual energy to maintain the other partner's immortality.

One need hardly be a sex magician or a Chinese Emperor to observe this phenomenon manifest in daily life. We have all encountered couples in which one partner grows ever stronger, while his or her partner visibly weakens psychically and physically. Of course, psychological factors play a part in such soul-draining exchanges. But once sex is experienced as the magical energy conduit that it is, the sex-vampiric root of such interactions becomes apparent. Such erotic predation need not take the form of a longlasting partnership; many a mundane one-night stand has allowed for the depletion of one partner's sexual energy for the benefit of the other.

Aleister Crowley, whose compulsive practice of sexual vampirism reduced both of his wives to madness, and helped to destroy a good number of his "Scarlet Women", once wrote of one of his female pupils: "A superb natural vampire. But she doesn't know the principles. Her lover has Mortis Rigor – and the most elementary good sense (one would have thought) and even natural instinct would have told her to get a fresh victim when the last has reached the state to which she has reduced the poor boy."

The Postures Of The Secret Rite

Returning to the Indian Tantric *maithuna*, through persistent recurrence of the rite, the erotically interlocked male and female adept should be able to fully rouse the dormant *kundalini* in their bodies, enabling a fully awakened consciousness to emerge. Traditionally, sex with an adept of either gender who has already experienced *kundalini* is believed to quicken the *kundalini* of the other partner. The startling phenomenon of body-to-body transference

of the unmistakable *kundalini* energy from one sexual consort to another has already been described.

A common *maithuna* posture is the *lata sadahna* position, so called because the *shakti* embraces the entirely immobile man just as the *lata*, or creeper plant, wraps itself around a tree. In *bhagasana*, the couple's bodies remain outwardly immobile throughout the rite, whilst the well-trained female initiatrix works the muscles of her vulva on her consort's erect penis, fastening it ever more tightly in place within her.

Savasana recreates the yogic posture seen in images of Kali mounting dead Shiva. *Sava* means "corpse", which has given rise to the Tantric pun that "Shiva without Shakti is *Sava*"; male consciousness lacking female power is a corpse. In *savasana*, the male lays prostrate beneath the female in a state of death-like trance and muscular relaxation, while she rides his erection, incarnating the dominant, active force of *shakti*. This corpse

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posture is linked to the age-old recognition that orgasm is often experienced as a kind of death, a verity communicated in the well-known French description of the ecstasy of sexual climax as *le petite mort*, "the dear little death".

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A multiplicity of sexual positions, or *asanas*, are taught to the celebrants of the sinister current. Almost all of them are focused on the female active/male inactive principle that has traditionally been thought to be the most efficient way to create the altered state of consciousness and flow of male-female energies into each other. Quite commonly, the sexual position taken during sinister current coition allows both partners to assume a seated face-to-face *asana*, with spines erect to more easily allow the flow of *kundalini* from sexual center to brain.

The *Mukha-Maithuna asana* of mutual genital adoration (the "69" position), can also be a powerful bioenergy exchange of masculine and feminine essence. This creates a kind of sexual closed circuit, permitting the celebrant's energies to course through each other in a continuous and unbroken flow, an exchange of erotomagical power that can be compared to the *uroboros*, the alchemical serpent that swallows its own tail. The physical distillation of the united Shakti/Shiva forces are contained in the substance of the sexual elixirs. Theoretically, the orally operative adept consumes the contrasexual essence emanated through his or her partner's genitals, a rite of mutual sexual vampirism enacted through oral-genital feeding.

It should go without saying that if you have no knowledge of your consort's sexual history or health, ingestion of sexual fluids during a working should not be considered. Any magician who ignores these precautions cannot truly be said to exercise the conscious approach to all physical manifestations that the sinister current adept seeks to maintain. The sleeping human surrenders to sexuality and its possible long-range consequences of pregnancy and disease as if in a dream, accepting whatever comes of it with passive inertia; the erotic initiate must be fully awake to all of the potential aftereffects of any sexual union.

The erotic interaction of the immobile male sex partner, incarnating the Shiva force on earth, and the active female, embodying the terrestrial Shakti power, often seems off-putting, or at least unfamiliar, to Western men and women. In the West, copulation very often takes the form of the female prone on her back in the so-called missionary position, while the male thrusts into her, using her vagina as a kind of masturbatory tool. The very different physical arrangement called for by the left-hand path rite necessitates that the female initiatrix uses her *yoni* in a much more active manner than is common among Western women.

The Yoni Of Shakti

In Tantric tradition, women who are trained to take on the role of *shakti*, or

sexual initiatrix, learn a method of vaginal control known as *sahajoli*. In India, this technique is secretly taught by already initiated older female adepts (sometimes the student's mother or grandmother) to girls at the age of puberty. Essentially, *sahajoli* involves the ability to exercise total control

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over the vaginal muscles during sexual intercourse, so that her partner's penis can be actively gripped and manipulated during the rite. Traditional training for *sahajoli* involves intensive exercise of the vaginal muscles for many years, often using dildos or other phallic substitutes to facilitate mastery of the technique. (This vaginal training is similar to the commonly taught

Kegel exercises known in the West.) The left-hand path sexual initiatrix utilizes the complex mechanism of her vagina with an agility and finesse that is all but unknown to the eroticism of the West, where even the most sophisticated basically consider the vulva as an inert hole to be filled.

This kind of vaginal control was also an important part of the training for the sacred Temple courtesans of India, the *devadasis* (literally, the "slaves of the god"), just as it appears to have been part of the refined sexual artistry of the Ancient Greek *Hetairae*. Descriptions of the eldest known form of sacred prostitution, that of the *Quadishthu*, or Temple harlots of the Sumerian sacred whore-goddess Innana/Ishtar, also make mention of what must have been a similar method. The *yonis*, revered in the left-hand path as the matrix of all manifestation, is a fully activated, mobile participant in the rite of ecstasy, as befits the energy of the wildly kinetic Goddess it symbolizes.

There is a surprisingly common Western male anxiety regarding the vaginal mysteries, perhaps most dramatically represented by the commonly reported phobia concerning the castrating *vagina dentata*, or vagina with teeth. Such neuroses are completely absent from left-hand path sexuality, which accords a reverence to both gender's genitals as living, creative incarnations of the divine. It is surprising how many Western men and women find the unfamiliar concept of an active vagina impossible to integrate, and this is one of the unspoken reasons that left-handed initiation has yet to be fully maximized in the Western world. No valid tradition of initiation into the physical feminine mysteries currently exists in the West. Consequently, the female student of the left-hand path sometimes finds it difficult to free herself of the culturally pervasive impression that her cunt is merely a passive orifice, rather than the energetic vortex of divine creative chaos posited in left-hand path veneration of the *yonis*.

Meticulous stimulation of all of the female partner's erogenous zones during the *maithuna* is considered essential to raising the necessary degree of sexual energy for the rite. This process culminates in careful attention to the clitoris, a technique which had been developed to a fine art in the left-handed Tantra of medieval times, when knowledge of female sexuality in the West had all but atrophied due to Christian loathing of the body – and especially the female body.

The Sacrifice

The true secret of secrets guarded by the *Vama Marga* rite was not simply the

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liberating, obstacle-overcoming and initiatory effect of taboo violation, which can only be the *first* phase of any deep-seated process of self-programming. Once the taboos have been broken and made sacred, the initiates continue to repeat the rite for the initiatory value of erotic exchange itself, especially the physiological impact of the prolonged sexual rite on the initiated mind. The

next step is the teaching that self-realization and coming into being as a divine consciousness aware of ultimate reality can occur during the intense flash of orgasm. For the left-hand path initiate, the orgasm itself is understood as an altered state of consciousness, and for this reason, the orgasm is prolonged, manipulated, internalized and integrated into the initiatory experience.

But the orgasm aimed for in Tantric rites is quite different than the fleeting physiological event that usually takes place at the culmination of sexual congress. The orgasmic ecstasy crowning the left-hand path erotic rite is not the brief spasm releasing sexual strain common to everyday sexuality; it connects to a hidden reservoir of boundless *shakti* energy, providing a physical launching pad for psychic metamorphosis. At the peak moment of climax, "the doors of perception" spoken of by William Blake are blasted wide and pure apprehension of core reality can be attained.

The sexual sorcerer can utilize this disruption in normative mental function to cast his or her will into the weave of *maya*, or ecstasy can be applied to internal change for initiatory purposes alone. Crucial to this process is that the adept undergoing orgasm must develop the ability to sustain full alertness and pointedness of thought even during the intensity of sexual climax, rather than slipping into the common black-out of consciousness that often accompanies orgasm. The traditional Tantric teachings are adamant on this point, urging the practitioner to resist the natural urge to fall into what is often described as a "swoon".

Also resisted by some – but not all – left-hand path practitioners is the natural urge to ejaculate during orgasm. Some methods to avoid this include the slowing down of breath to near immobility, which also slows the ejaculatory response, the yogic curling of the tongue backwards against the palate, and the one-pointed focus on the repetition of *mantras*. The already mentioned *yonimudra*, in which the perineum muscles are powerfully contracted before orgasm ensues, is also effective. However, these mechanical efforts are far less important than the inner altered state of consciousness – the ecstatic trance – in which the entire act is carried out.

The seed not spilled is theorized to produce more *ojas* in the body, which supposedly strengthens the immortal essence of the adept, theoretically creating an enduring spiritual body that can survive the physical body's death. Leaving aside such metaphysical physiology, which must always remain a subjective question of each initiate's personal belief system, the conscious curbing of the ejaculatory process definitely *can*

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create an extremely powerful altered state of consciousness, extending the orgasm to the entire organism. It is this latter consciousness-altering effect that seems of most value to us from the magical perspective.

The average, uninitiated human being, or *pashu*, uses sex as a tranquilizer or relief from the stress of existence; for him or her, the orgasm is merely a tonic for nervous tension, very often resulting in total lapse of consciousness or sleep. The sinister current initiate, as always, does the *opposite* of this natural urge to relax during orgasm – instead he or she uses the intensification of pleasure as a means of full awakening. As stated above, the Hindu-heretical left-hand path does permit the male to ejaculate within his *shakti*, with the customary provision that the invisible *bindu* energy that is said to dwell within the visible semen be returned to his subtle body, either through cunnilingus or the trained reabsorption of the fluid through the erect penis. This process of reabsorption of the spiritual energy of the semen back into the body is known as *vajroli mudra*, named after the *vajra*, or "thunderbolt" that runs through the body like an electrical jolt during sexual ecstasy.

Mastering this requires a great deal of preliminary yogic training, and is not easily accomplished by the beginning initiate. At the same time, the male *shakta* strives to draw in his consort's sexually enhanced *shakti* energy through his *lingam* into his body during the sexual union, a method known as *sahaholi*. If he does ejaculate, the adept is sometimes expected to practice *amaroli*, the drawing of the mixed essence of female and male energies back into his still erect penis, and theoretically reversing their flow, by causing them to course up the subtle channel of the spine into the crown *chakra*.

There are numerous interpretations of the "correct" method of male orgasm but from our perspective, none are indisputable.

The underlying – and perhaps essential – left-hand path principle concerning semen is the notion of ejaculation as magical sacrifice. The sinister adept's emission of semen is sacralised as a self-sacrifice of his own life-force into the altar of his *shakti's* vulva, an act known as *dutyaga*. In traditional Hindu ceremony, the celebrant usually pours consecrated ghee butter or oil on the fire of the altar. The heretical left hand path replaces this approved sacrificial substance with semen, which most Hindus are so loath to emit. In the pre-Tantric *Brihadaranakaya Upanishad*, an understanding of ejaculation as a sacrificial release of energy into the matrix of shakti-power is made plain: "Her lower part is the sacrificial altar: her hairs the sacrificial grass, her skin the soma-press [here reference is made to *soma*, the illuminating sacred potion of the gods, often though to have been a now unknown psychedelic substance] The two lips of the *yoni* are the fire in the middle."

Seen through the symbolic prism of the left-hand path, the friction of *lingam* and *yoni* are compared to the friction of the sticks that create the fire.

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The mounting sexual pleasure of the couple expresses the rising flames of the fire. The *yoni* is the altar itself, into which the sacrifice of sacred oil, or male ejaculate, is poured.

The divinity to whom the sacrifice is made is the female partner, the incarnation of the Great Goddess. The power of the sexual sacrifice is thought to be much stronger when she is menstruating, as this is believed to release more of the feminine energy sacred to the left-hand path. There can be no doubt that the tradition of sacrifice began with animal and human offerings to the gods. Left-hand path initiates consider the intensity of self-generated sexual energy freed at the moment of orgasm to be far superior to the force freed externally through the death of animals. Animal sacrifice is subsequently shunned by most Western left-hand path adepts.

The Elixir

Among the many paired opposites of sinister Tantra, the symbolism of white and red are as important as the earlier mentioned right and left, solar and lunar, Shakti and Shiva. White is the color of semen within which the masculine essence is conserved. Red is the fiery color of feminine *shakti*

the sexual rite, a conjunction of opposites is realized. On a less abstract level, the color red literally represents the feminine energy of the *shakti's* menstrual blood. The ritualized coming together of these red and white fluids during sinister sex recalls the importance of red and white to Western alchemy.

Left-hand path Tantrikas place great emphasis on the vaginal secretions of the female, ingesting them as the pure distillation of feminine energy in rites venerating the *shakti's* vulva. This fluid, called *amrita*, or "elixir of immortality" is sometimes believed to be vitalized with magical properties transformative of human consciousness, an agent quickening the process of Kundalini, the awakening of the Feminine Daemonic in the male. The female *amrita* consumed in left-hand path sexual rites is considered most powerful in *shakti* at the time of menstruation, a fact which has sometimes been compared to the elusive "ruby elixir" referred to in Western alchemical texts as a medicine for the soul. Erotic statuary in India's celebrated Khajuraho Temple depicts scenes of ritual cunnilingus that indicate a strong left-hand path influence. In the Chinese sex-magical tradition, the orgasmic flow of the female partner's Bartholin's gland fluid was also thought to be a substance rich with *yin*, the feminine life-force potable in a physical libation granting immortality.

In both the Taoist and Tantric traditions, great emphasis is placed on the necessity of absorbing the sexual secretion only from consorts demonstrating obvious physical health and vitality. Illness is said to nullify or even poison the effects of the *amrita* upon the adept.

Even within the sometimes austere constrictions of the Islamic world, home to an ancient magical heritage, decidedly left-hand path sex-magical traditions continue to be practiced by Muslim magicians. Often these involve the use of sexual secretions and menstrual blood as sorcerous agents, as in the societally disreputable but fairly common utilization of *sihr sufli*, which has sometimes been described as a form of Arabic black magic. Such rites require that the sorcerer performs a prolonged act of copulation with a female – as is so often the case in the Tantric *Vama Marga*, the sorcerer's consort must not be married to him. It is also considered preferable if the woman is menstruating, a condition every bit as much of a taboo within Islam as it is in Hindu culture.

At the completion of the act, the mingled semen, feminine secretions, and blood are carefully permeated into an absorbent piece of fabric. The erotically charged fabric is then ritually burnt, whilst the sorcerer calls upon one of the *djinn* – the demons of Arabic sorcery – to act in his stead in the daemonic realm. This rite, which draws on the veiled, repressed power of the Feminine Daemonic surging beneath the outwardly male-oriented surface of Arab life, is of course considered a defilement by orthodox Islam. As with all left-hand path procedures, it is the taboo-breaking nature of the activity that endows this kind of sexual sorcery with its force.

Again, in light of the great importance bestowed on male and female sexual fluids in some Tantric *Vama Marga* rites, we must state that the modern sinister current practitioner in the West should not feel at all compelled to faithfully accept these traditional teachings as valid for yourself. Any such automatic adoption of ancient praxis, lacking personal investigation and integration, would be no better than the blind superstition found in any faith-based religion, or in the worst depths of occult quackery.

The techniques of the left-hand path should never be taken on faith but tested in a spirit of practical experiment.

If through further training and experiment, you find that semen retention/reabsorption or consumption of female sexual elixir are useful to your spiritual goals, feel free to apply them to your initiation. However, don't assume that these practices are essential to left-hand path magic simply

because they are considered valid in the Eastern heritage of the sinister current. All too many left-hand path neophytes earnestly follow such Tantric prescriptions without critically considering *why* these actions are considered beneficial within the original cultural conditions from which the left-hand path emerged.

From a *practical* magical point of view, the reversal of semen flow has two things recommending it. Any inversion of natural processes is *psychologically* useful to the magician attempting to alter the substance of the universe through will. Also, the willed hindrance of the male ejaculation can allow for a very different quality of intense orgasmic pleasure that can be directed to magical objectives. Most importantly, the longer the sexual act is prolonged, the higher the level of sexual energy available to the celebrants for magical use. Now, many traditional left-hand path *gurus* would be appalled at our lack of strict observation of ejaculatory protocol, since the reabsorption of semen into the subtle body is often considered the main point of the rite. We leave it to the discretion of our reader to decide how much of a purist he or she wishes to be in these matters. As for the drinking of female sexual fluids, any substance produced during a magical working might be perceived as carrying the distilled energy of that operation. In our view, this is a subjective psychological interpretation, not an objective *fact*, as some left-hand Tantricists would rigidly maintain.

Vama Marga Without Dogma

It should not be thought that we are advising Western sex magicians to faithfully recreate every last detail of the traditional five M's rite, as some modern Western Tantricists have done. On the contrary, the particular taboo-breaking aspects of this rite, and much of its symbolism, can only have meaning within Hindu Indian culture. There would obviously be absolutely *no* taboo-breaking power released by Western magicians eating fish and

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meat, or drinking wine as an overture to their ritual sex acts, everyday practices in the Western world. You can only adapt the underlying principles described in this chapter, not necessarily the *specifics*, to your own workings.

The Western left-hand path magician can no longer rely on traditional taboo violation as taught in India, he or she must discover personal taboos to be shattered and then made sacred within a ritual context. In India, where "the sacred cow" is an ancient concept upheld by millions of Hindu vegetarians, and other animals are considered to be "polluting", the left-hand path adept eats certain kinds of meat as a dissident rupture with mass doctrine. Obviously, such an action is not meaningful in the omnivorous McDonald's culture most of our readers probably live in; other restrictions appropriate to your personal existence must be transcended.

Traditional left-hand path practices, such as uttering the correct mantras, consuming the specified taboo/sacred foods, cultivating *kundalini* energy to rise through the *chakras*, envisioning the god-forms of Shiva and Shakti, can only be useful to you if you accept and integrate the complex symbol system from which these practices were developed. But these subcontinental methods are by no means mandatory to attain the erotic illumination of the sinister current. For some Westerners, the traditional tools of the Indian left-hand path are effective, and have provided them with a sound structure in which to initiate themselves. For others, these handed down traditions are simply too removed from their own conditioning and every day experience to be anything but a distraction. In that case, learning the ancient *mantras*, *asanas*, and *mudras* – save as a starting point for adapting your own system from them – would be counterproductive. Identifying the core principles beneath the regional practice of lefthand path erotic initiation, and remanifesting these essentials in terms that have deeply personal significance according to your own programming, is a

far more useful task than mastering the "accepted" Tantric procedure. But only physical experiment with the body – rather than abstract study with the mind – can verify the premises of the left-hand path.

The Beast, The Hero And The God

Despite the initiatory significance bestowed upon the *Panchamakara* and other sexual rites, it would be a mistake to presume that traditional left-hand path teachers imagined that these methods would provide instant illumination for all. On the contrary, the left-hand path route to awakening was – and is – reserved only for a minority. A relatively small number of aspirants were considered suitable for left-hand path initiation; the righthand was considered by far the more appropriate route for the vast majority of initiates, as it still is today.

The *Kularnava Tantra* demonstrates how little suited most humans

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are to the left-hand path by sarcastically stating that "if merely the drinking of wine was capable of causing one to attain fulfillment, all who are addicted to liquor would reach perfection. If partaking of flesh always led to the high state, all the carrion-eaters in the world would become eligible to great merit. If liberation was assured by sexual congress with a *shakti*, all creatures would be liberated by female companionship."

An important aspect of the traditional Indian left-hand path is that it was reserved only for initiates demonstrating a certain disposition; it is considered useless or even dangerous for those lacking the spiritual proficiency and training to understand the rites on an initiatic level. This remains just as true in the contemporary West; erotic initiation is not appropriate for the majority of humans, most of whom are resistant to – if not incapable of – any kind of self-transformation, let alone that of the *Vama Marga*.

A common Western misunderstanding of left-hand path rites is to assume that they provide a spiritual license for mindless hedonism. In fact, we are dealing with what can be accurately termed *mindful* hedonism, the conscious and willed application of *hedone* (Greek for pleasure) to initiatory purposes. Underscoring this point is the statement in the *Kaularnava Tantra* which forbids "the glutton, lecher, greedy, ignorant, hypocrite, voluptuary and drunkard" from sinister sexual initiation. In traditional *Vama Marga* discipline, the initiate is tested by his teacher for a full year before being allowed to be inducted into any sexual rites, a rigor which seems quite unreasonable to Western aspirants. Along with the meditative and yogic mastery of altered states of consciousness which the student must learn as a prelude to the secret rite, he is expected to have mastered his passions. By the time he is confronted with the woman who will incarnate the *shakti* in the sexual initiation, he is trained to view her in an entirely different manner than the average uninitiated *pashu* man would consider a sexually accessible female.

It's important to clarify that most adepts of the left-hand path undertake this rigorous process of training while still earning a living in a job or profession within the prosaic world as householders, husbands, and wives. The left-hand path, for all of its metaphysical complexity, is not intended to lead its initiates away from all ordinary human pursuits. Instead, it's deeply rooted in a firm grasp of reality. Frequently, the adept leads what might be considered a perfectly "normal" existence by day, dedicating the *shakti* powered hours of night to the *Vama Marga*. Some radical adherents of the *Vama Marga*, who have reached the highest level of initiation, do break completely with society but these will always be a relative minority.

Tantric initiation posits three classes of spiritual aptitude, which should not be confused with the initiatory grades or degrees so beloved of Western magicians – these three levels of the *Vama Marga* are perhaps better

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understood as spiritual *types*. For each of these dispositions, Tantricism maintains that there is a suitable mode of initiation. The first, and by far the most common type of human, are those said to be *Pashubhava*, those of the "herd-like disposition". The *pashu*, or herd-beast, is directed toward traditional worship of the gods, sacrifice, devotion and exclusively intellectual learning – the way of the mass mind, in submission to deity as an external phenomenon to be obeyed. For the *pashu*, sexual initiation and intoxication are regarded as poisons – the stark encounter with *shakti's* naked energy would destroy the *pashu's* circuits. The *pashu*, bound entirely to uncontrolled animal instinct, is said to be ruled by the inert universal quality known as *tamas*. With very few exceptions, all who approach a left-hand path teacher for instruction are deemed to be operating at a *pashu* level. That is to say that they react to the manifestations of the apparent universe with the same lack of control as an animal might, completely at the mercy of the natural world. The *pashu* reacts, rather than acts.

After considerable training, the *pashu*-beast's inertia may eventually be transformed into the *Virabhava*, or "heroic disposition". The *Vira* can choose to follow the right- or left-hand path according to aptitude. Most will follow the way of the *Daksina Marga*, considered to be the safest method of Tantric initiation. A few will be considered heroic enough for the sinister current, whose extreme methods are thought to be much more perilous. The *Vira* who welcomes these dangers is poetically said to be "riding the tiger" in some of the Tantric texts. The *Vira* has created the active quality *rajas* in himself.

Only the *Vira*, or Hero, who has broken from the herd, is considered strong enough to transcend taboo violation, religious and social condemnation, and experience sexual ecstasy as spiritual awakening – a phenomenon compared to "walking on the edge of a sword". The *vira* of the left-hand path is considered to be a spiritual warrior, possessed of extraordinary courage and *virility* (the English word is derived from the Sanskrit *Vira*). The hero must have a "strong physique", according to *Gautamiya Tantra*. It is one of the many paradoxes of the Tantric world-view that even though the left-hand path *vira* ultimately aims to awaken the sinister feminine current within him, he must be considered virile – an expression of Shiva – before doing so. This seeming contradiction is based on the idea that before a man can bear the tremendous power of the feminine *shakti*, he must build up his strength far beyond that realized by the uninitiated male. This attests to the *active* character of the feminine principle as understood in the Tantras.

The heroic warrior conquers six internal attributes referred to as "the enemies". Once these inner enemies are subdued and brought under the adept's willed control – among them fear, jealousy, anger, and longing – the

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ordinary prohibitions of *pashu* society no longer apply. The next stage of left-hand path initiation is open to him, including the rite of the five M's and other sexual initiations, including the orgiastic unions we will consider later.

One of the tenets of the traditional Tantric teaching, which must seem quaint to modern Westerners, is that only the *vira* of the left-hand path is permitted to perform ritual sex with women to whom he is not legally married. Also, as we have mentioned in our description of the actual secret rite, the degree of nakedness revealed by the female initiatrix during the rite is contingent on the *siddha's* degree of initiation – only the most advanced practitioner is allowed to witness the complete nudity of his ritual companion, as the full force of unclad *shakti* power is esoterically believed to be too overpowering for the less spiritually evolved. On a perhaps more utilitarian level, one traditional Indian adept of the *Vama Marga* suggested to us that the real reason for this is that only the more yogically trained initiate will have learned the bodily control needed to restrain himself under

such stimulating circumstances.

The final state of being – the rarest of all – is the *divyabhava*, or divine disposition. The *divya*, or Divine, has transcended even the heroic mode, and has become a self-deified spiritual intelligence, liberated while still in the flesh, and free to operate as a god in human form. To come into being and re-manifest as an immortal, independent *divya* is the true aim of the sinister current initiate. And yet, this divine being is not to be confused with sainthood; the traditional image of the benevolent sage is not the way of the left-hand path *divya*. Indeed, the most highly initiated left-hand path adept would probably seem far from a saint or holy man by most conventional standards. According to the *Kaulavalinirnaya Tantra*, the liberated initiate of the left-hand path may sometimes appear to the uninitiated as a "demon" or "madman". He or she may persist in playing in divine *lila* with the world of *maya* but has transcended all of the external forms of ritual. The quality of the *divya* is *sattva*, or purity.

The superior being forged through the alchemy of the *Vama Marga* is not reduced to the bland and blissful "niceness" of the archetypal Buddha or enlightened consciousness of other teachings. The *divya's* sovereign freedom is just as likely to be expressed through a sometimes volatile, unpredictable, and untamed mode of conduct that can only startle those still enraptured

Supta, the great sleep. One of the greatest hazards on the left-hand path is the tendency of its initiates to proclaim that they have reached this state far too early in their development; a guarantee of disaster for them, and not infrequently for those around them.

The triad of beast/hero/god recognized by the Indian left-hand path is a common feature of Indo-European spirituality, namely the tripartite

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model of separating phenomena into three distinct modes of being. Even among these three grades there are further subtleties. The initiate of the left-hand path, for instance, is also known in Tantricism as *svechchhacaya*, alternately translated as "the one who walks his own way", or "the one who can do all that he wants." Such an initiate is free to act according to will, rather than as the subject of law. In the Tantric tradition, to do all that one wants is decidedly *not a* liberty granted to every human being. The *svechchhacaya* has progressed to a stage of development in which he acts according to will without the guidance of the guru considered so crucial to other initiates. Only certain candidates are considered to be of a strong enough disposition to handle the absolute freedom that these highest levels of sinister current initiation can allow.

One of the specific qualities thought to be befitting left-hand path initiation is a philosophical outlook known as *dvandvatita*. This describes a person who is free of all of the simple and confining diametrical black and white opposites that rule ordinary human thought. He or she, who is *dvandvatita*, in a Nietzschean sense, has gone beyond Good and Evil and revaluated all values. Nietzsche's nineteenth century concept of the *Übermensch*, or Overman, is not new; it can be traced to the idea of *dvandvatita*, a forgotten key of the left-hand path.

This notion that some persons are more innately qualified than others to exercise and enjoy total freedom and illumination instantly makes many modern Westerners uneasy, accustomed as they are to democratic concepts of egalitarianism. However, the traditional left-hand path understanding of initiation takes a radically different view of humanity than that currently promulgated. Tantric metaphysics considers that because men are clearly not equal, it is only logical that the method of initiation that liberates one individual cannot possibly be suited to another of an entirely different constitution.

The Eastern left-hand path does not discriminate based on those

criteria the mere mention of which makes so many moderns nervous, such as race, sex, and so forth. Indeed, as we have seen, the left-hand path routinely breaks Indian caste, racial, and social prejudices, elevating persons of low caste and social standing to a divine standing. This initiatory discrimination of the sinister current is based on far more subtle factors. Primarily, the essential spiritual nature of a given individual is focused on. However, the sinister current is based on a recognition of the possibility for radical transformation; the states of *pashu*, *vira*, and *divya*, are not considered static. The beast can theoretically become divine through application of will and self-imposed discipline, yoked to sexual initiation and awakening of the Feminine Daemonic of *shakti* power.

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The Sexual Initiatrix

We have only covered some of the most basic criteria of initiatory gradation followed in the Indian left-hand path; the Tantras are immensely complicated and often contradictory in their suggestions. In the traditional Eastern system, it must be remembered, the *pashu*, *vira*, and *divya* are presumed to be of the male gender. Until relatively recent times, even the goddess-exalting lefthand path of India provided little in the way of instruction for the female adept.

Women, in the traditional left-hand path, are revered as the physical essence and incarnation of *shakti*. Women of the left-hand path in India have consequently aimed at training themselves to be a *bhairavi*, a fit vehicle for *shakti* and the guru of male students. It could be said that women in the lefthand path primarily serve a priestly function, as they are the physical medium through which the divine force manifests. Nevertheless, there are even more criteria applied to the woman chosen as the sexual initiatrix than for the male initiate who undergoes the initiation. Indeed, the traditional selection of the female sexual perceptor sometimes seems as complicated as the process of selecting a Tibetan Dalai Lama.

Although left-hand path sex magicians are not obliged to obediently follow the traditional methods and criteria of selecting an appropriate partner for erotic initiation, many useful principles may be gleaned from the ancient teachings. Searching the corpus of traditional Tantric literature for practical guidance is no easy task, since much of it is veiled in deliberate obscurity. Furthermore, many of the most meaningful methods are not to be found in any written account, since the essentials were always communicated privately from one initiate to the other.

One school of Tantric erotomagic teachings assumes that the *vira's* sexual consort will be a woman especially empowered to transmit the *shakti* energy, usually an initiated *yogini* ("she to whom one is yoked") descended from a recognized lineage. Such women are considered to exude a specific bioelectrical current during the sexual rite, and as mentioned earlier, even their sexual fluid or *amrita* was considered to be a magically potent elixir. The *yogini* is trained to guide the psychic and physical transformation of her male partners, while not giving way to the waves of sexual pleasure that ordinary women might succumb to during the rite. Such women are especially capable of reacting to sexual pleasure in a manner conducive to reaching advanced altered states of consciousness during coitus. The previously described mastery of vaginal control, or *sahajoli*, was considered to be a given in the left-hand path *yogini*.

The body of the female initiatrix, transmitting *shakti* during sexual union, is itself the conveyer of initiation unto her male partner, which in turn, eventually allows the male to initiate others into the sinister

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current. Conversely, some *shaktis* are initiated via sex with an already initiated male. This idea of a physical transference of initiation and spiritual power is often a stumbling block to Western aspirants, who find it difficult

to shake the culturally ingrained idea that spiritual wisdom is something communicated only through verbal constructs and rational discourse. Tanta accepts that the very sight of an image, such as the *mandala*, *yantra* or a specific form visualised in the mind, can create specific states of consciousness in the viewer that transcend analytic modes of thought. Furthermore, the Tantric tradition maintains that a genuine spiritual teacher can initiate his or her student through such subtle means as an unspoken thought, a mere glance, or a profound touch. If these transrational forms of contact are deemed to be sufficient modes of instruction, then the far more intense interplay of sex would obviously be an even more powerful technique of initiation.

The female partner, although most commonly referred to as the *shakti* or *mudra*, is known by a variety of names in various left-hand path circles. In India, she is frequently the *duti*, the "messenger" between the male adept and the goddess power Shakti. The word *duti* speaks to the female's function as priestess, the physical intermediary between human and divine modes of being. The consort is also referred to as the *lata*, or the creeper, which describes the nature of her embrace of the male. Tibetan left-hand path rites are also centered on the person of the *dakini*, or "lady sky-walker". A *dakini* is simultaneously the red-skinned naked demigoddess depicted in Tibetan religious art as an object of meditation as well as the human female who embodies her in sinister rites.

Within Tibetan tradition, secrecy plays a much greater role than in Indian *Vama Marga*, and some outwardly celibate lamas choose a female sexual partner who is known as the *Songyum*, literally the "secret mother". She is sworn to life-time secrecy, sometimes with threats of death by magic if she violates the pact. One Tibetan tradition designates the female sexual consort as "the helper of the man on the way to enlightenment." Clearly, this auxiliary concept of "helper" places the female in the position of a mere assistant to the male's illumination, denying any initiatory value for her in the sexual exchange.

This subservient role would seem to totally contradict the idea that the male adept actually considers his female partner to be the incarnation of the Goddess, serving to illustrate how wide a gap there can be between the *theory* of the left-hand path and its occasional corruption in practice. Anyone approaching the serious study of the left-hand path must always do so with eyes wide open to the human condition. Esoteric symbolism can often be a convenient justification for sexual abuse no more illuminated than what one might find in any modern workplace. The phenomenon of the spiritual "casting couch" is all too common among sex magicians in East and West,

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presenting a major obstacle to genuine erotic initiation in both cultures.

The choice of female partner for the left-handed *Panchamakara* rite is sometimes a violation of taboo in itself. Widows were often sought as ritual sex partners because of their traditional defiling status in Indian society, a custom dating back to the time when they occupied so low a rung in the social ladder that they were expected to burn themselves on their husband's funeral pyre. Even now, the female sexual consort in left-hand path rites is often referred to as a "widow", even in cases where she isn't technically a widow at all.

Some of the Indian Tantric teachings insist that the ideal *mudra* is to be found only among women in the age groups of sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen. Supposedly, their feminine *shakti* power is at its height of energy and dynamism at this phase of life. Another consideration is that a young woman's relative lack of involvement in the routine of daily existence allows them to more easily embody the Great Goddess, as she is unhampered by the day-to-day concerns distracting a more mature woman.

A young, physically attractive *shakti* is often thought to make for

the best consort, since she will be the most likely to awaken the powerful current of desire needed for the rite. But this is certainly not always the case. Much older women who have experienced decades as a *shakti* are equally valued. The traditional Indian respect for the wisdom of age explains this to a certain extent but it is also thought that the older *shakti's* more seasoned sagacity confers a deeper initiation upon their partners. Although the beauty of youth and the physical body are honored – even revered – in the left-hand path, at a certain level of initiation, ritual sex transcends all outer manifestations of ordinary physical attractiveness. Tantra cherishes the Feminine Daemonic in all of its guises and life-phases, from horrid Kali, the cruel bringer of death, to alluring Parvati, the sweet-smelling spirit of seduction. The *shakti* frequently fulfills her sacred function for her entire lifetime, often initiating several generations of adepts into the left-hand path. She also plays an important role in secretly teaching younger women the physical and mental skills required by the *mudra*.

Many Indian Tantric sects are adamant that one should only perform erotic rites with a woman married to another man, and never with one of one's own wives. The underlying theory informing this concept, sometimes known as the *parakiya*, or "illicit love" was that the female partner should ideally be inaccessible as a romantic mate, and only available for initiatory sexual purposes. The different quality of passion released in an adulterous union was often compared to the ardor of a divine adulterous pair like Krishna and Radha and thought to be better suited to initiatory sex than married relations. It was assumed that the male adept would not know his *shakti* partner in a mundane sense, conditions making it easier for him to

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exalt her as the living embodiment of Shakti. There is some similarity between this concept and the medieval Western cult of the knight and his lady, a divinized female who was almost always the unattainable wife of another, admired from afar. On a sexually sublimated level, the chivalric Lady is the true inspirer and motivator of the knight's deeds of valor – another form of the *shakti* principle.

The vast differences between the rigidity of Indian marriage customs and the relative fluidity of Western matrimony would tend to negate the purpose of this custom today. However, it *can* be magically useful to choose as one's sex-magical partner a person who is not your customary sexual partner or spouse. Whether he or she is the partner of another or not, this can focus your efforts on the initiatory meaning of your erotic interaction, divorced from the distractions of a familiar domestic or romantic arrangement. Naturally, this would apply to both male and female magicians.

It must be stressed, in contradiction to some popularized recent distortions of Tantric sexual mysticism in the West, that left-hand path sexual rites have almost nothing to do with romantic love as is commonly understood. Also, the left-hand path sacralization of Eros was never intended to serve as a profane therapy method to improve ordinary sexual relations between couples – its utilization of the sexual energy is directed to aims that transcend the human personality altogether.

Another frequently recommended practice by the Tantric Kaulas of Northern India, one of the most radically left-hand path Indian lineages, was to select a young woman of a lower caste as a magical consort. In the strict, caste-bound society of India, we can see how this infraction of a powerful social taboo might add strength to a left-hand path rite, providing the sexual initiation with a technically illicit, liberating character. However, in the disordered social environment of the modern West, where caste is largely based on economic class, and such boundaries are crossed routinely, it would be difficult to imagine a sexual liaison that would provide an

equivalent violation of taboo. All that can be said is that deliberately performing sex magic with a partner of either gender who breaks your own established norms could be advantageous to creating the appropriate energy for a sinister current working.

In both India and China, it is said that women who have given birth have lost too much of their feminine essence – respectively understood as *shakti* power or *yin* – to make for powerful erotic initiatrixes. This concept is connected to the Eastern magical cult of the virgin, in that it was said that virgins are the best erotic initiatory partners for men since they are supposedly overflowing with untainted feminine essence. Sexual contact with the alleged magical properties of the virgin's abundant power is claimed to

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be a great boon, preserving the youth of the male adept who absorbs it during intercourse. From an exoteric perspective, we consider both of these ideas to be subjective cultural traditions akin to the Eastern insistence on retaining the sperm lest male essence be weakened, and of little meaning to the pragmatic Western sex magician.

However, there is another esoteric layer of relevant meaning encoded in this traditional concept – the manifestation of Shakti most relevant to the left-hand path is always the wild, untamed feminine power in its pure state, outside of social boundaries. Therefore, the woman whose identity as wife and/or mother is of *paramount* importance to her would not be the ideal left-hand path sexual initiatrix. The maternal woman is a creature of nature, bound to natural law, and the respectable social status that motherhood bestows. Therefore, going beyond the biological level of childbearing, the woman who has not yet connected to the world of *natura* through childbirth can esoterically be understood as the more appropriate incarnation of the dark side of the feminine principle in left-hand path sexual initiation.

The ancient concept of virgin, in contrast to the modern understanding of the word, did not necessarily imply sexual chastity – it described *all* unmarried and unattached women, including prostitutes. Several Tantric texts recommend that only *a nayika* is appropriate for lefthand path sex rites. In the tightly defined social structure of India, the *nayika* was a class of woman that Sir Richard Burton, that pioneering scholar of Indian erotic custom, described as --any woman fit to be enjoyed without sin." Virgins, women married more than once, and courtesans, were all referred to as *nayika*, and were thus commonly employed by the left-hand path *shakta* as a physical incarnation of *shakti*.

Typifying the often contradictory nature of left-hand path Tantra, these very specific qualifications for a female sexual partner are often negated by another dominant Tantric doctrine: it is frequently said that *every* female is an incarnation of Shakti on earth, regardless of age, appearance, caste, or training. Therefore, in some *Vama Marga* sects, very old women representing Shakti in her crone aspect are chosen to be one's sexual initiatrix. Now, the Western reader might erroneously imagine that this practice indicates that the Eastern left-hand path has utterly transcended the discriminatory "ageism" of the West. But it should be understood that one of the reasons for selecting such *a mudra* is to force the male adept – normally accustomed to only experiencing desire for smooth, toned, youthful bodies – to sustain the same degree of sexual ecstasy with what he perceives as an elderly hag with wrinkled skin and sagging breasts. Part of the methodical system of general deprogramming and deconditioning of natural instincts and preferences that all left-hand path adepts must undergo, such

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experiences also deepen the initiate's understanding of the transitory nature of *maya* and its effect on the senses.

The supposed purity of literal virgins' sexual energy is sometimes

scorned in favor of the opposite erotic qualities of whores, who are considered to emanate their own unique feminine essence. Among adepts of the Kaula sect, the deliberate contradiction of opposites so frequently band in left-hand practice is epitomized by their designation of their partners in erotic ritual as *Vesya Kumarika* – virgin whores.

In the ancient India from which Tantricism developed, whoredom was not regarded as &reputable or criminal. The religious courtesan was revered as a sacred being, an earthly vessel of the power of female sexuality at its divine level. The sacred courtesan, or *devadasi* (literally, the god's slave) was also understood as the wife of the god, and even secular prostitution was respected as an art requiring specialized training that went much further than erotic dexterity and versatility. However, it was the temple prostitute, the *devadasi*, who was the preferred partner for Tantric rites. Trained from an early age in the art of *sahajoli*, the vaginal control needed for *Vama Marga* operations, her experience in the temple would have provided her with a sacred understanding of erotic exchange inaccessible to the average woman. The legendary sage King Darikapa was said to have been brought to illumination by a wealthy South Indian courtesan, now revered as an emanation of the goddess *Vajrayogini*.

Until the full-scale arrival of British troops in India unleashed a mass epidemic of venereal disease among these women, the *devadasi* were closely associated with the Tantric cult. Eventually, the ancient cult of the sacred courtesan in India was outlawed by the British as a moral abomination, after contact with the West reduced the religioerotic meaning of the practice into mundane commercial prostitution. By that time, the formerly respected sacred courtesans were referred to contemptuously by the British occupying forces that used them for hurried sexual relief as "nautchgirls."

The courtesans used in some left-hand path rites were free to attain a level of erudition and education far superior to the Hindu wife, whose opportunities for cultivation of the intellect were severely limited. In this, the *vesya* was similar to the courtesan of Ancient Greece, another society that consigned women strictly to the household. The *Vesya* of India, like the Greek *hetairae* were renowned as much for their wit and intelligence as for their beauty and sexual expertise. The sacred courtesans of India, like their sisters in other ancient cultures, were permitted a sophisticated education in philosophy, literature, music, dance, and painting from a very early age.

They were also well versed in all magical arts, which made them ideal partners for left-hand path rites. The fact that education for females was

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restricted almost exclusively to courtesans led to some confusion in the early days of Britain's colonization of India. When pious missionaries first set up

Christian schools for Indian girls, the girls' parents assumed that their daughters were to be trained for prostitution. Horrified missionaries had to inform ready customers that their young charges were not for sale.

One of the drawbacks of the traditional teachings that our female readers will have noticed is their integral assumption that the initiate they address must certainly be a male – women are almost exclusively accorded the role of initiatrix, never taking into account the possibility of a female initiate making use of the sexual energies of her male consort. Modern female magicians must ignore this bias as an unavoidable historical circumstance; much of the Western left-hand path's work lies in refashioning these traditional keys for use by contemporary female initiates.

Disembodied Sexual Initatrixes

The lustful imaginings of men's hearts do indeed produce artificial elementals and ... these elementals are something more than subjective images and have an objective etheric existence.

—Dion Fortune, *Psychic Self-Defense*

The left-hand path initiate is not confined in his choice of consort to the

human realm. Many Tantric rites encourage the adept to magically summon a transhuman elemental feminine entity – known as the *devi* in Hindu Tantra, or the *dakini* in Buddhist Tantra – into the body of his human partner. In a certain sense, this process of erotic theurgy is central to all left-hand path sexual rites, since the couple's goal during sexual union is always to transform their temporal consciousness into the divine states of Shiva and Shakti. However, the invocation of the *devi* and *dakini* can have a more specific function, roughly analogous to the Western sorcerer's conjuring of a particular demon or elemental to perform a task thought to be especially under that demon's jurisdiction. If the customary Tantric practice of attaining Shiva/Shakti-like consciousness through sexual ecstasy is primarily of an initiatory character, the *devi* and the *dakini* are often called upon for less mystical purposes, primarily when the Tantrika desires to effect a material transformation in *maya* – the *devi* or *dakini*, temporarily present in the sex magician's partner, serves as his accomplice in sorcery.

Through *Prayoga*, the adept dispenses with the material world altogether. He visualizes these female elementals with such realism that he can then endow them with autonomous animation. It is at this point that sexual congress is performed with the *devi* for a specific sorcerous purpose, often to absorb her knowledge of higher states of being or to "see" through her eyes.

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Left-hand path Tantrikas in India and in the *Vajra* tradition of Tibet have also developed their own magical procedures for summoning discarnate sexual entities that very much resemble the succubi and incubi of medieval European infamy. The *Dakini*, or "Those Who Fly Through The Heavens", who are said to sometimes appear to their human male consorts as achingly beautiful, exquisitely graceful demi-goddesses redolent of the sweet scent of lotus blossoms, are often described as providing sexual delight far in excess of the capabilities of human women. European and Kabbalistic demonology would also have it that once having known the paradisiacal embrace of the succubus/incubus, mere mortals are no longer satisfactory.

As with all manifestations of *shakti*, the *Dakini* has her wrathful guise as well; red-skinned she-devils of fierce vampiric appearance are often materialized for sexual rites. Perhaps the most terrifying of these *Vajrayoginis* who serve as disembodied sexual iniatrices of left-hand adepts is the sword-brandishing Chinnamasta, depicted as carrying her own decapitated head in her hand, while her neck spurts a fountain of blood. (The decapitated head symbolizes the left-hand path adept's ruthless elimination of the false self of social conditioning.)

Especially in the Buddhist branch of the left-hand path, the monk or sorcerer creates these beings as an exercise in learning to project utterly realistic thought-forms or *tulpas*, to visible – and sexually tangible – appearance. True success in the projection of these creatures is only thought to be attained when others perceive the *tulpa* as vividly as the magician. The art of effectively *sending* such disembodied entities to others is related to this skill.

As is so often the case, the Hindu and Buddhist branches of the left-hand path explain the conjuration of these sexual elementals from contradictory perspectives. For the Indian adept, the *devi*, once materialized, is believed to be an external being, existing outside of his mind. For the Tibetan, she is only a projection of *maya*, as unreal as all other apparitions in the phenomenal world – including himself.

Rites Of The Radical Left-Hand Path

Even among *Vama Marga* Tantric sects, already operating outside of the established order, a great disparity of approaches exist when it comes to just *how* far each cult will go in their transcendence of taboo and sexual norms to

reach divine status. Three of the eldest sects use methods considered far more extreme than those found in later derivations of Tantra. This indicates that the original impetus of the left-hand path was the most radical, gradually losing some of its atavistic nature as it was institutionalized, a process which eventually resulted in the antiseptic right-hand path of Tantra.

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Northern India is home to two of the most radical left-hand path factions, the Kaula and the Kapalika, both Shaivite, or Shiva-oriented cults that seem to be among the earliest *Vama Marga* practitioners. The Kapalikas, or Skull-Bearers, were so called because they always carried with them begging bowls fashioned from the tops of human skulls, known as *kapalas*, part of their deliberately forbidding outer appearance. Founded in medieval Kashmir, the Skull-Bearers, like spiritual Hell's Angels, deliberately went out of their way to attract insult and disrepute upon themselves from respectable quarters of society. The Kapalikas and other left-hand path sects often drink the consecrated *madya*, or wine, from their skull cups; drunk on the mystery of death.

The *kapala* is an especially important symbol in both Indian and Tibetan forms of left-handed Tantra, frequently depicted as one of the traditional accessories of the many dark goddesses revered by sinister initiates. In the case of Vajrayogini, the infinitely desirable scarlet-skinned *Dakini* that embodies the *Vajra* form of Tibetan Tantra, the goddess, wearing a necklace of human skulls, is often seen holding a skull-cap brimming with blood in her left hand. Tantric *Dakinis* are also shown making offerings of their own sexual elixir, or *amrita*, in these ubiquitous skull-cups. The symbolic complexities of the *kapala* transcend the immediately apparent association with death and mortality, also suggesting the importance of the brain that rests in the skull-cup to initiation. The research of Mircea Eliade, the great Rumanian scholar of shamanism, suggested that the sacred role of the skull cap in left-handed Tantra can be traced back to an archaic cult of goddess-worshipping head-hunters operating in Burma and Assam.

The left-hand path *siddha's* utilization of *maithuna*, or sexual congress, was not limited to initiatory intercourse between only two magicians. Allowing for all-out orgiastic rites as well as for the more prevalent Tantric union of two Tantrikas incarnating Shiva and Shakti, some of the Kaulas and Kapalikas teach that spiritual liberation and illumination are also to be found in the unrestricted transport of the senses, particularly through the vehicle of pleasure with woman. A *Kaula* is a clan, or spiritual community which one may be born into or be initiated into, and these *orgia*, as unrestrained as they are, are held stringently within the context of an initiatory school. Some Tantric scholars believe that the intentional promiscuity of the Kaula orgies may have inspired the religiosexual scenes portrayed in the famous erotic sculptures seen in the Khajuraho Temple.

The left-hand path orgy is quite different from the famous Holi festival of religious promiscuity (still celebrated today in a symbolic, nonsexual form) once held by the entire community to celebrate the coming of spring. During the Holi revels, semen – customarily so zealously preserved – was allowed to flow freely, and obscene songs were cheerfully sung to

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inspire high levels of lust. However, the Holi orgies were essentially rites intended to connect its participants with the natural forces of fertility and fructification. It was a festival of orthodox unleashing of Eros temporarily permitted by the religious community for the good of the collective society. This kind of group sexual activity – although outwardly similar to left-hand path practice – actually served a completely conventional and orthodox religious purpose, at an opposite extreme from the personal and initiatory non-natural character of left-hand path *orgia*.

A text particularly associated with the Kaulas is the *Kaulanava Tantra*, which includes this maxim that could serve as the Kaula clan's motto: "O mistress of Kaula! In Kaula *dharma* (wisdom) enjoyment becomes complete yoga; bad deeds are made good deeds, and this world becomes the seat of liberation." As with all *Vama Marga* erotic rites, the initiates involved have already reached the *vira* or *divya* disposition, and have been comprehensively trained in the cultivation and manipulation of altered states of consciousness long before their participation in the orgy. This last point cannot be stressed often enough; no matter how intense the somatic bliss created through orgiastic activity, it is extremely unlikely to have any lasting initiatory consequence on a mind not already prepared for the rite by a demanding course of spiritual discipline.

In the traditional left-hand path practice of India, we find many historical precedents for the orgy's usefulness to the more unrestricted sinister current of today. The rite of the five M's is also sometimes celebrated within the context of organized group sex carried out on a large scale. The group observance, sometimes known as *Chakra Puja*, or circle worship, sometimes consists of as many as a hundred couples engaged in simultaneous sex, often exchanging partners during the rite. Frequently, the Kaula performance of the *chakra puja* augments the consumption of the traditional forbidden elements with hemp, taken for its aphrodisiac properties as a sweetened meal, communally smoked, or in the form of a liquid concoction. As always, the entire ritual begins with breathing exercises intended to center the mind and activate *kundalini* in the bodies of the participants.

Within the axis of the circle, a young virgin radiating *shakti* power at its maximum intensity is sexually venerated by the senior male or female initiate, the *chakresvara*, as the living Shakti, the presiding power of the orgy. Alternately, a highly initiated yogini, emanating *shakti* power, would have sex with each of the male celebrants, who would in turn communicate her power to their female consorts during the orgy. The word "orgy" in regards to the *chakra puja* can lead one amiss if one imagines total abandon and lack of control. On the contrary, the left-hand path orgy is very much a controlled, disciplined harnessing of group sexual energy, under the watchful eye of the *chakresvara*, who carefully orchestrates the sexual couplings

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around him or her for maximum effect. The orgy would often begin with a lesson from the presiding guru on some aspect of metaphysical thought, which would be followed by a period of questions and answer between the teacher and his or her students.

While one aspect of this working drew its initiatory power from the breaking of orthodox Hindu sexual restrictions, there was – as always – a more practical magical purpose as well. The intense raising of sexual energy created by this orgiastic operation forms a dynamic current that can be tapped into for accomplishing sorcerous objectives. The intense sexual energy current of the *Chakra Puja* is maintained by perpetuating the orgy for many hours. The *chakresvara* would personally direct the raising of group sexmagical energy, much like the conductor of a sexual symphony.

Despite the socially forbidden and taboo nature of such rites, belief in their magical power was widespread even among respectable Hindus uninitiated into the left-hand path. For instance, the *chakra puja* orgies were sometimes enacted as "command performances" for kings of embattled areas who hoped to defeat their military foes with the intense level of erotic force aroused by the circle.

The application of carnal sorcery towards destructive goals may seem like a contradiction to those who subscribe to the common misunderstanding that sex magic must necessarily be of a "loving" nature. In fact, the interplay of opposite forces integral to the left-hand path makes sexual ecstasy an ideal weapon in the waging of magical warfare. This

apparent incongruity is well symbolized in the simultaneously joyouswrathful and lustful-destructive nature of Kali's capricious play with the universe.

The circular form of the *chakra puja* orgy is probably the historic derivation of the commonly seen mandalas that show many divine couples in the copulating *yab-yum* (mother-father) position surrounding a principal divine figure in the center. These mandalas are typically interpreted as purely spiritual symbols by right-hand path Hindus, Buddhists and Western art historians but the real-life orgiastic origin of the symbolism seems clear enough.

A variant of the *Chakra Puja* is the *Choli Marga*, which takes its name from the *choli*, a brightly colored blouse worn by the female celebrants. This rite begins when each female Tantrika removes her *choli* and tosses it in a straw basket in a magically prepared circle. Each male Tantrika, with eyes closed, randomly selects a *choli* from the basket, thus selecting by chance his *shakti* consort for the night's ritual.

If this random pairing of erotic ritual partners most frequently breaks the taboo of caste, it also sometimes disrupts the more deeply-seated taboo of incest. As the initiatory clan, or *Kaula*, may be composed of one's

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closest relatives, the *Choli Marga* also frequently led to sexual congress between mothers and sons, brothers and sisters, and all other imaginable combinations. The Tibetan wrathful goddess Lha-Mo, one of the personifications of Kali, is said to be impregnated with an incestuous child, a breaking of taboo that makes her all the more sacred to left-hand path adepts.

Central to the overriding factor of chance which guides this orgiastic working is the complete breakdown of socially ordained order, a concentrated awakening of erotic ecstasy outside of accepted bonds. One of the restrictions of the *choli marga* orgy is that the celebrant is usually not permitted to perform the sexual rite with his or her legal spouse. As in the more common two-person rite we have already described, each female initiatrix sits to the left of each male *shakta*, an affirmation of the sinister nature of femininity. In one variant of the left hand path orgy, known as the spider-web rite, each orgiast is connected to all the others in the circle by a piece of cloth. Each strand of cloth creates a symbolic spider web through which sexual energy is transmitted, evoking the web-like nature of Tantra itself.

The orgiastic and incestuous erotic rites of the *Kaula* and *Kapalika* are tame in comparison to the thoroughgoing embrace of the outlawed and the outcast we observe among the *Aghori* sect. The *Aghori* reached their peak sometime in the sixteenth century but are still active as of this writing in contemporary Varanasi, albeit in increasingly dwindling numbers.

The founder of the *Aghori*, Baba Kinaram, was revered in his lifetime as a living *avatar* of Shiva, and according to legend died at the ripe old age of 150 years during the latter half of the 1-00s. Like all Tantrikas, the sexual union of Shiva and Shakti is of especial concern to the *Aghori* – *Aghora* is the name of one of the five faces of Shiva – but they specifically personify the male and female principles as the goddess Tara and her consort Mahakal, Shiva as Lord of the Dead and the cremation ground. The threeeyed, laughing Tara of the cremation grounds revered by the *Aghori* is a particularly grim image of divinity, her matted hair held in place by a writhing serpent, swathed in a tiger skin indicative of her ferocity. Tara is often depicted carrying a dagger and the familiar skull cap of the *Kapalikas* and *Aghori*. Although there is probably no etymological connection, Tara is thought by some modern Tantrikas to be simply the Indian manifestation of an archaic divine being present throughout the ancient world. This speculation is based on the goddess's name, which seems to echo that of

Ishtar and Astarte – manifold forms of the goddess related to the opposing but connected poles of extreme sexual power and destructive force.

This connection with Shiva/Shakti's ghastlier visage lends the Aghori a decidedly macabre character – they dwell in cremation grounds, which

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serve as their ritual sites and holy places, and when they are not naked, they wear the shrouds of corpses. Their hair is deliberately disheveled, like Tara's.

They smear their bodies with the ashes of the cremated, an act of deliberate pollution which would be strictly taboo for the Brahmin caste. Like the skullbearing

Kapalika from which they very probably descended, the Aghori beg for food with bowls made from the craniums of human skulls. These ghoulis begging bowls also serve as the Aghori's dinner plates – nourishment for life taken from death.

The Aghori pursue the essential Tantric left-hand path teaching of the absolute identity of opposites. For them, the same things condemned as utterly impure by conventional standards are to be made sacred – taboo is viscerally transcended and revealed to be illusory, an initiatory lesson leading to the god-like separation and liberation from the norms restricting the *pashu*.

The desired result of Aghoric left-hand practice is the attainment of a transhuman impartiality to the phenomena of Shakti's *maya*. The confrontation of inner demons, fears and terrors is an important aspect of Aghoric left-hand path initiation, which often lead the Aghori to pursue places of solitude from human society, such as cremation grounds, caves, and isolated jungles.

The Aghori are probably most notorious for their own singular celebration of *Panchamakara*, a variant of the Five M's observance that far surpasses in transgression the secret rite we have already described. The *matsya* (fish), *mamsha* (meat), *madya* (wine), *mudra* (cereal), and *maithuna* (ritual coitus) central to other left-hand path rites of initiation are replaced by the Aghori with another list of prohibited "M" elements. The Aghora Tantrics make a sacrament of ritual necrophagia by cannibalistically devouring human rather than animal meat (*mamsha*), specifically the flesh of human corpses at the cremation grounds. Although the concept of sacred cannibalism is probably one of the most startling features of traditional left-hand practice, it should be remembered that even the Catholic rite of Mass, with its ceremonial consumption of the "flesh and blood" of Christ is only a symbolic recreation of the same general idea.

Along with wine and other intoxicants, the Aghori adept drinks human blood (*medha*) and human urine (*meha*). Coprophagia or the consumption of human excrement (*mala*) rounds out a sacralised meal that is concluded with *mehana*, a word that can be taken to mean penis or semen.

None of these ritual violations of taboo are motivated by the same instincts that might inspire the contemporary profane urine, shit or blood enthusiast to partake of his or her particular fetish. Above and beyond the considerable release of magical energy freed by these actions, the Aghoric goal is to overcome all sense of conditioned fear or disgust obstructing the initiate's awareness, reaching a state of complete neutrality towards all

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manifestations of *shakti-maya*. In many cases, the consumption of such traditionally impure substances as human urine, blood, feces, and flesh is usually confined to a one-time breakthrough in consciousness; to repeatedly break these taboos once a transcendent insight has been gained through their ritual enactment would be senseless from an initiatory perspective. Other Aghoris continue these practices for specific magical purposes unrelated to the initial transgression of taboo.

One fairly common Buddhist practice in Tibet reveals an Aghori influence. The initiate is compelled to visualize the drinking of five fluids: excrement, brains, semen, blood, and urine, which are alchemically

transformed through disciplined thought control into wisdom-providing "nectars" sacred to Tibetan Buddhism. As is often the case, the Tibetan Buddhist adept – who radically rejects the reality of all apparent planes of existence – mentally imagines those taboo actions which the Indian Aghoris actually perform in keeping with the concept that *maya* is paradoxically real and illusory at the same time.

The Aghori's preferred initiatrix in sexual congress is a menstruating woman of the "untouchable" lower caste, whose menstrual blood mingled with his own semen is sometimes consumed at the conclusion of the rite.

This Aghori practice has a secular analogue in a modern Western "sect" dedicated to taboo-transgression; a well-known rite of initiation for the Hell's Angels motorcycle club decrees that the Angel must "earn his wings" by performing cunnilingus on a menstruating woman.

The Aghori sexual rite is often performed in a cremation ground at night, while both partners are seated upon a corpse. Unique to the Aghori among Tantric sects is a special emphasis on necromancy. The spirits of the dead still thought to be present in the recently expired corpse for a designated time are supposedly controlled through Aghoric sexual magic. These once secret rites were first documented outside of India by a sixteenth century Persian chronicler, at the beginning of the Aghoric movement. During the Victorian age, India's British conquerors were horrified to learn that these practices still continued among the remaining Aghori, who numbered no more than 300 by the late nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the Aghori are still commonly revered as holy men by many respectable middle class Indian devotees to this day.

Even more than the other left-hand path Tantric sects, the Aghori emphasise *direct*, spontaneous insight of reality rather than merely intellectual knowledge of books or scriptures. As B. Bhattacharya describes them in his autobiographical account of left-hand initiation: "The Aghoris are direct teachers who make nothing of the body, nothing of the body functions, nothing of fear, shame, scorn. They look like the rejects of life and senses; but they reject nothing." Only very few teachers competent to awaken this form of initiation are traditionally understood to operate at any given time,

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and these few make themselves extremely difficult to locate. Although a few contemporary writings of varying reliability on the Aghoric left-hand path school have emerged in recent years in the West, actual initiation into the school is always carried out through one-to-one personal induction.

If the revulsion inspired in the conventional-minded by Aghori lefthanded practices were not enough to scare away those only superficially curious in their practices, Aghoris often affect the outer appearance of a perpetually angry or insane temperament as added deterrent to the profane. Those who have sought instruction from them by appearing at the forbidding cremation grounds and garbage dumps they frequent are often met with mocking derision. Their habit of adopting serpents as mascots has not endeared them to the squeamish, and many who have approached the Aghori have had human skulls and bones thrown at them as a greeting.

The Aghori well illustrate Philip Rawson's cogent observation: "Anyone who actually carries Tantra to its ultimate degree, as real devotees must, can only end up a scandalous outcast." It must be said that very few initiates who walk the left-hand path, in East or West, ever go this far. In their refusal to accord with socially acceptable concepts of the spiritual, and their deliberate worsening of reputation, the Aghori are the living example of the Tantric left-hand path proverb that states "without earning a bad name, one does not get to the nameless."

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At The End Of The Path: Liberation

Such are the most prevalent historical methods of the left-hand path. But

before we can trace the introduction and development of these techniques in the Western world some very important questions remain unanswered. A path, it must be presumed, leads somewhere. Toward what destination does the left-hand path finally lead the walker who follows its obscure and difficult way? And *why* do adherents of the sinister passage subject themselves to such outlandish physical, mental and spiritual exertions?

In a word, the end of the path is liberation.

There has been much confusion in the West caused by uninformed speculation asserting that the right-hand path and left-hand path differ because of their goals. This is not true. As we have attempted to clarify, only their methods differ. The erotic and physically enacted left-hand path and the non-sexual, sheerly symbolic right-hand path ultimately aim to reach the exact same final destination, namely *moksha*, or liberation. Inevitably, the followers of each path have tended to consider their route the best way but the intent of liberation is the same for both. But despite this shared final destination, many right-hand path Tantrikas look down on the left-hand path adept as a sex-mad voluptuary, just as many sinister initiates ridicule the follower of the *Daksina Marga* as a timid prude. But it is often said by adepts of both methods that the *Vama Marga*, due to its extreme methods, is the faster way to liberation.

In the list of essential principles that opened this section, we stated that the left-hand path is "a way of liberation and illumination in *this* lifetime." These are rousing words, but without placing them in some sort of tangible reality, they are no better than poetic abstractions. Liberated from what? Illuminated to what realization?

We have already indicated that the left-hand path adept seeks to liberate him/herself from passive subjection to the illusory nature of *maya*, thus freeing consciousness from the binds of self-created delusion. This assault on normative mentation is conducted on several fronts, engineered by a series of self-created shocks to the system.

Within the subtle body, sexually animating the *kundalini* serpent opens the initiate's third eye, allowing awakening to a more complete awareness of reality prohibited by the usual sleeping state of mankind. In the physical body, the sacralization of the orgasm during ritual sex provides access to an altered state permitting a piercing rending of the veil, a transcendent ecstasy that opens the gateway to direct perception of the totality of being. Through the performance of sexual magic the *shakta* and *shakti* can alter the substance of *maya*, revealing the flexible nature of the world of visible manifestations, and the hidden extent to which mind can participate in the divine function of creating new realities.

By breaking taboos and overcoming self-generated obstacles, the

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initiate is liberated from the spell cast by the hypnotizing forces of social control and social identity, reaching a level of freedom from such concerns that allows him or her to step far outside the boundaries of the conditioned human. By embracing the horrors and joys of physical manifestation with equal fervor, the sinister adept is further freed from the windowless prison cell of either/or dualistic thinking. That transcendence of the human reaches its pinnacle during the veneration of his/her sexual partner as a divine being, and the initiate's own Eros-fueled ecstatic transformation of personal self into divine Self.

In all of these actions, the adept is liberated by realizing that every level of reality is his or hers to play with at will, a serious game and a joyful discipline that continually remanifests the left-hand path Tantrika's consciousness at ever higher strata of being. That much is in accord with the traditional teaching of the left-hand path. Although we have found great power in most of the traditional practices of the left-hand path, and recommend them to our readers, it is the next step suggested by many gurus

of the *Vama Marga* that we take exception to.

According to the most commonly taught theory of *moksha*, the last liberation from the proposed cycle of suffering, illusion and repeated reincarnation can only be achieved by attaining Oneness with the Absolute Mind, or godhead. In other words, the majority of Eastern left-hand path initiates seek to reach that state of non-being known as *nirvana*, which literally means "the candle is blown out" – the cessation of existence as a self, the willed dissolution of mind in the blinding white light of *Brahman*, the ultimate, impersonal principle said to exist beyond the screen of this world of appearances. A commonly used metaphor for this goal is the idea of the individual psyche as a drop of water being absorbed into the greater ocean from which it originally emerged.

Some Westerners have oversimplified this concept, and confused this absolute suprasensual state with Nature and/or God, familiar concepts in the West. In fact, *Brahman* is neither – it transcends any such categorizable frame of reference, and the entirety of the natural cosmos and any form of deity that humans might imagine are considered to be merely transitory mirages in comparison to this far greater reality of realities. Theoretically, the left-hand path or right-hand path initiate who has accomplished this form of liberation in a lifetime, *no longer exists*, although the physical body through which this goal was accomplished still breathes, walks, eats, excretes, and carries out the functions of animal existence. The state of the Tantrika who has achieved union with *Brahman* has often been compared to an empty cocoon from which the butterfly has flown, a vacant shell.

Although many left-hand path teachers will tell you that the above described selfless goal is the highest summit of initiation that can be reached through the sinister current, we reject this conclusion. Thus far, we have

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attempted to carefully present the authentic *Vama Marga* as it actually exists as a traditional teaching. At this point, however, we deviate from the most widely accepted form. The search for *nirvana*, from our point of view, is a kind of spiritualized nihilism, a suicide of core consciousness grounded in an unfortunate Eastern tendency towards world hatred that's antidote, in our opinion, can be found in the joyful magic of the left-hand path.

The goal we seek to reach through the left-hand path is *not* dissolution of the self into a Oneness greater than ourselves. Rather, we aim to strengthen the most essential part of the self – alternately referred to as the psyche, the daemon, or the soul – into a god-like intelligence that remains deliberately separate from that impersonal Oneness.

It seems absurd to us to perform the rites of sexual individuation and self-deification inherent in the left-hand path, freeing one's self from illusion thereby, only to dissolve the now separated and self-deified consciousness at the end of one's journey. Therefore, we walk the left-hand path towards the infinite perpetuation of the psyche. At first, this model of initiation may come as a relief to some, who might imagine that this means that they are now can comfortably continue forever as they currently exist, intact and unchanged. However, a sharp differentiation must be made here between the daemonic psyche we seek to sustain into an enduring divinized force, and the human personality, that temporary mask of identity formed by largely social factors, with its likes and dislikes, its habits and its neuroses.

That relatively shallow temporal persona *does* increasingly dissolve as left-hand path initiation proceeds to work its *solve et coagula* upon the adept. In fact, the personality is often the most fatal enemy of the initiate who seeks to liberate consciousness, as it rather desperately clings to familiar boundaries. Perhaps the most perilous danger of left-hand path initiation is the frequently observed grasping to maintain the personality, even as consciousness expands beyond all known limits.

So the sinister liberation we are speaking of can never be a

comfortable thing, as is sometimes imagined, as simple as walking from one room into the other. Like a rocket jettisoning its burnt out fuel tanks as it ascends, *something* must be left behind in the process of self-deification. The operation of separating the unnecessary aspects of your socially manufactured self from the enduring core Self is often a profoundly disconcerting metamorphosis. The left-hand path, no matter what ultimate goal is sought, calls for the death of some aspects of the self, as is made clear by the wide-spread presence of death symbolism and imagery in its traditional Tantric practice. Not the least of these is the "death" experienced in the intensely felt orgasm of sinister sexual rites.

The ancient Tantras themselves, like so many magical texts, are enigmatic enough to be interpreted in a multitude of ways. Some seemingly

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suggest the course of continued self-deification that we have followed, others appear to point the initiate towards the more conventional Eastern road to selflessness. Of course, there are many left-hand path Tantrikas who have cast aside the final goal recommended by most traditional instructors in favor of the eternal continuance of the psyche. This is relatively rare, however, and such Adepts are often condemned as having fallen from the path.

Indeed, one of the authors of this book was self-righteously scolded by an otherwise liberated *Vama Marga* instructor from whom some of the techniques spelled out in this book were learned. According to her, to use the left-hand path for any purpose other than the final unraveling of the self was akin to "black magic", and was a grave abuse of the teaching. However, we take the more pragmatic view that any technique is merely a tool that can be used by the practitioner for the attainment of any objective. To those of our readers who wish to follow the left-hand path to psychic oblivion, it is only fair to point out that this will *not* be the course we will be taking in the remainder of the book. In this regard, our understanding of the left-hand path is without limits, following the heretical and dissident unorthodoxies of the *Vama Marga* to their logical conclusions.

The Tantras, from which the majority of the Indian left-hand teaching is derived, have frequently been rewritten and reshaped by later interpreters, many of them Brahmins hostile to the radical methods of the *Vama Marga*. There is no doubt that in the process of such editing and revision, a great deal of deliberate distortion and watering-down of the true aims of the sinister current was accomplished, in an attempt to make Tantra more palatable to orthodox Hindus and Buddhists. However, he or she who moves away from the accepted written theory and engages in the actual body-to-body *practice* of the left-hand path will discover an esoteric technology of the flesh that leads anywhere but the "blowing out of the flame" of *nirvana*. One of the mouth-to-ear secrets of the whispered doctrine is that the left-hand path can take the initiate to the very opposite of *nirvana*: the willed recreation of your present self into a deified psyche – a *bodhisattva* – whose vivid flame may burn even past the death of the physical body, that alchemical laboratory of transmutation. In this sense, the state of consciousness attained through left-hand path sexual congress can be understood as a bodily trial run for creating your own godhood, as well as the process through which that godhood is wrought.

To explore this possibility further, it will be necessary to trace the sinister current as it has manifested outside of the Tantric tradition. From the very cradle of civilization in the temples of Babylon, hidden beneath the seemingly sex-negative creed of Christianity, and in the Western magical revival of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the siren song of the lefthand path calls.

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BOOK TWO:

The Sinister Current In The West

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IV.

In The Beginning Was The Word Decoding The Language Of Western Magic

*If language is not used rightly, then what is said is not what is meant.
If what is said is not what is meant, then that which ought to be done
is left undone.*

- Confucius

What cannot be articulated can't be realized.

- Order of Sekhmet Statement

The Logos Of The Left-Hand Path

Before we turn our attention to the history mechanics and praxis of left-hand path sex magic in the Western world, a preliminary examination of the wider magical context in which the sex magician performs his or her operations is necessary. The magician who attempts to clarify these basics of magical practice is immediately faced with the need to come to terms with the archaic, often opaque language traditional of the Black Arts. Throughout this book, we have already made frequent use of the words "magic" and "magician", "sorcery", "theurgy", "initiation" and "initiate", "daemonic", "workings", and the "psyche."

All too often, these elementary elements of the magician's vocabulary are applied without precision, necessitating this lexicon, which aims to keep later misunderstandings to a minimum. Although all of these words are drawn from the ancient Graeco-Roman Mediterranean magical culture, they are rooted in the same Indo-European family of languages that gives us most of the Sanskrit words used in the Tantric left-hand path teaching of erotic initiation. Not the least of these, as we shall see, is the word "magic" itself.

For the beginning magician, who may first be orienting him/herself to the sometimes bewildering and contradictory maze of esoteric terminology, this chapter will help develop useful habits of utilizing the magical vocabulary in a conscious and deliberate manner, rather than unthinkingly appropriating terms out of convenience or mental lethargy. Some stale magical phrases are embraced simply due to a received mystique that may be associated with them, much like the allure that a proven brand name exerts on a consumer. As for the more experienced magician, analyzing

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the magician's familiar vocabulary through fresh eyes can only add accuracy to one's existing magical approach. In the left-hand path magician's work to seize more power in the inner and outer worlds, a discriminating and judicious methodology of word usage is an essential aspect of reconstituting reality according to desire.

One of the most common archetypes of magic in folklore and legend is the magician who performs miraculous feats by uttering the correct magical word at just the right time. Whether it is the well-timed enunciation of "Abracadabra!" as taught in ancient magical texts and popularly adopted by stage magicians, or Aladdin's "Open Sesame!", the informing principle is the same. Of course, the accomplishment of one's goals is never quite that easy or predictable. Nevertheless, there is a grain of truth in this legendary prototype: using words correctly and with full cognizance of their meaning is a magical power of the first order. It's a skill that too few magicians attempt to master, perhaps because it seems less glamorous and romantic than other branches of the Black Art. An astounding measure of human perception and creation of reality is composed of the weaving and manipulation of the

abstract symbolism of words. One particular combination of words can literally open infinite doors of opportunity for the speaker, while the same exact words uttered in another situation might guarantee that the speaker is murdered.

What is true in an exoteric sense, is confirmed in esoteric teachings from all quarters of the world. As we have seen, the Tantric left-hand path teaching maintains that the universe can be controlled through a precise magical technology of sound manipulation related to words uttered by the gods to create the worlds, the science of *mantra*. Very similar is the Nordic lore of the runes, especially the magical and mystery-veiling verbal vibration said to be released by the proper utterance of the runic staves. The Biblical *Book Of John*, plagiarizing a much older Mesopotamian text, famously states that "In the beginning was the Word" or *Logos*. *The Memphite Theology* of ancient Egypt also contends that the creation of the world was implemented by the spoken word of a divine being – the *neter* Ptah. The left-hand path magician recreates the universe in part by taking on the god-like role of uttering the hidden words of power.

Despite this overwhelming and universal importance of words to the creation and ordering of reality, the majority of humans misuse these potentially sorcerous tools with exasperating inexactitude, creating realities for themselves that are profoundly disordered and chaotic, because they *literally* don't know what they're saying. Therefore, the magician is well advised to become proficient at the application of words to the manipulation of reality. Not all magical skills are learnable; this one is. Many a magician will protest that they don't need words to perform their magic. This is very

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often true, and obviously in the ecstatic and physical techniques of erotic magic, words are often superfluous and even irrelevant to the objective. Nevertheless, magic is essentially the art of communicating to different levels of reality, and the honing of word structure and meaning is a key ingredient in all communication, even (paradoxically) non-verbal methods.

So that this directory is as clear as possible, our first order of business is to define the basic terms we will use, especially those expressions that most easily give rise to confusion. The vocabulary of Western magic is almost entirely handed down to us from the world of Graeco-Roman antiquity, a cultural matrix imbued from top to bottom with an unambiguous acceptance of the value of the magical art that contemporary Western culture can in no way approximate. Many of the cognitive dilemmas inherent in self-described magicians of this era making use of the inherited terminology of long-dead cultures can be clarified by a more precise understanding of the actual etymological roots of these words.

Furthermore, the recognition of the fact that words carry very specific powers and associations has long been a basic core principle of magical practice. Like both the poet and the engineer, the magician strives to discover just the correct word, understanding that *nomen est omen* (name is power). What one calls something or somebody can actually change that object, quality or person in subtle but significant ways. As Julius Evola remarked in his *Men Among The Ruins*, "every word has its soul". Our dissection of the magical vocabulary is carried out in this spirit. Contrary to the academic's dry and rational analysis, our quest is for the hidden soul, the animating *daemon* concealed in these words. The left-hand path magician deliberately seeks to break with the general pattern of the mass mind as demonstrated in any particular time and place. In the general atmosphere of illiteracy bred by an increasingly audio-visual culture, what could be more arcane than developing your knowledge of words?

Magic

Inasmuch as this work is directed to the practicing magician, it behooves us to dig into the foundation of the original meaning of magic itself. "Magic"

and "magician" derive most recently from their Latin forms *magicus* and *magus*, which in turn were derived by the Romans from the Greek *magikos*. The ancient Greeks commonly referred to magic as *magike tekhnē*, literally "the in of the Magi." The modern magician does well to remember the ancient concept of magic as in art, noticing as well that *tekhnē* is the root word for "technology". Approaching magical praxis as a delicate balance of intuitive and aesthetic art form and logical and rational technology – at once an esoteric science and a Black Art – can allow for a more exacting approach to the development of this skill.

The Greek concept of *magike tekhnē* was decisively influenced by

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the Iranian Magi, known in the ancient Persian tongue as the *Magoi*. The Magi were the Medean priestly caste of Persia, respected throughout the ancient world for their wizardry. Perhaps the best-known account of the *Magoi* is found in the Biblical myth of the three *Magi* who travel to Bethlehem from distant kingdom to bring symbolic gifts to the infant Jesus upon his birth, clearly acknowledging the birth of one of their own, a fellow magician.

The Persian word *magoi* is, in turn, connected to the Sanskrit word *Maya*, which we have already described as the veil that obscures the illusive nature of reality from human eyes. *Maya* is also the very substance from which the Indian gods form reality, and the divine beings are known in this context as *mayin*, or magicians. An understanding of *Maya*, as the root of the word magic, commands our especial attention, as it is *maya* which the lefthand path magician primarily works with. By viewing the roots of the word "magic" through the differing lenses of the ancient Greek, Persian and Sanskrit definitions of the word, it may be that the modern magician can attain a more complete understanding of what it really means to be a magician. For while the definitions of magic have altered dramatically in the intervening centuries, certain core principles remain timeless and unchanging.

Now, various authors of many magical traditions have offered their "definitive" interpretation of magic. As long as one recognizes that every author (including the authors of this book) necessarily describe what is a deeply subjective experience when they attempt to define magic, the magician will avoid being confined by the personal restrictions of any particular magical theorist (again, including the authors of this book). However, when one removes the dross or idiosyncrasies of this or that cultural/personal perspective, certain key components can be observed in all definitions of magic. Basically, magic is any activity that seems to create change in the natural universe that apparently defies strictly scientific understanding of the principle of cause and effect. These changes, which may manifest subtly or dramatically in tangible reality, or in the psyche of the individual performing the magical operation, are usually engineered by the manipulation of any number of symbolic systems that communicate a magician's will to either an internal or external agency. For the sex magician, that symbolic system is primarily the human body itself, especially its erotic energies and ecstasies. Magic always seeks to exercise a certain measure of control over what can be very loosely termed as "natural" or "supernatural" forces, according to the vantage point of the magical tradition within which the sorcerer/initiate operates. It is this aspect of personal control over universal properties that some scholars of religion have used to differentiate between religious activity, which is usually based

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on an acceptance of the way things are, and an attempt to harmonize humanity with this natural external order, and magical activity; which is usually based on the attempt of the individual to determine his or her own power in the worlds. Beyond the observation of such generalities, it is very

difficult to proceed without resorting to dogma, doctrine or partisan perspective.

Academics, observing magical practices from the supposedly objective perspective of dispassionate research, have never provided a totally satisfying definition of what magic actually is. Magicians, perceiving the same phenomenon from the entirely subjective angle of the practitioner, have done little better. The left-hand initiate can move away from the archaic esoteric language altogether, gladly leaving the dusty baggage of occultism behind for less confining models. What occultists refer to as magic can just as easily be called the breaking of conditioning and reprogramming; the replacing of one reality with another. The central notion informing magic, by whatever name, is that what is commonly accepted as reality is far more pliant than we have been led to believe. The magician is essentially a reality engineer, shaping the malleable parts of his or her own mind, and consequently bringing about desired reality alteration in the substance of the world.

Truth to tell, most magicians live in a reality every bit as inflexible as their non-magically oriented fellows, with only the most superficial differences. Typically, during the time in which their rituals are performed, magicians may attempt to exercise their wills and imaginations to shape a few specific details of the phenomenal world to their liking. But once their ritual is over they basically return to the safe, orderly definition of reality they started from. What's worse, that reality is very often one in which the parameters and rules were decided upon by others.

Magic, understood as the manipulation of *maya*, is present in every aspect of human interaction, not simply within rarefied occult circles. Advertisers and political spin doctors, whose carefully orchestrated spells cause the reality of millions to dance to their tunes, demonstrate a more sound grasp of magical principles than the majority of occultists, although they might never recognize their activities as partaking of magic. Whenever we respond automatically to symbolic systems, we are enmeshed in another's magical ritual. One of the most potent world-wide magical workings is locked into our acceptance of certain pieces of government issued paper as being of intrinsic value. When everyone in a crowded courtroom stands because a man in a black robe enters the room, an ancient hex is operating.

A truly effective magical act will not only effect the desired goal in the universe. It will radically transform a magician's very self, shocking him

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or her awake, allowing a revelatory understanding of how accepted reality is based on obedient agreement with ideas, authorities and conditioning that blinds us to our own cherished illusions. The reader is wise to not accept any definition of so broad and complex an activity as the ultimate word on the subject. Magic is one of those words, like love or art, that must finally be determined by the individual undergoing the phenomenon and not by any external authority. The magician, like the artist or the lover, must constantly create new and revised definitions of magic as new understanding accrues through experience. Just as no two art critics will ever entirely agree on a definition of what constitutes art, so it is with magic. One serviceable definition from a non-occult perspective, was offered by Andre Breton and Antonio Artaud, describing their surrealist revolution in 1925: "A means of totally transforming the mind and everything which resembles it".

Michael Baigent and Richard Leigh provide another viable approach to magic in their history of alchemy, *The Elixir And The Stone*: "In its broadest sense, magic is the 'art of making things happen'. In its broadest sense, therefore, magic can be defined as a metaphor for the dynamic relationship between human consciousness or will and everything that lies beyond it – events, circumstances, objects, other people, Magic

implies at least some element of control, either through guidance or manipulation. It implies, that is, a technique whereby reality is encouraged, persuaded, induced or coerced to conform to certain specific objectives. Magic, in short, is the process of exploiting the malleability of reality, and of shaping it – or alchemically transmuting it – in accordance with given purposes or goals."

Much as with any consideration of the objective value of artistic creation, what one magician considers an experience of infinite profundity may seem entirely worthless or even ridiculous to another magician. For this reason, among many others, magic is a discipline ill-suited for those who require hard and fast rules and absolutely verifiable results.

Although we use the word magician in this text to facilitate ease of communication, it should be noted that those operating outside of a Western classical cultural framework are not limited to this word to describe themselves. The Sanskrit word *siddha* is commonly used in India to describe those who practice magic, and is certainly appropriate to the left-hand path, considering its sub-continental roots. Related to this word through their common Indo-European language stream is the Nordic practitioner of *seithr*, a left-hand path sex magic of Northern Europe, a Hyperborean shamanism. From Siberia comes the word *shaman*, the master of ecstasy whose magic is achieved while in a state of trance. A multiplicity of other ways to describe

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the magician can be discovered in the esoteric traditions of the world; a surprising amount of power can be awakened by locating exactly the right designation for your practice.

Magic Black And White

A word already fraught with ambiguity and open to interpretation becomes even mistier when painted a specific color. There are those who insist on designating this form of magic as "black" and that form as "white." In our view, this color-coding does nothing but perpetuate very limited and arbitrary cultural and religious prejudices at the expense of clarity. At its most simplistic and ignorant level, the black magic/white magic appellation is connected to the equally primitive good/evil dichotomy. Since we attribute no objective meaning whatsoever to the terms "good" and "evil", it only follows that we must reject the popular consideration of black magic as magic performed in the service of Evil and white magic as magic that perpetuates the Good. Ancient Greek *magi*, despite their relative lack of moral judgment, described practices intended to harm, bind or hypnotize as *kakotechnia*, "the evil art". This concept can be compared to the common Indian description of Tantric left-hand path magic – especially the previously described six malevolent rites – as *Abichara*.

Historically, the phrase black magic seems to have been devised by the alchemist Albertus Magnus, the thirteenth century mage who proposed that black magic was the "demonic" opposite of a benevolent natural magic, which he attributed to heavenly angelic powers. The twentieth century mage Gurdjieff, often denigrated as a black magician by his detractors, proposed a typically idiosyncratic definition of black magic, describing it as "a falsification, an imitation of the outward appearance of 'doing'." For those magicians whose identity formation demands a simple, easily grasped label, the roles of black magician and white magician are attractive categorizations requiring a bare minimum of thought to adopt. Self-described black magicians, enamoured of popular conceptions of the allure of evil, and usually motivated by a need to prove their social defiance, can step into an instant one-size-fits-all subcultural role satisfying the need for easy rebellion.

At the other extreme, the self-described white magician, who is often compelled to prove his or her social acceptability, can pat themselves heartily on their backs for becoming such benevolent beings. Both tactics reduce the complex multiverse of magical operations to a cartoon level. If such

symbolism is sufficient to satisfy your aesthetic needs as a magician, we can hardly argue with matters of personal taste; by all means, describe yourself in whatever terms you like – only do so *consciously*. However, for the more complicated pursuit of magic encouraged here, the differentiations of black and white magic will be refrained from, to avoid unnecessary entanglement

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in needless symbolic confusion.

To illustrate the capricious and restricted nature of this black/white business, a few examples will suffice. Although black is certainly the color associated with evil in the post-Christian European world., its transglobal symbolism is far more ambiguous. In ancient Egypt, for instance, black was a symbol associated entirely with the cultural good, since it represented the fertile black earth of the Nile. Egypt's ancient name, *Kmt*, means "the black land", a designation which was translated into Arabic as *al khem*, and may have given birth to the English words alchemy and chemistry, sciences long connected to Egypt. The daemonic and culturally "evil" beings in Egyptian religion, the foremost of these being the god Set, were colored red, the recognized hue of cosmic malevolence. Therefore, in ancient Egypt, a magician who practices what the modern Western world designates as "black magic" would have chosen the color red as a symbolic subversion, Red magic – appropriate though the phrase may be for an Egyptophile magician – might summon up the odd image of a Marxist sorcerer in contemporary parlance.

Similarly, although the color white is accepted by Christianized culture as the epitome of cosmic benevolence and holiness, white is quite commonly regarded as a demonic and malefic color in many African and Asian cultures. The poet Martin Fierro once wrote that "The White paints the devil black/the Black paints him white." This only demonstrates the extreme relativity of color symbolism to magical practice. Our recommendation to the magician is to avoid adopting symbolism related to any one particular time period or culture as much as possible, unless that symbolism is specifically chosen for a particular magical operation. This opens up – rather than restricts – the magician's ability to communicate his or her will to the many levels of reality. We have personally found that the value of separating magical activity into black and white branches is unserviceable to the pragmatic magician's needs.

On the other hand, we have found the phrase "the Black Arts" to be a useful short-hand term to serve as an umbrella for the panoply of magical techniques available to the magician, especially since it emphasizes the important artistic nature of *magike tekhnē*. Since this phrase stands on its own without an inbuilt comparison to an opposing "White Arts" it seems to us to be a more potent description of the subject, free of any superfluous moral implication. The Black Arts is also a purer term than black magic, since its use predates the Christian branding of all magic as evil. For instance, Ovid (43 B.C. – A.D. 18) already refers to the sorcery of the legendary enchantresses Medea and Circe as "their black art" in his famous *Ars Amatoria* (The Art of Love).

However, this is not to deny the necessity of observing and classifying some of the very real differences that *do* exist between various

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magical approaches. The ability of language to separate discrete opposites is of great use to the magician in creating a more workable magical blueprint. Of more precise benefit to our own objectives, and therefore utilized in this study as key descriptive devices, are the Tantric terms left-hand path and right-hand path. As opposed to black and white magic, left-hand path and right-hand path, if properly understood, do not infer subjective moral qualities of good and evil. They focus instead on more pragmatic aspects of actual method and objective. To say that one is a black magician or a white magician does not tell us anything about what the magician actually *does*, it

only vaguely tells us how his or her practices are viewed within an abstract moral code of dubious value. Left-hand and right-hand, if used precisely rather than poetically, can tell us exactly what a magician's procedure and techniques actually are.

Theurgy

Antiquity also provides us with other descriptions of specific branches of the magical art that are still useful today, although they must be applied with care. The Greeks spoke of a form of magic known as *theourgia*, a combination of the words *theos* = god and *ergon* = working. Theurgy, then and now, is thus the working of magic that brings the magician into contact with divine beings. Theurgy presupposes that the magician possesses some sort of theological philosophy concerning the existence of divine or praeterhuman intelligences and entities. Therefore, those magicians whose theology is basically atheistic could not be said to be theurgists. In essence, whenever the magician performs magic that *invokes* or *evokes* a god of any kind, he or she is technically practicing theurgy. Invocation, traced to its Latin origins, is literally to call in or on a deity (*in* = in *vocare* = call), while evocation is to call forth, or to summon. In the Middle Ages and during the magical revival of the nineteenth century, theurgy was deemed to be "greater magic", more acceptable than the so-called "lesser magic" that dealt with demonic beings in the sense that contact was sought with the higher (thus greater) order of divine beings.

No matter what deity is summoned during such operations, the theurgist is performing the sacerdotal function of priest or priestess of the deity, forming a human conduit to the divine realm. Of course, if no such contact is made, we are merely speaking of delusion, a common enough occupational hazard of all magicians. Considering that the majority of readers of this book will be concerned with evocation and invocation of deities often condemned by other religions as daemonic (another loaded word calling for later contextual definition), such differentiations as greater/higher and lesser/lower are fairly irrelevant to our objectives. Additional confusion on this point has been caused by the use among some

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initiatory schools of the phrases "lesser black magic" and "greater black magic", which rather arbitrarily and ahistorically assign new meanings to the traditional definitions of lesser/greater forms of magic known for centuries. As we are determined to create lesser rather than greater bewilderment, we have avoided incorporating phrases that tend to be obstacles to clarity, or that are particularly associated with any one modern sectarian view or the other. It's for this reason that we also prefer the traditional word "magic" to the currently popular "magick", with its specifically Crowleyan connotations.

We consider that the sex magician is practicing theurgy whenever he or she invokes or evokes any non-human entity during the performance of erotic-magical operations. Examples of erotic theurgy include the seeking of initiatory understanding through ritual sexual intercourse with a chosen divine intelligence, astral sex with succubi or incubi, or using an excess of sexual ecstasy or its aftermath to temporarily *become* a certain deity, among an infinite number of other options. It is the task of each individual magician to determine whether those phenomena that seem to function as deities or demons are independent beings existing free of human thought, or if they are manifestations of one's own mind. It is the *way* of the right-hand path, with its emphasis on *bhakti* or devotion, to insist that its initiates accept a religious vision of a given deity out of blind faith alone. The left-hand path approach to theurgy is far more concerned with awakening the divine aspect of the magician him/herself.

The rites of the traditional *Vama Marga* are theurgic in that they are almost always focused on the sexual interplay between Shiva, the male

principle, and Shakti, the female principle. However, exaltation of female divinity in the world and in one's self (regardless of gender) is the true focus of the left-hand path, perhaps expressed most dramatically in *kundalini*, the awakening of Shakti within one's own body. We view these exercises as means to the greater objective of personal attainment of an independent godlike consciousness in this lifetime, the act of *self-deification*.

Sorcery

We shall also frequently refer to the magician as a sorcerer or sorceress, one who practices the art of sorcery. These words – which have come to be interchangeable with magician or magic – derive from the Latin *sortarius*, one who throws or declares a lot, originally for purposes of divination. However, through modern usage of the word, the practice of sorcery can be understood as a more specific type of magic. For our purposes, sorcery is understood to center on the stratagem of orchestrating a pre-determined transformation in the world apparently *outside* of the magician's psyche by making use of physical objects, words, thought patterns, to effect that change.

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In the case of *erotic* sorcery, the manipulation of sexual energy obviously constitutes the principal means of effecting the desired alteration of reality.

One exemplar of sorcery would be the utilization of magic to cast a spell on another human being. Since we will be concentrating on sexual sorcery in this volume, perhaps the simplest and most obvious basic instance of this technique would be the magically inspired creation of a magical surrogate that represents the object of your lust, a form of sympathetic magic.

The sorcerer performs a magical operation in which willed concentration, altered state of consciousness and powerful imagination are focused on the object that serves as a substitute for the person you desire. You essentially convince yourself, through the controlled and temporary suspension of ordinary brain function, that the symbolic representation *is* the individual you are lusting after. By changing that object and bringing it under the control of your magically heightened consciousness you are changing – or at least greatly influencing – the actual person you long for. The advanced sorcerer can far exceed such simple mechanics in both subtlety and method but the underlying principle of sorcery is the same no matter how sophisticated the application.

Since, depending on one's point of view, certain mechanical aspects of the mind itself may be considered an object outside of the magician's core self, it may well be that sorcery can include the transformation of the sorcerer's own mental processes. Granting that truly precise definition can be blurred through such fine points, we prefer to classify the kind of magic that aims to change the inner self rather than the outer world – as interconnected as these may be – as being of an *initiatory* (rather than a sorcerous) character.

The ancients generally understood most other forms of magic to fall under the category of *thamaturgia* or "wonder-working" from the Greek *thauma* = wonder + *ergon* = work. When the sex magician creates changes in the inner or outer world that seem to defy the known laws of cause and effect by transforming the body and psyche through any deliberate alteration of consciousness, the results must surely seem wondrous and even miraculous to the non-magician. Thus, *thaumaturgy* can be used to describe almost any form of magical operation.

Initiation

Just as we consign magical actions focused on altering the seemingly external universe as the work of the sorcerer, we designate the more difficult work of *self-modification* as initiation, the work of the initiate. Initiation, a word derived from the Latin *initiare*, which simply means to enter upon or to begin, is a word fraught with many unfortunate cultural associations that need to be dispelled before proceeding. One immediately thinks of being

initiated into a secret society or fraternity by the performance of a clandestine ceremony, heavy on mystical mumbo-jumbo but lacking in any discernible clarity or usefulness. That kind of initiation, the carefully scripted induction rite witnessed in Freemasonry or in the magical organizations inspired by it, is not what we're referring to.

Anthropologists and students of comparative religions also describe as initiation the sacred rites that mark certain phases of an individual's entrance into various levels of tribal religions in both primitive and civilized cultures. While such practices may occasionally possess more authentic magical power than the first variety, the collective and socially binding nature of these traditional customs is quite different than the deeply personal and self-directed initiation of the left-hand path. Perhaps a better Western historical model for left-hand path initiation can be found in the ancient Hellenic mystery schools, of which that located at Eleusis is the most famous. These seemed to partake of some of the same self-directed development of the psyche we are concerned with in this study.

For us, initiation – especially as it transpires on the left-hand path direction fostered by this hook – is an ongoing process of radical selfdevelopment driven from *within*, rather than a ceremony enacted from without.

However, not everyone who simply practices theurgic, thaumaturgic, or sorcerous magic can truly be said to be an initiate. A certain amount of native skill and training can allow many individuals to be fairly successful magicians, achieving a surprisingly high ratio of positive results through sorcery. You may well be able to create desirable changes in the circumstances of your life, the people around you, and your environment in general by developing a fairly attentive magical practice. These outer changes, no matter how dramatic, will not necessarily have a deep impact on the deepest levels of your psyche, which is where the process of initiation most meaningfully manifests. We have known many a magician who developed enough magical skill to secure their dream job, their dream lover, their dream home, and other tangible goals. Magicians of this type are certainly not to be scoffed at; it takes hard work to attain such satisfactory circumstances, as any observation of the generally miserable lot of frustrated mankind will testify. Despite some magician's success at willing these desires into flesh, it very often happens that their magical development screeches to a halt upon obtaining their shopping list of limited needs. They never ask the basic philosophical question required by initiation, which is: "*Who* is the person who accomplished all of this, and what do I do now?"

To use magic in an initiatory sense, that is to develop and gain a more comprehensive knowledge of the self, rather than to merely satisfy one's immediate needs, goes against the grain of all of the messages being transmitted to us twenty four hours a day from the forces of social control.

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The world generally wants you to be a good citizen, a good consumer, an

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obedient follower of the rules. It offers no encouragement to the magician who actively seeks to take control of his or her own destiny through initiation, although there is an abundance of loose talk praising the abstract idea of freedom. Genuine freedom from the thought constructs of others, followed by genuine liberty from your own learned patterns of thought, are some of the left-hand path initiate's goals, and the illuminated libertine can utilize sexual magic as a method of achieving this daemonic and physical autonomy.

While this book contains practical information that can certainly assist the magician in achieving sorcerous goals, it is most relevant to the initiate, who is committed to a life-long process of self-knowledge and selftransformation.

Lest the reader imagine that by encouraging initiation we seek to nourish a warm, fuzzy glow of hope in the infinite horizons of human

potential, *a la* the New Age movement, nothing could be further from our minds. There are in fact definite limits to every human's potential, as left-hand path initiation can sometimes cruelly teach you. While the possibilities of selfchange available to *some* human beings are certainly much wider than they may at first imagine, this does not mean that "you can become anything you want" as many occult dreamers and spiritual salesmen will so readily promise you. Left-hand path initiation offers you opportunities of transformation inaccessible to the lazy and the ignorant, although it is not a passport to fulfilling every dream and whim you've ever entertained. This news always disappoints the incurably optimistic, or those seeking easy short-cuts, but can be an urgent jolt into awakening for those who are prepared for it, and have the patience to see the process through.

The initiate of the left-hand path – in contrast to the student of other more commonly accepted spiritual approaches – does not relax in a warm bath of pleasantly unthreatening mysticism. He or she confronts all of the unknown facets of the self with surgical precision. The results of this ceaseless selfconfrontation can often be deeply disquieting and even aggravating to the fixed concept of the self codified by social interaction and the biologically inherited anthropoid need to fit into the tribal/familial/cultural mind. Lefthand path initiation necessitates the deliberate act of severe and uncompromising conflict with all of the inner and outer constraints that bind your absolute liberty of mind, body and action in the daemonic and material realms of existence.

Many individuals drawn to the outer symbolism of these magical actions of subversion have failed to see that such initiatory dissent is *not* engaged in with the kind of foolish bravado that only leads to one's increased powerlessness. Popular manifestations of the cruder forms of lefthand path thought have inspired much impotent thumbing of one's nose at societal scarecrows. For instance, nothing could be easier than mocking the hypocrisies of organized religion or governments. It is considerably harder work to identify and ridicule your *own* hypocrisies, an action of self-

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awareness that left-hand path initiates strive to accomplish despite the blind spots we all develop.

Left-hand path initiation, then, is not defined by easy rebellion; it cuts much deeper, ultimately transforming the initiate's self, and not merely serving as a justification for mindless defiance of convention. The initiate's discerning ability to differentiate between empty anti-social posturing and the authentic initiatory disposition of a theomorphic consciousness that has transcended Good and Evil in the Nietzschean sense is essential. Much of the left-hand path initiate's work consists of intensive self-engineered deprogramming and deconditioning of one's learned behaviors, thoughts and habits. The initiated sex magician redirects the powerful drives of eroticism to these tasks of self-change, while the magician using sex for sorcery alone only seeks to make the world more suited to one's desire, without necessarily producing self-transformation. This conscious recreation of the self is far removed from the traditional "initiation" familiar to occultists, which is usually little more than a recitation or memorization of supposedly necessary facts and correspondences handed down by various schools, along with a parroting of occult jargon and buzzwords specific to some particular teaching. Left-hand path initiation ultimately wrests the control mechanism of the self away from *any* outside source, placing the initiate in full control of his or her powers of self-creation. The left-hand path initiate does not submit to any force outside of his consciousness.

A cautionary note: while this refusal to submit may seem to be a wondrously liberating sentiment, it should be understood that for those who go about it correctly, sinister current initiation is never an easy task. It will be recalled that the Great Goddess tells the sage Vasistha that the left-hand

path is "without austerity and pain." But very few can confront the unexpected self-insights revealed in the process without a fair degree of pain and disillusionment. However, on the *Vama Marga*, each disillusionment is experienced as the heroic delight of enlightenment, and with each new disillusionment, another notch is added to the initiate's belt, another fetter removed from the bondage of the *pashu*.

Obviously, this very book can easily be misused as another means of escaping from your self, were you to slavishly and uncritically follow its recommendations without careful self-analysis and personal weighing of your own desires. The disconsolate or frustrated human may despair of ever liberating his or her self from the discomfort of too much self-awareness. The sharp awareness of self in all of its dimensions sought by the left-hand path initiate is exactly what most human beings desperately seek to avoid. Submitting to the control of some other power – *any* other power – can seem like an attractive escape route to this unhappy lot.

Of the many powers one can submit to in the world, the dark and

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often mysterious influence of one's own sexuality can exert a lethal attraction. The person whose interest in sex magic is motivated by this drive to escape from the self will most likely only find disappointment and further despair. In fact, sex magic very often provides the magician with a clear and unshrinking mirror of the self that forces self-change of the most radical kind. This is one of its great advantages for the initiate, and one of its greatest dangers for the ordinary man and woman.

Magic of the theurgic, thaumaturgic or sorcerous kind can, and usually is, confined to a limited area of one's existence, and can be nothing more than a tool allowing one to achieve certain fixed and finite goals.

Initiation, however, once embarked upon, informs one's entire being, and entails a long-term commitment not necessarily required for the practice of magic alone. In the Greek mystery religions, an initiate was *a mystes* – "one who is initiated" – a word which gave rise to the English word *mystic*. In a certain sense, then, sorcery is strictly magical – the manipulation of *maya* – but initiation must enter into mysticism.

Workings

Drawing again on the definition of an ancient Greek word, *ergon* = work, we will refer to most of the magical operations referred to in this book as workings. The implications of performing a magical work or *ergon* is most appropriate for sex magical practice, since *ergon* is directly related to the *ta orgia*, or "secret rites" of the Dionysian Bacchanal, and thus to the English words *orgy* and *organ*, two words of especial relevance to sex magicians.

Some confusion has arisen in regard to the word *orgasm*, which is actually not related to *ergon* or *orgia* but derives from the Greek *orge* = impulse, and possibly the Sanskrit *urja* = vigor.

The operations encompassed in the phrase magical working transcend those proscribed and often repetitive actions usually referred to by magicians as rituals. It's instructive to note that the root word *rit* in ritual can also be found in the Greek *arithmos*, or number, which provides a clue to the rigid, unchanging and number-like quality of most ritualizing. Indeed, many non-magicians often describe the compulsive repetitious behaviors of their lives as "ritualistic", as in the ritual of patronizing the same restaurant every Friday night, always wearing a favorite blue dress on a first date, or always buying the morning newspaper from the same newsstand on the way to work. The sinister initiate actively struggles to *avoid* such reassuring, mindnumbing rituals, in his or her everyday life or when performing magic. Any ritual activity that deadens or soothes is a deterrent to the charged wakefulness we seek to engender in ourselves.

The magic of any genuine left hand path working, particularly the sex magical working, is best formed along more spontaneous and organic

lines, eschewing such traditional props as written ritual texts, and customary,

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supposedly obligatory ritual props, such as bells, candles, robes, pentagrams and the like. In the pure magical opera of the working, the magician seeks to keep such extraneous devices to a bare minimum, drawing on the stark powers of the mind and body alone to effect one's magical will in the world.

The word ritual tends to imply a well-rehearsed, systematic "acting out" of religious or metaphysical symbolism, little different than the extravagant but empty mummery practiced by organized religions in their places of worship. While magic can most certainly be a religious experience, in the truest sense of the term, it should never be the kind of religious experience that merely comforts by going through the motions of a routine. Our somewhat more clinical use of the word "working" suggests a more unconfined manipulation of magical energy, involving direct encounter with the numinous, as unencumbered by habitual response or the reliance on familiar magical crutches as possible.

Even more to be avoided than the customary orthodoxy of repetitive ritual is ceremony, which can only imply the reenactment of proscribed rites ordained by law, entrenched by custom, and performed according to an unbending set of rules. The formula and recipe of ceremony are certain death for the vitality of the left-hand path magician, who remains vigilant through an experimental, ever-changing reinvention of magical strategy.

Most ritual and ceremonial magic is static, relying on the tried and true instead of venturing out into new and unexplored directions. While the left hand path initiate may wish to observe certain ceremonial occasions, such as weddings, funerals, and other rites of observance and celebration, even these should not be the simple recitation of text enjoined by profane society. Such rites should always be magical workings in and of themselves that cause action and change in the self and in the outer world.

The Daemonic

We have already referred several times to the Daemonic, another word easily misinterpreted if taken at face value. One may understandably assume that we refer to the putative evil spirits or infernal beings that Christian theologians and traditional demonologists so often direct their fulminations against. Since this study scrupulously shuns the entire worldview implied by use of the simplistic good/evil dichotomy, and the authors don't accept the existence of evil as a force that exists outside of culturally determined value judgments nor the existence of an inferno populated with malign bat-winged entities, our reference to the Daemonic is something altogether on a different plane. Yet again, we return to the original source of the word in the Greek language, which offers a richer and thus more useful definition for the magician than the limiting Christianized definition.

The word "Daemon", from the Greek *daimon*, originally carried no

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pejorative implication or connection with evil. It merely referred to a kind of protective spirit or demi-divinity thought to be associated with each individual. Deriving from *daiomai* or "I distribute", the daemon was considered as a literal distributor of fate. Daemon has also been defined as "replete with wisdom", and in this regard, the daemon was also deeply connected to the Roman concept of the *genius*, a god that presided over one's birth. Persons of remarkable talent or extraordinary accomplishment were considered to be guided by a *Daemon* or *Genius*, just as the concept of *Genius loci* is still used to describe the distinctive spirit of a specific place.

Perhaps the most illustrious historical example of this is Socrates, who claimed that he heard the voice of a daemon, or genius, that guided his life. According to R.B. Onians, in his *The Origins Of European Thought*, the word "genius" was originally the Roman equivalent of the Greek *psyche*, described as "the life-spirit active in procreation, disassociated from and

external to the conscious self that is centered in the chest." Significantly, for the most advanced stages of left-hand path initiation, the genius of an individual was believed to be a subtle element of the human being that could survive the death of his or her physical mechanism.

The genius of the Romans, said to possess the procreative power of sexuality that survives death, has much in common with the ancient Egyptian *khabit*, or shadow, one of the eight powers that make up the human life-force. In his essay "Egyptian Anthropology", the magician Don Webb has described the shadow as being "of extreme importance" since "It is the source of one's power of mobility, and one's reproductive power. The shadow can be stolen when one sleeps, causing the object of the theft to die. Certain powerful sorcerers can detach their shadows and send them on missions of harm or espionage. The shadow follows the dead into the *Tuat*, thus assuring his or her mobility there."

Of relevance to the sex magician is Webb's statement that the shadow held the sexuality of the being, and to the extent one's sexuality survived death it was through the shadow."

Thus, the *Demons Of The Flesh* evoked in the title of this work are the unique and inimitable spiritual forces – the *daemon*, *genius*, shadow or psyche – connected with each self-realized sex magician of the left-hand path, the individual daemonic intelligences that can be best accessed through magical operations. Communication with these daemons – beings interpreted by some as manifestations of unknown aspects of "the higher self", and by others as literal non-human entities – allows the magician to more completely control one's self-created destiny. The inner genius or *daemon* inhabiting the body was inextricably linked with an individual's

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luck in the world.

In a slightly different sense, we use the Daemonic as a synonym for the spiritual and metaphysical realm of human consciousness, that realm where much of the magician's most enduring work is performed. It is in the Daemonic stratum of being that the magician encounters and interacts with the eternal and cosmic principles, transcending the transitory and strictly human-defined sphere of magical activity. One of these Daemonic eternal principles of particular bearing to the left-hand path sex magician is the Feminine Daemonic, the living essence of the dark feminine principle.

Old school occultists will perhaps understand the Daemonic sphere of consciousness as akin to "the astral plane" or as the region where the "akashic record" can be encountered. If the human magician can indeed create a part of himself or herself that is immortal, as some left-hand path schools claim, it is on the Daemonic level. If the magician seeks to experience a semi-divine state of consciousness during a magical working, he or she must first attain the Daemonic perspective before doing so. When the magician transmits his will into the universe to effect more than just the human lifestream, he or she does so from the Daemonic station. It must be stressed that the word "Daemon", in and of itself, is morally neutral, originally possessing none of the implication of evil later attached to it by Christianity. For the Greeks, a benevolent daemon was designated as *an eudaemon* and a maleficent one was known as *a cacodaemon*.

The Psyche

Defining the Daemonic leads us to consider the corresponding, and equally hard to grasp concept of the soul, alternately the Greek *psyche* or the Latin *anima*. As the classical philologist Georg Luck writes in his *Magie Und Andere Geheimlehren In Der Antike*: "in a certain sense the soul is a daemon". If we understand the Daemon or soul/psyche/anima to be words that describe an ultimately nameless indwelling metaphysical essence that occupies the physical body – an essence that is the core of what makes you an independent being – Luck's description is comprehended more clearly.

One cannot speak of left-hand path initiation without attempting to define the psyche, that elusive but all-important personal essence that is the consciousness itself. Although the importance of the flesh to sex magic must not be underestimated, the physical body alone is only the tool that the psyche manipulates to exercise its subtler and less tangible objectives. Of course, the argument has been offered that the psyche may well be nothing more than a complex phantasm produced by the brain, and is therefore nothing more than another bodily phenomenon. While this is a quandary no magician should ignore, a scientific analysis of this question extends beyond the scope of this study. Let us instead focus on attempting to provide a

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definition of the soul/psyche that serves the initiate and the magician in his or her work.

Of no small significance to the initiate working with the masculine/feminine polarities intrinsic to erotic magic is the fact that the very word is derived directly from the Greek name Psyche, the Hellenic goddess of the soul. This connection between our modern word "psyche" and the name of a goddess illustrates the very ancient understanding of a mystery central to the left-hand path, "the path of woman". The psyche, understood as an indwelling goddess, is essentially a feminine essence that literally *animates* the human being, related to the feminine *shakti* power so central to the traditional Indian left-hand path. In the Gnostic tradition, the idea of the divine Sophia, the spark of divine wisdom that is said to be hidden in every human being, is also understood as a female entity. In the modern West, the influential *psych*-ologist Carl Jung provided us with a contemporary model of this concept. Jung's *anima*, which he borrowed from one of the Latin words for the psyche, was defined specifically as the feminine psychic essence inhabiting every man's consciousness.

The best-known myth concerning the goddess Psyche also sheds light on the subject of this book, for Psyche was said to have fallen madly in love with none other than Eros. This passion between the spirit and sexuality demonstrates a clear esoteric understanding in the ancient world of the inextricable bond that exists between two levels of being that the Christianized West has always insisted on separating. Much of the Occidental magical tradition maintains this division between the Erotic and the Psychic, although they are reconciled again in the work of the left-hand path magician.

While every level of your psychobiological being is impacted and transformed through the process of left-hand path initiation – including the body so scorned by the male-directed mass religions – it is in the more fluid psyche, your core self, that the most enduring Remanifestations occur. Every culture and metaphysical teaching possesses its own system of soulcraft, and we recommend that the pragmatic magician compare as many of these as possible before determining his or her own approach to the development of the psyche.

An Exercise In Etymology

Hopefully, in reading this chapter, you have identified some magical words or phrases that you may have adopted during the course of your life that are deserving of etymological analysis. Although this book is written from the perspective of left-hand path sex magicians for others who wish to learn this art, the reader should not instantly adopt the identity of "left-hand path sex magician" unless the principles and exercises outlined here actually speak to you.

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As for the Sanskrit jargon of the left-hand path tradition itself *shakti*, *kundalini*, *mantra*, *maya*, *yonis* and so forth the magician should understand that these words are but useful descriptive devices. One shouldn't lose the forest for the trees by becoming so immersed in nomenclature that one neglects the far more useful *realities* these sounds symbolize. To do so would

be to slip into merely abstract considerations, turning away from the physical world where left-hand path initiation is rooted.

In reading this, some will probably discover that they've grown lazy in their thinking in some areas, describing one's self or one's magical activities with words that don't actually serve personal magical objectives.

For example, many magicians choose to describe themselves as witches, pagans, Satanists, Chaos magicians, magickians, white magicians, black magicians, or any number of other popular terms that provide instant identity on rather shaky grounds. Look into the actual meanings and implications of these words anew according to the science of word definition rather than as loosely defined by the various magical subcultures from which they spring.

You may find that such words don't correctly describe you at all, and that they can actually form an impediment to the important task of selfanalysis that underlies all magical work. On the other hand, you may find that your chosen moniker is more correct than you previously knew. Use such titles with a magician's conscious sense of the appropriate for you also magically mold yourself by what you call yourself. Try to delete the use of as much vague magical and occult jargon from your vocabulary as possible, always aiming at a higher and more specific level of precision and accuracy.

Thus do the *magi* of the left-hand path begin their work of recreating the world.

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At The Left Hand Of Christ

The Holy Whore And The Gnostic Magus

Let not your left hand know what your right hand does.

-Attributed to Jesus, *Matthew 6.3*

Isn't it a somewhat pedantic and priggish attitude to invoke all the forces but Jesus? It makes him a sort of devil" and so liable to attract all the good people.

Aleister Crowley, on the sex-magical invocation of Christ.

The Cross The West Bears

Anyone who attempts to follow the elusive trail of the left-hand path in the West eventually smashes into one monumental roadblock on the way.

That obstacle is the deadly influence of organized Christianity's enduring stranglehold on Western sexuality. To understand the peculiar situation in which the Western sinister current sex magician has been forced to operate, we must first come to terms with the distorted psychosexual conditions that the past centuries of Christian dominance have engendered.

Without a doubt, Hindu and Buddhist puritanism and restrictions of sexuality present their own unique challenges to the Eastern adept of the left-hand path. But they simply can't compare for sheer ferocity with the hatred of the body that informs the exoteric Christian worldview. Any attempt to integrate the left-hand path into the Western world must consider the pernicious influence that the popular cult of crucifixion – even in its currently waning manifestation – has brought to bear on the deepest levels of erotic experience.

Some readers may find it perverse and paradoxical to begin the quest for a Western left-hand path by dwelling on the negative impact of institutional Christianity, a religion which originated in the East. After all, thousands of years before the spread of the Christian epidemic, the magical and the erotic were celebrated as integral aspects of highly advanced Western cultures. It's all well and good to look back fondly to the spirit of erotic liberty and joy that was known to the pre-Christian West of antiquity.

But the rich sex-magical tradition fostered in the founts of Western civilization, ancient Greece and Rome – as well as the lesser known erotic

sorcery practiced in the "barbarian" Nordic and Celtic regions – were almost completely annihilated by the conquering armies of the Cross. Christianity's destruction of the ancient sex-magical traditions of Europe has left Western

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magicians with no *living* native practice of erotic initiation to learn.

Although some neo-heathens have tried admirably to resurrect these shattered relics to their former vibrancy, even the best results are inevitably lacking in historical continuity. Western sex magicians have had to do their best to overcome Christianity's devastating impact on erotic magic by piecing together fragments from the ruins. Despite their efforts, many of these attempts to reconstitute a pre-Christian approach to sexual magic are often mired in idealization, romanticism, and fanciful wishful thinking – not the best tools with which to forge a viable system of sexual initiation.

As we have already illustrated, sex-magical practices roughly analogous to the left-hand path have emerged now and again throughout the Western world, apparently independent of Tantric influence. If left-hand path initiation is actually a universal neurophysical phenomenon, rooted in the body, rather than in the peculiarities of any particular culture, this should not be surprising. However, in attempting to sketch a concise outline of the lefthand path in the West, we observe two different streams of the sinister current. The eldest of these is an indigenous tradition of sex magic in the West that not infrequently parallels what we have already described as the essential principles of the Eastern *Vama Marga*. The more recent manifestation, less than 150 years old, is the latter-day effort to actually import the Tantric teachings of the left-hand path from India and Tibet to Europe and the New World. Both of these tributaries of the left-hand path's westward flow can prove problematic for the pragmatic sinister current sex magician.

In the case of left-hand path compatible sex magic as practiced in Western antiquity, so much of the genuine teachings have been lost or misreported through later Christian distortions that it is nearly impossible to study the original techniques in an undiluted form. As for the more recent introduction of authentic *Vama Marga* initiation to Europe and America, this effort has also been considerably hampered by the quandary of fitting a radically sex-positive doctrine like the sinister current into minds shaped by the body-denying creed permeating Christian culture. The casual observer might be perplexed by this last assertion. Surely, one might speculate, in the porno-saturated modern world of the industrialized West, where almost every form of sexual expression is openly celebrated, the left-hand path would hardly raise an eyebrow?

It is true, of course, that many modern Westerners are intrigued by the idea of Tantra's sexual practices. However, unless the Western adept is totally deprogrammed of the mainstream Christian attitude to sexuality, progress on the left-hand path is all but impossible. One can lead a life of absolute sexual license but still suffer from the Eros-crippling impact of Christian conditioning. And to our experience, the Biblical notion of sex as

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sin can infect the Western approach to the body even if an individual has never touched a Bible, or consciously considered Christian morality.

To counter this psychic contagion, many Westerners have taken up sex magic merely to demonstrate their break with the pervasive Christian anti-sexual conditioning. If sex is "sinful", they will dutifully commit every sin in the book. Assuming such a reactionary stance can only be a very preliminary step in one's initiation on the left-hand path. Sadly, many Western sex magicians remain stuck in this rut, expending so much valuable energy fighting the inner demon of Christian sinfulness that they never progress into higher states of initiation.

It could be argued that even Aleister Crowley – the most influential

Western sex magician of the past century – who spent decades energetically reacting to the sexual repressions of his upbringing in an extreme Christian sect, never completely deprogrammed himself. Even in his sixties, one gets the impression he was still "being a bad boy", doing everything he could to outrage his long-dead puritan parents. The Eastern *Vama Marga* adept transgresses the sexual taboos of Hinduism in the beginning phase of initiation only to progress to a deified realm of being far beyond *any* cultural boundaries. The transgressions are not an end in themselves; they merely mark the bare beginning of the journey of self-creation as an individuated being. Likewise, the sinister current magician breaking with Judaeo-Christian programming must be careful not to be trapped in a limited reactionary role. In the West, the ancient left-hand path principle of *Viparit-Karani* is evident to a degree in the commonly observed practice of inversion that emerges in the historical Satanic tradition in such sexual rites as the Black Mass. However, once inversion is institutionalized through repetition it can become its own stifling orthodoxy, and has little if any transformative power. A Black Mass every Friday at midnight is as useless to the radical left-hand path process of self-transformation as church every Sunday morning.

For instance, if a disaffected Christian teenager living in a small religious town first wears an inverted crucifix, he is pushing against the flow of local socioreligious convention, making a healthy attempt at self-individuation.

In rare cases, the deliberate estrangement from familial and religious restrictions *might* provide enough of a shock to be useful for actual initiation. But every shock wears off eventually. If our theoretical Satanic rebel wins the approval of his friends for this small defiance, the "evil" emblem becomes a status symbol, defeating the purpose of opposite-doing. Once that inverted crucifix is reduced to a permanent fixture of self-image, then it becomes just another comforting convention to overcome.

The fatal schism between sex and spirit, Eros and Psyche, has so contaminated Western culture that even non-Christian magicians have unthinkingly adopted the organized faith's revulsion for the body and for sexuality. This can be observed in the surprisingly common condemnation of

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sex magic of any kind by the many Western magicians who display a distinct discomfort with orgasmic sorcery. For them, *any* form of erotic initiation is a deviation from the "higher" powers of the mind to the "lower" sexual center. At best, they might dismiss the left-hand path as a silly distraction from the strictly cerebral concerns they deem to be more meaningful. At worst, they might consider sex-magical operations to be a destructive dead-end.

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Despite the universality of the left-hand path, by whatever name, the aspiring left-hand path sex magician will discover that one of the advantages of first studying the original Eastern model of the *Vama Marga* is that its uniquely tolerant approach to seemingly heretical or dissident ideas has allowed the Indian left-hand path to evolve there in an atmosphere of relative freedom.

The same cannot be said for less permissive environments, which have consistently persecuted and even murdered those who have been suspected of experimenting with erotic self-initiation. Particularly in those countries that have fallen to Judaeo-Christianity, Islam, or the many other Eros-denying faiths of self-renunciation, sex magic has until recently been performed under a noxious cloud of religiously inspired sin and shame. The sex-obsessed hysteria of the virulent witch-burning epidemic which scarred Europe for centuries is only the most dramatic episode in the West's attempt to exorcise the demons of the flesh. The few written records of Western sexmagical experiment that exist before the twentieth century reflect the sexually ambivalent cultural atmosphere in which they were written.

As we shall see, this has lent a stunted, fugitive quality to Western

erotic metaphysics that is quite unknown to the Eastern acceptance of the left-hand path's place as a legitimate – if subversive – method of spiritual development. One need only consider the case of Aleister Crowley, to perceive the difficulties of erotic initiation in a sex-negative religious and social climate. There's no doubt that Crowley's often melancholy struggle with his sexual demons broke barriers freeing contemporary sex magicians from many an inhibition. And yet, how ultimately joyless and reactionary his "sex magick" seems in comparison to the liberatory aims of the Eastern lefthand path. To be sure, the relative freeing of human erotic potential since the so-called sexual revolution allows contemporary sex magicians a much more conducive climate for left-hand path initiation than the one with which Crowley was forced to contend. But even now, a residual sense of sin and guilt clings to many a Western magician's pursuit of awakening through Eros, a hangover from the oppressive demonization of carnal pleasure that so characterized the Christian era.

As the Western world haltingly awakens from the long nightmare of exoteric Judaeo-Christianity and its stifling influence on Eros, Western magicians can find a model of erotic initiation in the Tantric *Vama Marga* that is refreshingly free of the anti-sexual hysteria and moral overtones of good and evil that haunt Occidental sex-magic models. Even outside of Tantra, the Indian approach to deity – just as the pre-Christian West of antiquity once did – exalts a pantheon of gods and goddesses who act on their libidinous desires. This sublime erotic understanding of the divine naturally leads to the thought in left-handed praxis that human self-initiation to deified

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levels of consciousness does not only occur from the neck up. Phallus and vulva are accepted as important – indeed essential – aspects of one's total initiation. In the Christian West, the *only* religious role models to have been accorded the dignity of an active sex life are the Devil and His demonic accomplices. Thus, the nascent left-hand path in the West, such as it is, has largely been stuck in the rather limited rut of Satanic imagery to the exclusion of any deeper models of initiation.

Although the Indian left-hand path has its own limitations – its sometimes paradoxically narrow view of the female initiate being the most galling of these – the *Vama Marga* allows the initiate a much wider scope in which to develop. By way of contrast to Western sex-magical practices turning back to ancient methods, the Tantric left-hand path can still be studied as a fairly organic, dynamic whole operating *today*, not simply the nostalgic recreation of a long-vanished past. Authentic teachers of the Indian left-hand path are still transmitting the methods of the sinister way as their predecessors have for centuries, in an unbroken chain of tradition. Their lessons can be melded to the needs of modern Western sex magicians, evolving an ancient legacy in new and unexpected directions while retaining the undimmed power that only a truly vital tradition can provide.

To accomplish such a synthesis, and to make the case for a Western form of the left-hand path, it also becomes obvious that there really isn't anything very "Western" about it. The most influential strains of sexual magic that have developed in the Western world – when they are not directly derived from Indian Tantra – are actually drawn from a variety of Middle Eastern sources. With the exception of European witchery – which may or not represent a genuine survival of a pre-Christian sinister current – such ostensibly Western sex-magical themes as Gnostic libertinism, the Templar heresy and its god/dess Baphomet, the cult of Babalon, the Grail quest, and hermetic alchemy are not native to Europe at all.

Due to its ubiquity and adaptation into local forms, it is also easily forgotten that the dominant spiritual tradition in the West – Christianity – is yet another Eastern cult, utterly alien to the native European religious impulse. But is the sex-hating exoteric Christianity that has so twisted the

Western psyche truly representative of the original teachings of Christ? Centuries of ecclesiastical fulmination against the demons of the flesh would cause one to assume that nothing could be more contrary to Christianity than left-hand path sex magic. And yet it has long been noted that organized Christianity, for all of its outward mortification of the flesh, betrays a deep if severely sublimated undercurrent of erotic mysticism. Think of St. Teresa of Avila's orgasmic-ecstatic visions, in which she experienced the presence of Jesus penetrating her "like a lance driven into the heart." The commonly used Christian image of Christ as the bridegroom and the believer as the

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passionately expectant bride bears unmistakable sex-magical connotations. During the delirious heyday of Church-sanctioned flagellation, St. Augustine was obliged to warn the faithful not to whip themselves with too much devotion, lest their agony take on ecstatic overtones. The sexual symbolism of the Eucharist, with its ritual consumption of the flesh and blood of Christ is obvious.

The branches of Christianity we know today in the West, it must be stressed, represent only the victorious factions of a diverse religion that once expressed itself in a dizzying variety of forms. Those *other* Christianities, many of them inclusive of Eros and magic in their practices, were almost thoroughly eradicated as "heresies" by the stronger Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Church. That violent purge is what has left us with the resolutely anti-erotic brand of faith still operating today, a creed, shaped far

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more by the anti-sexual psychoses of such fiercely ascetic Church fathers as St. Paul and St. Jerome as anything implicitly stated in the Gospels. Accompanying this relatively late-developing loathing of sexuality was a rabid misogyny, a condemnation of woman as the author of original sin, the diabolic temptress who led man astray in the garden of Eden. This hatred of womankind is well represented by the snarl of Tertullian asserting that woman is "a temple built on a sewer."

But any religion so dedicated to the demonization of Eros and the Feminine Daemonic is doomed to create an unintended counter-reaction within its ranks. The constant Christian preaching against physical sin only makes the forbidden fruit of sexual pleasure seem all the more appetizing. But these traces of sacred sexuality that still pop up in Christianity like the Bishop's embarrassing erection at High Mass may actually be rooted in a long-lost erotomagical tradition hidden within Christianity itself.

This tradition, referred to alternately as libertine Gnosticism, hedonistic Gnosticism or Spermo-Gnosticism, has unquestionably been the most significant influence on the development of a sinister current in Western sex magic. The importance of a long-suppressed early Christian sex-magical teaching may be surprising for those readers who might imagine that the occidental left-hand path is best exemplified by the confused cluster of half-understood ideas known as "Satanism." Central to the forgotten practice of carnal initiation concealed beneath centuries of Church-fostered abrogation of Eros are the ancient magical archetypes of the Magus and the Whore.

Christ And Mary Magdalene

The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee. – Luke 1:35

To begin the process of dismantling the West's psychic chastity belt, let us consider the distinct possibility that Jesus Christ, the Western world's primary archetype of moral righteousness and sanctified celibacy, was in fact the very model of a left-hand path sex magician. We began our survey of the Eastern left-hand path with the Tantric parable of the Fucking Buddha. No understanding of the Western left-hand path can be integrated without encountering the copulating Christ.

Intrinsic to the left-hand path is the understanding that the adept

reaches his highest level of initiation through the power of a female consort, his *duti* or messenger between the physical body and the divine force of the Feminine Daemonic in its many forms. We have already mentioned that a common feature of the myth of the *magus* in almost every culture is his association with just such an initiatrix. Leaving aside the complex issue of whether the magician Jesus Christ (not a personal name but Greek for

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"Anointed Saviour") actually existed as one single historical personage, we can easily identify the woman in his myth who was the esoteric source of his power.

Mary of Magdalene, according to Church tradition, is the embodiment of the fallen woman, the woman of sin. She is the archetypal whore, portrayed in centuries of religious art, many Hollywood-kitsch Bible epics, and at least one popular musical as a beautiful prostitute who leaves her debased life behind to follow the abstentious teachings of her Master. In this popular image, the all-suffering virtue she demonstrates as one of the first Christians stands in stark polarity to her previous existence as the most lascivious of creatures. We are to understand that the Magdalene's calling to harlotry was not dictated by financial need alone but was the result of her unquenchable desire. In this respect, she served to illustrate the commonly asserted Christian view that all women were driven by a consuming nymphomaniacal frenzy, an infernal temptation perpetually drawing men away from purity. William Caxton's *The Golden Legend or The Lives Of The Saints* is fairly typical of writings about Mary Magdalene, telling us that "she shone in beauty greatly, and in riches, so much the more she submitted her body to delight, and therefore she lost her right name, and was called customarily a sinner."

But from a left-hand path perspective, the Magdalene can also be understood as an incarnation of that formidable *avatar* of *shakti* power, the sacred courtesan, she whose erotic energy is so highly prized by the adept of the *Vama Marga*.

The Bible itself, characteristically, offers only a few sparse details about Mary. These vague mentions have been embellished by Catholic theologians into a full-blown narrative, just as other famous Bible characters, including Satan, have been granted stories in later Church tradition that are far more extensive than anything actually located in the scriptural texts themselves. But the Church legend woven around Mary Magdalene is quite interesting, not least since it grants this mysterious feminine figure such an important role in the drama of Jesus' initiation.

She is commonly understood to be the nameless woman who washes Christ's feet with holy oil, thus making Mary Magdalene the anointer of Jesus, " [who] has anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair." Through this ritual anointing, the magician's self-deified status is actualized by the Feminine Daemonic, as personified in human form by a disreputable prostitute, a living symbol of sexual energy without bounds. Within the Hellenic magical tradition of Christ's time, there was a longstanding practice of the magician anointing himself with oils as a phase in his transformation from human to divine consciousness. The "woman of the city, a sinner" who Jesus defends from a stone-throwing mob, in heretical

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contradiction to tribal law, is also commonly identified as Mary Magdalene.

The Bible also refers to "Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven evil spirits had gone out."

Just as Mary Magdalene's anointing of Jesus indicates that she is the first to accept that he truly is "the son of [a] god" (a common claim made by the *magi* of the time), she is also granted a pivotal place in all of the important phases of the magician Christ's ascension from man to deity. Her presence at the turning points in the myth of Jesus support the theory that she

is his hidden initiatrix, the female power who grants him his magical abilities. Mary Magdalene stands below the cross when he endures initiatory death; it is she who goes to his tomb to perform the rite of anointing the corpse, and she is also the first disciple to discover that his body has vanished. Finally, of all his disciples, Christ chooses to reveal his resurrection to her. If we read this tale as the fragmentary remnant of a carefully conceived initiatory myth encoded with magical symbolism – rather than as a historical chronicle of "true" events – Mary Magdalene's prominent position in the allegory becomes clear.

If the well-established, sanitized icon of Christ as glorified goodytwo shoes and holy wimp can temporarily be blotted out, a more realistic image of Jesus the left-hand path heretic may emerge. Viewed from this perspective, Christ clearly manifests every one of the essential principles of the left-hand path as enumerated in the first chapter of this book.

Even the Bible, carefully edited to present a respectable image of Christ, cannot fail to communicate something of his sinister side. Here was a magician who scandalized tribal elders by violently repudiating all the laws of orthodoxy and declaring himself a god. He teaches his followers that "the kingdom of heaven is within you", and consorts with outcast elements of society. He claims to be self-deified and instructs his students that they can *also* become as gods – much like the Tantric *bodhisattva*.

Although much is now made of Christ's message of love, he also displays a great deal of divisive and antagonistic behavior, stirring up trouble in true left-hand path fashion. The harsh tone of the left-hand path warrior, the force of creative conflict, rings out when he warns "think not that I am come to send peace upon the earth: I came not to send peace but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father." Within the rigid family-based society of his time, such iconoclasm can be compared to the Indian left-hand path adept's breaking of caste and Hindu taboo.

John Whiteside Parsons, a twentieth century sex magician who can be counted among the few pioneers of a genuine Western left-hand path, recognized in Jesus a "dangerous" kindred spirit. In his 1950 essay *Freedom Is A Two-Edged Sword*, Parsons wrote of Christ: "He denied the church, preaching the personal and interior nature of the kingdom of heaven. He

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denied the authority of the state and the home, preaching the higher allegiance to individual conscience. Had his philosophy succeeded, it would have overthrown the Jewish religion and the Roman state. To circumvent him, it was first necessary to kill him ... and afterwards to subvert his teachings into another do-as-you-are-told soothing syrup."

Jesus is associated in the Biblical Gospels with several deities that would have been viewed as "evil" by the Judaic religion he opposes, further ostracizing him from the clan in the classic left-hand path tradition. Indeed, the religious authorities specifically charge him with effecting his thaumaturgy with the demonic aid of Beelzebub, a demonized form of the Canaanite storm god Baal, often compared to the Egyptian Set. Christ begins the final phase of his initiatory journey entering Jerusalem mounted on a stolen jackass, a notoriously stubborn beast commonly interpreted as the therionthropic symbol of the malevolent deity Seth-Typhon. Seth-Typhon, a latter-day Hellenic derivation of Egypt's Set, was frequently appealed to by the *magi* of the time in their rituals. Many surviving magical papyri reveal that Seth-Typhon was equated with the Semitic storm god IAO, or Yahweh, whom Christ is said to have claimed as his "father". Fully in keeping with the magical practice of his era, Jesus speaks mysterious "mantras" to effect feats of sorcery. And he maintains a very special – if vaguely defined – relationship with a woman condemned as a "sinner".

Affirming the importance of Mary Magdalene's prostitution to the Christ myth, contemporary accounts of Jesus, far from suggesting that he

was the copulation-free product of immaculate conception, frequently described him as the bastard son of a whore who had been impregnated by a soldier in the Roman Army occupying Judea. Of course, this story of Christ's origins may well have been an alternate myth that was excised by the puritanical editors of the authorized Bible we know today. There is an undeniable mythic resonance in the idea of a powerful *magus* being born from the union of a warrior (extreme male energy) and a whore (extreme female energy) – the age-old conjunction of the opposing Mars and Venus, by whatever names. On a more prosaic level, the whores and soldiers of occupied countries have been procreating out of wedlock since time immemorial, so it's conceivable that this legend of Christ's parentage is nothing more than a mundane biographical fact. At any rate, the symbol of the holy whore had played a significant role in Middle Eastern magical culture long before Christ's time, as we shall see, which does much to explain why having a harlot for a mother and as a companion would serve as impressive "credentials" for any would-be magician of the era.

In regards to the later authorized myth of the Virgin Mary, it must be remembered that the word "virgin" in antiquity did not necessarily specify, as it does by contemporary standards, that the woman in question had never

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experienced sexual intercourse. A virgin was simply an unmarried woman, a definition which resolves the seeming contradiction between the conflicting legends of Christ's mother as whore and the more widely accepted later picture of Mother Mary. One of the many goddesses who are called virgin, but who are at the same time sexually promiscuous, include Ishtar, portrayed simultaneously as girlish maiden and Whore of Babylon, patroness of harlots.

Finally, utterly isolated from the conventions and norms of his culture, the magician Jesus was condemned to be executed as a common criminal, although he had attained a state of initiation allowing his imperishable psyche to survive physical death. It is unlikely that the crucifixion/death of the *magus* and his miraculous resurrection are to be interpreted as historical events in time. More likely, the narrative is a symbolic metaphor for a magician's willed initiatory "death" and transformation from one state of being to another. An interesting artistic tradition persists that depicts Christ laughing during his ordeal on the cross, the threshold between mortal life and godhood. Like many transgressive magical deities of ancient times, Christ has also occasionally been depicted in his final agony with an erection, a sign of magical potency.

Contemporary accounts of Jesus describe him as one of many wonder-workers and magicians operating at the time, and he was commonly believed to have learned the magical art in Egypt, where he was said to have commanded "the names of an angel of power", alternately described by Bidez and Cumont in their *Les mages hellénisés (The Hellenic Mages)* as "demons of a higher order." Christ's journey to Egypt, the land of magic, was taken as evidence of the sinister, occult source of his powers by his Rabbinical and Roman enemies. According to Morton Smith's *Jesus The Magician*, Christ's opponents also claimed that magical symbols were tattooed on his body in Egypt, a typically left-hand path breaking of taboo, in this case the Judaic restriction on marking the body.

Clearly, Christ does not perform his magical deeds by commanding external entities to do his bidding, or by performing convoluted rituals. He has fully activated a magical current *within* him, thus becoming a *daimon* in his own right. This internal power, known as *dynamis* in the Greek magical tradition, is similar to the self-sufficient energy stream of *kundalini-shakti* the left-hand path magician awakens in his/her body at the highest level of *divya* initiation. That the organized religion later built around the figure of this mysterious magician is so often adverse to magic of any kind is one of history's most absurd ironies.

Of course, despite the intriguing sinister aspects apparent in the Biblical Christ, the Holy Book cannot be said to indicate in him the most defining factor of left-hand path initiation – the celebration of sexual magic. For this, other sources are more illuminating. Roman and Jewish opponents

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of the early Christian sect, for example, routinely characterized the disciples of Jesus as practitioners of a love cult whose rites included feasts that culminated in sexual promiscuity. Christ's teaching of unconditional *Agape* (Greek for "love"), was often presumed to include a mystical transubstantiation of sex not dissimilar from that practiced in Tantric group rituals. The tradition of the *agape* feast, originally a crucial element of Christian practice, was finally outlawed by the Church itself in the seventh century, when reports of orgiastic ritual being held in churches became commonplace throughout Christendom. By that time, all traces of any remaining sex-magical component in Christianity had been thoroughly expunged.

The original talisman of early Christianity was the *Ichthys*, a stylized fish, well known as a symbol of the erect phallus in Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cultures. The faithful, interpreting the gospel as history, assume that the current Christian talisman, the cross, is merely a reference to the crucifixion. But the intersecting lines of the cross also form an ancient symbol for the sexual union of man and woman, the physical gateway of creation.

A spontaneous eruption of *Agape*, the suppressed spirit of original Christianity, resurfaced in a bastardized form in the 1960s, among a popular youth subculture of disaffected disciples known as "Jesus Freaks." Some Jesus Freaks attempted to disturb their conservative parents by emulating the reviled establishment's central religious icon, Jesus, as a role model of antisocial rebellion. In so doing, they adopted the communal living, celebration of free love, indiscriminate sexuality, and combative attitudes towards tribal elders that characterized the less acceptable side of the Christ mythos. In a sense, one could postulate that this was a very naive expression of a Christian left-hand path in practice.

Going several steps further in this direction in the same lime period was Charles Manson, known to many in his prime as "the Wizard". Leaving aside entirely the sensational crimes of which he has been accused, Manson illustrates how the hidden left-hand path aspects of the Christ archetype can take hold of those who identify themselves utterly with it. Upon being released from a long prison sentence, Manson presented himself to a small contingent of alienated youths as the Second Coming of Jesus (and the Devil), orchestrated taboo-breaking orgies to break the bonds of his middleclass adherents to norms of possessiveness and jealousy, and adopted the mystical revolutionary rhetoric of Christ's statement to "think not that I am come to send peace upon the earth: I came not to send peace but a sword.."

The fact that Manson was also – in accordance with at least one version of the Christ legend – the bastard son of a reputedly loose woman was surely not lost on him. Manson's duality-transcendent claim that Christ and Satan were one is a typically left-hand path conjunction of opposites, and

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unconsciously reflects some Gnostic teachings, as does his frequently stated observation that he has a woman inside of him. However, Manson's selfdeification of himself as a reborn Christ, which went so far as recreating

Mary Magdalene's anointing of her Master's feet with his disciple Susan Atkins taking the role of Mary, cannot truly be considered a left-hand path phenomenon. Manson's well-documented misogyny alone makes it clear that his "ministry" lacked the exaltation of the Feminine Daemonic that the sinister current is based on.

Sophia And The Serpent

It might be said that the accusations leveled at the early Christians concerning their sexual practices can be dismissed as nothing more than the usual vilification suffered by any unpopular minority religion. However, archaeological evidence unearthed in the past century seems to confirm that Christ's original teachings may well have centered on a form of secret sexual initiation. And just as Mary Magdalene serves as Christ's shady guardian angel in the authorized Catholic version of the myth, she is also an important figure in the more complete picture of early Christian sex magic now emerging.

Clues as to the actual nature of Mary Magdalene – and the long hidden esoteric roots of Christianity – surfaced as long ago as 1896, when a German Egyptologist discovered a previously unknown early Christian text entitled *The Gospel Of Mary*. That a Gospel would be attributed to this notorious fallen woman was a startling indication that later Church fathers had deliberately obscured the presence of a Feminine Daemonic in early Christian teaching. In 1945, this picture became even clearer when local residents of Nag Hammadi, Egypt stumbled upon a hidden trove of ancient apocryphal documents preserved in a desolate cave. Dubbed the Gnostic Gospels and the Nag Hammadi Library, these were clearly scriptural chapters that never made it into the sanctioned Bible.

No wonder, since they presented an unexpected picture of the early Christians completely at odds with the previously accepted notion of an antifemale, anti-sex, male-dominated community of believers. The texts supported the *Gospel Of Mary's* evidence that Christ's original disciples were actually initiates of a Gnostic mystery cult. Not the least of the shocks revealed in the Gnostic Gospels was the role of Mary Magdalene as an important teacher in her own right within this initiated circle. This function fills in the details missing in the later depiction of Mary as a mysteriously omnipresent – but not especially wise – passive witness and adjunct to her Master's magical deeds.

The Mary Magdalene of the Gnostic Gospels is never referred to as a prostitute. It becomes obvious that this was a much later accretion added to

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her myth, perhaps in an attempt to minimize her original importance. But it is probable that her later image as archetypal whore is a confused echo of a strong erotic component in her being, an element we will explore in some depth. A mythic figure as potent as long-lived and potent as Mary Magdalene is bound to be transformed through the centuries; the magician attempts to view all the many levels that form the whole.

The Gnostic texts repeatedly state that Mary of Magdalene grasps some core mystery of Christ's teaching better than any of his male disciples.

She is referred to as "the woman who understood completely" and "the anointer" – Jesus praises her as the disciple who most deeply comprehends his instruction. Indeed, it seems that the female initiates in Christ's circle *all* possess some secret knowledge that the males are lacking. Mary is only the foremost of seven female disciples who are said to be "strong by a perception which is in them," an advanced state of consciousness that the twelve male disciples readily acknowledge, although not without envy. Of course, these seven wise females were deleted from the final edition of the Bible, and Mary Magdalene's own minimal presence in the approved scriptures is but a pale reflection of her prominence in the Gnostic Gospels.

It has been speculated that the seven females may connote the seven planets of ancient astronomy, and that the twelve males represent the twelve zodiacal signs. If so, this ties into the concept of Christ as Hellenized *magus*; such star lore played an important part in the magic of that time. The Biblical story of Mary Magdalene being possessed by seven demons is also evident in the Gnostic Gospels – this may well be another veiled use of the number seven; the number was often associated with female erotic magical

power.

Within the specifically Gnostic context of these texts, Mary's enhanced knowledge is not to be understood as the ignorant blind faith held so dear in the later distortions of Christianity into a cult for the masses.

Rather, we are led to understand that she has experienced an initiatory *Gnosis*, a transcendent perception of reality, akin to the left-hand path state of *Bodhana* (awakening). For some of the Gnostic sects, such illumination was presumed to be due to the awakening of a divine wisdom or knowledge locked within every human body, a feminine divinity known as Sophia. This resembles the Buddhist left-hand path's custom of referring to the female sexual consort as the *vidya* – the bringer of knowledge.

One of the early apocryphal scriptures relating a conversation between Christ and Mary Magdalene is entitled *Pistis Sophia*. This is only one of many confirmations that the original Christian magical cult was not dedicated to the monotheistic worship of a monolithic male deity. It actually granted especial reverence to the left-handed powers of a female divinity. To understand the magnitude of the Feminine Daemonic in general and Mary Magdalene in particular to the early Christian Gnostic community, we need

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only consider the titles of some of their lost Gospels: *The Gospel Of Eve*, *Noria*, *Birth Of Mary*, *Great And Little Questions Of Mary*, *Pistis Sophia IV*.

Contrast these female-centered Gospels with the official Gospels anthologized in the Bible – all of them ostensibly authored by men – and the full extent of the later Christian expurgation of the feminine becomes clear.

While the Church's transformation of Mary Magdalene from a teacher commanding center stage to a subservient prostitute on the sidelines is startling enough, the excommunication of the goddess Sophia from later Christianity was even more decisive in recreating Christianity as a puritan, anti-female sect.

The adept's awakening of Sophia in the flesh can also be paralleled with the Tantric left-hand path arousal of the hidden Goddess Kundalini, whose full activation also bestows suprahuman wisdom. The Gnostic's passionate adoration of Sophia was known as *philosophia* – the love of Sophia – a mystical communication with a divine female intelligence having

little to do with the strictly intellectual pursuit currently labeled "philosophy." As we have noted earlier, there is a further connection between Sophia and the serpentine Kundalini as sinister current manifestations of the Feminine Daemonic. In the teaching of some Gnostic Christian sects, Sophia first appeared to the primordial female Eve in the Garden of Eden as a female serpent instructing humanity in forbidden knowledge – especially carnal knowledge.

It's unlikely that modern Christians will enthusiastically embrace the notion that Jesus and his original followers worshipped the being now despised under the name of "Satan" as a benevolent female snake-deity, while vilifying the being they currently know as "God" as a malignant demiurge. Many Christian scholars commenting on the Nag Hammadi Library have also done their best to studiously ignore or evade the sexmagical implications to be found in these controversial texts.

The Sacrament Of The Bridal Chamber

Specifically, what was the secret knowledge that made Mary Magdalene "the woman who understood completely"? Assuming that these texts, like the Tantras and so many other ancient initiatory writings, do not communicate directly but in simile and coded language, there must be a reason why Mary is so consistently singled out in this manner. In part, this knowledge seems to have been communicated to Mary due to her especially privileged place among the disciples, a unique closeness to the *magus* Jesus that the other disciples frequently allude to in several passages.

In one Gnostic Gospel, set in a time after the death of Jesus, Christ's

student Levi declares to Peter that, "He loved her more than us."
Peter, addressing Mary in the *Gospel Of Mary* asserts: "Sister, we
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know that the Saviour loved you more than the rest of women."
And in the *Gospel Of Philip*, Mary Magdalene is dubbed the
"companion of the Saviour."

Only Mary, among all the disciples, is ever called Christ's
"companion", a fact that has perplexed many scholars of these texts, creating
decades of debate on the precise inference. This dispute has been sparked
because the particular Greek word for "companion" used by the anonymous
author of the *Gospel Of Philip* was commonly used to describe a male's
adulterous sexual partner. Adultery, in the ancient world, consisted of any
sexual relationship outside of wedlock; this original Gnostic notion of Mary
as Christ's adulterous "companion" might have given way to the much later
idea of her as an adulterous prostitute.

Interpreters eager to steer clear of the possibility of a sexually active
Christ have argued that surely Mary was strictly his *spiritual* companion,
perhaps a poetic metaphor for the Gnostic union of the initiate with the
divine female wisdom, Sophia. This is possible, but as we've observed in so
many left-hand path Tantric texts, the metaphor of the metaphysical union of
spiritual opposites is frequently combined with *the physical* union of male
and female in sexual rites. Just as dead Shiva, the embodiment of
consciousness, gains his power from copulation with the active Shakti, so
may the early Christians have seen Mary Magdalene "the companion of the
saviour" as the animating female power of the dead, but resurrected, Christ.

Another famously controversial fragment of a quotation in the
Gnostic Gospels concerning Mary's relations with Christ tells us a bit more
about the nature of their companionship: "The saviour loved her more than
all the disciples and used to kiss her often on her mouth."

It is true that among early Christians there existed a ritual kiss
intended to confer spiritual power from one initiate to another, which may
be what is being described here. On the other hand, "kissing" was a
frequently used euphemism for copulation in other texts of that time, just as
"mouth" was a common euphemism for vagina in the religious writings of
antiquity.

These evocative textual allusions that Mary Magdalene may indeed
have been the sex-magical consort of Christ are given further weight by the
historical existence of a Gnostic Christian tradition of sexual ritual. Gnostic
Christians generally encouraged initiates to abstain from sex because it
could lead to the creation of unwanted physical matter in the form of
children. They believed that Ialdabaoth, a malevolent god thought to have
created the dark world of matter, kept potentially immortal souls imprisoned
through sexual breeding and its perpetuation of human bodies. Ialdabaoth,
the Gnostic "devil", is the same divinity now worshipped as the one, true
God by Christians. Gnostics sought to liberate these trapped souls through
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the *gnosis* of Sophia, a liberation with more than a passing resemblance to
the later left-hand path adept's liberation from the cycle of reincarnation
through the *jnana* (knowledge) of the Great Goddess, Shakti.

The Gnostic Christian's abhorrence of matter is obviously a very
different approach to the body than we have seen in the Indian *Vama Marga*,
which unreservedly embraces the physical world as a gateway to initiation.

However, despite this significant philosophical discrepancy, the actual
physical *practice* of Gnostic Christian sex magic is very similar to what we
have already examined in the left-hand path. If the magician Christ's
teaching condemned procreation, like other Gnostic sects, it seems that it did
not forbid sex for spiritual purposes.

Just as the Indian *Vama Marga* would later allow special sexual

circumstances for a chosen elite of initiates thought capable to exercise discipline, some branches of Gnostic Christianity did allow for advanced adepts to perform sexual rites. The best known of these was the Sacrament of the Bridal Chamber, an operation of erotic mysticism in which the ecstatic love of Sophia was enjoyed within the physical vehicles of a couple's sexually united bodies. However, impregnation had to be avoided at all costs, lest more unwary souls be trapped in the flesh. This very often led the Gnostic couple to perform *coitus interruptus*, as well as anal or oral sex, to prevent semen from being ejaculated into the vagina. (A much later Gnostic sect, the Bogomils, operating in Eastern Europe, were particularly associated with anal intercourse – the word "buggery" is a distorted form of "Bogomil.") How ironic then that Christians today should base their identity so firmly in the spawning of families and the condemnation of "unnatural" sex practices – the polar opposite of the original Gnostic strain of Christianity.

Such non-procreative practices led the later ascetic branches of Christianity to condemn the libertine Gnostic sects as perverse debauchees, sexual criminals who broke the natural law decreeing that sexual energy should only be applied to the edict commanding men and women to "be fruitful and multiply" Whenever we find erotic power channeled from the natural, mortal world into the daemonic, immortal plane of being, we are dealing with the sinister current. The eminent Gnostic scholar Elaine Pagels, describing the Sacrament of the Bridal Chamber in her essay "Adam and Eve, Christ and the Church; A Survey of Second Century Controversies Concerning Marriage" writes that those "who have experienced the 'mystery of the syzygies' are enjoined to enact marital intercourse in ways that express their spiritual, psychic and bodily integration, celebrating the act as a symbol of the divine pleromic harmony. But those who remain uninitiated are to refrain from sexual intercourse."

If Pagels is correct, Gnostic Christianity may well have experienced

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an eventual schism between a small, initiated core that practiced sexual rites for self-deification and a larger, uninitiated mainstream that were celibate and ascetic – the left-hand path and right-hand of Christianity. Obviously, right-hand path Christianity has flourished in the form of the sin-obsessed exoteric face of the religion. The esoteric sinister current of Christ's teaching must be actively searched for by initiates, possibly resurfacing historically now and again in such streams as the Templar heresy and the Grail Quest.

In their desire to avoid ejaculation and its consequences, it appears that Gnostic Christian sex magicians also developed semen retention techniques. Just as Indian left-hand path adepts refer to the reversal of semen to the magical act of "causing the sacred river Ganges to flow backwards", Middle Eastern Gnostics cryptically described the science of "reversing the mighty river Jordan." (The Jordan, like the Ganges, was regarded as a holy body of water.)

This practice bears some resemblance to the later Tantric methods, although the motivation was quite different. Nevertheless, it can be presumed that the physiological result of such exertions must have created the same ecstatic altered states of consciousness that left-hand path Tantrikas experience through extended, non-ejaculatory full-body orgasm. Whatever the outward form of the religious/cultural motivation for these sexual modifications, the result – a prolonged state of neurophysical bliss allowing for transcendent awareness – is simply an inbuilt biological phenomenon evident in all time periods. Another left-hand path phenomenon at work here is the disruption of the normal, natural flow of vital erotic energy outwards from the penis, where it is dissipated in transient organic processes. By deliberately willing this creative energy upwards towards the brain, sexual power becomes a tool of "supernatural" self-transformation rather than

earth-bound physical reproduction.

The female sexual partner in the Sacrament of the Bridal Chamber was considered the living embodiment of the divine Sophia. Illustrating the universal nature of the sinister current as it manifests in different times and places is the fact that Sophia, understood as the male Gnostic's inner alter ego made flesh was known as "She of the Left Hand", a lunar force. This overwhelming female power incarnate in a human female is practically identical to the Tantric left-hand path's *shakti*. Among the Gnostic Christian sect known as the Ophites (*Ophis is* Greek for snake), who revered the Garden of Eden's serpent as an incarnation of She of the Left Hand, Sophia and Christ were thought to be divine siblings. The left-flowing power Sophia and the right-flowing power Christ were said to be the daughter and son of a feminine Holy Ghost whose incestuous sexual coupling created a bipolar erotic energy that descended into the human *magus* known as Jesus during his baptism. Thus, Ophites attempted to recreate this physical integration of

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the opposite sexual forces within themselves as way to self-deification. The resemblance to the Indian left-hand concept of the coupling of Shiva and Shakti being activated in the adept's body is obvious.

It should be remembered that just as the left-hand path *siddha* of India is practicing a heresy against orthodox Hinduism, Christ and his disciples were heretics against Judaism. Tantra is heavily influenced by the Hinduism it broke away from, and Gnostic Christianity is stamped with older Hebraic concepts rejected by orthodoxy. Sophia, She of the Left Hand, can be traced to a much older Hebrew female divinity, the Shekhinah, whose worship dates back to the time before the adoption of a monotheistic male creator god. One of the meanings of Shakti is the "wife of the god", and Shekhinah is often translated as "secret wife of the king" – in both beings, we are dealing with a Feminine Daemonic source of sacral kingship and authority flowing sexually from female to male. Both the early Hebraic Shekhinah and the Gnostic Sophia were described as descending into the human body, "the Temple of the Holy Ghost", sometimes in the form of a dove – the masculine Holy Ghost of orthodox Christianity's Trinity is but Shekhinah/Sophia given a sex change.

The male principle, the Shiva force, in Gnosticism, analogous to *the Logos* of Christ to whom the Sophia was coupled, was referred to as "He of the Right Hand" and was understood to be both the "sun" and the "son of a god". Exactly as in Tantra, the Gnostic sexual yoking of the lunar, female Left Hand to the solar, male Right Hand was a wedding of opposites that created the inner androgyne. In the Gnostic Gospels, the dialogue of Mary Magdalene with her fellow disciples includes several references to this creation of a spiritual androgyny, although the exact process to be used to reach this state is left unclear. We read *that gnosis can* "[make] a woman male", and that the seven female disciples are capable of "becoming male." This initiatory transformation bears similarities to the left-handed Buddhist idea that "a woman can become a Buddha." *The Gospel Of Philip* suggests that at some advanced level of consciousness female becomes male and viceversa.

The Gospel Of Thomas also states that "unless a man became a woman, and a woman, man, thou canst not enter the Kingdom of Heaven". The Kingdom of Heaven, as understood in esoteric Gnosticism, has nothing to do with the popular Christian fantasy of harp-strumming angels and pearly gates – it is clearly a state of being that the *gnosis* conferred by the union of Sophia and the *Logos*.

"Eat My Flesh And Drink My Blood"

In one of the apocryphal Gospels, Mary Magdalene asks Christ: "We have heard that there are some upon the earth who take male sperm and female menstrual blood and make a dish of lentils and eat it, saying 'We believe in

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Esau and Jacob. Is this a seemly thing or not?" Jesus is unequivocal in his condemnation of the practice: "This sin surpasses every sin and every iniquity. Men of this kind will be taken immediately to the outer darkness, and will not be returned again into this sphere."

And yet, despite this harsh pronouncement, other sources from roughly the same time period indicate that some early Christians identified Jesus and Mary Magdalene with exactly this specific "sinful" practice. In *The Woman Jesus Loved*, the Finnish scholar Antti Marjanen even suggests that the severity of the above passage may have been written with the public relations motive of disassociating Christ's original disciples from the sexmagical practices their opponents frequently accused them of teaching.

Another early Christian text comments convincingly on the existence of a Christian sex magic tradition imbued with striking parallels to left-hand path use of sperm and menstrual blood. *The Panarion*, written by Epiphanius, documents what he defines as "libertine sects" centered around the erotic interaction of Christ and Mary Magdalene. Epiphanius notes apprehensively that the female principle plays an particularly crucial role in the Gnostic circles his polemic is aimed against, pointing out with disapproval that libertine Christians name their Gospels after the names of women, such as Eve or Mary Magdalene. In *Panarion*, Epiphanius refers to a holy book called *Great Questions Of Mary*, which describes how Christ once brought Mary Magdalene to a mountain to impart a private instruction to her which was not vouchsafed to his other students. The common mythological device of being brought to a high mountain is a symbol of ascending to an altered state of consciousness, entering the realm of divine existence.

Of this cult, Epiphanius wrote:

And they too have many books. ... about the Ialdobaath ... and in the name of Seth ... and they have ventured to compose other Gospels in the name of the disciples, and are not ashamed to say that our Saviour and Lord himself, Jesus Christ, revealed this obscenity.... they suggest that he revealed it to her after taking her aside on the mountain, praying, producing a woman from his side, beginning to have intercourse with her, and then partaking of his emission, if you please, to show that 'Thus we must do, that we may live.' And when Mary was alarmed and fell to the ground, he raised her up and said to her 'O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?'

That Christ chooses to share this mystery with Mary alone is yet another indication of the unique place she holds in his circle. The reference to the "name of Seth" associated with these libertine teachings is a further suggestion that Jesus may have been one of the magicians who invoked the

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deity Seth-Typhon, a god long associated with sexual sorcery. The practice of ritualized copulation followed by consumption of the sexual fluids described here is, of course, analogous to the ingestion of post-coital semen and female *amrita* that we have already observed taking place within the *Vama Marga* tradition. In both sinister Tantra or Gnostic libertinism, the celebrants do not swallow the sexual elixir to integrate some physical property contained in the fluid but to devour *magical* energies of which the physical substance is only an outer form. Tantrics seek to imbibe the essential *shiva/shakti* power. Gnostics believed that drinking the sperm or menstrual blood would prevent souls from being born, delivering the unborn beings contained in the seed to the pleroma, a spiritual realm above the control of the Archon, the tyrannical rulers of the sphere of matter. In both cases, the willed transformation of a natural, mortal substance into an immortal, psychic force is essentially left-hand path.

Elsewhere in *The Panarion*, Epiphanius writes of the unnamed sect, which may be the Naasenes: "They say that the flesh must perish and cannot be raised, but belongs to the Archon, but the power in the menses and semen,

they say; is soul 'which we gather and eat ...' and when Christ said, 'Except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood,' and the disciples were disturbed and replied, 'Who can hear this?' they say the statement was about the dirt [a euphemism for semen]." According to Epiphanius, the libertine Gnostics interpreted the Eucharist of Christ's "flesh and blood" literally. He describes one of the followers of Christ asking his menstruating bride to have sex with another brother of the sect during a communal gathering. Upon climax, the male withdraws his penis, and the copulating couple receive the semen on their own hands rather than allowing it to flow into the vagina, as a sacrificial offering made to Jesus. "Whenever they go wild for themselves," Epiphanius reports, "they soil their own hands with their own ejaculated dirt [semen], get up and pray stark naked with their hands defiled."

We offer this gift, the body of Christ," they intone, referring to the sacrificed semen. The female's menstrual blood is offered with the words, "This is the blood of Christ." After these sacrificial prayers, the fluid is consumed by the *couple*. This recalls the Tantric left-hand path concept of ejaculation into the *shakti* as a sacrifice, and the need to return the spilled essence back into the body where it serves a psychic function. The sanctification of menstrual blood is another striking similarity between Tantric and Gnostic Christian left-hand path practice. The taboo against menstrual blood, symbol of the dangerous lunar power of the feminine force, was every bit as pronounced in the Hellenized Middle Eastern areas in which Gnostic Christianity flourished as it was in the Indian regions where the *Vama Marga* celebrated comparable rites. Beneath this Gnostic Christian sacrificial meal of semen and menstrual blood is surely a variation of a much

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earlier custom of human and animal sacrifice for magical purposes, also reflected in the literal sacrifice of Christ's body on the cross. Epiphanius further interprets the coded sexual references in the Gnostic Gospels, which appear to be written in the same sort of left-hand path "twilight language"

(Sanskrit *sandhya-bhasa*) used later in the Tantras:

"By 'the outgoing of water' and, 'that will bring forth his fruit,' means the emission at climax. And its leaf shall not fall off' means 'We do not allow it [semen] to fall to the ground, but eat it ourselves.... and I am going to omit most of their proof-texts, lest I do more harm than good by making them public ... When it says that Rahab put a scarlet thread in her window, this was not scarlet thread, they tell us, but the female organs, and the scarlet thread means the menstrual blood., and 'Drink water from your cisterns' means the same."

Like the Mary Magdalene described in the New Testament, the Old Testament's Rahab is also a prostitute, suggesting another connection between the Gnostic tradition of sex magic and sacred prostitution. If Epiphanius is correct in associating the color scarlet with the vulva of a magical whore/consort, this symbolism may also come into play in the much later Apocalyptic description of the "Scarlet Woman ... the mother of harlots."

Although few occultists are aware of Epiphanius's *Penarion*, this obscure early Christian text has actually exerted a strong, if circuitous, impact on the development of contemporary Western erotic initiation. The French author Clement de Saint-Marcq specifically cited. *The Penarion* in his 1906 essay, *The Eucharist*, which argues that the true power once underlying Christianity has been lost due to the organized Church's replacement of the original Gnostic sexual Mass with the symbolic rite of wine and wafer. According to de Saint-Marcq: "Saint Epiphanius provides a complete description of the Eucharist ceremony, but attributes it solely to the Gnostics, carefully representing it as an aberration abhorrent to all true Christians. In their gatherings, he said, men and women ate human reproductive seed, turning to the altar, and saying (to the All Mighty)

'*Offerimus tibi donum corpus Christi*' 'We offer in sacrifice the body of Christ!'"

Theodor Reuss, founder of the early twentieth century German quasi-Masonic brotherhood known as O.T.O., or Ordo Templi Orientis, read *The Eucharist*, and proclaimed that de Saint-Marcq had revealed in its pages the pivotal mystery of the O.T.O. – the Gnostic ritual consumption of semen as embodiment of the *logos* provided a medium between the adept and the divine. From Reuss, this doctrine was passed on to Aleister Crowley, who made the eating of his own sperm into an almost daily magical practice.

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Although their practice of a sexual eucharist may be the same, it should be noted that there is a vast gulf between the Gnostic's *initiatory* goal of selfapotheosis and Crowley's ineffectual sorcery which was invariably focused on a futile attempt to magically materialize money.

Even in this brief sketch of early Christianity's left-hand path, we encounter the same method of ritual spermophagia we have already encountered among India's *Vama Marga* adepts, and will later come across again as an essential element in the sex magic practiced in the later O.T.O. tradition, to cite only a few examples. In *The Eucharist*, Clement de Saint-Marcq states that this custom can be found in the ancient religions of Egypt, China, Africa, and even declares the odd theory that the Gnostic sex rites can be traced to Hindu teachings – which suggests that he may have been dimly aware of left-hand path ideas slowly beginning to circulate in the West at that time. The phenomena of such internally coherent systems of erotic alchemy appearing in ancient Judea, medieval India, and modern Europe make it increasingly evident that the sinister current is far more than a local tradition – it is, in Jungian terms, a true archetype, a Platonic *eidolon* eternally taking flesh with only the slightest variations throughout human history.

Viewed in this light, the question of whether the *magus* Christ and his companion Mary Magdalene were living human beings, mythic constructs, or an admixture of the two, becomes practically irrelevant. For the pragmatic left-hand path magician of today, more interested in his/her own self-deification than in reverence for external beings, Christ and the Magdalene are only one of the most intriguing instances of the sinister current couple, yet another manifestation of Shiva and Shakti's play of *maya*.

Simon Magus And Helene

To more fully understand, and thus integrate, the contrasexual forms which the left-hand path reverberation of the relationship between Simon and Helene.

From the cult that had formed around the figure of the *magus* Jesus, Simon appears to have borrowed several key ideas. He just as ardently claimed to be the Son of God. More specifically, Simon taught his own version of a Holy Trinity; with himself as the father, Jesus as the Son and his consort Helene as the Holy Spirit – this concept of Sophia as Holy Spirit was a common one among the Gnostic sects. In contrast to the *magus* Christ's selfless magical acts of healing and benevolence, as described in the authorized Bible, records of Simon's thaumaturgy seem more distinctly sinister. If he was admired for his miracles, they also seemed to inspire fear. He was well known for his necromantic ability, the invocation of demons for

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self-seeking purposes, and the alchemical creation of an *homunculus*, an artificial humanoid being. We are told that he had built statues of himself and Helene, idols which he supposedly enjoined his many disciples to worship.

Of course, we must remember that this rather diabolical picture of Simon was used by the Church to present him as an egomaniacal charlatan

and an impostor in comparison to his ostensibly virtuous contemporary Jesus. Orthodox texts present Christ as a self-effacing humble figure who seeks to lead others to become *one* with God. Simon, however, is depicted as striving to *become* God – the ultimate left-hand path goal. In point of fact, it is quite probable that the magical operations and objectives of Simon and Christ were not so radically different, since they seem to both have been based on precisely the same Graeco-Egyptian Gnostic tradition. ICs ironic that one of the great heresies of Simon is his claim that the prostitute Helene is "the holy spirit in all her splendor", since Mary Magdalene plays such an equivalent role in the myth of Jesus.

According to Church legend, the renown of Simon and Helene became so great in Rome that even the Emperor Nero and his wife Poppaea could be numbered among their adherents. This association in itself suggests the Satanic image afforded to Simon Magus by orthodox Christians, who hated Nero as the instigator of anti-Christian persecution, later identifying him as the Great Beast 666 of the Apocalypse. As wicked Nero's spiritual Master, Simon Magus may not be *the* Antichrist but he may well be one of the "false teachers" referred to in the passage in I *John* which reads "it is the last time: and as you have heard that anti-christ is coming, so now have many anti-christs have arisen; whereby we know that it is the last hour."

A very common form of myth in antiquity is the Battle of the Magicians. In such duels, the triumphant party is presumably established as the ordained representative of a legitimate religion, whereas the loser is confirmed to be a pretender, a magical charlatan. The contest between the serpent-conjuring *magus* Moses and the court magicians of the Setian pharaoh Ramses is an archetypal example of this sort of competition.

In *The Acts Of The Apostles*, the best-known mythical account of Simon Magus, the Apostle Peter is portrayed as the Christian hero who vanquishes the left-hand path *magus* at the height of his powers. Invited by Nero to perform a miracle before the Roman masses to win them over categorically to his cult, Simon arrogantly opts for the Forum as a suitably grand stage for his magic. To reveal that he is indeed as powerful as God – as a self-deified being himself – the *magus* vows to rise to Heaven before the eyes of the spectators. This he easily proceeds to do, ascending high above the Forum. Outraged at this blasphemous challenge to the powers of *his* favored *magus*, Christ, Peter manages to defeat Simon by merely praying

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and making the sign of the cross. Simon topples to his death, defeated by Peter, who went on to become the first Pope. It is based on legends like these that the formerly vilified magic of Christ – which as we have seen was originally judged to be demonic in character by the Pharisees – slowly became a reputable and state-approved religion, while the magic of Simon Magus was branded as the illegitimate chicanery of a scoundrel.

Despite the purportedly tidy defeat of Simon, the Simonian sect continued to hold sway for many centuries. It decisively shaped Ophite Gnosticism, with its celebration of the sexual lessons of the female serpent, and contributed much to hermetic magical practice and European alchemy, both of them suffused with cryptic references to the sexual creation of a spiritual hermaphrodite within the physical organism. The name of Simon Magus also lives on in one of the many sins still recognized by the Catholic Church. The sin of simony consists of trying to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit, one of the many spiritual offenses the Samaritan magician was charged with perpetrating.

If Simon Magus and Helene can be considered the first coherent figures of the black magician and his consort in the West, the first century Gnostic mage also appears to have served as the role model for Europe's most enduring legendary diabolist, the mysterious Doctor Faust. Simon was commonly known during his lifetime as *faustus*, Latin for "the favored one" –

a reference, perhaps, to the reportedly uncanny luck which his inner *daemon* or *genius* brought to him. When Johann Goethe composed his epic *Faust: A Tragedy*, the definitive version of the Faust legend, he drew on deep research into the Gnostic heresies. In Goethe's *Faust*, the magician learns that the most powerful force in the cosmos – mightier than his blood-pact with Mephistopheles – is *das Ewigweibliche*, the Eternal Feminine.

Just as the original *faustus*, Simon Magus, encountered the Feminine power in the body of his consort Helene, the Tyrean whore, the fictional Doctor Faust finds this magical essence embodied in the beautiful Helen of Troy, summoned from the netherworld through the Devil's necromancy. It's hard to imagine that Goethe's depiction of a demon-conjuring sorcerer named Faustus and a supernatural feminine being named Helen is not a deliberate recurrence of Simon Magus and Helene, incarnation of the Divine Sophia.

From first century Rome to eighteenth century Germany, the timeless paragons of the left-hand path adept and his *shakti* are clearly discernible.

The Sacred Prostitute In Antiquity

We have established that the semi-mythical figures of Simon and Christ are manifestations of the Graeco-Egyptian tradition of the *magus*. Viewed in their proper historical context, they can no longer be considered the unique phenomena orthodox Christianity presents them as. They are simply two

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particularly well-remembered magicians of their time, a period in which selfdeified *magi* operated in all sectors of society. Similarly, their Feminine

Daemonic consorts, the prostitutes Helene and Mary Magdalene, are but enduring expressions of the sex-magical role which the sacred courtesan, or *hierodule*, has played from the very beginnings of recorded magical activity in the earliest known civilizations.

Conditioned to associate the word "sacred" with purity, chastity, and celestial modes of being, and the word "prostitute" with promiscuity, lust, and carnality, the modern mind can only experience a jarring dissonance when these seemingly irreconcilable concepts are brought together in the form of the holy whore. The Semitic word for prostitute, *k'deshah*, is derived from the word for "sacred", the Mesopotamian temple prostitutes were known by the similar epithet of *quadishtu*. Despite her dominant place in the spiritual life of all pre-Christian cultures, the sacred prostitute is today an utterly banished power. Like all forces rejected by the mainstream of current *pashu* opinion, the left-hand path adept can find a great reservoir of untapped magical energy by contemplating and then integrating this rejected form of Shakti into his or her initiation.

Of particular usefulness to sinister current initiates is the way in which the holy whore bridges the long sundered gap between spirituality and sexuality in her very body. She is a living *yantra* expressing the uniquely left-hand path interplay of the physical organism – the Temple of the Nine Gates – with the non-physical divine essence that can be caused to dwell within that shrine of flesh. The male who made a pilgrimage to any of the temples of sacred prostitution – institutions that played a pivotal role in the spiritual life of antiquity – was not simply seeking the relief of mundane orgasm readily available from a profane whore. He understood that his partner's body was mysteriously transformed during the rite into the literal incarnation of the goddess whose temple she served.

Often trained since her youth in the practice of formal esoteric dance, the sacred prostitute elevated the *ars amatoria* of seduction into a religious art. An important key to the success of such magical operations of self-deification was the deliberately impersonal nature of these unions. The anonymous priestess recognized the stranger who came to her as the embodiment of the goddess's divine consort, often referring to him by the name of the god. As a priestess, it was her sacerdotal task to form a physical link between the divine mode of being and the mortal world; her partner

received an erotic sacrament, equivalent to the sexual transmission of *shakti* operant in the left-hand path *maithuna*. The transcendent function of sexuality as a medium of divine communion occurring within the timeless locus of the temple, rather than as an alleviation of temporally bound physiological tensions, is the lost secret of sacred prostitution.

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A clear demarcation must be made between two types of sacred prostitution. There were the holy whores who were formally dedicated as slaves of a temple's presiding divinity and there were the profane women compelled to follow the common custom of temporarily offering themselves to strangers at the temple as a one-time self-sacrifice to the Goddess before marriage. This latter example of a widespread, obligatory, pre-nuptial religious observance did not partake of the same magical function engaged in by the permanent prostitute priestesses.

In Egypt, sacred courtesans were the priestesses of Bastet and Hathor, goddesses of sexual love. Even after the decline of Egypt, the city of Naucratis was famed throughout the antique world for the beauty and seductive powers of its temple prostitutes. In Greece, the *hetairae* of Aphrodite Porne – Aphrodite the Whore – were especially honored. We have already discussed the *devadasis* of India, perhaps the longest-lasting cult of holy harlotry. But even in ancient times, the sacred whores of Babylon were accorded an unique dignity. This reputation endures to this day in the image of Babylon as the height of lascivious idolatry – even the name has become a synonym for erotic excess taken to religious extremes.

The Great Whore

In the thrice mysterious hall where men have never entered, we have feted you, Astarte of the Night. Mother of the World, Well-Spring of the life of all the Gods! I shall reveal a portion of the rite, but no more of it than is permissible.

About a crowned phallos, a hundred-twenty women swayed and cried.

The initiates were dressed as men, the others in the split tunic.

The fumes of perfume and the smoke of torches floated fog-like in and out among us all

I wept my scorching tears.

All, at the feet of Berbeia, we threw ourselves, extended on our hacks.

Then, when the religious Act was consummated, and when in the Holy Triangle the purpled phallos had been plunged anew, the mysteries began; but I shall say no more.

– Pierre Louys, *The Songs Of Bilitis*

The essential left-hand *mysterium* of self-deification flowing from initiated female to male is described in one of the earliest extant texts of world literature. In the Sumerian epic of Gilgamesh, dating from 7000 B.C.E, we read of an act of sexual initiation occurring between Samhat, a *herem*, or whore of the temple, and the primordial wild man Enkidu. The *herein* "opened wide her garments, exposing her charms, yielded herself to his embraces, and for six days and seven nights gratified his desire, until he was

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won from his wild life."

Enkidu is transformed from a beast to a hero via this erotic induction carried out during the magically significant seven nights. In this marathon bout of sexual initiation we can recognize an ancient Near Eastern version of *Vama Marga* methodology. Enkidu, an animal bound entirely to nature, is a *pashu*; he becomes heroic – a potentially divine *vira* – only through prolonged contact with the sacred feminine force of the temple prostitute, the intermediary of the Great Goddess on earth. As in the *Vama Marga* rite celebrated with the initiated *mudra*, sex with this prostitute-priestess is an operation of theurgic sex magic that profoundly alters the consciousness of

the male, allowing him to remanifest on a higher level of evolution.

The anonymous author of the tale of Gilgamesh also tells us that the savage Enkidu is transfigured into a being "like unto a god" through the shakti-power emanated via Samhat's "art of the woman." An important part of this rite is the courtesan's "anointing Enkidu with fragrant oil." 2,500 years before the Christian era began, we see a prefiguration of the sacred prostitute Mary Magdalene's anointing of the god-man Christ with consecrated oil, a sexual laying on of hands that causes the power of the feminine holy spirit, the Sophia, to descend into the body of the *magus*. Like Samhat, the earliest known representative of their sorority, the whores of Babylon and Sumer laid claim to a similar initiatory ability.

The importance of sacred prostitution to Babylon can be attributed to the fact that Mesopotamian culture's eldest and most prominent female divinity, the Queen of Heaven, was worshipped as the patroness of all prostitutes, both sacred and profane, female and male. This complex deity, known to the Sumerians as manna, and the Babylonians as Ishtar, was also venerated in other cultures as Astarte, among countless other regional variations. As a *shakti* conducive to workings of the sinister current, this goddess, still potent among Western left-hand path magicians today after thousands of years, has few peers.

In a very early writing, a priestess known as Enheduanna refers to manna as the mother of harlots. In hymns sung in her honor, Ishtar describes her temple as a "tavern"; then, as now, the traditional hunting ground for whores. Some images portray her as a prostitute leaning out of a window looking for customers. Her temple priestesses were known as the *ishtaritu*, in honor of her, and as an indication that they were charged to embody her in the sexual rites of sacrament celebrated in her temples.

Inanna is the erotic goddess *par excellence*, the wild, unrestrained side of female sexual power as a divine force in and of itself. Despite the adoration in which she was held by all quarters of Sumerian society, a culture characterized by the strict rule of law, and dominated by the importance of the family and the marriage contract, Inanna is very much a divinity *outside*

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the established societal standards. In none of her myths is she depicted as a mother or a wife; the intensity of this manifestation of Shakti exceeds the ownership of another or acquiescence to the social niceties such roles would entail. "Like the demons," Volkert Haas has written of Ishtar in his study of Hittite magic, "she has no mother, husband or children." In this regard, she is the hypostasis of extramarital sex, prostitution and all acts of lust occurring outside the rule of law. Diane Wolkstein, a contemporary translator of the myths of Inanna-Ishtar, has described the goddess as "the place where not all energies have been tamed or ordered."

And yet, every year, the kings of Sumer, and later of Babylon, were obliged to assure the vigor of their royal authority and of the fertility of the land by engaging in a publicly celebrated act of sexual magic with a priestess representing this wild sexual entity. The High Priestess of the *ishtaritu* would climb the zigurrat as the incarnation of the goddess; an altar-bed, "the bed of kingship and queenship", awaited her in a specially appointed chamber.

There, she took the sovereign into the liminal realm of what has been described as "the holy loins" or "her wondrous vulva", magically bestowing the power of the Queen of Heaven upon the King of Earth in a *hieros gamos*, a sacred wedding.

In another public religious ceremony dedicated to Inanna, we see the symbolism of the left-hand path expressed in an hermaphroditic rite. Women devotees in these processions wore masculine attire on the right side of their bodies, while men wore feminine garb on their left sides, reflecting a pre-Tantric association of gender with the energies of right and left. This ritual

attire was apparently a form of identification with the goddess, who is occasionally pictured as a bisexual being in half-male/half-female raiment. Ishtar was also said to exist as a hidden figure of the opposite sex within each human being, a concept obviously prefiguring the contrasexual concept of *kundalini*.

Despite her cherished role as the divine symbol of the infinitely desirable, sexually passionate woman, once she leaves the pleasures of her "bed that sweetens the loins" there is no denying manna's streak of cruelty, her violence, her overwhelming aura of danger. It is rare that such an important goddess in any mythological pantheon is so associated with the darker aspect of the Feminine Daemonic – in this, she resembles Kali, who is at one *Kalakarshini*, the destroyer of time, and *Kamini*, incarnation of sensuality. Coupled with her dominion over the erotic sphere, Inanna-Ishtar presides over the powers of war. Her lust for destroying adversaries is every bit as ardent as her amorous desires. For the Sumerians, war was "the dance of Innana," and the Akkadians called the battlefield the "playground of Ishtar." In this guise, she is seen as a fierce regent of war, literally armed to the hilt with swords and arrows, guarded by her sacred animal, a rampant

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lion. But even when dressed to kill, she strikes a sexually provocative pose.

In Inanna-Ishtar, Whore Goddess and War Goddess, the creative chaos energizing both lust (Eros) and combat (Ares) is united.

Astronomically, manna is the morning and evening star, the planet Venus, eventually related to the myth of Lucifer, the light-bringer. The light of her star, symbolized as an eight-pointed emblem, was said to guide the way of prostitutes in the darkness of the desert. She is also a shamanic goddess of mystical initiation who descends to the underworld, confronts death, and returns transformed to the consciousness of day. Connected to the sacred number seven we have already encountered in other contexts, one of her best-known myths finds her ritually removing seven articles of clothing at the seven gates of the underworld, finally revealing her nakedness. From this myth derives the ritual revelation of female erotic power known as the Dance of the Seven Veils.

Something of the ambiguous nature of manna's being – and its relevance to the sinister current – can be gleaned from the tale recounting the goddess's encounter with Enki, the god of wisdom, the arch-magician. After

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she literally drinks a smitten Enki under the table, the god of wisdom "swaying with drink" bestows upon her his hidden powers, known in Sumerian as *me*. Among these powers are such traditionally valued qualities as truth, godship, certain talents and crafts, the art of song, and a variety of magical weapons. But Innana also boasts that she was given other powers from the drunken god of wisdom: "He gave me the art of lovemaking", "He gave me the kissing of the phallus," "He gave me the art of prostitution," "He gave me the cult prostitute ... the holy tavern ... the art of slanderous speech ... the art of treachery ... the plundering of cities..." When the inebriated god sobers up, he realizes to his dismay that his seductive guest has absconded with all of his wisdom.

Reverence for the sexual prowess and magical powers of the Great Whore extended even to Egypt, where she was known as Astarte. In one myth concerning the Egyptian sinister deity Set, his mother Nut offers him the foreign goddess Astarte as a sexual consort. Set's mother hopes that Astarte's legendary charms will distract Set from his ceaseless belligerence, so disruptive to the static harmony sought by the other Egyptian gods. But the sexual coupling of Set and Ishtar, both of whom are divinities of war and extreme sexuality removed from societally respectable channels, hardly seems like an encouraging recipe for fostering harmony. In the papyri collection of Egyptian spells known as *Leiden I*, Astarte and Set are both appealed to for magical

purposes.

The Demonization Of The Great Whore

The invincible goddess, known as Manna, Ishtar, Astarte and Ashtoreth, had been victorious in so many battles before. But she finally fell victim to the rise of the three monotheistic faiths that emerged in the Middle East. As with so many of the great gods of antiquity, it was Inanna-Ishtar's fate to eventually be toppled from her throne and forced into service as a grossly simplified Judeo-Christian demon. Like other pre-Christian deities, this was not a simple transference of her attributes into one new entity; Ishtar was split into two disparate beings – a minor figure in the Old Testament, and a far more substantial presence in the New Testament.

The sexual rites of Ishtar were especially loathsome to the Levite priests, worshippers of the "jealous and wrathful" male god Yahweh. The very idea of a powerful female priesthood dedicated to sexual worship was abominable to a faith that envisioned womankind as the cause for man's expulsion from paradise. In Canaan, the erotic sacrament was enshrined in the bodies of the temple courtesans of Ashtoreth, the consort of Baal. The Old Testament quotes Samuel as warning Israel to "put away the strange gods and Ashtoreths from among you and prepare your hearts for the Lord". Elsewhere, we read that the Israelites "forsook the Lord and worshipped Baal and Ashtoreth."

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The Levite hatred of Ashtoreth and her prostitute-priestesses was shared by the later ascetic strain of Christianity that took root in Rome. The Roman Emperor Constantine, the first *Caesar* to adopt the Christian religion, personally ordered the destruction of one of the last temples of Ashtoreth at Aphaca, Caanan in 300 CE, declaring the ancient temple to be "immoral." Constantine's fateful conversion to Christianity marked the beginning of the West's slide into the abyss, and marks a turning point in the desecration of the feminine principle from its former power.

The name Ashtoreth, removed from any historical context, eventually found its way into Christian demonology. The Goetic magicians of the Christian era summoned Ashtoreth as the first of the demonological hierarchy of Thrones. The radiant goddess Ishtar was reduced from her former status as the personification of lust to a rather shabby demon, who merely "tempts men with idleness and sloth." When the notorious Madame Montespan, mistress of the French King Louis XIV, performed her famous black masses in the 1670s to cast a lust spell on the monarch's straying heart, the demon Astaroth was invoked – it is doubtful that Montespan knew that she was really calling on the

Great Whore herself for this enchantment. The nineteenth century demonologist Collin de Plancy drew Astaroth as a repulsive spider-bodied entity sporting the heads of a cat, a lugubrious king, and a frog; a far cry from the majestic deity from which the petty demon derived. A much more powerful survival of Inanna-Ishtar plays a major role in the New Testament's visionary *Book Of Revelation*, the *Apocalypse* written by John of Patmos in approximately 95 C.E. In *Revelation 17: 3-6*, John writes:

"I saw the Scarlet Woman sitting on a Beast with seven heads and ten horns, covered with blasphemous names. The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and gilded with gold and precious stones and pearls, with a golden cup in her hand filled with the abominations and the unclean things of her fornications. On her forehead a name had been written, a mystery: Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the Earth. I saw the woman was drunk from the blood of the Saints, and from the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. Seeing her, I wondered greatly."

Countless interpreters of the Bible, running the gamut from the scholarly to the demented, have attempted to decode this awesome apparition of the end times. But whether John intended Babylon the Great to signify some

contemporary evil, a metaphysical truth, or both, there's no doubt that he drew directly on the well-established image of Inanna-Ishtar, who was once revered by her devotees as "the mother of harlots." John's description of the Scarlet Woman and the dragon Leviathan upon which she rides also echoes a Babylonian religious text addressed to Ishtar: "Like a dragon you have filled the land with venom. ... Lady mounted on a beast..."

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Much like Kali, the apocalyptic Whore of Babylon is a symbol of the primordial woman of sacred chaos returning at the end of time; both goddesses incarnate the potent sexual violence that gave birth to the universe, restored to her awe-inspiring authority at the hour of dissolution.

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For some European Hermeticists, who later interpreted the Bible as a veiled alchemical text, the color of the Scarlet Woman of the Apocalypse symbolized the phase in the alchemical work known as the Red Opus. In 1584 C.E, the Elizabethan mage Dr. John Dee and his associate Edward Kelly recorded their Enochian Aires, in which a distorted version of the Scarlet Woman's name, Babalon, first makes a cryptic appearance.

It was under this curious name that Inanna-Ishtar-Astarte, mankind's first documented deity of feminine sexual magic, would return, several centuries later, to take her place as the chief *egregore* of a modern Western sex-magical tradition.

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VI.

Eastern Secrets And Satanic

Pleasures

The Left-Hand Path

And The Modern Magical Revival

The *Vama Marga* – From East To West

Almost all of the modern European magical Orders and teachers that can be said to have had a major influence on left-hand path sex magic, whether for good or for ill, have based their authority on a claimed transmission of secret Asian or Middle Eastern knowledge to the West. Among the mages we will consider in this chapter, we can count Theodor Reuss's sex-magical fraternity Ordo Templi Orientis, whose very name suggests a hidden Eastern source; G. I. Gurdjieff and H. P. Blavatsky, who both cited Tibetan Buddhism as their inspiration, and P. B. Randolph, who acknowledged Syria as the root of his erotic magic. As we shall see, for the most part, such claims were nothing more than romantic myths, but these persuasive legends of a hidden Oriental sexual wisdom being revealed for the first time exerted a potent fascination on early twentieth century magicians from industrialized cultures. This tendency of would-be sages in the 19th Century West to present their knowledge in Eastern guise was also based on the historic fact that there had been an immense Eastern magical influence on Europe from the Islamic world many centuries earlier; such currents as alchemy, the Troubadour tradition, and hermetic magic had been imported through contact with Arabic savants.

Western magicians seem to more easily embrace the concept of sexual initiation if it is thought to have been derived from some exotic elsewhere. We find the same phenomenon today; although the allure of a mysterious East has been considerably lessened by the advent of mass tourism, television and the World Wide Web; now the mystery-hungry more readily accept channeled revelations from sunken Atlantis or communications from extraterrestrial worlds.

However, the first inklings of the Eastern sinister current went Westwards in a more prosaic fashion. An unlikely group of messengers first brought actual knowledge of the real left-hand path tradition from India to England, from whence it slowly spread throughout Europe and the New

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World, sometimes mutating into wholly unexpected hybrid strains. In the mid-nineteenth century, the British colonial rulers of India were working with a cabal of Christian missionaries to implement legislation criminalizing the practice of Tantra, and especially its "barbaric" left-hand path sexual branch. Vigorously supporting this anti-Tantric prohibition movement were many puritanical Indian representatives of the high-born Brahmin caste, who had long regarded the caste-defiant and heretical methods of left-handed Tantra as a disgusting profanation of Vedic law. Faced with such pressure, the struggling *Vama Marga* circles were forced to celebrate their rites under even more secretive conditions than had previously been the case.

Into this environment came Edward Sellon (1818-1866), a young British Army officer, amateur pornographer and fairly notorious connoisseur of recondite sexuality. Stationed in India since the age of sixteen, Sellon was intrigued by the rumors of the *kaula* midnight orgies, and of the sacred celebration of wine and woman in the secret rite of the five Ms. With the help of a local civil servant, Sellon managed to earn the confidence of one *kaula chakra*, and observe what he described with a typically Victorian mixture of prurience and moralism as the "very licentious" circle orgies of the Shakti cult. Some commentators have suggested that young Sellon's first experience of sex took place within the context of the left-hand path ritual, but so little biographical information exists on this elusive character that this must be ascribed to conjecture.

Sellon's work, despite its obscurity, was instrumental in bringing awareness of the left-hand path to the West. Judging from these writings, it is apparent that he certainly had a first-hand knowledge of Tantric erotic initiation. However, it was not until twenty years after Sellon's return to England that he first revealed something of what he had learned of the sexual power of the goddess whose name he spelled as "Sacti". In 1865, he released a peculiar work of eccentric scholarship entitled *Annotations On The Sacred Writings Of The Hindus*. This booklet puts forth his theory that the sexual rites still observed by the Shakti cult are a living continuation of a onceuniversal tradition of sexual initiation that was celebrated by the ancient Egyptians, pre-monotheistic Israelites and Assyrians. Although he dismisses some of the Tantric sex practices as superstition, he concludes that the lefthand path's methods of awakening are the survival of a tradition that "two thousand. years before the Christian era ... was, as at the present day, in full force; the Gnosticism of India." Seeking to connect a hidden sexual mystery underscoring all ancient religions, Sellon interprets the phallic *lingam* and vulval *yonis* of India as identical with the genital symbolism of Isis and Osiris, among other contrasexual mythologies. In the orgia of the *chakra puja*, Sellon sees a distant survival of the rites of the ancient Greek Dionysian revels.

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Sellon explains how the universal mind, Brahma, split itself into a left-sided female and a right-sided male whose androgynous copulation created the manifest world of appearances. With something of the lecherous zeal with which he wrote his pornographic tales, he lovingly describes the youthful beauty of the naked female sexual consorts representing the Shakti force, who he accurately refers to as the *dutis*. In an 1866 autobiography of his adventures, *The Ups And Downs Of Life, Memoirs Read Before the Anthropological Society Of London*, Sellon noted that the *duti* was selected regardless of her caste, and although a temple dancer was preferred, she could be a pariah, slave, or courtesan. These pioneering Western accounts of

left-hand path practices were considerably less sensational and ill-informed than many later European descriptions, which almost universally condemned the *Vama Marga* as the blackest of the supposedly degraded heathen customs of a savage people. Sellon's work was an improvement over the sensational rumors Westerners had previously been exposed to, which ignorantly connected the secret rites of Tantra with human sacrifice and the murderous depredations of the Thuggee cult of stranglers.

In April of 1866, having just made his curious contribution to knowledge of the left-hand path, the 48-year old Sellon shot himself to death in a London hotel. His little-known books, published only ten years before the advent of the Western magical revival, are some of the first to suggest that the very roots of all esoteric religions, mystery cults, and mystical symbolism are based on a hidden sexual gnosis that only uninterrupted surviving tradition is the Tantric left-hand path. Sellon's ideas, although crudely presented, deserve credit as presaging the more sophisticated Western sex-magical philosophies of such later figures as Randolph, Reuss, Crowley, Parsons, Evola, and Grant.

British awareness of the left-hand path, first established by a pornographer, was expanded upon by the writings of a priest. The Calcuttabased Christian missionary W. J. Wilkins, unlike many of his more zealous colleagues in conversion, did not view the teeming sects of India as so many bugs to be stamped out for the Lord. In his *Hindu Mythology, Vedic And Puranic*, published in London in 1882, Wilkins provided his readers with a sober, objective account of the basic Tantric philosophy and practice, not shying away from the sinister current. Inevitably, a few Europeans living in India were actually initiated into the circle of the left-hand path, but these first legitimate "white Tantrikas" did little to introduce the authentic practice they had learned to the West. As is so often the case in the history of ideas, the true popularization of the left-hand path outside the sub-continent was facilitated by individuals who barely understood the concept – in this instance, the cranky amalgamation of genuine wisdom, starry-eyed romanticism and confidence game that constituted the modern occult resurgence.

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Madame Blavatsky Gets It All Wrong

One of the features that characterized the culture of the nineteenth century occult revival was the giddy appropriation of exotic metaphysical terms from non-Western cultures. The Theosophical Society, co-founded in 1875 by the fraudulent Russian spiritualist Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (1831—1891), was an important agency in this process. Through the internationally embraced Theosophy movement, which also first popularized that now odious expression "New Age", half-understood concepts such as *as karma*, *akashic record*, *mahatma*, *yogi*, *chakra*, and many more became common currency among European and American occultists. Among the hoard of esoteric expressions cited by Blavatsky and her followers were "Left Hand Path" and "Right Hand Path." (The custom of capitalizing these words derives from Blavatsky, and was later imitated by Aleister Crowley)

There could hardly have been a worse interpreter of the left-hand path and right-hand path for Western audiences than Blavatsky, whose doggedly misguided explanation of the sexual and non-sexual approaches to Tantra has been the single most influential source of perplexity on the subject. As first given forth to her followers in her autocratically remitted books and magazine articles, which she cobbled together from an immense library of plagiarized sources, and subsequently twisted by others into ever more erroneous interpretations to the present day, the Blavatskyite version of the left-and right-hand path remains the most widely accepted in Western occult circles.

For Blavatsky, it was all quite simple: the left-hand path was

simply the path of evil, whereas the right-hand path was characterized as the path of good. The vast network of Tantric teaching that gave these terms their meaning – and which oversteps the very idea of evil and good, as it does all dualities accepted by the herd-animal – was conveniently ignored altogether. Not surprisingly, she averred that she and her Theosophical Society were most decidedly of the right-hand path, which she associated with the vaguely Rosicrucian notion of a Great White Brotherhood. According to the good Madame, anyone who didn't support Theosophy – or was determined to prove her fakery – was of the left hand path, the Black Brotherhood. Although many orthodox Hindus would probably agree with her assessment of the left-hand path as "evil", it is unknown where exactly she picked up this particular bias.

According to Blavatsky, the source of her wisdom, which she revealed to mankind in her *The Secret Doctrine*, was Tibet, where she had supposedly been initiated into an inestimably ancient esoteric teaching. However, none of her writings indicate anything but the most superficial knowledge of Tibetan mysticism, a fact betrayed by her ignorant interpretation of the left-hand path. From the smattering of knowledge she gathered in her voluminous reading of occult texts, she obviously learned

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that the left-hand path had something to do with sex, and for Blavatsky – at least in her official writings – sex was unspeakable, a "bestial appetite which should be starved into submission." (Like so many self-appointed guardians of morality, Blavatsky's private sex life appears to have been much more adventurous than her public image of rectitude would suggest). Theosophical theology, clearly influenced by ascetic rather than libertine Gnosticism, conveys a general distaste for the fleshly cage in which the soul is theoretically "imprisoned." Carl Jung once perceptively described Blavatsky's Theosophy as "pure Gnosticism in Hindu dress." Left-handed Tantra, as an initiatory doctrine which considers the flesh not as a terrible prison to be escaped from, but as a temple to be held sacred, could only be conceived of as anathema by Blavatsky.

In her *Theosophical Glossary*, she clucks her tongue disapprovingly at the left-hand path: "the special energy connected with sexual rites and magical powers – the worst form of black magic or sorcery." Here we find the first popular equation of the Eastern idea of the left-hand path with the Western concept of black magic. This untenable synthesis of mutually exclusive cultural catch-phrases – the former a precise description of a method, the latter a vague moral judgment – would be embellished upon by a quarrelsome legion of occultists throughout the twentieth century. Through this process, Blavatsky's uninformed conflation of left-hand path with black magic would become the norm among the denizens of the occult subculture.

As part of her elaborate, well-nigh Lovecraftian science fiction cosmogony, Blavatsky also taught that the "immoral" left-hand path was actually a degenerate relic of a decadent "root-race" that had originated in the lost continent of Atlantis. This theory indicates just how far afield the Western occult understanding of the left-hand path had strayed from the real thing as practiced in Asia. For Blavatsky, whose esoteric theories of evolution were both a precursor of and a direct influence on the lunatic fringe of National Socialism, the left-hand path's depraved origins in an antediluvian lesser branch of humanity was a damning indictment indeed. As fanciful as it is, the Theosophical association of left-hand path sexual magic with a supposedly inferior racial strain emulates Hindu orthodoxy, which as we have seen, condemns the *Vama Marga* as a hideous sex cult originating among the lower castes.

Arthur Avalon Almost Gets It Right

If Blavatsky was the chief Western architect of the "left-hand path = evil" equation, her simplistic distortions were balanced by the far more accurate

depiction of sinister Tantra provided in the work of Sir John Woodroffe (1865—1936). Not an occultist or magician from the outer fringes of society, Woodroffe was a thoroughly respectable high-ranking Justice living

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in Calcutta at the end of the nineteenth century, who developed a personal fascination with Tantric thought and practice.

With his lawyer's zeal for defense and meticulous explication, Woodroffe took pen to paper under the mystical Celtic pseudonym of Arthur Avalon, and produced a series of groundbreaking works that explained Tantra as a legitimate spiritual discipline. The Avalon books not only served to remove some of Tantra's stigma in the minds of his European readers.

Many English-speaking Indians also regarded the left-hand path as a shameful relic of a supposedly savage heritage they would just as soon have forgotten in their desire to become a modern Westernized nation. Avalon's work introduced a wide native Indian readership to the value of practices that had previously been clouded with secrecy. Earlier Indian works in English concerning Tantra had offered a heavily censored, whitewashed version of the Tantric teachings, usually from the derisive and biased perspective of the Brahmin caste authors who wrote them. Strangely, it took a European to make Tantra into at least a partially acceptable subject of study in India.

For all of the great benefit of Avalon's books in keeping an imperiled tradition alive, and the pioneering scholarship with which they were written, he also succeeded in promulgating a long-lasting misinterpretation of the left-hand path. If Blavatsky painted the *Vama Marga* in the most fiendish black, Avalon just as zealously whitewashed the subject, ignoring and evading the more socially taboo aspects of the secret rites. Woodroffe went overboard in his eagerness to simultaneously justify and downplay the notorious erotic aspects of Tantricism's left-hand path. Avalon stresses the dangers and grave consequences incurred by an adept who undergoes sacred sex without totally extinguishing every last trace of carnal enjoyment and biological lust from the act. Sir John did his best to explain the spiritual philosophy underpinning Tantra's sexual form of illumination, but his arguments come across as defensive, reflecting his own rather prudish prejudices.

Considering the hysterical Victorian attitudes prevailing at the time, and Woodroffe/Avalon's objective of preventing Tantra from being declared against the law, his reticence is perfectly understandable. Unfortunately, many other authors unexposed to more primary sources and teachers have unwittingly taken up this misleading and strait-laced approach directly from Avalon's writings. The result has been that it's now practically become an article of faith among Westerners that the serious Tantric initiate must strive manfully (or womanfully) to resist all sensations of carnal delight during the sexual rite. This priggish attitude can be illustrated in his remark that "Many years ago Edward Sellon, with the aid of a learned Orientalist of the Madras Civil Service, attempted to learn [the secret rite's] mysteries, but for reasons, which I need not here discuss, did not view them from the right standpoint."

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The "right" standpoint, we must imagine, can only be the anti-hedonic interpretation of sexual illumination favored by Avalon, whose sensibilities were offended by Sellon's more lustful approach to the subject.

Nevertheless, Avalon's books are essential reading due to their wealth of objectively conveyed knowledge concerning the principles and methods of Tantra.

Avalon is also notable as the first author to consider the possibility of left-hand path methods of sexual taboo-breaking as being "Antinomian" in character. In light of the recent connection of some Western schools of the nominal left-hand path with the antinomian concept, Avalon's much

earlier ideas are illuminating. Writing of the left-hand path doctrine in which the liberated adept of the *Vira* and *Divya* level of initiation is said to have risen above good and evil (*Dharma* and *Adharma*), Avalon observes that such initiates are called *Svechacari* "whose way is *Svechacara* or 'do as you will—. He notes that "Similar doctrine and practices in Europe are there called Antinomianism." However, Avalon carefully explains why Antinomianism is an inaccurate description of the left-hand path's overcoming of social conditioning, commenting that "I spoke of Antinomian Doctrine and Practice, and of some Shakta theories and rituals which have been supposed to be instances of it. This word, however, requires explanation, or it may (I have since thought) lead to error in the present connection. There is always danger in applying Western terms to facts of Eastern life. Antinomianism is the name for heretical theories and practices which have arisen in Christian Europe. In short, the term, as generally understood, has a meaning in reference to Christianity, namely, contrary or opposed to Law, which here is the Judaic law as adopted and modified by that religion."

In his insistence on using words with mantric precision, rather than according to arbitrary intellectual fads and fashions, Avalon's pioneering scholarship on the *Vama Marga* still stands head and shoulders above many modern attempts to make the mysteries of the left-hand path intelligible.

P. B. Randolph – Forgotten Father Of Modern Sex Magic

Although the books of Sellon, Wilkins, Blavatsky, and Avalon provided the West with its first inklings of understanding (and misunderstanding) concerning the left-hand path system of sexual illumination, it took many decades before the actual methods of left-handed Tantra were practiced in Europe. Long before the 1960s counterculture's interest in Eastern mysticism collided with the sexual revolution – a cross-pollination that brought some aspects of the *Vama Marga* to youthful seekers – a separate

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stream of sex magic began to form in the West. The origins of this variation of the sinister current could not be traced back to the ancient goddess cult of Mother India, but to the combustible energies of post-Civil War America.

By far the most important nineteenth century sex magician, and perhaps the first to describe himself with that term, was the American occult utopian, Paschal Beverly Randolph (1825—1875). Plagued by depression all his life, he committed suicide at the age of fifty in the same year that Madame Blavatsky founded her Theosophical Society, and in which Aleister Crowley was born. According to the Russian Satanist Maria de Naglowska, who later became entwined in Randolph's teachings, the true cause of Randolph's death was a curse placed on him by Madame Blavatsky herself, Naglowska, a sex magician herself, claimed that Blavatsky was angered at Randolph for breaking the unspoken law that forbids revealing the secrets of sex magic to the profane. This tale typifies the kind of melodramatic rumors that swirl around the known facts of Randolph's existence.

His occult writings, and perhaps unwritten methods that were never put to paper, had a decisive influence on Blavatsky, Reuss, Crowley and the German magician Franz Bardon alike. Randolph's ideas, especially his utterly unique claim to be the possessor of a hidden body of knowledge he called the "Anseiratic Mysteries", also seem to have been adapted without credit by the spiritual teacher G. I. Gurdjieff. So we can say that this now largely forgotten magician originated many of the key concepts later publicized by the most significant figures of the Western occult revival.

Here, we will concern ourselves largely with Randolph's sex-magical practices, which exhibit more than a passing resemblance to some left-hand path principles.

The son of a wealthy Virginian medical doctor and a mulatto woman who may (or may not) have been of French-Malagasay descent,

Randolph went to sea at 15, subsequently sailing around the world for five years. These travels enhanced his taste for adventurous voyage, and he eventually journeyed to such far-flung locales as Turkey, Egypt and Syria, sometimes serving as a ship's doctor. Randolph claimed to have acquired some of his magical knowledge in India, where he was supposedly initiated by Bengali yogis into the mysteries of Tantra. However, as mentioned earlier, this self-perpetuated biographical claim of "secret wisdom from the East" is one that we will encounter frequently in the history of Western sex magic, and must be taken with more than a grain of salt. Randolph's idiosyncratic system of erotic initiation is only superficially reflective of the authentic *Vama Marga*.

An acquaintance of Abraham Lincoln, Randolph became a wellknown lecturer for the controversial cause of abolition before the American Civil War. (More than one occult conspiracy theorist has actually proffered

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the implausible speculation that Honest Abe was a secret initiate of Randolph's sex-magical fraternity.) In his relatively brief life, PBR – as he was respectfully known – also became a major player in almost all of the major occult movements and fashions of his time. In 1850, he was initiated into the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor (also known as the Hermetic Brotherhood of Light), the first of many Rosicrucian-themed. Orders with which he was involved. Swept up in the American craze for spiritualism and table-tapping initiated by the Fox sisters, a swindle he later rejected, he soon progressed to hermetic ceremonial magic. Among Randolph's friends could be counted the French mage Eliphas Levi, the most prominent author of the early magical revival, and Bulwer-Lytton, the British ceremonial magician and occult novelist who originated the concept of vril. (Bulwer-Lytton was one of the first British magicians to use the phrase left-hand path, but like Blavatsky he condemned it as a form of debased black magic, due to his aversion to any use of the erotic in initiation.) Randolph established the first American Rosicrucian association, the Third Temple of the Rosie Cross, founded in San Francisco. During the American Civil War, his Order activities were suspended, and Randolph fought for the Union, in the ranks of the all-black Fremont Legion. In 1870, he named himself the Supreme Hierarch, Grand Templar, Knight, Prior, and Hierarch of the Triple Order, also known as the Brotherhood of Eulls, a vehicle for his sex-magical teaching.

In accordance with the traditional left-hand path teaching, Randolph acclaimed sex as the most powerful energy accessible to humans for the operation of magic. For him, sex was imbued with what he termed "the pellucid aroma of divinity." Although he never specified what divinity he had in mind, there can be no doubt that sex was a religious sacrament for this Rosicrucian adventurer. Randolph's open emphasis on sexual sorcery in the last years of his life not only caused him to be branded a "libertine" by his puritanical Rosicrucian colleagues, but led to his arrest for inciting "free love" and disturbing the public morality. If his sex magical theories now seem somewhat naive and rudimentary to the contemporary reader, it must also be remembered under what repressive psychosexual conditions any erotic experimentation had to be conducted in nineteenth century America. Compounding the challenge of writing openly about sexual magic in that era was Randolph's African ancestry, which already drew criticism in the atmosphere of institutionalized racism prevalent in the United States. He encountered far less prejudice in his dealings with European magicians.

Randolph's allegation to have based his teaching on lessons learned from his supposed Tantric initiation in India is unlikely, but the other source he cited as the origin of his "soul-sexive" mysteries rests on even shakier ground.. Randolph claimed that he was but the interpreter to the West of a

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long-lost tradition of erotic-initiatic enlightenment practiced in Syria by a tribe known as the Nuzairis. This mysterious clan – neither Muslim nor Christian – can be compared to the Yezidi tribe, the supposed "devil worshippers" of Iraq. The great "Anseiratic" secret imparted to Randolph in Syria, or so his tale went, consisted of the ritual transmission between men and women of an electromagnetic energy emanating from "the seven magnetic points of the human frame" (luring the "marital office and function" – Randolph's euphemism for the sexual act. The seven magnetic points in the body radiating energy sound suspiciously like a restatement of the seven chakras of the Yuma Marga, rather than any known Middle Eastern tradition. And yet, despite the supposed Syrian tribal derivation of the sex magic secret, Randolph was not above indulging in a bit of typical occult braggadocio, asserting that "my doctrine ... alone declares and establishes the fact that the marital function [sex] is unquestionably the highest, holiest, most important, and most wretchedly abused of all that pertains to the human being."

In fact, in a disclosure of truth almost unknown among the mythifying lineage of Western magicians, Randolph eventually admitted that he had concocted the whole Anseiratic legend – which he sometimes revealed under the cryptic pseudonym "The Rosicrucian" – from whole cloth. Nevertheless, the basic mechanics of his sexual magic technique, invented or not, have been the primary source for the best known streams of Western sex magic that followed. Randolph's writings are veiled in a sometimes impenetrable doublespeak, perhaps a necessary softening of sexual themes rarely discussed in his time. This is combined with his habit of coining an obscure magical vocabulary, such as *volancia*, *posism*, and *decretism*, to explain the simplest of concepts – clear communication was not Randolph's forte.

But if we pare Randolph's convoluted rendering of the spurious Anseiratic mystery down to its basic elements, we are left with this: if a couple makes "a nuptive prayer", a strong, mutually agreed upon wish during mutual orgasm – the "nuptive moment" in Randolphian jargon – that desire will manifest in the phenomenal world. Randolph himself provided this simple formula:

"The entire mystery can be given in very few words, and they are: An upper room; absolute personal, mental, and moral cleanliness both of the man and wife. An observance of the law just cited during the entire term of the experiment – 49 days. Formulate the desire and keep it in mind during the whole period and especially when making the nuptive prayer, (luring which no word may be spoken, but the thing desired be strongly thought."

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The couple who performed the "marital function" properly, Randolph claimed, could command powers that the reader will recognize as similar to those *siddhis* claimed by left-hand path Tantrikas. Empowered by the sacred properties imparted through the mutual orgasm, he or she could converse with disembodied beings of a higher order than man, practice telepathy with each other, read the mental projections of strangers, magically control the will of others, prepare and charge amulets for sorcery, attain supersensual visions, as well as manifesting the typical sorcerous goals of money and health.

The key to Randolph's sex magic was the training of the will to remain unyielding and controlled under all circumstances, especially the overwhelming "crisis" of orgasm. This discipline of the will during sexual climax was known as *Volancia* (from the French for "will."). This concept of the disciplined will during sexual ecstasy, which Randolph described as "the irresistible force of lightning, which ... does not tire" is much like the Buddhist left-hand path concept of the imperishable *vajra* thunderbolt that flashes during erotic illumination. In *Mysteries Of Eulis*, from 1874,

Randolph proclaimed the preeminence of Volancia in his system of sex magic with the grandiloquent formula "Will reigns Omnipotent; Love lieth at the Foundation." The similarity of this phrase to Aleister Crowley's much later magical formula "Love is the Law, Love under Will" is surely more than coincidence.

Indeed, it is hard to believe that the dominance of the will in Crowley's religion of Thelema is not derived directly from Randolph's earlier philosophy of Volancia. As we shall see, Crowley had a habit of presenting ideas appropriated from others as his own, without ever acknowledging his sources. Keep in mind that Crowley, a wealthy child of the Victorian Empire, shared many of the racial attitudes common to his class and era. It is unlikely that he would have credited the genesis of some of his most important ideas to Randolph, a man he would almost surely have designated as a "nigger."

Randolph also pioneered another practice now commonly ascribed to Crowley; long before the Englishman's descent into narcotized disarray, his American predecessor wrote publicly of his magical experiments with hashish and ether.

Once the sex magician has mastered his or her will during the sexual act, Randolph advises the cultivation of "decretism." This is the capacity to give one's self commands that will be followed without hesitation, in a state of confidence that these commands will transpire as formulated. "Posism" is a prescribed system of sexual positions resembling the Tantric *asanas*, which allow for different modes of electromagnetic force to be exchanged during the "spasm of love." Randolph characterizes the penis as the conveyor of a positive charge, while the vagina emits a negative force – a theory which

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concur with the left-hand path model of bipolar energy transmission. Unique to Randolph is the notion that on the mental plane, these gender polarities are reversed.

He explained that "while the phallus of the man is positively polarized and the kteis of the woman is negatively polarized, the head of the man, the organ of his mental manifestations is, to the contrary, negative and magnetic for rapport with the head of the woman which is positive and electric." Randolph's use of the Greek word *kteis* (vagina) foreshadows Crowley's later explanation that his spelling of "magick" with a "k" is a reference to the centrality of the *kteis* to his initiatory practice.

Finally, the couple is directed to develop "tiroclerism" which seems to be a form of yogic visualization, permitting the adept to create clear mental images that become reality at the moment of mutual orgasm. "If," Randolph writes, "a man ardently wishes a force or power into being and guards this wish from the instant that he penetrates into the woman until the instant that he withdraws from her, his wish is necessarily fulfilled." As a beginning exercise in developing the inner fundamentals necessary to any erotic sorcery – the willed transmission of the adept's imagination into the daemonic realm, charged with sexual ecstasy – Randolph's system is an effective one.

Although Randolph's formula for "nuptive prayer" was adopted, using different terminology, by such later sex magicians as O.T.O. founder Theodor Reuss and Crowley, their practice differed sharply from Randolph's in several important aspects. The most obvious of these distinctions is that Reuss and Crowley, both confirmed despisers of womankind, essentially used the female sex partner as a sort of necessary evil in their rites, poking their magic wands into her to bring about their own orgasm, but hardly viewing her as a coequal collaborator in the working. Randolph, however, insisted that the female partner's orgasm was a crucial factor in the culmination of the rite: "It is best for both man and wife to act together for the attainment of the mysterious objects sought." The female partner must possess "perfect sexive and orgasmal ability; for it requires a double crisis to succeed." Randolph's veneration of the female is partially in harmony with

left-hand path *Shakti puja*. He states that "all *force and powers arise from the womanhood of God*."

Considering all this, can we recognize in Paschal Beverly Randolph an adept of the sinister current? His "soul-sexivism" does bear many of the universal marks of the left-hand path: the divine nature of the feminine power; a bipolar positive/negative sexual energy transmitted by the male and female organisms; the attainment of maya-transforming magical *siddhis* through enhanced orgasm. His open practice of sex magic in the conservative, strait-laced culture of nineteenth century Boston was certainly a bold, even dangerous, defiance of orthodoxy. However, on closer analysis,

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Randolph's worldview – at least as expressed in his public writings – is far too accepting of social conventions and the norms of *pashu* morality to partake of the heroic, transgressive qualities that determine Vama Marga initiation in its highest mode of expression.

For all of his daring, Randolph communicates an unmistakable puritanism in many of his sex-magical instructions that is not suited to the left-hand path's transcendence of social programming. For instance, he warns the couple that they must never experience "lust or pleasure" (luring the "sexive prayer", declaring that any "carnal passion" felt during ejaculation will be "suicide" for the male sex magician. This is rather reminiscent of the seventeenth-century Catholic injunction bidding copulating couples to procreate without "any sort of desire or pleasure" and makes for an unlikely recipe for the kind of extreme ecstasy required for magical consciousness alteration. And for all of the resemblance of Randolph's "womanhood of God" to the Shakti principle, he only reserves such reverence for those women who obey the dictates of conventional morality.

"Success," Randolph wrote, "requires the adjuvancy of a superior woman. THIS IS THE LAW! A harlot or low woman is useless for all such lofty and holy purposes, and just so is a bad, impure, passion-driven apology for a man. The woman shall not be one who accepts rewards for compliance; nor a virgin; or under eighteen years of age; or another's wife."

Contrast this with the previously described left-hand veneration of Shakti in all of her guises, including whore, adulterer, and virgin, all of whom are considered ideal sexual consorts for *Vama Marga* rites. Randolph's legacy to the Western sinister current is mixed; although he was a trailblazer in bringing the formerly secretive practice of sex magic out into the open, his initiation was incomplete. Randolph stopped short of confronting the night side of the sinister current. Many of his techniques were adopted into the latter-day cult of the Scarlet Woman, but his vision lacked the chaotic power of the Whore of Babylon that is the driving force of the left-hand path in the West.

There is a final puzzle piece to consider among the many that make up the life of P. R. Randolph. In 1931 a book entitled *Magia Sexualis*, attributed to Paschal Beverly Randolph, was published in Paris. Credited as having translated the work from English into French is Maria De Naglowska, the previously mentioned Satanic sex magician. Most of what is known of Randolph's sex-magical teaching derives from this work, and a translation of it into English printed almost forty years later in the United States. However, it is not at all clear whether Madame de Naglowska can truly be said to have merely translated Randolph's most famous book, or if she is in fact the actual authoress of the book. She may have written it under Randolph's name, based on her interpretation of some of his obscure pamphlets and documents from

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his Brotherhood of Eulis, interweaving her own theories into the text.

The distinct possibility that the American pioneer sex magician's principal work was actually written in French decades after his death by a female Russian Satanist is only one of many of the peculiar mysteries the

student of the Western sinister current must contend with. This connection of de Naglowska, who we will investigate later, with Randolph's influential sex magical writings, illuminates the previously neglected role that the distinctive but little-known Russian strain of the magical revival played in the development of the Western sinister current. Madame Blavatsky, one of the originators of the magical renaissance, was only the first of a series of Russian occultists who were important bridges between the Western and Eastern esoteric traditions.

G.I. Gurdjieff And The Sexual Center

I certainly have an aim of my own, but you must permit me to keep silent about it. —G.I. Gurdjieff to P.D. Ouspensky

No analysis of the left-hand path in the West can ignore the teaching of the enigmatic Russian known as Georgei Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1874—1949).

Those who have studied Gurdjieff's system of spiritual awakening, alternately called the Fourth Way, the Way of the Sly Man, or simply the Work, without comparing it to earlier traditions, may be surprised to find him in the company of left-hand path sex magicians. But the similarities between Gurdjieff's system and that posited by the traditional left-hand path are unmistakable. Indeed, the Fourth Way appears to be a Tantra consciously adapted for modern Europeans, a condensation of the central left-hand path concepts, less most of the Eastern terminology. Gurdjieff himself made no claim to originality, acknowledging that he was merely the herald of a nameless ancient tradition to the West. This vaguely described teaching had supposedly been mastered by Gurdjieff during a period of wanderings in the East. In this, he was little different than his predecessor Madame Blavatsky, who also spoke cryptically of secret initiations conferred in Tibet, or the claim of Theodor Reuss that the secret sexual doctrine of his O.T.O. was conveyed by Eastern sages.

If one eye-witness account, reported by Gurdjieff's disciple Maurice Nicoll, can be believed, at least one traditional practice of the Tibetan Buddhist branch of the left-hand path was known to Gurdjieff. Nicoll claimed that he once accidentally caught a glimpse of his teacher, who was unaware of being observed, murmuring to himself: "I am *dordje*, I am *dordje*." *Dorje* is Tibetan for *Vajra*, the thunderbolt that descends from the celestial region to the earth (luring the sexual rites of the *vajrayana*). According to Tantra, he or she who becomes *dorje* or *vajra* has walked the

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left-hand path to reach a sovereign and indestructible state of being. This incident, if true, suggests that Gurdjieff privately incorporated left-hand path methods into his own self-initiation, even if he did not include such doctrines in his teaching to others.

It has been suggested that Gurdjieff actually cobbled together his teaching from a simplified amalgamation of Tantric Buddhism learned in Tibetan monasteries and Sufi principles obtained through encounters with Islamic Dervish orders. Less glamorously, the Work might just as easily have adapted from occult books that would have been available in the Russia of Gurdjieff's youth. Whatever the actual origin of the Fourth Way, even a brief outline of the most important elements reveals strong left-hand path influence.

Gurdjieff's most influential disciple, P. D. Ouspensky, when pressed to define his Master's *chief* lesson, summed it up succinctly: "Man is asleep. He must wake up." Gurdjieff's hypothesis that the natural state of humanity is a nearly comatose spiritual sleep, a listless daydream through which he or she moves mechanically, seems to reflect the Tantric left-hand path concept of *Supta*, or sleep. The adherents of the Fourth Way, in their difficult striving to wake up, are compelled to build up an unnatural "super-effort", a force within themselves which they utilize to counter the heavy weight of sleep. The *Vama Marga* adept is also taught to violently assault his or her

slumber by all possible means, coming to that state of Awakening, or *Bodhana*, which we have already referred to.

The left-hand path insists that awakening runs counter to the natural order of things, and even breaks the rule of the divine. Gurdjieff often stated that his Work of awakening was pitted "against nature, against God." Just as the *Vama Marga* instructs its initiates that awakening can only be accomplished through the physical body, rather than through the cerebral means favored by conventional religion, so did Gurdjieff push his followers, often effete intellectuals and artists, to exceed their physical limits as a form of liberation. For Gurdjieff, the Work was a matter of bringing "the seven centers of man," located in the body, into harmonious adjustment. This concept be almost certainly borrowed from the Tantric system of seven *chakras*, and under further analysis the activation of the "seven centers" appears to be Gurdjieff's version of Kundalini yoga.

Gurdjieff placed special emphasis on the "sexual center" as the source of the energy that could eventually be directed toward the freeing from sleep and the activation of the "higher centers" of the body, which are dormant in most human beings. Here we encounter a modern reworking of the left-hand path notion that the powerful sexual energy unleashed in the lower *chakras* can pierce the higher *chakras*, ultimately opening the eye of Shiva, the symbol for divine consciousness.

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Although he never specifically described this process of creating a higher body by harmonizing the seven centers of man with the energy and substance of sex as Kundalini, direct references to the term are not absent in Gurdjieff's Work. In his simultaneously profound and unreadable gargantuan novel *Beelzebub's Tales To His Grandson*, Gurdjieff coins the typically Gurdjieffian term "Kundabuffer", This he describes as a sleep-inducing force of hypnosis and fantasy that prevents humans from awakening to a more vivid life in the real world. Of course, this is not completely dissonant with one left-hand path understanding of the Kundalini force. In its dormant, coiled serpent manifestation, Kundalini is thought to be the root cause of human delusion, exercising a spell of enchantment over the mind that can only be broken by awakening the serpent from slumber.

Gurdjieff also maintained that human consciousness could never survive physical death unless the aspirant worked at creating a "higher body", a spiritual organism which appears to be the "subtle" or perhaps "causal" body of Tantric initiation – "the body of light" known to Gnostic libertines. The *Vama Marga* practitioner of Kundalini believes that the more enduring spiritual body within his or physical vessel is fed and energized by the sexual currents, and the internal build-up of the *ojas*, the force emanated by semen. With this arcane metaphysical physiology Gurdjieff is in accord on every point, declaring that "the substance with which sex works" is the fuel for the "higher body", that subtle organism which does not exist until it is created through the efforts of the awakened man or woman. To his inner circle of followers, Gurdjieff was more blunt; "the substance with which sex works," he admitted, "is semen."

It was a substance Gurdjieff had no compunctions about sharing with his many adoring female disciples. Like a twentieth century reincarnation of the legendary left-hand path Tibetan "Divine Madman", Drugpa Kunley, Gurdjieff scandalized sedate esoteric circles of the 20s and 30s by seducing followers by the score, and assuring them that relations with the Master were beneficial for their spiritual development. One of Gurdjieff's more astute biographers, James Webb, quotes one disciple as saying, "Gurdjieff used to take us girls into intimacy with him. It was his way of helping us."

Considering how closely every other part of Gurdjieff's teaching resembles sinister current practice, it may be that he privately taught his

admirers some form of sexual initiation. However, unlike his contemporary Crowley, Gurdjieff left behind no record documenting his many trysts. Any attempt to determine whether these were actually left-hand path sexual rites – as some have theorized – or were simply manifestations of a high libido exercising itself among a willing audience of spiritual groupies cannot be made with any certainty. Such erotic exploits inspired numerous rumors of

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"sexual black magic" to be associated with Gurdjieff, whispered innuendoes that his flamboyant behavior only exacerbated. Former lovers were said to have a penchant for killing themselves after the Master had slaked his fleshly appetite upon them, and more than one intimate student of Gurdjieff's suspected that she had been the subject of a lust spell.

One interesting anecdote from 1933 suggests that Gurdjieff had gained proficiency in a practice associated with left-hand path sorcery, and indicates something of his libidinous reputation. At a party, Gurdjieff turned his gaze – frequently described as hypnotic – on his American pupil, the novelist Zona Gale, who was seated with a companion. They observed the notorious magus inhaling and exhaling in what seemed a deliberate, methodical manner. Gale blanched, stiffened, and upon resuming her composure reported (in the terminology of the Work) that Gurdjieff's peculiar attentions had "struck her right through her sexual center". The Sly Man had supposedly bestowed a remote-control orgasm upon her through his magical powers. Even though such tales must be taken with a grain of salt, they form an ineradicable part of Gurdjieff's legend.

This feat recalls a mind control method practiced by Indian left-hand path adepts, who claim the ability to form a telepathic link with another person by carefully observing, and then imitating, his or her breath pattern. Attuning one's own breathing to another person's respiratory rhythm, with full mental focus, is said to allow the magician ingress to the unsuspecting consciousness of another, permitting willed control of that individual's mind.

Through these means, death, healing, transmission of thought, or sexual excitement can theoretically be brought about from a distance. Of course, in the above-cited case of Gurdjieff and his student, we can't ignore the psychological factors establishing a pre-existing link between sorcerer and subject, an affinity which must surely ease the flow of such a transmission.

Like Crowley, Gurdjieff was adamant in his opposition to any kind of contraceptives, perhaps a reflection of his belief in the magical properties of semen, and its purported role in the creation of a "higher body". Be that as it may, the Master's many dalliances with his disciples led to the creation of many illegitimate bodies of the usual physical type – whatever the nature of Gurdjieff's sexual relations with his students, he left behind him a throng of Gurdjieffian bastards and bastardettes. Although he has long since been cast in a saintly light by his latter-day followers, an essential part of Gurdjieff's personal teaching was the way in which he deliberately inverted the usual behavior expected in a spiritual teacher. His carefully embellished repute as a lecher was only one of his tactics. He seems to have gone out of his way to have been exceedingly difficult, temperamental and untrustworthy, and many a would-be adherent of the Fourth Way abandoned it out of sheer exasperation with the teacher's unfathomable – and sometimes infuriating – methods.

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During the early part of his career as a professional enigma, Gurdjieff mortified one prospective pupil, a strait-laced and respectable military officer of the Russian aristocracy, by insisting that he meet him for the first time at a particularly seedy cafe frequented by prostitutes. The officer's first impression of his guru was of an unkempt, shady personage who greeted him with the disappointed complaint that "there are usually more whores here."

Gurdjieff's disciple, J. G. Bennett, interpreted Gurdjieff's deliberately

scandalous, often impossible behavior to be in keeping with the Sufi practice of *malamat* (being blameworthy), in which the initiate adopts a mode of conduct that consciously alienates those around him, ruining the good reputation strived for by conventional citizens. The practice of *malamat* might very well have been learned by the young Gurdjieff through an encounter with the Malamti Sufi Order, an initiatory body founded in the eighth century that has exercised a powerful underground influence upon the magical tradition.

Such systematic ruination of one's standing in society is of course also a standard practice of advanced left-hand path adepts, whose god-like contempt for the slave values of the *pashu* manifest in extreme rejection of all of the props of mass-approved comportment. If Gurdjieff did not go quite as far as the Aghori in this radical detachment from that being he disdainfully referred to as "the normal man", his actions seem to have served the same initiatory purposes, for him, and for those willing victims he entangled in his teaching.

There is one frequently ignored detail in Gurdjieff's life that places his often puzzling behavior in an illuminating context. It seems fairly certain that Gurdjieff's own restless trek through Tibet and possible contact to the court of the Dalai Lama was made whilst in the service of the Tsarist intelligence service. He seems to have carried out this assignment under the convenient guise of a spiritual seeker, and may well have continued his intelligence work for other nations after the Bolshevik revolution.

Gurdjieff's withering contempt for politics, patriotism and government policy of any kind – which often dismayed his more idealistic disciples – was surely as informed by his experience as an undercover operative who had been privy to the behind-the-scenes operations of the world, as by any metaphysical understanding. Thus Gurdjieff could assume the seemingly contradictory roles of Tsarist spy and minor Nazi collaborator, among many others, with little hand-wringing over conventional ethics.

Was this stance simply Gurdjieff's mystical rationalization for indulging a generally roguish character? He never explained directly, but his life-long pattern of creating elaborate initiatory crises and traumas for his disciples, sexual or otherwise, thus forcing them to think for themselves or fail in the attempt, seems clear enough. Although it can be argued that

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Crowley's similar courting of scandal and public infamy may have served the same purpose, one gets the impression that Gurdjieff was much more controlled and premeditated in applying this strategy. Like the medieval lefthand path Master Drugpa Kunley, Gurdjieff sought to awaken his pupils through shock treatment, disillusioning them as harshly as possible.

Gurdjieff biographer James Webb describes the one recorded meeting of Gurdjieff and Crowley; based on what he claims are first-hand reports. (Lawrence Sutin, in his *Do What Thou Wilt: A Life Of Aleister Crowley* casts some doubt on this account.) If the encounter occurred as described, it can be interpreted as meaning that either Gurdjieff sensed an essential hollowness at the core of Crowley's persona, or merely felt that he had to place any likely competitor in the Western guru game in his place. After Crowley spent a fairly innocuous weekend at Gurdjieff's Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man in Fountainbleau, Gurdjieff allegedly turned upon his infamous guest and treated him to a furious public denunciation. "You are filthy, all dirty inside. You never come in my house again!", Gurdjieff shouted at the Great Beast 666, whom according to some eyewitnesses at the meeting of mages, skulked off in a rare state of embarrassment. Considering that Gurdjieff declared that one of his missions in the West was the eradication of occultism and the delusions it excites, it may be that he saw the arch-occultist Crowley as a prime target.

Gurdjieff's system grants none of the special importance to the

Feminine Daemonic that characterizes the left-hand path; in fact, although many women were charmed by him, he was often described as the epitome of the overbearing macho patriarch. His ebullient promiscuity alone, despite certain suggestions of erotic-esoteric energy transfer, certainly doesn't qualify him as a left-hand path adept. However, there are enough indications of a Tibetan Tantric influence in his life and thought to cause us to wonder if he did not view his many female consorts as *Songyums*, or "secret mothers", in keeping with the covert practice of sexual initiation within left-handed Buddhism. Gurdjieff, ever the Sly Man, left only hints; whatever the motive force of his teaching was, it was largely communicated privately and in terms that suited each individual student.

Rasputin And The Holiness Of Sin

In considering the existence of a Slavic left-hand path, as suggested by such figures as Naglowska and Gurdjieff, the almost legendary sex-mystical exploits of Grigori Yefimovich (1862—1916) are worthy of a brief contemplation. For all of his notoriety, Yefimovich, far better known by his nickname of Rasputin (derived from the Russian word for "dissolute" or "lewd") has had surprisingly little influence on the sex magical tradition of the West. But the heretical Christian and heathen synthesis of erotic

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illumination engaged in by Rasputin and his female followers makes for an excellent example of the universality of left-hand path principles.

A great deal of foolishness has previously been written concerning Rasputin, who has been caricaturized as a Satanic mad monk. The "Satanic" charge has not the least basis in fact, and is simply based on his sinister reputation. Far from mad, Rasputin appears to have been a canny if uneducated observer of human nature, whose disreputable religious practices were in striking contrast to an otherwise calm and serious demeanor. And he was never a monk by any means; he spent all of three months on a spiritual retreat at a monastery, but never sought or claimed holy orders. Rather, he was considered by his admirers to be a *starets*, a wandering "holy man", due to his reputation for possessing mysterious powers of healing and second sight, which can be described as magical in nature. Rasputin's possession of magical *siddhi* was sincerely attested to by the adoring women in his circle, one of whom was the Tsarina Alexandra, Empress of all the Russias, for whom all types of occultism had long been an abiding interest. The strange circumstances of Rasputin's death have only contributed to the enduring legend of his uncanny powers.

Rasputin's crude if energetic methods of sexual initiation were not his invention; they were adapted fairly faithfully from his contact with a Russian pseudo-Gnostic sect popularly known as the Khlysti, or "flagellators." Although the Khlysti never attained anything like the complex philosophical and esoteric body of wisdom known to Tantra, there are many similarities between their rites and those of the *Vama Marga*. Both techniques utilize copulation as a process of self-deification. The moment of supreme sexual ecstasy enjoyed by the Khlysti couple leads not to identity with Shiva/Shakti but to the male's mutation of his mortal consciousness into the Christ, while the female is transformed into the Virgin Mary. This act of spiritual incest between deified humans also recalls the *agape* practiced by libertine Gnostics, in which the male is mystically transformed into Christ, and his consort becomes the Sophia. As with the libertine Gnostics, the Khlysti interpret the mystery of sexual illumination as the spiritual descent of the holy ghost into the physical body.

Initiates of the Khlysti, usually located in rural Russia, feigned devotion to the Russian Orthodox Church during the day, waiting until their clandestine nocturnal gatherings had commenced to practice their *true* religion. Just as the sexual evocation of Shakti in India's secret rite is traditionally carried out in an abandoned place at midnight, the witching hour

is also the preferred time in which to begin the Khlysti orgy The circle of the Indian *chakra puja* orgy is recalled in the frenzied circular dance that begins the Khlysti rite. Similar to some Dervish dance rituals, the whirling Khlysti dance was used as a means of altering consciousness, and at its frenetic zenith, the participants flagellated each other's bodies to heighten their

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ecstatic states. When the somatic energy had been brought to the desired level, the gathered couples spontaneously undressed and paired off to celebrate the prolonged orgiastic phase of the Working. And as in the *chakra puja*, one of the female Khlysti served as the temporary avatar of feminine power. One of the orgiasts was selected to be the incarnation of the Virgin Mary, and was venerated in her ritual nakedness. The pre-Christian origin of the sect is made obvious in the fact that the "Virgin" is also considered to be "Mother Earth"; the Feminine Daemonic Shakti power that clearly places the orgy under the aegis of the left. Rasputin has been reported as telling his disciples that he first learned the "blessed secret" of "sanctification through sin" through some sort of tutelary communication conveyed through the voice of "holy Mother Earth."

The *starets* taught his congregation, which at first consisted of gypsies and peasants in his native Siberia – but from 1903—1916, extended to the society ladies of St. Petersburg and Moscow – that to be truly redeemed of sin, one must sin thoroughly. To this end, Rasputin led his refined adherents in modified recreations of the Khlysti orgiastic revels that have since taken on mythological proportions. The surviving evidence seems to indicate that Rasputin's prolonged bouts of frenetic dance and sexual abandon were also intended to create a unique heightened state of consciousness, a mystical apotheosis of initiatory death through orgasm that is similar to *Vama Marga* practice. Crowley's attempts to sexually exhaust himself and his lovers into a death-like state of visionary "eroto-comatose lucidity" seems comparable.

This Rasputinesque use of extreme sexual ecstasy was primarily a means of provoking inner death of the false persona and rebirth into a more illuminated psychic condition. However, the women who submitted to Rasputin's erotic spell often reported relinquishing consciousness altogether during the trance of repeated orgasm, which would seem to be the opposite of the increased Awakening of the psyche usually aimed for in left-hand path rites. Rasputin's aim of inverting established religious norms through sexual taboo-breaking and proclaiming the sinful to be sacred is a clear manifestation of the sinister current, another of those atavistic resurgences of the hidden left-hand path of Christianity. Ironically, despite the nominally Christian essence of Rasputin's approach to erotic initiation, the only manifestation of Western sex magic he seems to have affected was the Luciferian sex magician Maria de Naglowska.

Maria de Naglowska – A Satanic Sophia

Despite the centrality of the female sexual initiatrix – whether she be known as Shakti or Sophia – to left-hand path erotic awakening, it was not until the twentieth century that a female sex-magical teacher openly emerged in the

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West. Her teaching, which she clearly identified as being Satanic in nature, reveals definite parallels with the authentic left-hand path. Almost unknown in the Anglo-Saxon world, she was the Russian-born Maria de Naglowska (1883—1936), who established a flourishing school of Satanic sex magic in the Paris of the 1930s. As a sex-magical teaching that has no connection at all to the lineage of O.T.O. and Crowleyan practices familiar to Englishspeaking magicians, the unique approach to erotic initiation devised by this remarkable adventuress has been unjustly ignored.

De Naglowska, the daughter of a high-ranking Tsarist military officer who was assassinated by a nihilist anarchist, was orphaned at an early age.

After her education, she became involved in a bohemian milieu of artists, writers and occultists, swept up in the revolutionary fervor of 1905 Russia. Like many spiritually inclined aristocratic Russian women of her generation, she knew Rasputin, whose sex-mystical ministry seems to have influenced some elements of her own messianic religion. (In 1931, Naglowska translated a biography of the holy man, *Raspoutine*, by the Russian author Simanovitch, into French.) Russia had long been home to many thriving Slavic Satanic sects, and de Naglowska may also have established contact with some of these as a prelude to her own diabolical school.

Exiled in Rome after the revolution, she became involved in the esoteric community there, a period which included a dalliance – both spiritual and carnal – with the Traditionalist magician Julius Evola. It was also in Italy that Naglowska encountered a mysterious Russian teacher from the Caucasus, who she later implied was a major source of her own sex-magical doctrine. Making her living as a journalist, she was often suspected of espionage, in the shady occult tradition of Dee, Reuss, Gurdjieff and Parsons.

Her travels brought her as far as Alexandria, Egypt, where she became involved with the local branch of the Theosophical Society. Despite her marriage to a Zionist activist, who eventually abandoned her and their three children for Palestine, Naglowska reputedly pursued her lively sexual appetite with enthusiasm. Notwithstanding her notoriety as a free spirit and habitu  of the international occult movement of her time, she did not really come to prominence until her arrival in Paris between the World Wars.

If previous European Satanic circles had sought to carry on their activities in secret, Naglowska positively courted the attention of the French press, as well as writing several books and pamphlets which made explicit her instructions for diabolically inspired erotic illumination. Despite her forthright glorification for what she termed "the unspeakable happiness of Satanic pleasure" in her 1932 *Le Rite Sacr  de l'Amour Magique (The Sacred Rite Of Magical Love)*, it is interesting that de Naglowska aroused none of the outraged and prurient scandal her contemporary Crowley – who had been reduced to near-pariah status by the British press only a few years earlier – had provoked. Indeed, one newspaper account of de Naglowska's

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consecration of sex-magically trained women at her seminary, *La Fleche d'Or* (The Golden Arrow) good-naturedly characterizes it as an "interesting religious experiment." Far from supervising a secret society, Naglowska held fairly open rituals of Satanic sex magic, to which the interested public were invited for initiation into the school.

In her temple, a converted hotel located in the fashionable Montparnasse district of Paris, she regularly presided over a rite she called

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"the Golden Mass" in which as many as twenty copulating couples formed a "magical chain" very much like the highly disciplined chakra-puja circle orgies of Tantra. The sexual current generated by this group activation of erotic energy was often directed to the magical destruction of enemies, but unlike other Satanists, de Naglowska also used group "diabolical operations" to heal ailing members of her group. The idea of sex magic performed to the glory of Lucifer might inspire thoughts of wild, unrestrained orgies, but Naglowska's group sex operations were actually precisely choreographed and controlled rites. A meditative dance, similar to eurhythmics and the movements which Gurdjieff taught his students, were a major part of these Golden Masses, and preceded the sexual phase of the Workings.

Naglowska's insistence that her infernal form of sex-mystical transformation could only be communicated through the agency of ritual copulation with "an adequately trained woman" demonstrates the importance of the Feminine Daemonic to her discipline. This trained

sorority may be considered to fulfill the function of *shaktis* within the Naglowska branch of the sinister current. Naglowska herself was known by her followers as "the Sophia of Montparnasse", in a reference to the Gnostic feminine principle said to impart the gnosis. Her female acolytes were also known as *Sophiales*, presented as the vanguard of a "new matriarchy".

In the imminent utopia Naglowska proposed, all 17 year old girls would be consecrated as sex-magical *Sophiales* in special training institutes.

This consecration she thought necessary to balance the disturbed equilibrium between male and female polarities, which she theorized was the root cause of the world's ills. Thus, sex magic was seen to exercise not only a personal initiatory transformation on the couples who practiced it, but a much larger social effect. (Naglowska's hypothesis that unsatisfying sex and imbalance of the genders created social catastrophe bears some similarities with the psychologist Wilhelm Reich's ideas, although he would certainly have rejected any mystical or Satanic overlay)

The world-changing force, according to Naglowska, was "feminine power", which she believed would emanate from a new kind of spiritually and sexually advanced woman, "*la sagesse*" – the wise woman. Far from the usual lascivious cliché of what a Satanic woman might be, Naglowska described her ideal female "initiatix" as a "pure woman ... who does not tolerate perverse vibrations." In this regard, Naglowska seems to be influenced by her reading of the earlier writings of P. B Randolph, and their insistence that sex magic should never be performed with a "harlot or low woman."

Naglowska maintained that the *Sophiales*, among whose number we must presume she included herself, embodied physical gateways to selfdeification for their male partners. As in the traditional *Vama Marga*, the

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female is the deified priestess in the Naglowska cult. She sexually communicates a potentially dangerous esoteric power to the male, a power that cannot be confronted and sustained by anything less than a heroic disposition. For Naglowska, the end liberation of this sexual operation was not the deliberate obliteration of the self into *nirvana* that some Eastern lefthand path adepts seek, On the contrary, the Naglowskan disciple was led along the more radical *way* of the sinister current, the riding of the tiger of sexual ecstasy to rebirth as a "kingly man", a god-like daemon. The profane sexual act, which usually binds a couple more deeply to nature and mortality, is here used to blast their psyches into a non-natural state of being.

Naglowska's Satanic sex-magical utopia was known as the Third Term of the Trinity (TTT to her disciples), which was conceived in Aeonic terms as a new world-age which would radically change the spiritual and sexual nature of mankind, constituting an evolutionary transformation. The

High Priestess of this coming age taught her acolytes that the first two "terms" had been Judaism, the age of the Father, and Christianity, the age of the Son. In the impending Third Term, which she identified as the age of the Mother, Naglowska wrote, "sex [with the wise women] will confer the luminous knowledge of LUCIFER and SATAN regenerated." Naglowska did not envision her Third Era of the Mother as a dark age of doom, but the concept of a spiritual age ruled by the leftwards Shakti power of Woman and the previously reviled powers of Satan/Lucifer can be seen as a Western form of the Kali-Yuga.

Surely the most controversial ritual in de Naglowska's complicated liturgy was the Trial of Hanging, in which male adepts were sexually stimulated, then voluntarily hanged until they passed out in a state of controlled semi-asphyxia. When the male sex magician hovered in psychic limbo, in a state de Naglowska described as "above all delights," one of her personally initiated female adherents would position herself on his asphyxiainduced erection. The ligature around his throat would then be released, and

as he came back to consciousness, he would experience what de Naglowska describes in her *The Light Of Sex: Ritual Of Satanic Initiation* as "the explosive penetration of the resplendent woman at the sublime moment of holy coitus." (Now, kids, don't try this at home.)

This ordeal required that the male not ejaculate, retaining his semen for the same purposes of spiritual energy containment taught by some Tantrics. The adept who survived this procedure was transformed, in de Naglowska's words, into "the sublime madman of the secret doctrines ... a new man." Exactly which *secret* doctrines she refers to is not explained, which unfortunately typifies de Naglowska's often fanciful and deliberately vague style.

The Trial of Hanging appears to be a sacralization of the fairly common

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sexual fetish of autoerotic asphyxia. The mostly male devotees of this not infrequently fatal practice masturbate while hanging themselves, aiming to maximize the intensity of orgasmic bliss by timing climax to occur at the moment of altered state of consciousness created immediately before blackout. The Trial of Hanging as practiced by de Naglowska's Satanists was the enactment of a complex cycle of sex-magical initiation that's ultimate goal was the recreation of the magician into a "Messiah," an erotic form of self-deification congruent with left-hand path objectives. Some of the magical theory informing the Trial of Hanging was explained by Naglowska in her 1934 booklet *The Mystery Of Hanging: Satanic Initiation According To The Doctrine Of The Third Term Of The Trinity*. But the memoirs of her students make it clear that the true gist of her sexual teaching was communicated only in private audience.

By all accounts, the Golden Arrow was, at its core, a personality cult dedicated to personal allegiance to De Naglowska herself, who as High Priestess of the Temple of the Third Term of the Trinity, was the sole authority in doctrinal and ritual matters. In one of the oaths taken by her male initiates, who were ordained as "Knights of the Heart", the novice swore to be "an adept of Maria de Naglowska" and to "accept her doctrine of the Third Term of the Trinity" Her knights vowed a sacred oath, sealed by a drink from a chalice placed on the pubis of their High Priestess, that "I will research with my companions the erotic act of initiation, which transforms the heat in light, revealing LUCIFER in the Satanic shadows..."

Naglowska's rather ambiguous understanding of Satan recalls some Gnostic heresies, which taught that Lucifer or Satanael were not entirely evil beings but indispensable companion forces which worked in tandem with Christ and Sophia to bring about gnosis. In one of her rituals, de Naglowska states that in the new spiritual age that she thought was dawning, "SATAN (negation), is momentarily reconciled with GOD ... the negative action of SATAN is absolutely necessary to GOD." Naglowska's theology, with its reconciliation of God and Satan, also foreshadows the teachings of Robert and Mary Aim DeGrimston, leaders of the 1960s Process Church of the Final Judgment, who held that "Soul and Body can be reunited by the Spirit of the Unity of Christ and Satan, within the Essence."

At the end of 1935, at the age of 52, Naglowska surprised her followers by announcing that her mission in the world was over. An emotional farewell ceremony was held at her temple. To her inner circle, she elaborated further points of her obscure doctrine, encouraging them to carry on the preparation for the Third Term of the Trinity. She died the next year in Switzerland, a passage interpreted by her more credulous disciples as a sign that their High Priestess had the gift of prophecy; others have speculated that she had been diagnosed with a terminal illness. Although

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some Naglowskan initiates haphazardly attempted to carry on the orgiastic circles and the acts of sexual regeneration with the *Sophiales*, like most

personality cults, the Golden Arrow could not survive without its charismatic founder. Reverence for their teacher was so profound that none of the consecrated women she had trained were prepared to take over as the *Fleche D'or* leader, which did not bode well for her hopes of a new matriarchy. A short-lived successor group, *Christ-Roi* (Christ-King), continued performing the Trial of Hanging, claiming to be under Naglowska's spiritual supervision from the other world, but eventually dispersed.

Naglowska's sex-magical approach to exaltation of Luciferian principles has not been influential in magical circles generally. Very few modern Satanic groups have followed her lead in using sex for spiritual purposes, although the Trial of Hanging was adapted by one modern Western left-hand path Order in the 1980s. Her complicated vision of religious utopianism based on the ascent of the "wise woman" is probably too dogmatic to be very adaptable to other magical belief systems, and her many books and pamphlets have hardly been read outside of France in the 1930s. Naglowskan sex magic's most dramatic affect seems to have been upon some of the many literary figures and intellectuals who were disciples and lovers of this striking personality in Rome or Paris. In particular, three of the men who had encountered the gnosis of the Satanic Sophia went on to chart unexplored regions of erotic mysticism that touched directly upon the live wire of the sinister current.

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The Naglowska Circle

One of the curious who were drawn to the Golden Masses held by the *Fleche D'Or* was the French author Georges Bataille (1897-1962), whose potent fiction and philosophical essays point the way to the sacred pornography we mentioned in the introduction to this book. Naglowska, with her rather wholesome approach to Satanic sex, and her desire to avoid "perverse vibrations" would probably not have approved at all of the direction Bataille took. In his lascivious novella *The Story Of The Eye* (1928), which sometimes borders on the concerns of traditional Satanism, a defrocked Catholic priest is initiated into the left-hand path mysteries of eros, death, and transgression of the sacred. Ritually raped, forced into sacrilege against a transubstantiated Eucharist host and the wine that is Christ's blood, Bataille's priest is eventually subjected to necrophiliac indignities by an unholy trinity of debauched adolescents.

In 1937, after his observation of de Naglowska's Golden Arrow, Bataille formed his own small magical secret society, known as *Acéphale*, a name based on a self-created artificial deity called Acephalos (Greek for "Headless.") Although Bataille claimed to teach an "atheological" (godless) religion, it is interesting that the name of Bataille's *Acéphale* group recalls a well-known Greco-Egyptian hermetic text, popularized by the Golden Dawn and Crowley, which invites the magus to declaim: "Thee, I invoke, Akephalou, [the headless one]." The headlessness Bataille referred to also indicated that his group was deliberately anarchic, without any fixed leader; an experimental attempt to dispose of the hierarchical structure that suppresses the freedom and spontaneity of so many magical groups. One of *Acéphale's* plans, which never came to fruition, was to inspire one of its nine initiates to voluntarily serve as a sacrifice. Their objective was to reach a "limitless abandon", but the intensity that fueled this investigation into group dynamics proved short-lived.

In 1938, Bataille turned his direction inward, attempting what he called "inner experiments" which he based on a study of Tantra, yoga, and Tibetan mysticism. He wrote that "the Tantrics use sexual pleasure not to lose themselves in it but as a kind of springboard," enthusiastically embracing this practice as a "black magic [which] has continued this

tradition until the present day" Through these Tantra-based experiments, he realized what he described as "the identity of these perfect contraries, divine ecstasy and its opposite, extreme horror." Here we have a mystical crisis that the Aghori in the cremation grounds of India would have understood.

In his essay *Erotisme*, Bataille states that "eroticism opens one to death; death opens up the negation of individual duration." This awareness of the initiatory power of the "little death" of orgasm can be likened to *Vama Marga* ritual juxtaposition of the macabre and the sexual. In Bataille's work,

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we frequently find an obsession with themes that we have already encountered in our explication of the more extreme frontiers of the Eastern left-hand path. He was fascinated with the etymology of the word "sacred" or *sacer*, which means defiled and holy at the same time; the importance of transgression and taboo-breaking in his work reflects the deliberate reversal of rites celebrated in the *Vama Marga*. Like the left-hand path adept, Bataille sought those numinous levels of consciousness he called "states of sovereignty" through delving into forbidden and rejected phenomena. "What I teach," Bataille declared, "is a drunkenness: I am not a philosopher, but a saint, perhaps a madman." One is reminded of Naglowska's claim that her sex magical procedures aimed to produce the "sublime madman of the secret doctrines."

Bataille's utilization of matter and the physical body as a medium of illumination also seems influenced by his pursuit of Tantra's left-hand path.

His statement that "it is possible to identify as a leitmotif of gnosis the conception of matter as an active principle," is attuned to the Tantric concept of the Shakti force – which is the visible world – as the active energy in the universe.

Bataille's mystical appreciation of the Feminine Daemonic often focused on a fascination with the whore as sacred icon, a theme he held in common with the cult of the Scarlet Woman, from its roots in Sumerian sacred prostitution to the modern magical veneration of Babalon. Always eager to cast a deliberate pall of irreverence on his work, he once described his method of philosophy as being akin to the leasing art of a prostitute undressing. In his erotic tale *Madame Edwarda*, Bataille describes a drunken male patron of a bordello who is forcefully confronted with shakti power. Madame Edwarda reveals her vulva to him "so you can see that I am God." When she compels him to perform cunnilingus on her, Bataille's character confesses reverently: "I then knew – once every trace of drunkenness in me had worn off – that She had not lied, that She was God." This is essentially a modernized restatement of the *yonipuja* of the left-hand path secret rite.

The influential Italian Traditionalist magician and philosopher, Baron Julius Evola (1898—1974), had an affair with de Naglowska during her sojourn in Rome in the early days of the Mussolini period of the 1920s, and she translated a book of his poetry into French, *Poème À Qualre Voix*, in 1921. Commenting on Naglowska's teachings many years after her death, in his *Melaphysics Of Sex*, he made an interesting remark on one aspect of her theory of sexual enlightenment. According to Evola, the ritual copulation taught by Naglowska was celebrated "not in order to enter into the realm of death and becoming, but in order to leave that realm and maintain awareness of his own being instead of dissolving." Although he later rejected the Satanic aspect of her writings as a "deliberate intention to scandalize the

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reader," Evola did suggest that that de Naglowska may have developed her magical practice from contact with authentic "secret teachings."

Evola maintained a life-long interest in sex magic, which seems to have been initiated by contact with an associate who was the only Italian student of Aleister Crowley's Abbey of Thelema in the 1920s. He formed his own magical circle in Rome, the Group of Ur, which experimented with

some aspects of Tantra. His highly recommended works on Tantricism, which are at their best when describing the way of the left-hand path, are authoritative enough to have been published in India, something which rarely occurs with Western authors. It is difficult to say whether Evola was merely a brilliant esoteric theoretician and scholar or an actual practicing magus. Like Bataille, a key to Evola's thought is the attainment of a heroic sovereignty, the recreation of one's self as a "Kingly man," in the language of Naglowska's doctrine of the Third Term. Ultimately, Evola's austere hermetic approach to initiation is worlds apart from the somewhat romantic Luciferian sexuality of Naglowska, but the brief romance of these Western adepts of the sinister current is a fascinating footnote in the modern development of the left-hand path.

One of the writers who came into Maria de Naglowska's orbit was the American journalist, author and erotic explorer William Seabrook. Of lesser intellectual stature than Evola and Bataille, Seabrook's specialty was the writing of rather sensational exposés of occult subjects. His better known books include *The Magic Island*, a pioneering study of Haitian Voodoo and the cult of the zombie, a subject which Naglowska has also studied, and *Witchcraft: Its Power In The World Today*, which provided pre-World War II Americans with some of the only knowledge of contemporary magical practice available. The prolific pornographic author Frank Harris introduced Seabrook to Aleister Crowley, who engaged Seabrook's wife as one of his sex-magical partners – with her husband's blessings. Seabrook shared with Crowley an absorbing interest in the use of bondage and sexual slavery as a magical technique. According to one of Crowley's final interviews, Seabrook "always traveled with a case-load of chains, being a masochist as well as a sadist."

Upon seeking out the celebrated Naglowska's Satanic temple as a potentially juicy subject for one of his journalistic pieces, Seabrook discovered that some of his best liked fetishes – sexual suspension and erotic autoasphyxia – had been incorporated into the *Sophiale's* religious celebration of the Mystery of Hanging. Overall, however, one gets the impression that Seabrook was something of a dilettante, who ingratiated himself into magical circles in search of colorful copy, and whatever erotic diversion he might find along the way. Crowley acknowledged that Seabrook possessed "genius" but ultimately dismissed him as having "a
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journalist's mind."

***Fraternitas Saturni* – Satana And Her Gnosis**

Naglowska's Fraternity of the Golden Arrow was not the only European Order in the 1920s and 1930s to fuse a form of sinister current sex magic and an idiosyncratic vision of Lucifer and Satan in its doctrine. Before we look into the impact of the far more well-known German sex magical school known as the O.T.O., a contemplation of its obscure semi-associate, *Fraternitas Saturni*, or Brotherhood of Saturn, will provide us with an intriguing example of how some of the sexual initiatory teachings of the Pastern *Vama Marga* were adapted by Western magicians. In the case of the *Fraternitas Saturni*, we have a uniquely Teutonic initiatory school that's influence has never successfully been transplanted into Anglo-American culture.

Since the nineteenth century, there had been a thoroughgoing fascination with all things Indian prevalent among the German intelligentsia. German and Austrian Indologists looked to India as the forgotten source of Teutonic civilization. For post-Nietzschean German intellectuals seeking to break with the Judaeo-Christian heritage they interpreted as an alien doctrine imposed by force upon Europe, the recently rediscovered Aryan mythology of India was enthusiastically embraced as the West's true spiritual fountainhead. This thread became a powerful impetus for German

magicians, who were inspired to research Indian and Tibetan mysticism, and eventually came upon Tantra and its sexual left-hand path. (The swastika, more properly known in Sanskrit as the *suvastika*, an ancient symbol of Kali, was introduced into right-wing occult circles at this time.) It was this characteristic enchantment of the Fatherland with its distant sister, Mother India, that led directly to the incorporation of *Vama Marga* techniques into the *Fraternitas Saturni*. The left-hand path, utterly rejected as black magic by the largely Theosophically influenced occultists of colonialist England, found a receptive sanctuary in the secret operations of the FS.

The FS was the brainchild of the Berlin bookseller Eugen Grosche (1888—1965), who is better known by his magical name Gregor A. Gregorius, and whose books include *Satanic Magic* and the thinly fictionalized autobiographical novel *Exorial: Story Of A Demonic Being*. Gregorius led the lodge through various fractious and schismatic mutations until his death in 1965. This turbulent life's work was interrupted by the National Socialist ban on magical lodges in the 1930s, which was promptly followed by a postwar Communist ban on occult activity in the East German state.

Revered by many as one of Germany's few original magical minds in the twentieth century, second only to the influential Franz Bardon, Gregorius has also been dismissed by others as little more than a horny

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crackpot. The post-World War II O.T.O.'s nominal Head, Karl Germer, who maintained a life-long feud with Gregorius, once described him as "a sexmaniac, [who] dabbled in hypnosis and drugs – one of the lowest types of occultist I ever met." Considering the great respect in which Germer held Aleister Crowley, also a "sex-maniac" by any standard, and whose involvement with drugs went much further than mere dabbling, this opinion must be viewed with some skepticism.

Originating from a schism with the Pansophical Lodge, one of the larger German occult bodies, the *Fraternitas Saturni* was founded in 1928 with a nucleus of about forty members. The initiates of the FS were not merely the marginal types customarily attracted to occult Orders; several German aristocrats and artists from the thriving Berlin film industry were also inducted. Gregorius created a complex and eclectic doctrine postulating the coming of a new astrologically determined Age of Saturn, related to the coining Age of Aquarius that occultists of every stripe had anticipated as the dawn of a new age. The Saturnian mysteries were communicated to the lodge through a graded hierarchy of basically Freemasonic degrees.

Within the Saturnian liturgy, we find such seemingly unrelated Western themes as astrological and planetary magic, the exaltation of Lucifer, Gnosticism, the sexual evocation of demons, and pendulum magic mixed with Eastern notions such as the chakras, the doctrine of reincarnation, and some elements of Tantra. The FS student, who was referred to by the Sanskrit word *chela*, was methodically trained in meditation, visualization, mantric vocalization; Gregorius supervised a genuine school that actually taught a specific and rigorously conceived magical technology that expected objective results.

The presiding spiritual entity in Saturnian theurgy was the *egregore* GOTOS, a daemonic being that held the same place in the FS as Baphomet once did among the Knights Templar. (Baphomet also plays a significant role in FS ritual.) This grab-bag of magical methods was expressed through a litany of scripted pseudo-Masonic rituals, which were performed by the formally robed Brothers and Sisters of Saturn in a converted temple located in the back of Gregorius's bookshop. However, individual work in solitude was of greater significance, since Gregorius believed that Saturnian initiation, which was based on "pitiless love", required the *chela* to be judged by the harsh spiritual tester Saturn, a merciless teacher who provided

little comfort for his aspirants.

Gregorius used his bookshop to give lectures to the public on such then-taboo topics as Vampirism and Blood Magic, and the esoteric significance of homosexuality. Even in the "anything goes" atmosphere of Weimar Berlin in the 1920s, all this led to the adherence of a sinister, wild, and Satanic reputation to the FS. The *Fraternitas Saturni* had been conceived as a secret society, and for decades all that was publicly known of

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its rituals and beliefs was based on sensational rumor, centering especially on orgies, the ritual use of blood, and experimentation with hallucinogens for consciousness alteration.

Despite the official position of secrecy maintained by the FS, the local newspaper *Berliner Illustrierte Nachtausgabe* revealed something of the controversial magical experiments of Gregor Gregorius in an October 1929 article. Unwelcome scandal was generated when a female initiate of the FS was involved in a bus accident while under the influence of cocaine. If such shenanigans shocked the non-magical public, Gregorius's Fraternity was also viewed as anathema by the majority of German occultists, due to the friendly ties Gregorius sustained with Aleister Crowley, who was almost universally reviled among holier-than-thou esoteric circles in Germany. Although the FS technically adopted Crowley's Law of Thelema, the group's actual philosophy and practice in fact reflects very little Crowleyan influence. Crowley himself barely took interest in the activities of Gregorius, who was too independent to be the kind of idolatrous disciple the Great Beast preferred. Frau Martha Küntzel, Crowley's most devoted German acolyte, whose dream was to bring the message of Crowley's *The Book Of The Law* to her other great hero, Adolf Hitler, did not approve of Gregorius either. She condemned Gregorius as a "Black Brother" – Crowleyan jargon for an evil walker of the left-hand path. In its very early days, the FS formed a magical axis with The Adonist Society, a sex magic study group that eventually went its own way to obscurity.

The veil of secrecy under which Gregorius operated was not easily penetrated. What is known of the actual formal rituals and magical practices celebrated by the FS in the 1920s derives almost completely from the publication of private internal documents purchased from a Grand Master of the FS in the 1960s, and subsequently published in Germany in 1971 by Dr. Adolf Hemberger under the unwieldy title *Organisationsformen, Rituale, Lehren Und Magische Thematik Der Freimaurerischen Und Freimaurerartigen Bünde In Deutschen Sprachraum Mitteleuropas. Teil I: Der Mystisch-Magische Orden Fraternitas Saturni*. These documents, which we recommend to those interested in a more detailed understanding of the FS, reveal that the *Fraternitas Saturni* is, in many ways, the twentieth century Western Order most attuned to the left-hand path as we have defined it.

A system of Tantric *viparit-karani*, or opposite-doing, is demonstrated in the FS requirements that the initiate must push severely against his or her natural inclinations to cultivate those aspects of the self that instinct has left undeveloped. For instance, a born poet or artist would be compelled to pursue the scientific, rational side of herself, just as an engineer would need to discover the unexpressed romantic element of his psyche.

Not the least aspect of this balancing of the light with the hidden dark

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side of one's being is the FS glorification of the figures of Lucifer and Satan, divine intelligences who informed Gregorius' applied sexual mysticism. The popular vulgarization of these concepts today might easily cause the contemporary reader to misinterpret Gregorius's Satanic teaching as simply the crude reversal of Judeo-Christianity that one encounters in post-1960s Satanism. But to paraphrase a comment once made by Gregorius' one-time

associate, the Typhonian sex magician Kenneth Grant, with whom an alliance was formed in the 1950s, the Satan-Lucifer complex exalted in the FS was "ante-Christian" rather than "anti-Christian." In fact, the FS doctrine regarding Lucifer and Satan was a sophisticated religious concept with deep roots in pre-Christian Gnosticism, reflective especially of some of the Ophite Gnostic ideas we have discussed in Chapter Five. Gregorius taught his Saturnian brethren that the Edenic serpent which orthodox Christianity knows as Satan, who gave mankind the gift of gnosis, was really the Christ, while Lucifer was envisioned as a separate entity, a heroic/rebellious bringer of light in darkness. This Gnostic identity of Christ and Satan is a theme that curiously recurs throughout the history of the Western sinister current.

The FS, at least in theory, operated along the elitist lines of the true left-hand path; Gregorius did not simply welcome all applicants to join with open arms. He wrote that his lodge was based on a deliberate "exclusion of base humanity" – a concept not unlike the rejection of the *pashu* from Vama Marga initiation.

The left-hand path criterion of self-deification as practiced in the FS is demonstrated most dramatically in the rites aimed at comprehending the Light from Darkness – *Lux e Tenebris* – a paradoxical juxtaposition of opposites Gregorius called the Dark Light. Gregorius later wrote a novel, *Das Dunkle Licht*, expanding on this subject. Despite his apparent acceptance of much Hindu dogma, Gregorius rejected the commonly accepted notion that the aim of initiatory liberation was dissolution of the self – rather, he sought to continually perpetuate the human self as a selfdeified daemon.

Lucifer was presented as the progenitor of humanity; Saturnian theology attributed the first primordial sexual act to Eve and Lucifer. Gregorius also recognized the importance of a Feminine Daemonic Shakti form of Satan, the female Satana, associated with the serpent of Eden. This not only recalls Gnostic teachings identifying Sophia as the snake in paradise who granted Eve the forbidden knowledge, but may be a Saturnian form of the feminine serpent force Kundalini, derived directly from Gregorius' study of Tantra. In one of the FS's most secretive sex magic rites, later published by Hemberger, the magician calls on "the power to awaken the ancient serpent," an obvious reference to the sleeping fire snake of Kundalini, that also suggests "that old serpent, called the Devil" of

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Revelations. Other expressions of left-hand path Shakti godheads in the Saturnian worldview included Sophia, Eve, and Lilith, all of them connected to the primordial myth of Eden, where the first gnosis was won.

From this sexually tinged Luciferian/Satanic daemonology, we turn to the actual sex magical practices of the Brotherhood of Saturn, some of which were clearly adapted from the Indian left-hand path. Sexual magic, although important to the Gregorian system, was only one of the aspects of initiation that the Saturnian adept was led to master. Saturnian theory was centered on the willed and disciplined creation of a total man and woman. Initiation, according to Gregorius, did not encompass only the cerebral and spiritual centers; the physical body was also cultivated, a process that could not exclude the essential erotic sphere. Erotic initiation in its physical form was actually limited only to initiates of the *Gradus Pentalphae* (the 18°) of the Brotherhood's highly structured 33 degree system. It is strange that female *chelas* were not permitted to claim this particular grade, although they were certainly encouraged to participate in the sex magical rites associated with it. It must be said that the FS never entirely came to terms with the feminine principle. One detects a tinge of negativity associated with female sexuality in FS doctrine; even if woman's erotic force was considered to be of undeniable power for magic, it was also considered to be slightly suspect and dangerous. Thus, the "Daughter of Lilith", as the female sex

partner is referred to in one FS rite, is accorded a rather ambiguous role in the lodge.

Gregorius basically accepted the left-hand path metaphysical physiology of the subtle body, with its seven *chakras*, and its male-positive/female-negative polarities. Female Saturnian initiates, of which there were relatively few at first, were taught that they were the incarnation of lunar energy, an idea that can be found both in Tantra and alchemy. To this traditional understanding of the esoteric aspect of femininity was added the Saturnian lesson that women were also the fleshly embodiment of Lucifer on earth. In keeping with hermetic and Tantric tradition, Gregorius claimed that men were solar in essence. The marriage of Sol and Luna in Saturnian sexual workings was not only focused on the initiatory development of the specific magicians involved. Like de Naglowska, Gregorius hoped that FS erotic-magical unions would harmonize the fundamental disturbance between the sexes that created inter-gender civil war in the profane world. Sexual magic, as Gregorius explained it, was based on the male *chela* discovering his *anima*, his "sister soul", who had taken the form of a female sex-magical partner, the Saturnian form of a Scarlet Woman. This process also enjoined the female *chela* to seek her "brother soul", the Jungian animus.

Probably the best known aspect of FS sex magic was the consultation
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of the stars as a determinant for appropriate sexual positions and juxtaposition of erotic energies. Just to provide one example, a dominant lunar influence on a given day would recommend that a lesbian working of sex magic – the wedding of two lunar forces – would be the most effective. The rigid, formulaic nature of such astrologically dictated sex acts seems to us to be the least useful of the Saturnian sex magic teachings, but this practice is still prevalent, especially in Germany.

The most direct influence of the Indian left-hand path tradition on the *Fraternitas Saturni* is the performance of the "Rite of the Five Ms", which despite its name actually bears little resemblance to the secret rite of the *Panchatattva* we have outlined in Chapter Three. From what can be gleaned from Hemberger's previously cited work, this rite was to be celebrated by one copulating couple, in a black-clad chamber hung with inverted pentagrams, a curious mixture of Eastern Tantra and Western Satanism unique to the FS aesthetic. The couple is charged to awaken the *chakras* through meditation, and to consume the traditional four taboo elemental elements of wine, meat, fish, and grain, sealed by the fifth etheric element of *maithuna* (sexual union.) The sexual position prescribed is essentially the *Viparit-Karani*, the female lowering her *yonis* upon the seated male's *lingam*. But the objective of the working is not the transcendent duality-surpassing state of consciousness sought by the Tantric of the left-hand path. Instead, the combined sexual energies are directed externally to the sorcerous creation of an elemental, theoretically brought to life by the post-coital trickling of semen and *amrita* from the woman's vagina on to a parchment inscribed with sigils symbolic of the daemon in question.

This erotically engendered parenting of demons, actualized from within the bodies of the magicians, is almost always the purpose of *Fraternitas Saturni* sexual magic. The intense fascination Gregorius held for this theme is suggested by the name he bestowed upon his daughter, Alraune, born in 1914. She was christened after the title character of Hanns Heinz Ewers's popular 1911 occult novel *Alraune*, the tale of a *homunculus*-like *femme fatale* created through an alchemist's sinister experiments with semen and a mandrake root.

Another FS rite of magical procreation, also designed for one couple to perform, calls for the male's activation of an entranced naked female's *chakras*, proceeded by coitus that "feeds" a charged talisman encoded with

daemonic sigils. The 1920s-era FS, like most groups that include sex magic in their teaching, were often accused of celebrating orgies. No doubt they would have if conditions had allowed, but their chronic lack of female *chelas* limited their opportunities. The only ritual approximating group sex in their known liturgy is the notorious *Gradus Pentalphae* working, in which a copulating couple is encircled by the group energy of their 18° lodge

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brothers. The literal climax of the rite called for the blood of a beheaded hen or rooster to be poured over the copulating pair, a sacrifice timed to occur just before the moment of the couple's orgasms.

The *Fraternitas Saturni* tradition continues today in Germany, although its methods and terminology have evolved from the days of its inception in Weimar-era Berlin. Several conflicting groups claim to represent the true spirit of the FS, a chronic phenomenon in magical circles, which brings us inevitably to consideration of another Berlin-based sex-magical Order...

The O.T.O And The Phenomenon Of Occult Organizations: Decorated Cages

The pioneering German-English sex magician Theodor Reuss, founder of the O.T.O., and his contentious colleague Aleister Crowley, who was associated with Reuss's O.T.O. from 1912—1921, have been aggrandized into the stuff of occult folklore since the magical revival of the 1960s. In the process, the letters O.T.O. (Ordo Templi Orientis) have become indelibly connected with popular ideas of Western sex magic. Consequently, the vexing topic of occult organizations in connection with the sinister current must be briefly addressed. For the past few decades, and even in Crowley's time, there has been a persistent controversy between various factions, each claiming to be the "real" and legitimate O.T.O., while denouncing all other claimants as impostors. This magical war, typical of the entire modern occult subculture's infighting, has long ago progressed from curses into prolonged legal battles, with bad blood all around. The ongoing strife between bickering camps is so characteristic of O.T.O. history that it often seems that the various claimants have spent more time waging judicial combat against each other in court than performing the erotic rites for which they have become notorious in the public mind.

Since our concern will be limited to determining if the various O.T.O.(s) under Reuss, Crowley and their spiritual successors have relevance to left-hand path sex magic, we will largely ignore this endless struggle for legitimacy. In our estimation, such trivial squabbles have less than zero significance to the work of left-hand path initiation. Although we must admit that there is a certain irresistible potential for low comedy in the spectacle of respectable judges and attorneys hairsplitting over the burning issue of which competing Crowleyan sect has the legal right to confer the holy mysteries of sperm-and-blood wafers and anal sex upon its parishioners.

From our view, we should establish from the first that we personally see little value in the creaky Masonic apparatus of rigid grade system, hierarchical structure, reverence for sectarian holy writ, and scripted

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ceremony that has typified the O.T.O. from its inception sometime between 1906—1912 to most (but not all) of its quibbling manifestations in the past century. Such inflexibility, coupled with the nearly necrophiliac cult of personality that has formed around the icon of Aleister Crowley in the majority of post-1947 branches of the O.T.O. seems extremely ill-suited for sinister current liberation. Which leads us to an important question concerning the Western occult organization phenomenon in general: can any formalized magical order convey the radical emancipatory power so essential to left-hand path initiation?

The inconsistency of the search for ultimate and uncensored truth – the awakened understanding of *maya* – with the inevitable limitations of the group mentality were decisively addressed by the Indian philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti. When only a child, Krishnamurti had been selected by the leaders of the Theosophical Society, then headquartered in India, to be groomed as the World Teacher, the long-awaited successor to the Buddha and the Christ. A large and prosperous organization known as the Order of the Star of the East was formed as a vehicle for his teaching. But at a congress of the OSE, held in Holland in 1929, Krishnamurti shocked his assembled followers by announcing that he was dissolving the Order he led, and renouncing the organizational principle as a means of guiding individuals to truth. Any magician considering the dilemma of the occult organization must be struck by these excerpts from his speech:

"Truth, being limitless, unconditioned, unapproachable by any path whatsoever, cannot be organised; nor should any organisation be formed to lead or coerce people along any particular path. If you first understand that, then you will see how impossible it is to organise a belief. A belief is purely an individual matter, and you cannot and must not organise it. If you do, it becomes dead, crystallised; it becomes a creed, a sect, a religion, to be imposed on others ... If an organisation be created for this purpose, it becomes a crutch, a weakness, a bondage, and must cripple the individual, and prevent him from growing, from establishing his uniqueness, which lies in the discovery for himself of that absolute, unconditioned Truth. So that is another reason why I have decided, as I happen to be the Head of the Order, to dissolve it ... You use a typewriter to write letters, but you do not put it on an altar and worship it. But that is what you are doing when organisations become your chief concern. "How many members are there in it?" That is the first question I am asked by all newspaper reporters. "How many followers have you? By their number we shall judge whether what you say is true or false." I do not know how many there are. I am not concerned with that. If there were even one man who had been set free, that were enough.... Again, you have the idea that only certain people hold the key to the Kingdom of

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Happiness. No one holds it. No one has the authority to hold that key. That key is your own self, and in the development and the purification and in the incorruptibility of that self alone is the Kingdom of Eternity...."

It should be mentioned that Krishnamurti was in no way an advocate of the left-hand path; indeed, he rejected all traditional esoteric terminology. Yet his message is resonant with the liberatory passion of sinister current initiation. In the same speech, he asked his forsaken disciples not to follow him, but to ask themselves "in what way are you freer, greater, more dangerous to every society which is based on the false and the unessential?" And although he cast aside the restrictive organizational model of initiation, he did suggest that a "body" of awakened beings might work together informally as a genuine school without succumbing to the deadening, weakening effects he identified in a more fixed organization: "But those who really desire to understand, who are looking to find that which is eternal, without a beginning and without an end, will walk together with greater intensity, will be a danger to everything that is unessential, to unrealities, to shadows." Krishnamurti's emphasis on the inherently hazardous pursuit of banishing *maya*-like shadows from the mind correlates to the left-hand path adept's work.

Finally, Krishnamurti left his Order of the Star of the East with these parting words: "You can form other organizations and expect someone else [to take on the role of World Teacher]. With that I am not concerned, nor with creating new cages, new decorations for those cages." This statement should be kept in mind as we outline the attempts of Reuss, Crowley and others to squeeze sex magic into an elaborate and unyielding pseudo-Masonic curriculum. The left-hand path initiate who dispassionately reviews the whole

pageant of magical societies, clubs and fraternities that have marched through Western occult history from the nineteenth century to the present day will recognize the "new cages" and "new decorations for those cages" that pass by in such solemn but often ridiculous procession.

In 1970, in an article in the *Los Angeles Free Press*, the novelist William S. Burroughs – who often turned to the theme of sex magic in his work – reported on his own brush with the phenomenon of the spiritual organization. After attending some courses provided by the Church of Scientology, Burroughs came to similar conclusions as Krishnamurti had concerning the ultimate futility of systematized group efforts at enlightenment. Although he acknowledged the usefulness of some Scientology techniques, Burroughs decided that "I am in flat disagreement with the organizational policy. No body of knowledge needs an organizational policy. Organizational policy can only impede the advancement of knowledge. There is a basic incompatibility between any organization and freedom of thought." Scientology founder L. Ron Hubbard, 246

operating on the fringes of a Californian O.T.O. lodge in the 1940s actually played a significant role in establishing the sex-magical cult of the Scarlet Woman, a curious tale we shall return to later.

To untangle the whole intricate history of the diverse groups that have called themselves O.T.O. over the past century or so would tell us much about the kind of human folly of which Krishnamurti spoke, but very little about left-hand path sex magic. Those interested in a comprehensive account of the O.T.O. story are directed to the authoritative work of Peter-R. Koenig.

However, a few clarifications are in order. The O.T.O. has been described falsely by some unreliable journalists and authors as a vehicle for Satanic orgies; in fact, it is more accurate to say that their practice of sex magic is along the lines of Gnostic Christianity, as interpreted by its founder Reuss and then elaborated upon by Crowley. Those that have looked into the phenomenon a little more deeply may have learned that the O.T.O. can trace its lineage directly back to the Knights Templar and Illuminati. You might also discover that the lost secret wisdom of these legendary Orders is still authentically preserved within the O.T.O. Furthermore, it has been said, the sexual secret taught to the highest degrees of the O.T.O. was communicated by a trio of Eastern wise men, two yogis and a fakir. None of these things are true.

Get past the most persistent layer of fictions concerning the O.T.O., and one uncovers another layer concealed beneath. There, one might discover that the founding father of the O.T.O. was one of Austria's wealthiest and most respected industrialists, the leading Freemason and Theosophist, Dr.

Carl Kellner. According to this tale, Kellner co-founded the Order with another prominent Theosophist, Dr. Franz Hartmann, a close associate of Madame Blavatsky. They were soon joined in the Order by the celebrated creator of Anthroposophy, Rudolf Steiner. If true, this would have been an impressive pedigree; few magical Orders could claim such eminent men as patrons. But in fact, Kellner and Hartmann were both dead before their names were associated with the supposed founding of the O.T.O., and all evidence suggests that they had nothing at all to do with the O.T.O. in any capacity.

Rudolf Steiner's marginal connection to the O.T.O. is based on the most tenuous of circumstances.

In exploring the O.T.O., one is reminded of the scene in *The Wizard of Oz* in which the Wizard is revealed as a shabby puppeteer manipulating the hidden gears which create the illusion of the wondrous magical land of Oz. When caught in the act, the Wizard, desperately cries, "Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain!" The "Wizard" behind the curtain of the O.T.O. was the Anglo-German Theodor Reuss (1855-1923), who set in motion a long-lived charade that many others have perpetuated over the decades.

Some, like Aleister Crowley, have embellished the myth Reuss created for
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their own cynical purposes. Others were sincerely but naively swept up in the mystique and a deep need to believe in it all.

From his first announcement of the O.T.O. to his death, Reuss contended that he was only the second head of the Ordo Templi Orientis, and that he had inherited the Order from the real founder, supposedly Dr. Carl Kellner, upon the latter's 1905 death. This fable has led many authors to follow the false lead of trying to establish Kellner as the mastermind of the O.T.O., while ignoring Reuss as merely a secondary player. In fact, the O.T.O. was solely the brainchild of Theodor Willson Reuss, and it is to him we must turn to begin to make sense of the O.T.O.'s influence on Western sex magic.

Theodor Reuss And The Sexual Religion Of The Future

Reuss was primarily known in his day as a ceaselessly scheming small-time occult swindler scrabbling together an erratic living by selling questionable charters for quasi-Masonic Orders. Like many figures in the occult revival of the time, Reuss was an on-again off-again player in the shadow world of intelligence. His Anglo-German *ancestry* allowed him to move easily between two worlds. While working for the German Secret Service in London, he is said to have infiltrated the Socialist League, where he befriended Karl Marx's daughter Eleanor. Originally trained as a chemist, Reuss also acquired a professional singing voice, performing the gamut from Wagnerian opera to British music-halls. Bilingual, he wrote for a wide variety of English and German newspapers and magazines. But these worldly occupations all took a back seat to Reuss's life-long *metier*: the tireless founding of pseudo-Masonic Orders.

Reuss was the self-appointed head of many impressive-sounding institutions, the existence of which rarely extended beyond printing suitably imposing stationery on which to send out bombastic decrees. In contrast to the freewheeling magical subculture of today, in which one-man occult societies are founded at the blink of a website, the majority of magical activity in the early part of the twentieth century was deeply embedded in the stuffy formalities and inflexible apparatus of Freemasonry. It was a world of grand titles, secret passwords and handshakes, solemnly conferred degrees, and elaborate scripted ceremonies, all performed whilst garbed in extravagant uniform seemingly on loan from an opera house's wardrobe.

The Masonic-magical community of the early twentieth century from which the O.T.O. developed was strictly an old boy's club. One of Reuss' innovations was to allow women full membership in some of his Orders, which of course would have been a necessity for the sex-magical pursuits of O.T.O.

A full account of Reuss's adventures in quasi-Masonry would take
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us far afield from our search for a Western left-hand path. But to understand something of the background from which O.T.O. emerged, it's sufficient to know that by 1902 Reuss was claiming full authority in Germany over several irregular Masonic Rites operated from Berlin. ("Irregular" Rites are those not recognized by the official body of Freemasonry as legitimate.) The most prominent of Reuss's Orders were the Sovereign Sanctuary of the Ancient and Primitive Rite 95° of Memphis and Misraim (MM), and the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, the AASR. MM and AASR, like the O.T.O. that later emerged from them, were essentially commercial vehicles; their *raison d'être* was to collect dues from members with a craving for the pompous titles and cryptic mumbo-jumbo of Masonry. As a side business, Reuss also peddled admission into questionable aristocratic Orders which granted would-be "Knights" permission to officially call themselves "Sir."

Reuss was already indulging his penchant for myth-making and

swathing himself in the reputations of the Great (or at least famous) Adepts of the past. Reuss, in a bid to sell permissions to open lodges under his aegis, suggested that his Memphis and Misraim Rite was a revival of the mountebank Cagliostro's Egyptian Rite, founded in Paris. And if that wasn't impressive enough, he also claimed a link to the celebrated Adam Weishaupt, founder of the fabled Illuminati. Before he conceived the O.T.O. angle, one of Reuss's less successful enterprises was an Order of the Illuminati, which he shamelessly presented as the authentic resurfacing of that legendary eighteenth century cabal. These entirely bogus connections to Cagliostro, Weishaupt and the Illuminati – figments of Reuss's febrile imagination – were carried over into his myth of the O.T.O., and are still cited today by the ingenuous as proof of the O.T.O.'s illustrious lineage.

Yet another Reussian Order, this one drawing on the potent myth of Rosicrucianism, was the Fraternitas Lucis Hermeticae. Some modern authors have assumed that it must have been connected to Paschal Beverly Randolph's similarly named lodge, the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, operating in Paris. Indeed, a 1912 constitution drafted by Reuss establishes that the O.T.O. "is an organisation, known previously as "Hermetic Brotherhood of Light", newly organized and newly constituted." Even if there is no direct connection between the Randolph and Reuss vehicles, the influence of Randolph's sex magical theories on Reuss – and subsequently on the later versions of the O.T.O. – seems clear enough.

If the reader is having trouble keeping up with Reuss's many vaguely defined Orders, imagine Reuss' own difficulties. He was faced with the challenge of keeping The Ancient and Primitive Rite of Memphis and Misraim, The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, The Order of Illuminati, and several other Rosicrucian-themed fraternities of his devise somehow distinct from each other. This bewildering aggregation of Orders was in

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permanent fluctuation – the border between one Reuss Order and another was so unclear that even the "most worshipful brothers" who joined them weren't exactly sure to which one they belonged. Reuss's mania for constantly dreaming up ever loftier names for these ambiguous fellowships only added to the confusion. What was needed, he seems to have decided, was a central umbrella Order to incorporate his vast phantom empire under one roof.

There was a more pressing impetus for the construction of a new, hopefully more coherent (and lucrative) super-Order. Reuss had been consistently losing money on his Masonic ventures since the resignation of several members from Reuss's reconstituted Illuminati. These disgruntled exmembers

brought Reuss to court, exposing the sham nature of the many paper organizations he touted to the tightly-knit Masonic community.

Thus it was that Reuss, who could already proudly proclaim himself Illustrious Brother, Expert Master Mason, Secret Master, Perfect Master, Grand Elect Knight Kadosh, 30°, Grand Inquisitor Commander, 31°, Prince of the Royal Secret, and Sovereign Grand Inspector General 33° ad Vitam of the Orders of the United Rites of Scottish, Memphis and Misraim

Freemasons in and for the German Reich, added the resplendent title of Outer Head of Ordo Templi Orientis, the Sovereign Sanctuary of the Gnosis, to his ever-expanding roster of imposing epithets.

Although Reuss and later embellishers of the O.T.O. myth stated that it was officially formed as early as 1896 or 1902, its actual founding date was almost certainly much later. No mention of it appears until 1904, and it doesn't seem to have been much more than yet another empty name on Reuss's letterhead until as late as 1912.

In 1906, Reuss, with an eye on publicity, sent a letter to the then wellknown esoteric teacher Rudolf Steiner, founder of the Anthroposophical movement, duly granting him the honor of the 33° and 95° in the O.T.O. No doubt this came as a surprise to the puritanical Steiner, who later was

emphatic in his unqualified denunciation of Reuss and his O.T.O. venture – let alone its sex magical teaching. However, it was Reuss's custom to attempt to forge alliances with prominent men in the occult world of his day by endowing honorary dignities upon them, in the hopes that these tenuous links with distinguished names would be good for business. To this day, based on this nebulous incident, many O.T.O. adherents insist, despite all evidence to the contrary, that Rudolf Steiner was a leading figure in the early Ordo Templi Orientis.

Reuss's efforts to publicize the O.T.O remained on this small scale until September of 1912, when he published his first lengthy article about the fledgling Order in a Jubilee edition of *The Oriflamme*, a newsletter Reuss distributed to his loosely-linked, ever-shifting network of organizations. Reuss shamelessly quotes a few passages out of context that the then recently

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deceased Franz Hartmann had penned before the Ordo Templi Orientis even had any semblance of existence:

"Let it be known that there exists, unknown to the great crowd, a very ancient order of sages, whose object is the amelioration and spiritual elevation of mankind, by means of conquering error and aiding men and women in their efforts of attaining the power of recognising the truth. This Order has existed already in the most remote, and prehistorical times and it has manifested its activity secretly and openly in the world under different names and in various forms; it has caused social and political revolutions and proved to be the rock of salvation in times of danger and misfortune."

Having established the inestimably great age of the O.T.O, as well as its secret influence upon world history, Reuss lets it be known that "our Order" is the repository of a transmission of spoken wisdom communicated from "wise men from the East". Finally, after several circuitous detours through further hinted-at mysteries and coyly suggested arcana, Reuss finally lets the cat out of the bag in the last paragraph of the article: "Our Order possesses the key which opens up all Masonic and Hermetic secrets, namely, the Teaching of sexual magic, and this teaching, explains, without exception, all the secrets of Nature, all the symbolism of Freemasonry and all systems of religion."

Reuss imparted basic magical knowledge and mental training to his O.T.O. initiates according to a system of seven Freemason-style degrees, which were fancifully associated with the opening of the seven *chakras*, a concept popularized through the writings of Blavatsky. The new candidate for O.T.O. initiation was earnestly guided through the usual rigmarole of Masonic pomp, ceremony, and endowing of bombastic titles and fancy apparel so dear to the joiner of occult organizations. But unlike other Masonic groups, there was an emphasis on developing pseudo-yogic powers of concentration, breath control and focus of the will – preparation for the true work of the O.T.O. In light of its later reputation as an exclusively sexmagical body, it should be emphasized that the Reuss O.T.O. was extremely discreet when it came to advertising the exact nature of its teachings. It was not until the Templar reached the eighth degree of initiation that the secrets of sex magic were revealed to him. He was instructed to perform autoerotic magic, which took the form of masturbatory worship of one's own "holy phallus" combined with the development of mental imagery at orgasm.

Only upon attaining the ninth degree was the initiate instructed in the O.T.O. technique of ritual coitus with a female. For Reuss, former opera singer and ardent Wagnerian, the consciousness-altering secret of ritualized penetration of the vagina with the phallus enacted in the DC' rite was

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revealed in esoteric symbolism by Richard Wagner in his opera *Parsifal*. According to Reuss, in his 1914 *Parsifal And The Secret Of The Graal Unveiled*, the spear and grail-cup so important to the opera are actually

symbols for the *lingam* and the *yoni*. He speculated that the miraculous spiritual benefit which the Grail knights receive from drinking the sacred wine from the holy chalice veils the Gnostic practice of eating the sexual fluids emitted by men and women during copulation as a means of gaining divine consciousness. "Wagner," Reuss announced in his usual bravura style "is not only the greatest hero, but also the greatest confessor and prophet of the sexual religion of the future, which will be based on the obligatory ritual consummation of the sexual act." Wagner, no doubt an enthusiastic *erotomane*, may not have agreed with his admirer's assessment, but we have already noted the long-standing connection of the Graal legend with an esoteric tradition of sex-mysticism. Richard Wagner himself often used sex to activate the shamanic ecstasies that led to his inspired compositions. Sex magicians should take note of the magical role that the Feminine Daemonic played in Wagner's tempestuous operas and in his turbulent love life. As Julius Kapp wrote in his *The Women In Wagner's Life*: "The prime force of creative art is Eros. A more convincing proof of this maxim than is afforded by the life of Richard Wagner it would be hard to find in the cultural history of the human race."

This ninth degree sexual rite, despite Reuss's claim that it was passed on to the Order via Kellner from Eastern Adepts, reveals little apparent Tantric influence except for the recommendation that the male celebrants should ingest the alchemically mixed sexual fluids released at the conclusion of the operation. But this act does not seem to derive directly from *Yuma Marga* teaching concerning the drinking of the *amrita*. Instead, the Gnostic practice of eating sperm as a way of incorporating the Body of Light, the essence of Christ consciousness in semen, seems to have been Reuss' real inspiration. The true secret of O.T.O. sexual initiation was Reuss's belief that consuming a Holy Mass of semen was a key to mystical illumination. To his credit, he seemed far more concerned with using sexual force for the Great Work of transforming consciousness; the small-minded use of spermophagia for money magic that Reuss's would-be successor Crowley was reduced to is absent from the early O.T.O.

Reuss identified the power fueling his brand of sex magic as "the practice of transmutation of reproductive energy." In the sense that such a transmutation involves the deviation of a natural bodily force normally expended in procreation into a non-natural psychic power creating a new state of being, Reuss's concept coincides with sinister current erotic metaphysics. During the ninth degree sexual act, the O.T.O. adept was expected to exercise his force of will to lift the reproductive energies

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gathered in the genitals to the abdomen; the breathing and concentration exercises learned in the first seven degrees allowed the transmutation to be accomplished. Obviously, the method of raising sexual energy from the lower to the higher areas of the body can be likened to Kundalini, and is much like Chinese Taoist sexual alchemy. Adopting his Masonic brother Carl Kellner's somewhat faulty and incomplete understanding of yoga, Reuss based his sexmagical theories on the development of the 10 Vayus (winds) in the body.

This rechanneling of reproductive power, Reuss maintained, was not simply an excuse for "sexual excesses, but the strengthening of eternal divine power on the earthly plane, for which sexually strong perfected people, of masculine and feminine gender are needed." He also likened the practice of IX° sex magic to the divine process of creation, exclaiming that "this is white sexual magic!" Reuss ambitiously envisioned the O.T.O. as the vanguard of a utopian society of sexually liberated beings, which he described as "a community of Neo-Christians." Those who have attempted to paint the early O.T.O. as an assembly of Satanic sex fiends are easily refuted by Reuss's own description of his organization as a white magical religion with strong, if unorthodox, Christian overtones.

But Reuss cannot really be considered an exponent of the left-hand path, since his original O.T.O. was entirely a phallogocentric sperm cult – women may have been allowed to join his Order, but they were not accorded any great importance; in his writings and rituals, we find no recognition of the Shakti power of the Feminine Daemonic, one of the most important criteria for defining an adept of the left-hand path.

It is true that Reuss professed to view womankind as "the incarnation of divine creative power" and "guardian of the holy fire", stating that "Every 'Blessed Woman' is 'Holy' to us." Superficially, Reuss's theories concerning the sacred place of woman would seem to be in accord with the left-hand path reverence for the Shakti principle. However, when he writes that his teaching seeks to establish a future in which every "'Mother' is honored as the 'High Priestess' of her family," he betrays the traditional views of most German men of his time: a woman may be sacred, but her only proper functions are motherhood and minding the hearth. For instance, Reuss condemned England "with its extreme Motherhood-denying 'woman's movement (Suffragettes)'" and hoped that the O.T.O. could aid in inculcating a more mother-friendly environment there.

Reuss essentially viewed the ideal female sex magic partner as a fawning vessel passively absorbing her Master's seed – the structure of O.T.O. sex magic provides the female with a secondary role while simultaneously placing her on a pedestal. We will encounter the same curious phenomenon in Reuss's O.T.O. contemporary Crowley, who praised his women to the sky as living goddesses in his flowery abstract writings

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whilst demanding that they be beaten, barefoot and pregnant scullery maids in reality.

Tellingly, the O.T.O.'s ninth degree is nearly identical with Paschal Beverly Randolph's simple instructions for making a "prayer" at the climax of intercourse, focusing the will at the moment of orgasm to create a magical change. But according to Reuss, who took his cue from Blavatsky's tall tales, yet another of those mysterious Eastern *Mahatmas* had been instrumental in founding the Ordo Templi Orientis, although this one was presumably still occupying a body on the material plane at the time. Reuss put forth that his dead colleague Carl Kellner had been initiated into sexual rites by two Indian yogis, *Sri Mahatma* Agamya Guru Paramahansa, and Beema Sen Pratap. According to this founding legend, additional instruction had been provided to Kellner by an Arabic *fakir*, one Soliman bin Aifha, reportedly a Sufi Master.

Did these teachers exist? In Kellner's 1896 paper *Yoga, A Sketch Of The Psycho-Physiological Element Of The Ancient Indian Yoga Teaching*, which was presented to the Third International Congress for Psychology held in Munich, he thanks a "Mr. Beema Sena Pratapa from Lahore." The paper, notable as an early European introduction to yoga techniques, makes no mention of any sexual rites, and is inaccurate in many basic points of fact, which does not speak well for Reuss's claim that Kellner was instructed by authentic Indian teachers.

Rather than accept the legend that the O.T.O. was drawn from genuine Indian left-hand path sources, it seems far more likely that Reuss merely picked up a few stray Tantric ideas from his extensive reading in several languages and applied his own considerable reservoir of magical knowledge upon this bare basis. It has also been argued that Reuss's knowledge of sexual magic was obtained from his knowledge of Paschal Beverly Randolph's Eulis Brotherhood and Hermetic Brotherhood of Light, which seems quite probable when we examine the actual procedures of the O.T.O.'s sex magic. If this were the case, the Western world's most wellknown sex magical Order is not the product of secrets whispered by Eastern holy men at all. It may be that the O.T.O. is a synthetic creation whose

genesis truly lays in the mind of an obscure African-American writer operating in the prosaic USA. Proof, yet again, that the facts are far stranger than the exotic legends occultists sprinkle like fairy dust in their wake.

Whatever the truth may be, Reuss allowed it to be known that some of the closely guarded arcana supposedly revealed to Kellner on his Eastern journey concerned the long-suspected but never definitively proven nature of the sex-magical practices of the Knights Templar. From his enigmatic teachers, Kellner had allegedly learned that the Templars had acquired a system of what amounts to left-hand path illumination. Reuss concluded that the entire Masonic tradition that the Templars had subsequently inspired was

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informed by a secret doctrine of Eastern sexual magic, the key to which Kellner had been granted in India. Many Central European Freemasonic Orders claimed – with vivid imagination but little historical basis – to be the authentic heirs of the martyred Templars, guardians of the secret wisdom of Baphomet. What exactly this wisdom consisted of had been open to dispute. Reuss's innovation was to brazenly identify the Templar legacy supposedly inherited by the Freemasons as a system of sexual magic.

Seen through this newly provided initiatic vantage point, many of the infamous accusations leveled against the Templars took on a new significance. The Knights had not been Satanic debauchees, as the Church had concluded. Rather, they were the martyred bearers of a hidden knowledge of erotic initiation communicated to them while stationed in Eastern lands.

The documents from the Templar trial, for instance, disclose that each new Templar was accepted only after presenting his naked body to receive a three-fold kiss on mouth, abdomen and the base of the spine from the perceptor of the Order. Hearing of this, the Christian magistrates could only have concluded that this rite of initiation was a celebration of the Satanic *osculum obscaenum* – the obscene kiss reported to have been witnessed performed upon the Devil himself at Black Sabbaths. However, viewed from the pseudo-Tantric perspective Reuss had now adopted, this kiss may well have been a transmission of *prana* – the vital magical life-force – to three important *chakras* or power points in the body. The kiss at the base of the spine may well have been intended to activate *kundalini*. The charge that the new initiate sometimes submitted to ritual fellation or anal sex could have been the sealing of this initiatory exchange of sexual power.

And what of Baphomet, the baffling androgynous deity the Templars supposedly worshipped? Might this half-male, half-female being not be an anthropomorphized figure symbolizing the hermaphroditic inner state created by sexual union? Reuss, and Crowley after him, was to make Baphomet an important part of his reconstituted Order of Templars.

In the decades before the O.T.O.'s founding, interest in Baphomet had recently been revived through the writings of the French mage Eliphas Levi. It is important to understand that the O.T.O.'s mixture of esoteric themes was very much a reflection of concerns circulating throughout the occult world of the time. For example, Reuss would surely have been familiar with the work of Baron Joseph von Hammer-Pürgstall, an author deeply immersed in the study of Eastern mysticism. It was Hammer-Pürgstall who first theorized that the name of Baphomet had been derived from the Greek *Baphe Metis*, "the baptism of wisdom." Hammer-Pürgstall's fascination with Baphomet led him to translate the cryptic words engraved on an ancient Templar chest discovered in Burgundy: "Let Baphomet be

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exalted, who causes things to bud and blossom! he is our root; it is one and seven; abjure the faith and abandon thyself to all pleasure." Hammer-Pürgstall also speculated that the homosexual rites attributed to the original Templars were the survival of a cult of phallic worship.

Reuss insisted that he now had conclusive proof that the Knights Templar had been provided with a mandate by a school of Eastern sexmagicians to bring this secret doctrine to the benighted Western world. This mission had failed with the mass arrest and extermination of the Templars. Reuss boldly contended that *Sri Mahatma* Agamya Guru Paramahansa, Bhima Sen Pratap, and Soliman bin Aifha, had granted his fallen fellow seeker Kellner the sole occult authority to be the true heir of the pure Templar tradition in the West, now that he had reestablished contact with its long-lost source. Armed with this commission, Kellner is said to have returned to Vienna, where he instituted a new Order of Templars in the West, grandly termed a "Sovereign Sanctuary" of secret wisdom. Again, not a shred of proof exists to back up any of this, but it has been solemnly repeated by hundreds of authors as gospel truth. The name of Ordo Templi Orientis was chosen to explicitly acknowledge the spurious Eastern source of the sexual secrets underlying this undertaking.

As with so many intelligence operatives, Reuss's real convictions remain a matter of dispute. The National Socialists, revolted by his combination of magic, Freemasonry, and "free love," condemned the O.T.O founder after his death as a left-wing "Sex-Bolshevist." But some of his own writings suggest that he was actually a right-wing German nationalist professing authoritarian utopian visions. In 1914, Reuss laid out his messianic proposal for an ideal future, a curious mixture of communism, fascism, and sexual liberation. After the O.T.O had been ratified as the official state religion, Reuss mused, a rigorous program of eugenics would be instituted, assuring that only "perfect" couples would be licensed to breed. Under his O.T.O. utopia, a system of slave labor would be installed, and the state would abolish all private property for the common good.

Considering that Reuss presented the O.T.O. as a modern revival of the lost Templar heritage, another glaring omission is evident in his program.

After all, if the voluminous records of the trial of the Templars can be believed, the sexual rites of initiation performed by the all-male Order of Knights seem to have been concentrated on the exchange of male sexual energy. In 1906, Reuss was indeed brought to court by a student on a charge of homosexual violation, supposedly committed during a yogic lesson, but this seems to have been a trumped-up accusation. Any serious attempt at recreating Templar magic would presumably have to include male-to-male anal intercourse and fellatio – practices never addressed in Kellner's original O.T.O. curriculum. This inconsistency was eventually rectified by the man

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who attempted to wrest control of the O.T.O. from Reuss, and remake it in his own image; Sir Baphomet – better known as Aleister Crowley – who can never be accused of having left any logical hole unfilled.

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VII.

Sex Sex Sex And 666

Aleister Crowley: Adept Of The Left-Hand Path?

The Secret Of Secrets – Crowley Joins The O.T.O.

The next link in the chain of the modern sex-magical tradition established by Reuss has been granted the patina of legend by the sanction of yet another one of those enduring occult myths. It goes like this:

In 1912, an irate Theodor Reuss is said to have paid a call at the Victoria Street flat of a thirty-seven year old English amateur poet, mountaineer and magician. This was not a social visit; Reuss had come on official Order business. Upon being invited in, Reuss immediately

reproached his host for having dared to publish the most inaccessible O.T.O. secret, the sexual mystery of the IX°, in one of his books. The Englishman, one Aleister Crowley, informed his guest that was impossible – he did not even know the O.T.O.'s IX° secret. To prove his point, Reuss examined Crowley's library and found one of his perplexed host's tomes, *The Book Of Lies*, an enigmatic collection of magical riddles, puns and wordplay even more cryptic than others in his oeuvre. There, on the page entitled "The Star Sapphire", Reuss pointed an accusatory finger to the offending line; "Let him drink of the Sacrament and let him communicate the same."

Clearly, Reuss explained, Crowley must be referring to the O.T.O.'s central initiatory *mysterium*: the ritual consumption of semen as the essence of the Gnostic Logos. Of course, it was unlikely that any reader unversed in the obscure byways of libertine Gnostic heresy would have the faintest idea what this sentence meant. Nor was it very likely that Crowley's obscure book would have fallen into the hands of too many readers. Nevertheless, Reuss bade Crowley to keep the sacred secret of the Order, the supposed key to all magic. Crowley solemnly vowed that he would never disclose this to the profane. The purpose of Reuss's visit resolved, the adepts discussed the mysteries of erotic initiation as they understood them. Reuss, realizing that Crowley's independent research into sex magic had made him privy to the teachings of the Order, suggested that he become the leader of the (then memberless) O.T.O. in Britain. Ever fond of fancy titles and quasi-Masonic pomp and ceremony, Crowley agreed to bear the terrible burdens of office he had been offered.

At least that is the story – more or less – as it was related by

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Aleister Crowley, and subsequently embellished by his followers. While there may be some atom of truth to this oft-told tale, at least one detail is askew; at the time of this momentous meeting of magical minds, *The Book Of Lies* had not yet seen print – it was not to appear until the next year. In which case, whatever spermomagical O.T.O. secrets had been hinted at in its pages, they were already known to Crowley, who had by then been installed as the Order's British chief.

Crowley later claimed that his meeting with Reuss confirmed his suspicion that "behind the frivolities and convivialities of Freemasonry lay in truth a secret ineffable and miraculous, potent to control the forces of nature, and not only to make men brethren, but to make them divine."

That secret, of course, was sex magic – a practice that may not always make men "brethren", but can at least be counted on to make them very friendly with one another. Although the name of Aleister Crowley is today practically inseparable from the idea of sex magic, it must be remembered that in his lifetime, despite all of his deliberate provocations of public morality, he was surprisingly tight-lipped about his practice of erotic sorcery and initiation. Crowley may never have made that legendary solemn vow to Theodor Reuss to guard the sex secrets of the O.T.O. from the great unwashed. But in the vast body of written work Crowley wrote for public consumption, he offers only a few covert clues to his readers, usually veiled in symbolic euphemisms. His more direct sex magic instructions and rituals were reserved only for those few of his students who actually formally joined his precarious variant of the O.T.O.

Much was rumored and insinuated about Crowley's notorious sexual habits during his fleeting public appearances in courtroom battles and gutterpress reports of his activities. But very little of a definitive nature was known until after his death, first through a few less than objective biographies, and then through the publication of his many magical diaries, the most useful of which are *The Magical Diaries Of Aleister Crowley* and *The Magical Record Of The Beast 666*, which were not made publicly available until the 1970s. For the most part, it is to Crowley's own

uncensored words in his sex-magical diaries that we will turn in our examination of his actual practice. Think what one will of Crowley as man and magician, his journals provide any student of sex magic with invaluable psychological insights into some of the challenges of erotic initiation in the modern West.

It somehow seems appropriate to begin our exploration of Aleister Crowley with an uncertain legend rather than an established fact. For any attempt to get to the bottom – shall we say – of the Great Beast is largely a matter of seeing beyond the gaudy glare of his posthumous legend to the mortal that legend conceals.

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Whatever the true story of how Reuss first came into contact with Crowley, the English magician was indeed summoned to visit Reuss in Berlin, where he was ceremonially installed as the "Most Holy, Most Illustrious, Most Illuminated and Most Puissant Baphomet, X., *Rex Summits Sanctissimus* 33°, 90°, 96°, Past Grand Master of the United States of America, Grand Master and Supreme and Holy King of Ireland, Iona and All the Britains that are in the Sanctuary of the Gnosis, *National-Grossmeister ad vitam* der M.:M.:M.:" The name Baphomet was selected by Crowley in honor of the androgynous idol of the original Templars whose work the O.T.O. claimed to be continuing.

If Frater Merlin (Reuss) believed that his newly instated lodge brother Baphomet would make for a useful subordinate in the Order, he was not the first to underestimate the vaunting ambitions of Aleister Crowley. As Jean Overton Fuller wrote of Crowley: "He was one of those who use people as ladders; ingratitude was his hallmark." Far from being content to play second fiddle to Reuss in the tiny O.T.O., Crowley already envisioned himself as the prophet – if not the incarnation – of Thelema, a new religion that he preached would rule mankind for the next two thousand years. To this end, he quickly diverted his branch of the O.T.O. from Reuss's original vision into a vehicle for the promulgation of his personal religion, Thelema.

In 1921, Reuss, annoyed by Crowley's attempt to integrate his Thelemic teaching into the Order, expelled the Englishman from the O.T.O. altogether. Nevertheless, after Reuss's death in 1923, Crowley continued to masquerade as the Outer Head of the O.T.O. for the remainder of his life. The result has been that the true O.T.O. – such as it was – founded by Reuss has been long eclipsed by the Crowleyn fantasy, an error that continues to the present day.

Holy Crowleynity

Although we will largely be concerned here with Crowley's sex magical theory and practice, this important aspect of his teaching should be understood as only one part of a complex religious system. Before we identify some of the most germane elements of Crowleyn erotic initiation, a larger picture of the prophetic role Crowley fashioned for himself must be presented.

The event that had provided Crowley with his messianic mission took place during Crowley's 1904 honeymoon in Cairo. According to Crowley, a superhuman being known as Aiwass dictated to him a received document called *The Book Of The Law*, acclaimed as the principal Thelemic scripture. (Gerald Yorke, another disenchanting adherent who later characterized Crowley as a "false prophet," irreverently called Aiwass "Eyewash") Crowley recalled that the voice of Aiwass spoke to him from

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behind his left shoulder – a detail interpreted by some as evidence that *The Book Of The Law* is a work of the sinister, left-turning current. Less esoterically, some psychiatrists have described hearing voices from behind the left shoulder as a symptom of schizophrenia – although if Crowley's behavior can be classified clinically, the highs and lows of manic depression

would seem a far likelier diagnosis.

Whether one interprets *The Book Of The Law* as a transmission from a god-like being, or merely as an eruption of Crowley's unconscious mind, it is significant that its reception was anticipated by Crowley's wife, the illfated Rose. She is said to have fallen into a light trance and announced to her husband that the Gods had a message for him, detailing the time and place at which they would communicate. Many of the visions, oracles, and astral messages that were such an important part of Crowley's magical practice were in fact spoken to him by his female sexual partners, who invariably served as his intermediaries to "the astral." For the most part, these visions were inspired by an excess of drinking, ether, opium, and flicking, which allowed his exhausted consorts to fall into a post-coital trance of what Crowley termed "eroto-comataose lucidity"

In this altered state, Crowley's female companion served as his "skryer," an Old English word for a medium, or "seer." In this sense, the specific left-turning properties of the Feminine Daemonic were a major influence on Crowley – he consistently relied on erotically charged women to be his guides to the daemonic realm. However, he refused to accept that female magicians could serve as much more than mindless empty vessels, radios of flesh picking up stray signals from the beyond. For Crowley, Woman was merely a desirable animal, whose natural propensity for visionary experience in a state of erotic arousal made her a useful beast of burden for his forays into the higher planes of consciousness. But he utterly denied her the dignity of a left-hand path *shakti*; he once dismissed woman in general by writing that "She has no individuality." The sinister current sex magician, in considering what useful methods Crowley's legacy may contain, must keep his withering scorn for the feminine in mind.

Crowley put forth that Aiwass was one of the "Secret Chiefs" or "Unknown Superiors" said to preside over this planet, similar to the *mahatmas* popularized in the West by Theosophical teachings, or the *bodhisattvas* of the Buddhist left-hand path. Perhaps Crowley's least ambiguous statement concerning such entities is his remark that his "observation of the Universe convinces me that there are beings of intelligence and power of a far higher quality than anything we can conceive of as human; that they are not necessarily based on the cerebral and nervous structures that we know, and that the one and only chance for mankind to advance as a whole is for individuals to make contact with such beings." For

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Crowleyans, and perhaps for Crowley himself, *The Book (of) The Law* is a testament of such contact between man and these higher intelligences. Through the message of Aiwass, Crowley declared that he had become the prophet of the Aeon of Horus, the long-awaited new age that would sweep away the religions of the past. (The Aeon concept, based on Crowley's misconception of the Gnostic *Aion*, which he first learned of from the magician and actress Florence Farr, reveals the substantial impact of Gnosticism on Thelema.)

Thus ordained to the sacrosanct office of World Teacher, Crowley presented himself as a religious figure comparable to Christ, Lao Tzu, Buddha and Mohammed – the most recent in a lineage of sages who have been charged with the spiritual supervision of the planet. Crowley's messianic goals, directed to "all" rather than to a few heroic beings prepared to break from mass consciousness, cannot be reconciled with the left-hand path's elitist and individual approach to initiation. But clearly such a lofty sense of identity is consonant with sinister current objectives of self-deification.

Just as Gautama Siddhartha, the Buddha, had condensed his teaching in the Word *Anatta*, and the Christ had proclaimed *Agape* (Love), Crowley had uttered *Thelema* – Greek for "Will." In 1915, Crowley named himself as the Magus of Thelema, in a rite of initiation that was marked by the

crucifixion of a toad symbolizing Jesus. Identifying himself with the godhead of the apocalyptic monster foretold in *Revelations*, he took the name To Mega Merlon 666 (Great Beast 666), and set for himself no lesser aim than "to set in motion occult forces which would result in the illumination of all by 2000 A.D." Crowley's law for human conduct, uttered by his followers with alarming frequency, is "Do what thou wilt is the whole of the law." In practice, the Law of Thelema compels those who accept it to seek the one thing that they were meant to do in this incarnation, and to fulfill one's Will regardless of any external opposition – to be what you most truly are. A full exploration, acceptance, and mastery of one's sexual desires is an important part of this quest. Just as we have noted that one of Crowley's other wellknown dictums "Love is the Law, Love Under Will" bears a suspicious resemblance to his sex magical predecessor P. B. Randolph's "Will reigns Omnipotent; Love lieth at the Foundation", so is Crowley's Thelema and its law of Do What Thou Wilt clearly appropriated from a much earlier source.

In the bawdy French novel *Gargantua*, by Francois Rabelais, written in 1542, we find an Abbey of Theleme, whose randy Thelemite libertines live under the motto *Fay Ce Que Vouldra* – Do What Thou Wilt. Sir Francis Dashwood's eighteenth-century society for aristocratic rakes and orgiasts, the Hellfire Club, emblazoned this same motto from Rabelais over the entrance to their own mock Abbey at Medmenham. (Crowley founded his own lowbudget Abbey of Thelema in a Sicilian farmhouse during the 1920s.) At the

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very least, then, Crowley's religion of Thelema and its Do What Thou Wilt philosophy must be considered repackaged goods. To those who pointed out the earlier appearances of these key Thelemic concepts to him, Crowley brazenly insisted that Rabelais was in fact a secret Adept who anticipated the coming of Crowleyanity. In deference to this prophetic vision, Crowley canonized Rabelais as a Thelemic saint. Crowley, like most founders of religions, twisted the sometimes awkward facts of history to meet the needs of his budding faith.

The Thelemic injunction of "do what thou wilt" can be compared to the Tantric left-hand path level of initiation known as *Svecchacaya*. The *Svecchacari* adept is said to literally follow the way of "do as you will." Such initiates have transcended all *pashu* dualities. The *Svecchacari* is free to act according to will, having passed beyond the strictures binding the uninitiated. Crowleyan Will, like Tantric *Svecchacaya* is not a license for anarchy, rape, and murder as has commonly been assumed. At least in theory, the Thelemite and the *Vama Marga* initiate are permitted to act according to self-volition, rather than obey the laws dictated by society and religion, because they operate from a divine state of consciousness. Whether Crowley can be said to have mastered himself sufficiently to exercise his Will with such impunity is open to question. Nevertheless, it's apparent that he himself entertained no doubts on the matter.

Shortly after declaring himself an Ipsissimus, a grade of initiation in the Western magical tradition roughly equivalent to the Eastern left-hand path *Divya*, Crowley composed a revealing initiatory self-portrait. The mixture of brutally honest self-examination leavened with flashes of megalomania typifies the Crowleyan approach to his favorite subject: "I am myself a physical coward, but I have exposed myself to every form of disease, accident and violence; I am dainty and delicate, but I have driven myself to delight in dirt and disgusting debauches, and to devour human excrements and human flesh. I am at this moment defying the power of drugs to disturb my destiny and divert my body from its duty. I am also a mental and moral weakling, whose boyhood training was so horrible that its result was that my will wholly summed up in hatred of all restraint, whose early manhood, untrained, left my mind and animal soul like an elephant in rut broken out of the stockade. Yet I have mastered every mode of my mind,

and made myself a morality more severe than any other in the world if only by virtue of its absolute freedom from any code of conduct."

The overcoming of inner and external boundaries, the reconstruction of the self through trespass and inversion, the integration and acceptance of the horrifying aspects of *maya*; all of these Crowleyan methods would be

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immediately familiar to the more radical practitioners of the left-hand path, such as the Aghori. Just as the Indian left-hand path Kapalikas deliberately dishonored themselves in the eyes of legitimate Brahmin society as a tool of transcendence, one could make a case for Crowley's deliberate provocation of the acceptable standards of his time as a pure expression of one of the sinister current's most important methods.

The remanifestation of a rich, respectable, Cambridge-educated scion of a devout Christian family into the "Wickedest Man in the World", a destitute junkie expelled from several countries and calumniated as the foulest of perverts in the international press may have been Aleister Crowley's most effective magical act. Thus transformed into "the Wanderer of the Wastes" as he styled himself, Crowley could no more return to the polite British society that bred him than could the Tantrika who had shattered the Hindu taboos connected to sex, diet and death return to his or her allotted place in the caste system. But once separated from convention and social conditioning, the adept must take the next more difficult step of recreating him/herself as a sovereign entity.

Earlier, we cited Philip Rawson's observations that the most extreme *Vama Marga* adept forces "himself to [commit] acts which destroy any vestiges of social status and self-esteem," a course of initiation which gladly accepts the role of "scandalous outcast" as a necessary prelude to divinity. Crowley, for all of his seemingly pertinent emphasis on sexual magic, departs from the essential principles of the left-hand path in several vital ways. But in the art of opposite-doing, of consciously going against the grain of self and society to individuate and self-deify, while paradoxically doing one's will, Crowley, a "scandalous outcast" by any standard, conies very close to the sinister current.

That being said, it must be noted that a would-be adept of the lefthand path in the twentieth century has absolutely nothing to gain by merely aping Crowley's studied excesses, as all too many of his followers have senselessly done. Crowley had his own programmed training to transcend, just as you most certainly have yours. In 1920, there were relatively few well-brought up Englishmen exploring the dark corners of their psyche that

Crowley systematically sought out. But since 1967, when Crowley's appearance on the cover of the Beatles' album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* propelled him to pop icon status twenty years after his death, most modern magicians probably need to overcome the very ubiquity of Crowley in occult culture rather than emulate him.

Although Crowley's law of Do What Thou Wilt did not originate with him, the seriousness with which he promulgated the concept cannot be denied. Associated with the discovery of the True Will that Crowley posited as the central purpose of each human incarnation was his dictum that "Every

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Man and Woman is a Star" – according to Thelemic doctrine, each selfrealized individual must follow his or her own course in the ordering of the universe, just as a star is separate from all other stars. Here we find another of the many traces of Gnosticism that inform Crowleyan thought; the Gnostics also maintained that the spark of divinity trapped in the human body was once a celestial body of light, and through the gnosis of Sophia, it was thought that men and women could return to their pristine existence as incorporeal stars.

If he made large claims in the religious sphere, Crowley was just as

bold in literature, comparing himself to Shakespeare among poets, and ranking himself as one of the greatest mountaineers of all time. Despite the pomposity of these pretensions, one gets the sneaking suspicion that much of the Croweyan bluster may just be an elaborate practical joke, an expression of the derision in which he appears to have held even his most devoted followers. If Crowley, was, as we tend to believe, little more than an erudite and sometimes even brilliant conman who enjoyed assuming the airs of a holy guru, he was at least partially honest about his real motivations. In the same *Book Of Lies* that had supposedly revealed the sex-magical secret guarded by the O.T.O., the Beast exposed an even more pertinent illustration of his methods:

*Teach us your secret, Master ! yap my Yahoos.
Then for the hardness of their hearts, and for
the softness of their heads, I taught them Magick.
But ... alas!
Teach us your real secret, Master! how to become
invisible, how to acquire love, and oh! beyond all,
how to make gold.
But how much gold will you give me for the Secret
of Infinite Riches?
Then said the foremost and most foolish; Master, it
is nothing; but here is an hundred thousand pounds.
This did I design lo accept, and whispered in his ear
this secret:*

A SUCKER IS BORN EVERY MINUTE.

Other authors have already chronicled Crowley's life and magical teachings in exhaustive depth, regarding him from such extremes as the pious reverence of the true believer to the lurid character assassination of the yellow journalist. For Crowley himself, such judgments were probably of no consequence; like Oscar Wilde, he seems to have lived by the credo that "the only thing worse than being talked about, is not being talked about." Our interest here will largely preclude determining if the Great Beast was a saint

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or a demon, a visionary or a madman. We have already established that a lefthand path adept may well appear to be insane or demonic by the non-initiated *pashu's* standards. And as Crowley himself rightly pointed out, true initiation is "incompatible with bourgeois morality." To judge him according to standards which he willfully abandoned early in his career would be meaningless. Rather than grapple with the ethical questions Crowley's excesses must raise, we will narrow our focus to placing his actual sexmagical practice into context with the left-hand path tradition, in an effort to ascertain what relation Crowley ultimately has to the sinister current.

Crowley And The *Vama Marga*

Many modern-day Crowleyans have characterized their master's teaching as a "Western Tantra". Even a few respected Tantric authorities, such as the Australian Jonn Mumford, have attempted to place Crowleyan sex magick in line with the *Vama Marga*. Some adherents of the various O.T.Os that have mushroomed since Crowley's death, accepting on faith Reuss's fabrications concerning Carl Kellner's supposed Eastern left-hand path initiation, naturally tend to see Crowley continuing this Tantric tradition. Indeed, some Crowleyans maintain that Crowley was actually inducted into *Vama Marga* rites by a Madras-based Guru, one Subhappaty Swami. But based on the lack of authentic Tantric concepts in his teaching, we suspect that this is as insubstantial a claim as the earlier legend of Kellner's supposed left-hand path instruction dreamed up by Reuss.

The prolific and controversial British Thelemite author, Kenneth Grant, leader of the Typhonian O.T.O, has especially linked the Crowleyan 93 Current with the Eastern left-hand path. Based on his writings, which we

will consider again later, the notion that Crowley was a walker of the sinister way has gained fairly wide currency. For instance, in their *King Of The Shadow Realm*, Grant and his frequent collaborator John Symonds rather arbitrarily interpret the phrase "Abrogate are all rituals, all ordeals, all words and signs" from Crowley's *Book Of The Law*, as meaning that Crowley believed he should abandon "ceremonial magic as taught in the Golden Dawn, and take up sexual magic as taught by the *Vamacharis* or followers of the left hand path (because their worship is with women who are lunar or of the left)" But Crowley's sexual magic betrays very little taught by any followers of the left-hand path we are aware of; it is actually a conglomerate of Reussian sperm-gnosis, Randolph's orgasmic prayer and Volancia, the Kabbalah as taught by the Golden Dawn, all melded with Crowley's own self-created religion of Thelema.

Another poetic flourish from *The Book Of The Law* – "put on wings, and arouse the coiled splendour within you: come unto me!" – has also been deciphered as a reference to awakening of the kundalini. And yet such

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interpretations, which resemble in their subjectivity the personal readings of Bible quotations indulged in by Christian sects, are not supported by Crowley's own writings. Despite such imaginative exegesis, save for a few indistinct references to Tantric concepts here and there, we find nothing in Crowley's work that evidences a working familiarity with left-hand path initiation.

One of Crowley's central magical practices was the consumption of his semen combined with the female secretions (sometimes her menstrual blood) from his partner's vagina. Several Indian Tantras describe the ingestion of semen and menstrual blood as an act which can grant "all that one wishes", and more than one Tibetan *Vajrayana* text encourages the male adept to "lick the lotus [the vagina]" after the sexual union to gain certain magical powers. Crowley's detailed writings demonstrate no first-hand knowledge of left-hand path Tantras, but he may well have learned of this practice from Arthur Avalon's books before encountering Theodor Reuss' spermophagic O.T.O.

To his credit, Crowley was one of the first Westerners to introduce yoga methods to Europe. However, none of the simple yogic techniques he taught his pupils are left-hand path in nature, despite his profound interest in sexual mysticism. Although the first two years of the twentieth century found Crowley traveling in Tibet, Ceylon, Nepal, and northern India – all major centers of left-hand path activity – he left no record of encounters with Tantric circles during this journey. According to him, several Himalayan mountaineering expeditions brought him into contact with temples previously forbidden to Europeans, but the secret doctrine of sexual initiation does not seem to have been conferred upon him in these visits. The major influence on Crowley's understanding of Eastern initiation came from his friend Allan Bennett, who abandoned Western hermetic magic for a Buddhist monastery in Ceylon, where he became Ananada Metteya. Apparently Buddhism endowed Bennett with powers Western sorcery had not – Crowley claimed that his colleague had mastered the *siddhi* of levitation. Crowley, uncharacteristically, always acknowledged the debt he owed to Bennett, whom he described as one of the few men from whom he had ever learned anything. But whatever Crowley learned from Bennett it was not the carnal yoga of the left-hand path – Bennett was the most conventional of Buddhist monks, firmly dedicated to asceticism and denial of desire.

Crowley himself was quite unambiguous in placing himself firmly on what he understood to be the right-hand path, distancing himself from the left-hand path in no uncertain terms. The problem is that it appears unlikely that Crowley's understanding of the paths was any more informed than the simplistic good/bad sophism of Blavatsky, who influenced his thought far

more markedly than has been generally realized.

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So, despite the fact that some of his latter-day disciples are convinced that Crowley was the epitome of a left-hand path adept, and he himself categorically stated that he was not, he lays today in something of a limbo between the two paths. The fact is that many aspects of his magical practice, as we know them from his own voluminous writings and diaries, do fit the criteria of the universal sinister current as we defined them in Chapter One, just as others seem to argue strongly against such an identification.

This characteristic confusion in his makeup, which some would no doubt interpret as a sign of genius, was ably described to Jean Overton Fuller by the Baroness Vittoria Cremer, a one-time associate and later foe of the Beast: "He wasn't White, He wasn't Black. Half-way in everything Crowley. He had enough knowledge to raise a current he couldn't control. Couldn't get it up, couldn't get it down, so it went round and round. It drove him mad. He wasn't a magician, he was a maniac." Even allowing for the subjective nature of such personal animosity, a study of Crowley's life and work bears out many of Cremer's impressions. (Although a plethora of accounts would testify to the fact that the satyr-like Crowley didn't usually have any difficulty getting it up.)

Crowley's Definition Of The Left-Hand Path And Modern Neo-Satanism

Crowley's uneducated adoption of Blavatsky's mistaken equation of the lefthand path with black magic and the ill-defined "Black Brotherhood" would have unforeseen consequences. 1934 saw the publication of *The Devil Rides Out*, the first of many Satanic potboilers penned by the British occult hack novelist Dennis Wheatley. *The Devil Rides Out* tells the tale of a Satanic secret society led by a charismatic magician based on Crowley. In fact, Wheatley, whose knowledge of magic was nearly nil, had obtained Crowley's help as an occult adviser during the research stage of his novel's composition. It was directly from Crowley that Wheatley picked up the specious idea that the way of Good was the right-hand path and the way of Evil was the left-hand path. Knowing none the better, and obviously having no familiarity with the true meaning of the phrase as a sexual method of initiation, Wheatley went on to describe the fictional Satanists in his novel as practitioners of the "Left Hand Path," although they are nothing of the kind. From this precarious source, some latter-day Satanists, unfamiliar with Eastern methods, began to capriciously utilize the phrase "left-hand path" as a synonym for Satanism and black magic.

In particular, some of the writings of Anton LaVey (1930—1997), proprietor of the 1960s' personality cult, the Church of Satan, brought Dennis Wheatley's Crowley-derived association of Satanism with the lefthand path to a youthful and uninformed audience. That a fictional source

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such as Wheatley would be adopted by the LaVeyist interpretation of Satanism is not surprising. The Church of Satan's illusive ruling body, The Council of Nine, was named after a minor adventure novel by Talbot Mundy, *The Nine Unknown*; its newsletter, *The Cloven Hoof*, borrowed its name from a fictional periodical mentioned in a Robert E. Howard short story. LaVey also plundered the work of such fantasists as H. P. Lovecraft, Frank Belknap Long and H. G. Wells to find material for his rituals. He based significant areas of his life on William Lindsay Gresham's novel *Nightmare Alley*, the tale of a carnival conman who sets up his own religion.

LaVeyism, an atheistic, materialistic and misogynistic creed, expressed no interest in the spiritual expansion of consciousness through sexual contact with the Feminine Daemonic (or any other means) and can certainly not accurately be labeled left-hand path. This error was, in turn, appropriated by some of LaVey's admirers, and now it seems that every

Satanic group in the Western world automatically describes itself as lefthand path, cheerfully – and often willfully – ignorant of the true meaning of the term. As we have demonstrated in the cases of de Naglowska's *Fleche D'Or* and Gregorius's *Fraternitas Saturni*, Satanism and the sexual initiation of the left-hand path do indeed sometimes coincide, but this has actually been the exception rather than the rule. One common feature of modern Satanism is the mere celebration of carnality alone. Enjoyable though that pursuit may be, it is not a manifestation of the sinister current, just as the exclusion of sexual methods of initiation in favor of the purely cerebral, must also be ruled out as constituting the way of the left-hand path. Ironically, most of the modern Satanists who call themselves left-hand path dislike Crowley intensely, and are unaware of his influence on their identities.

Crossing The Abyss

Despite his acknowledgment of Reuss as the conveyor of the hidden truth of sex magic, Crowley also claimed to have divined the underlying sex-mystical basis of all magic in 1905, while being serviced by a whore. Furthermore, a major turning point in his erotomagic initiation was based on a revelation bestowed to him in 1909, a few years before his encounter with Reuss's O.T.O. sexual teachings. This flash of insight occurred during a pilgrimage to Algeria, while engaged in a rite of desert buggery dedicated to the lascivious goat-god Pan. His partner in this working was one of his first followers, the British poet Victor Neuburg, with whom Crowley enjoyed a complex sadomasochistic bond.

The masochistic context of almost all of Crowley's significant magical revelations has been evaded by many students of the Beast, but his incorporation of erotic pain and degradation into his initiation is perhaps his

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most original contribution to sex magical practice. Crowley and Neuburg's roles of Master and Slave were played out in theatrical guise during their North African journey. The Beast posed as a holy dervish, while he compelled Neuburg to play the role of a "tamed and trained demon" *a djinn*, under Crowley's command. Crowley wrote of Neuburg: "The more insanely and grotesquely he behaved, the more he inspired the inhabitants with respect for the Magician who had mastered so fantastic and fearful a genie." It is typical of Crowley to claim that the locals gullibly fell for this act, since they "saw that I was a saint." It seems just as likely that the Algerians may have considered the couple to be nothing more than two insane Englishmen.

Despite his many travels in the East and Africa, Crowley rarely viewed the denizens of those regions as much more than exotic, superstitious "savages."

In an isolated desert wilderness, the two magicians celebrated an act of sex magic, during which Crowley claimed to have overcome the dualistic opposition between the spirit and the flesh, understanding that sex could be performed as a divine sacrament. Obviously, such a realization is one of the indispensable tenets of the left-hand path, so it will be worth our while to analyze this event and its impact on Crowleyan thought in some detail.

Crowley, it must be realized, was writing in an era when homosexuality was still criminalized in England. (For instance, polite society looked askance at Neuburg for the rest of his life due to this youthful phase of experimentation with homosexuality.) Crowley only said publicly of his encounter with the incarnate Pan that it was "unlawful to speak openly under penalty of the most dreadful punishment: but I may say that the essence of the matter was that I had hitherto clung to certain conceptions of conduct of behavior which, while perfectly proper from the standpoint of my human nature, were impertinent to initiation. I could not cross the Abyss till I had torn them out of my heart."

Beneath this discreet verbal veil, Crowley means that he had submitted to being anally fucked by his normally submissive disciple Neuburg, as a springboard to mystical realization (in this case, entrance to the

Fourteenth Aire in Dr. John Dee's Enochian Calls). Crowley described the incident more vividly in his obscure homoerotic curiosity *The Scented Garden Of Abdullah The Satirist Of Shiraz*:

"In the hush of the sunset, come noiseless hoofs treading the enamelled turf; and ere I know it a fierce lithe hairy body has gripped mine, and the dread wand of magic shudders its live way into my being, so that the foundations of the soul are shaken. The heavy breath and the rank kisses of a faun are on my neck, and his teeth fasten in my flesh – a terrible heave flings our bodies into mid-air with the athletic passion that unites us with the utmost God – 'hid i' the th'middle o' matter' – and the life of my strange lover boils within my bowels ... we fall back in ecstasy – somewhat like death – and the gasping

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murmur Pan! Pan! Io Pan! while the marmorean splendour before us turns into the last ray of sunlight his goodly smile upon our still and stricken bodies."

It should be noted that Crowley's goal in this rite was not the construction of the independent and enduring god-like consciousness we have focused on as the ultimate goal of left-hand path sexual magic. On the contrary, he used the orgasm "somewhat like death" to dissolve "the ego" – that imprecise and troublesome word – into what he described as "the ocean of infinity."

Indeed, Crowley explicitly states that to "cross the Abyss" without consciously destroying one's personality is to step irrevocably onto the lefthand path, as the understood it.

Such a goal would have been the very opposite of his intentions, according to Crowley's worldview, shaped as it was by Blavatsky, orthodox Buddhism, and the cosmology of the Golden Dawn, the hermetic Order that provided his introduction to ceremonial magic. All of these religiophilosophies judged what they termed the left-hand path to be the decidedly wrong path, if for very different reasons. Any attempt to reconcile Crowleyan sex magick with the sinister current must take his own negative understanding of the left-hand path, and his self-definition as a follower of the right-hand path, into account. Of course, Crowley's emphasis on sexual mysticism and erotic rites alone would exclude him from the right-hand path in its authentic form, but these terms were already hopelessly confused in Western magical circles, even by Crowley's time.

In any event, it was this Algerian anal epiphany that led Crowley to name himself to the degree of (8) = [3], *Magistri Templi*, according to the initiatory grade system of his own Order, the Argentinum Astrum, or Silver Star. Further discussion of the meaning of such grades is fairly irrelevant to our understanding of the left-hand path. However, our readers can easily determine for themselves whether Crowley really had dissolved his ego and personality into the ocean of impersonal nature after this pivotal sex magical rite that made him claim the grade of Master. One need only observe the remainder of Crowley's life after 1909, to be hit over the head with the undeniable fact that here was a man who retained a monumental ego and personality until his dying day.

But Crowley's blustering megalomania was always offset with an equally powerful psychic counterweight. According to his frequent biographer John Symonds, when the nearly forgotten Crowley crossed his final abyss in 1947, reduced to a shabby existence in a cheap boarding house, a witness to the Beast's demise overheard his last words. "Sometimes I hate myself," an agitated Crowley muttered on his deathbed.

While it can be misleading to attribute too much meaning to the

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terminal reflections of a dying man, a lifelong streak of self-loathing in Crowley's being must be kept in view as we explore his sex magical practice. Crowley's diaries often drop the inflated hyperbole of his public persona, revealing a tortured soul struggling with depression, boredom, drug

addiction, and poverty. In our view, one need only read through the monotony of his journals, with their ceaseless accounts of misery, ennui and mindless spite to learn that for all of his claims to having reached superhuman states of initiation, Crowley remained an unenlightened person, a slave of his compulsions, flailing from one hopeless scheme to another. If Liberation is the end goal of left-hand path erotic initiation, then all of the Beast's arduous pansexual exertions seem to have missed the mark.

The Beast And His Scarlet Women – A Harem Of Victims

This significant 1909 sex magic working with Victor Neuberg, which Crowley interpreted as the demarcation point between existence as a human magician and life as a partially divine being, also underscores another way in which Crowleyan sex magick differs radically from traditional left-hand path practice as we have described it thus far. Crowley's most illuminating religioerotic transformations seem to have been realized as the result of his homosexual relations, while he clearly placed his magical couplings with females on a lesser level of importance.

Certainly, the basic physical mechanism of orgasm and somatic bliss is the same regardless of which genders are involved with the process. But the different spiritual and subtle component operant in initiatory sex between same-sex (monopolar) and opposite-sex (bipolar) partners cannot be ignored as a factor in the left-hand path. In Crowley's case, his unique interpretation of the differences between male and female sexuality must also be placed in context with his unbridled loathing of the feminine principle in general and his contempt for women in particular that are such major themes in his life.

Rather than being motivated by a conscious and positive desire to interact with same-sex psychosexual energy – which could potentially be useful for sex-magical initiation – Crowley's homosexual leanings often seem generated by a phobia in regards to female sexuality. This is spelled out, among other places, in his *The Esoteric Record*, an account of a later homosexual evocation of theurgic forms, also celebrated with Victor Neuberg. Crowley states that the use of women sexually "is more dangerous to the career of the magician" than sex-magic between male partners. (According to a Palestinian magician of our acquaintance, this belief is still held to among the secretive circles of mostly male sex magicians currently practicing in the Islamic world.) In his old age, Crowley wrote in his diary that contemplation of the vulva filled him with revulsion – an attitude inconceivable to the left-hand path adept.

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All this is not to say that Crowley wasn't profoundly attracted to women – at least as physical specimens useful for his purposes – but that attraction was convoluted by as pathological an expression of love/hate as can be imagined. Despite the countless female consorts he used as magical tools in his life, Crowley's deep-seated antipathy for womankind seems to have prevented him from ever understanding or accepting the *Shakti* principle intrinsic to the left-hand path, the way of woman. "Women," he mused, "should be brought to the back door like milk when needed." Not exactly the Goddess sexually revered in human form that we *have* seen is the base of the left-hand path experience. A telling quote from Crowley's own autobiography speaks volumes: "man is the guardian of the Life of God; woman but a temporary expedient; a shrine indeed for the God, but not the God."

The divine force, for Crowley, could only be imagined as the phallus. His total identification with the *lingam* as the true creative power was as constitutional to him as was his disregard for the *yonis* as a mere accessory.

He compared the shape of the human brain to the glans of the penis, obscurely theorizing that the similarity in shape indicated a parallel in function between the two organs. All visible creation flowed from the penis in the form of semen, he surmised, just as the brain created all thought. Crowley described the single tuft of hair on his shaved head as a phallic lock.

His stylized signature was marked by the distinctly phallic "A" in Aleister, which he inscribed as a cartoon cock and balls. When performing his homosexual XI^o grade of O.T.O anal sex magick, he sometimes envisioned himself as a deified penis discharging numinous seed. If his actions caused many to view him as something of a prick, Crowley would have gladly agreed.

Crowley once observed that "women don't count, they only exist insofar as they seduce or otherwise destroy men." Mind you, millions of men in Crowley's era expressed an equally low opinion of the fairer sex, but such simplistic assessments of one half of the human sexual equation coming from a man who claimed to have transcended all profane mental restrictions must give one pause. More importantly, Crowley's philosophy of woman as a "temporary expedient" completely contradicts the centrality of the Feminine Daemonic to left-hand path liberation. In this respect, Crowley seems never to have advanced from the traditional Judaeo-Christian view of the female as "Adam's rib", God's secondary botched creation who tempted man from Eden. This view of womankind, like so much in his worldview, he would have learned in the Plymouth Brethren, the religious sect in which he was reared as a boy.

It was during the constant Bible study in his childhood that Crowley first encountered the icon of the Scarlet Woman – our old friend Inanna/Ishtar – in the form of the Whore of Babylon, that awesome harbinger of *Apokalypis*, mounted on the Great Beast 666 of *Revelations*, whose cryptic number "is the number of a man." From this Christian distortion of a Mesopotamian myth, Crowley borrowed the central religious figure in his own personal cosmology. His mother, or so he claimed, was so scandalized by his adolescent dalliance with the family maid that she dubbed him the Beast, endowing him with his first and probably best known magical name. And what is the Beast without his mystery Whore, the Scarlet Woman?

"O Blessed Beast, and thou Scarlet Woman of his desire," wrote Crowley, transfiguring the Biblical monstrosities into the holy contrasexual duality of Thelema with a stroke of his pen. In keeping with his sometimes eccentric interpretation of Kabbalistic numerology, Crowley spelled the Scarlet Woman's name as Babalon, a singular form he borrowed from John Dee's *Enochian Aires*. The number of Babalon, in Crowley's view, was 156, which he explained as symbolizing "constant copulation or samadhi on everything." This much is at least in keeping with Inanna's legendary carnal appetite, illustrated in Akkadian and Sumerian tales that describe her blissfully engaging in sex that lasts for "long days" until she is sated.

For Thelemites, one of the primary symbols of Babalon is a vivid scarlet rose, its color suggesting the "blood of the saints" that fills the Cup of

Fornications held aloft by the Whore of Babylon in *Revelations*. This vaginal rose is equated by Crowley with the symbol of the Rosy Cross so central to Rosicrucianism. (The crimson rose of Babalon also recalls the importance of the *yoni*-like scarlet hibiscus flower in the secret rite of the *Vama Marga*.) For Crowley, the saints whose blood had seeped into the flower were not the Christian martyrs. They were the Masters of the Temple, like himself, who had supposedly crossed the abyss by pouring every last drop of their Selves into the Universal Oneness, symbolized as blood/semen ejaculated into the Whore's vulva.

Considering the importance of Beast and Babalon to his religion, it is curious that Crowley barely looked into the origins of these mythic beings. If he had, he would have learned that just as the Whore was Inanna/Ishtar/Astarte, the Beast 666 was also originally a feminine deity, the she-dragon Leviathan, derived from pre-Christian Sumerian lore concerning

Tiamat, atavistic goddess of the deep. This ancient understanding of the Beast as a female force negates Crowley's self-definition of the Beast 666 as the quintessence of solar-phallic power, but then mythological scholarship was never the poetic romantic Crowley's strong suit. His do-it-yourself mythology inexplicably presented Babalon as an aspect of the Egyptian goddess of the night sky, Nuit, suggesting in *The Book Of The Law* that Babalon is Nuit's "secret name." Babalon, as a being of sheer lust, was also interpreted by Crowley as the feminine counterpart of Pan, the lascivious goat-god of ancient Greece.

From henceforth, Crowley sought the Scarlet Woman in her human incarnation, beginning a futile quest for a projected inner ideal, a neverattainable anima that he found and then lost in hundreds of women. It would be wrong, however, to think of Crowley's vision of the Scarlet Woman as a soul mate – he was thoroughly uninterested in any woman's soul, and it is questionable whether he even thought women possessed souls at all. Often, to consecrate the ascension of these human women to Scarlet Womanhood he would paint his phallic Mark of the Beast between their breasts as a talisman of ownership which seems to contradict his own statement that "there shall be no property in human flesh."

If Crowley were ever to have placed a lonely-hearts ad seeking a new Scarlet Woman, his criteria were plainly outlined in *The Book Of The Law*: "Let her work be the work of wickedness! ... Let her kill her heart! Let her be loud and adulterous!" When it comes down to it, Crowley's vision of the Scarlet Woman is the man-eating, ball-busting, femme fatale, the *belle dame sans merci* that dominated European art, poetry and literature of the 1890s, transformed into a magical idol. In fact, many Symbolist and Decadent artists created images of the Whore of Babylon that foreshadow Crowley's cult of the Scarlet Woman in their kitschy magnificence. Babalon can also be

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compared to the Gnostic Sophia, in that Crowley equated knowledge of the Whore with "Understanding" – with a capital "C", to provide a distinction from the mundane sense of the word – the wisdom that made the magician into a Master. This interpretation of sexual union with the Shakti would be understood by the Tantric Buddhist as well, who views his female partner as *Vidya*, the embodiment of wisdom.

For a time, he would pluck some anonymous schoolteacher, prostitute, actress, or unsatisfied housewife from her drab existence and elevate her to the sacred Thelemic office of Scarlet Woman. Despite the grandeur of the title they assumed, almost none of the women Crowley selected to serve in this role were magicians in their own right. He much preferred to be the sole magical authority in the spotlight where his dealings with the opposite sex were concerned; only among his male disciples would he countenance anything like parity of knowledge. Crowley neither recognized nor desired spiritual or intellectual gifts in his mistresses – for him, women were incapable of genius, or even original thought. The only exception to this he would allow was among his few lesbian disciples, whose masculine characteristics he theorized might permit for a reflection of male mental prowess.

Consider Crowley's description of one of his Scarlet Women, Boddie Minor, who he damns with faint praise by comparing her positive masculine traits to her feminine defects: "She was physically a magnificent animal, with a man's brain well stocked with general knowledge ... but despite every effort, there was still one dark corner in which her femininity had taken refuge and defied her to expel it." He frequently described his Scarlet Women as animals; some of his more notable Whores of Babalon he nicknamed the Cat, the Monkey, the Snake, and the Owl. These may seem like affectionate pet names, but Crowley, an enthusiastic hunter, had as little empathy for the animal kingdom as he did for the opposite sex. Whether quadruped or female

biped, both species were regarded equally as pests to the Great Beast.

Amateur psychology is one of the more odious afflictions of our age. Still, we find it hard to believe that Crowley's loudly expressed revulsion for his own mother – by his own account, a narrow-minded religious fanatic and "ignorant bigot" – was not a major impact on this crippling limitation in his psyche when it came to women. One look at Crowley's private diaries, and it becomes clear that his gynophobia was not merely an abstract philosophical affectation adopted to shock the genteel.

His own description of his daily life is a grueling account of drunken, drugged rows, in which the Beast proudly portrays himself as endlessly battering and belittling, kicking and punching his luckless female companions. Not infrequently, he gloats over the beatings he has delivered to his paramours, much as he exults about his mindless torture of animals.

Lest one romanticize the dreary situation, it must be made plain that the

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violence Crowley visited upon his magical and mundane mistresses was rarely the conscious and consensual practice of sex-magical dominance and submission that we will explore in the final chapter of this book. Rather,

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Crowley's sadism is a petty bullying of the weak, a grotesque parody of the pseudo-Nietzschean message of strength preached in his *Book Of The Law*.

Crowley's abuse of women is one of the most glaring examples of behavior causing one to doubt his claimed attainment of higher states of consciousness. Naturally, the Master presented his thrashings of women as initiatory lessons designed to help his victim/students overcome their limitations. In fact, they appear to be merely out-of-control temper tantrums.

In comparison to the heroic self-containment ideally sought by left-hand path initiation, Crowley's outbursts indicate a total lack of mental dominion over *pashu* instinct. Even more evidently, Crowley's compulsive brutality towards females contradicts an essential observation of Tantra made by a Muslim cited in the first section of this book: "this sect calls women *shaktis* (powers) and to ill-treat a *shakti* – that is, a woman – is held to be a crime."

The tangible results of Crowleynan pedagogy speak for themselves; the two women who officially married him both became alcoholics, and died in insane asylums at an early age. The string of sad creatures whom Crowley lifted to the position of "Scarlet Woman" fared little better. In abstract theory, on paper, Crowley extolled the sacred nature of his Scarlet Women in the most extravagant purple prose, written in a style approximating Swinburne channeling the Old Testament: "Blessed be She, ay, blessed unto the Ages be our Lady Babalon, that plieth Her Scourge upon me ... that hath filled Her cup with every Drop of my Blood ... Behold, how she is drunken theron, and staggereth about the Heavens, wallowing in joy ... Is not She thy true Mother among the Stars, o my son, and hast not thou embraced Her in the Madness of Incest and Adultery?"

No doubt this sort of thing was impressive, and even flattering, to the psychically vulnerable women Crowley tended to vampirize. But in practice, Crowley pressed his Scarlet Women into conditions of medieval servitude, true to his observation that "a woman is only tolerable in one's life if she is trained to help the man in his work without the slightest reference to any other interests." If that was the humble fate the Beast deemed best for human women, we should not be surprised that his vision of even such a commanding force of the Feminine Daemonic as Babalon was equally limited by his misogyny. In *Magick*, Crowley makes it clear that exalted being though She may be, even the Goddess has no more important task than "to help the man in his work." He wrote "And for this is Babalon under the power of the magician, that she hath submitted herself unto the work; and she guardeth the Abyss."

When we think of the tremendous power once attributed to Babalon,

in her earlier, purer forms of Innana, Ishtar and Astarte – those awe-inspiring deities of sacred war and holy lust – it becomes obvious how grossly diminished and deformed is the Crowleyan concept of Babalon that has

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become popularized in occult circles. If there is anything that the left-hand path adept working with the Babalon current learns, is that this proud Warriress never submits to another's power. In fact, the ancient mythologies of manna and Ishtar attest to her independence from the servitude of any other being – she is the chaotic, disobedient spirit of freedom incarnate, on both the sexual and psychic levels.

The contrast between Crowley's everyday disregard for living women and his idealized vision of the Goddesses distantly revered in his Thelemic pantheon is striking. For example, he bestowed his own daughter with the bombastic name Nuit Ma Ahathoor Hecate Sappho Jezebel Lilith, even while maintaining that females could never aspire to be much more than convenient apertures to satiate the lusts they aroused in men. (When his many-named child died at an early age, Crowley remarked that the cause of her death was "acute nomenclature.")

Complicating the picture of Crowley as constitutionally gynophobic is his fervent desire to be sexually degraded and enslaved by his Scarlet Women during acts of sex magic. But even this masochistic impulse is an expression of his loathing of the feminine; by submitting to a woman, that lowliest of creatures, Crowley believed he was humbling himself to a gutter of shame even more debased than his mistress's own position in the cosmic scheme of things. We'll return to Crowley's application of sadomasochism to initiation, as well as his own conflicted understanding of the feminine side of his being.

One can easily get the false impression that the archetypal Thelemic couple of Scarlet Woman and Beast is a Western form of the Shakti/Shiva polarity. Later renegade Thelemites, breaking from Crowleyan orthodoxy, did take steps to enact these iconic sexual god-forms in a more liberatory lefthand path mode. The Scarlet Woman archetype has since developed its own momentum among magicians, independent of Thelemic doctrine. But Crowley himself defined the Scarlet Woman merely as "*any* Woman that receives and transmits my Solar Word and Being." At her best, his female sexual partner could only hope to be a pale and passive moon reflecting the greater glory of her Master's solar rays – the oblation of his seed.

The Ins And Outs Of Crowleyan Sex Magick

Crowley's "Solar Word" was his Logos, as manifested in the Beast's holy semen, a divine gift the Scarlet Women were counted most fortunate to receive. Should she become impregnated by the Beast, the more profound were her blessings. Ironically, any contemporary fundamentalist Christian could heartily agree with Crowley's views on woman's proper and natureordained place as mother. Similarly, the Beast's zealous religious conviction that contraception and abortion were morally unacceptable would find favor

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with His Holiness the Pope. Underlying these "pro-life" aspects of the Crowleyan sexual teaching – which completely contradict the Thelemic endorsement of each individual's freedom to do what she will with her own body – is a belief that sperm is the sacred substance.

Reading some of Crowley's commentary, it's apparent that he considered spermophagia – semen eating – to be nothing less than the key to immortality, as well as a boon to mystical Understanding. He understood semen to be the alchemist's "Blood of the Red Lion," the primordial matter containing the essence of all material and spiritual forms. Released from the Athanor, Crowley's alchemical code for the penis, into the retort (the vulva), semen becomes the elixir of life itself. Consume sperm, Crowley taught his inner circle, especially his sperm, and you consume the all and everything of

creation, which he once described as the "fluid vehicle of the Spirit, the Elixir of Magick." Just as he thought that the spilling of animal blood was necessary for theurgic operations bringing god-forms to earth, he was convinced that ejaculation attracted invisible demons, which could conceivably take on substance through its life-creating powers. This idea mirrors Church demonological teachings concerning the succubus, which claimed that these sexually voracious elementals were given form from the magical properties of semen spilled during nocturnal emissions.

Superficially, Crowley's near-idolatry of semen may seem to accord with the principles inspiring the sperm-retaining practice of some left-hand path adepts. A major difference is that the *Tantrika* seeks to draw on an invisible spiritual and psychically transformative inner power – the *bindu* – contained within the outer form of sperm. But Crowley's sex magick is unequivocally materialistic; he considered the physical matter of his semen itself to be magically potent. And of course, he considered its frequent ejaculation to be as necessary for attainment as some Tantrikas consider the withholding and externalizing of ejaculation.

From the sinister current perspective, the natural procreative powers of the human body generated during ritualized sexual arousal and orgasm do not effect transformation of *maya* due to organic factors, such as the emission of semen. Magical change can be created because of the adept's redirection of the physical process of sexual creation to a subtle, psychic mode of being that manifests in the non-natural realm.

One of the most controversial and misunderstood passages in Crowley's *Magick In Theory And Practice*, entitled "The Bloody Sacrifice and Matters Cognate" states that "a male child of perfect innocence and high intelligence is the most satisfactory and suitable victim." With tongue in cheek, he proceeds to write reverently of himself in the third person: "It appears from the Magical Records of Frater Perdurabo [one of Crowley's many magical names] that He made this particular sacrifice on an average of

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about 150 times every year between 1912 c.v. and 1928 e.v." The "male child" is of course his own seed, "sacrificed" through the working of sex magick.

Here we have some correspondence with the left-hand path idea of the semen as a sacrifice offered to the *yonis*-altar of the Goddess; but for Crowley, *yonis* and Goddess are both besides the point. Although Crowley's reference to the spilling of his semen as a sacrifice and his consumption of it as a eucharist resembles Eastern left-hand path erotic alchemy involving the libation and reimbibation of sexual fluid, Crowley differed from the *Vama Marga* interpretation due to his entirely phallogocentric vision. The Scarlet Woman's sexual fluids could not compare in importance to his own. After all, she was but the "shrine" of the God – it was Crowley alone who was the God. In such a union, despite some similarities of method with the sinister current, it should be evident that the deeper principles are completely at variance with one another.

Inspired by Reuss's earlier O.T.O. version of Spermo-Gnosticism, Crowley-cum was the central sacrament of Thelema, the equivalent of Christ's body consumed in human semen during the Gnostic Mass we described in the previous chapter. Indeed, one of the contributions Crowley made to Reuss's O.T.O. was his writing of a Gnostic Mass, literally dripping with not-so-cryptic sexual symbolism.

Crowley adopted Reuss's theories to his own magical practice, and considered it essential to drink his own semen from the orifices of his Scarlet Women, primarily as a medium of sorcery. Like a connoisseur of fine wine, Crowley kept meticulous records documenting the exact consistency, flavor, and amount of his semen. Typical is this diary entry, written during his ruinous attempt at creating a Thelemic commune in Sicily: "Orgasm very

strong and savage. Elixir, nearly all absorbed: Alostrael [the magical name of his longest-lasting Scarlet Woman, Leah Hirsig] could only get a few drops." Less enthusiastically, he might note: "Elixir, nothing special – good though when duly mixed."

From such observations, he pronounced prophecies and divination. These auguries were rarely of a spiritual or initiatory nature – they tended to focus again on the material aspect of *maya*; impending windfalls of money, a new source for heroin, luck in some literary venture. Occasionally, an opus of sex magick was dedicated to such vague aspirations as "Rededication of myself to my prophetic mission," "establishment of the Law of Thelema" or even the surely needless request for "lust and the power of lust." Whatever the Beastly wish may have been, he usually shouted it out at the moment of orgasm, a much more assertive version of Randolph's "nuptive moment." In the many records of these sorcerous couplings that Crowley left behind, one does not get the impression that much in the way of mental imagery or psychic focus was going on; Crowley seems to have considered a strong

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orgasm and a bellowed wish sufficient to do the trick. (The exception to this is his sexual invocations of god-forms, during which he theoretically transferred his consciousness to the mind of the imagined god at the moment of climax.)

As for Crowley's form of union with his partners, this was usually entirely conventional penetration of one orifice or the other; the prolonged state of ecstasy sought by left-hand path adepts was apparently not of interest to him. His diary, *The Magical Record Of The Beast 666*, among other private journals, provides us with a fairly complete account of his sex magickal practice. In these chronicles, we learn that many of Crowley's sexual partners were completely unaware that they were participating in any kind of magic at all. (We will discuss the possible benefits and disadvantages of sex magic with an unknowing accomplice in a later chapter.) For all of the relatively more formal workings of the "Royal Art" with his various Scarlet Women, there are just as many hurried XI° buggeries with unknown men in Turkish baths, encounters with apathetic prostitutes, and other anonymous quickies. These abbreviated trysts would hardly seem to allow time for the attainment of the altered state of consciousness magic requires, let alone the cultivation of ecstasy. Of course, the mark of a genuine magician is the ability to create alteration of *maya* under any circumstances, eventually transcending the need for visible ritual altogether. We leave it to our readers to decide if this was the case with Crowley, or if some of the nameless ruttings to which he ascribed initiatory significance were merely non-magical outlets to assuage what he once described as his "blind, horrible ache for [sexual] relief."

Crowley is constantly comparing the strenuous orgasms he undergoes during his workings to near-death experiences – a juxtaposition of death and Eros we have already encountered in the traditional left-hand path. "The most favorable physical death is that occurring during the orgasm," the Beast cryptically wrote, hinting at one of his most frequently employed methods of consciousness alteration. His rapturous descriptions of utter physical exhaustion after his couplings reflect an important part of his magical teaching in the O.T.O. In his *De Arte Magica*, he advises the adept to deliberately exhaust the body during coitus, so that the aforementioned trance of "eroto-comatose lucidity" can take hold of the consciousness. In this state, Crowley or his partners – usually with a little chemical assistance – would attempt to separate the subtle body from the depleted carnal shell to travel on the astral plane. In the left-hand path rite, it is the prolonged union of sexual opposites, and the sustained exchange of sexual energy that transforms the couple's psyche.

In Crowleyan sex magick, the union and the orgasm are often only

mechanisms to allow for the more important post-coital trance to take place.

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Sinister current initiates should experiment with both modes, although the extended full-body orgasm of the left-hand path rite is intended to greatly increase energy and wakefulness, rather than leading to the fatigued reverie

Crowley sought to achieve. In his desire to be thoroughly and utterly exhausted unto the brink of death by orgasm, the note of bodily mortification and self-abnegation that runs through all of Crowley's work seems evident. Since he obviously regards sex as an inherently "bad" activity, to be enjoyed only in spite of itself as a religious obligation, it is not surprising that so much psychic strain would lead to post-coital depletion rather than the increased alertness desired by left-hand path adepts.

In complete contrast to this technique, the Beast sometimes used sex as a muse, engaging in hours of sex to inspire his creative, rather than simply seminal juices to flow. After one particularly strenuous tryst with a married woman during his Mexican sojourn, Crowley was inspired to a marathon sixty-seven hour writing session. The result was *Tannhäuser*, an impassioned drama in verse inspired by Wagner's opera, which takes the form of dialogue between the goddess of Love Venus, and the bewitched knight Tannhäuser.

Crowley, like the left-hand path initiate, sometimes used sex to rend the veil of *maya*, and transcend outer appearance and inner programming. He advised, for instance, that "One might have a liaison with an ugly old woman until one beheld and loved the star which she is." During one New York visit, he posed as an artist advertising for crippled, hunchbacked, or otherwise "as ugly as possible" models – the art he had in mind was the Royal Art of sex magick. The *Vama Marga* adept, as we have described earlier, uses similar methods of awakening and consummating desire with partners customarily repellent to one's aesthetic conditioning and natural inclination.

Crowley also used semi-public displays of sexuality to shock his more reserved students into initiatory insight. Israel Regardie, shortly after taking on the job of Beastly secretary, recalled witnessing his guru and the latest Scarlet Woman "fucking like animals" on the floor in his presence, shortly after their introduction. Regardie later took umbrage at one of his teacher's anti-semitic remarks, but continued his exploration of orgasmic liberation as a Reichian therapist. Crowley's more charitable admirers have suggested that the Beast deliberately drove away his most devoted disciples as a method of assisting them to find their true wills. This seems unlikely, considering how urgently he needed his followers' financial support, but cannot be ruled out altogether.

In the stead of more durable and disciplined techniques of psyche expansion, and despite his rather erratic dabbling with yoga, Crowley was wont to fuel his sex magick with the copious use of cocaine, opium, ether, and hashish. His fondness for ether was such that many first-hand accounts from those who knew the Beast describe the distinctively caustic odor of the

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drug preceding his entry to a room, and lingering long after he left. (His addiction to heroin, which decreases the libido, cannot really be adjudged as an aphrodisiac or consciousness-altering aid to sex magic.) The Eastern lefthand path tradition also makes precise use of the psychoactive effects of wine, and hemp-based THC substances, under the aegis of Shiva, the lord of mind-manifesting potions. But it is this very precision which differentiates left-hand path ritual intoxication from Crowley's uninterrupted and undisciplined assault on his nervous system with a pharmacy of chemicals. Crowley was clearly medicating himself throughout the day in an attempt to make life more bearable; far from awakening him to see beyond the delusions of *maya*, his drug use seems only to have perpetuated his selfdeceptions.

At least in his youth, Crowley balanced his prodigious drug intake with strenuous exercise, taking on such physical challenges as

mountain-climbing and other athletic pursuits. But one almost never hears of Uncle Aleister's followers tackling Mount Kilimanjaro in imitation of their Master; they usually settle for the easier route of mimicking his wellcultivated "dope fiend" image.

If the practices outlined above led to the fulfillment of any of the tangible needs Crowley used his sex magick to meet, we might well recommend his methods as viable. But from a pragmatic perspective, even if

Crowley must be counted as the most famous twentieth century sex magician, he cannot really be rated as a particularly effective sex magician. Despite Crowley's constant performance of sex magick and consumption of his elixir, as documented in his magical journals, the much needed "gold" and "victory" he incessantly petitions the gods for rarely, if ever, materialize.

Perhaps the Beast's extravagant will for self-destruction, an undeniable component of the psychic and physical masochism so central to his being, had more force than his temporal need for survival and worldly success.

Magicians must be keenly aware of the deep, often hidden, needs that motivate them rather than the superficial passions they are focused on at the moment. Crowley, often a deft psychologist in interpreting his students, appeared to be strangely oblivious to what made his own complicated psychic mechanism tick.

It may also be that he simply overdid it. It has been our observation that magicians who perform sex magical operations on an almost daily basis – as Crowley tended to do – can burn out very rapidly. Also, Crowley's penchant for a working-a-day left him with little room for reflection; his frantic activity allowed nothing to develop in time. Although he gave the very useful bit of hypothetical advice that magic should be performed without "lust for result," in practice Crowley was impatient in the extreme for immediate results. As soon as the last drop of his "Solar Word" has spurted out, he is eagerly examining its taste for omens, consulting his ever-handy I

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Ching yarrow sticks, searching for Kabbalistic correspondences, or drawing out astrological charts; all in an attempt to ascertain the prospect for results.

The importance of sperm as an agent of magical change in Crowleyan sex magick is attested to in Crowley's *Emblems And Modes Of Use*, a brief document that was once considered the greatest secret of the Beast's ersatz O.T.O.. Why such secrecy has been accorded to this simple instructional text is hard to imagine, since the method of sympathetic sex magic it recommends has been known to primitive shamans and sorcerers around the world since the earliest times. Nevertheless, knowledge of the mystery revealed in this paper was once inexplicably considered tantamount to claim of a high degree of initiation among some of the competing O.T.O.s that have followed in the Great Beast's footsteps. In so many words, Crowley advises the magician to bedaub a sigil or talismanic device with his sperm, scooped out of his partner's vagina after coitus. The demon and elementalmagnetic properties of the sperm will supposedly draw such beings into the sigil, manifesting the sorcerer's desire. This is much the same age-old principle that we have described in Chapter Three's account of the Arabic rite in which a couple's menstrual blood and sperm are mixed on a fabric, and then burnt, for the purpose of attracting *djinn*.

One of Crowley's many Quixotic get-rich-quick schemes, dating from his wretched latter years, provides us with a pertinent example of his bias for the male sexual principle and its physical expression in semen, over the sinister Feminine Daemonic and its elixirs. At one desperate juncture in his life, Crowley tried to market vials of his semen as a wonder medicine. He appropriated the Indian left-hand path name *Amrita* – the elixir of life – for this product. Of course, in the *Varna Marga*, the word *Amrita* usually designates the sexual secretions of the female *shakti*, not her male partner's semen alone. And in Tantra, the act of consuming the combined sexual fluids

is the outer symbol of a spiritual alchemy of opposites, designed to seal an inner transformation; it is not typically a form of divination or sorcery

The secret rite of the *Vama Marga* is a spiritual and physical exchange of prolonged ecstasy flowing between the bipolar halves of divinity manifested in the forces of Shiva and Shakti. Crowleyan sex magick is a much more one-sided action, in which the male ejaculation is really all that matters.

For all of the emphasis on sperm in the Crowley cult, female secretions do play a part – even if a far lesser one – in some Thelemite sex magick. One of the oracular commandments in *The Book Of The Law* proclaims that "the best blood is of the moon, monthly." This fairly transparent reference to menstrual blood has led Crowleyans to craft holy wafers made of menstrual blood and sperm; these "cakes of light" are the eucharist meal consumed by celebrants of some versions of the Crowleyan

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Gnostic Mass. The Mass of menstrual blood and semen can be traced to the Gnostic libertine practices previously described as a juxtaposition of the right-hand Logos and the left-hand Sophia. The "light" consumed in the cakes of light is that spark of divinity, central to Gnostic soulcraft.

Considering that such a mixture of bodily fluids can conceivably be fatal in the era of AIDS, some modern-day Crowleyans bake these eucharist cakes at temperatures high enough to theoretically kill the virus – a safe-sex magick precaution the Beast never had to consider.

The Palace Of Shit And The Eye Of Horus

As unappetizing as these sperm and blood cakes of light may seem to some, the ingredients required for Crowley's private celebration of Thelemic eucharist is even more of an acquired taste. In his *Magical Record Of The Beast*, dating from 1920, he writes that "In my Mass the Host is of excrement, that I can consume in awe and adoration."

Crowley's employment of shit, both human and animal, as a magical condiment, obviously bears comparison with the practices of the extreme left-hand path sects of India, who include ritualized coprophagia in their methodical overcoming of societal taboo and personal disgust. In his 1929 *Magick In Theory And Practice*, Crowley gives advice to the aspirant magician that would be familiar to the left-hand path adept. He recommends "training the mind and body to confront things which cause fear, pain, disgust, shame, and the like. He must learn to endure them, then to become indifferent to them, then to analyse them until they give pleasure and instruction, and finally to appreciate them for their own sake, as aspects of Truth."

"When this has been done," Crowley sensibly suggests, "he should abandon them if they are really harmful in relation to health or comfort." As is so often the case, the Beast offered others sage counsel he himself often ignored to his peril.

Crowley's records make no mention of the use of excrement in Tantric alchemy, which, in any event, is not connected to the blasphemy of Catholic ceremony suggested by Crowley. His practice of a "Mass... [thats] ...Host is of excrement" also recalls more familiar European accounts of the Black Sabbath, in which Satanists were described as eating fecal wafers in mockery of the Catholic Mass. But these accounts of Satanic coprophagia were most likely fantasies concocted by Christian witch-hunters rather than a true left-hand path tradition of reversed rites. The infamous nineteenth century French Satanists, the Abbé Boullan and his mistress Adele Chevalier, a former nun, did offer hosts of excrement to their flock in the Church of Carmel, as part of their dutiful acting out of medieval Christian nightmares of *diablerie*. However, Crowley, for all of his reactionary tirades against

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orthodox Christianity, was not operating from Boullan's Satanic view – he

had more personal magical motivations.

Just as Crowley attributed distinct magical powers to semen, as a vivifying force of astral intelligences, he also seemed to believe that the alchemical mingling of sperm, excrement, and the not infrequent bleeding of the ruptured rectum during anal intercourse created a material essence in which daemonic and elemental entities could take shape. (We would be remiss were we not to point out that the incorporeal organism this mixture is most likely to conjure today is called. AIDS.)

Crowley's statement that he had "driven [himself] to delight in dirt and disgusting debauches, and to devour human excrements and human flesh" would suggest that, like the Aghori initiate, he had to force himself to break his own natural inclinations to perform this act so repugnant to the majority of mankind. However, Crowley evidenced such a palpable enthusiasm for excrement from a fairly early age that this often ignored aspect of his religious teaching may have just as well have been simply one of his many personal fetishes. A fascination with the erotic potential of human waste emerges in his work as early as 1898, when the twenty-two year old Crowley published his first book of poetry. In that volume, he was already celebrating feces in these self-deprecatory lines:

*All degradation, all sheer infamy;
Thou shalt endure. Thy head beneath the mire
and dung of worthless women shall desire
As in some hateful dream, at last to lie;
Woman must trample thee till thou respire
That deadliest fume;*

This may seem at first like poetic posing in the decadent style of the time, but Crowley practiced what he preached. His magical experiments with the "dung of worthless women" are well-documented, especially during his attempt to institute a "Collegium ad Spiritual Sanctum," the Abbey of Thelema, on the island of Cefalu, Sicily. During one rite of subservience to his Scarlet Woman of the time, Leah Hirsig, Crowley obeyed her request to eat her shit from a silver platter as a sign of his devotion to the Whore of Babalon incarnate. To seal the rite, she burnt her Beast's breast with a smoldering cigarette. Crowley exulted that "'tis joy to be splashed with the mire of her Triumph." Golden showers were also incorporated into the couple's sadomasochistic sex-magical operations, as this Crowley-penned paean to his Scarlet Woman illustrates: "Straddle your Beast, My Masterful Bitch ... Now from your wide Raw cunt, the abyss / Send spouting the tide / Of your sizzling piss / In my mouth; oh my whore / Let it pour, let it pour!"

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We have described how and why Eastern *Vama Marga* adepts, in their attempt to make sacred even those aspects of physical existence that are generally shunned, consider all rejected matter, including excrement, urine, menstrual blood and the contemplation of corpses in the burning ground as possible tools of liberation. Although Crowley seemed unaware of this element of Tantric teaching, the similarities to his own fascination with coprophilia and urolagnia bear comparison.

When one of Crowley's students, Mary Butts – a name eminently suited for the Beast's singular approach to initiation – arrived for tutelage at the Abbey of Thelema, her Master welcomed her with the offering of a goat's turd on a plate. Whether Crowley presented her with this repast as a genuine test of her commitment to the Great Work or simply as an indulgence of his prankish schoolboy humor cannot be said with certainty. Butts was soon a witness to one of Crowley's less successful rituals, an attempt to induce a hegoat symbolizing the fabled Goat of Mendes to copulate with the haggard body of his much-abused Scarlet Woman, Leah Hirsig. Despite all efforts to coax the goat to perform his sacred function, the animal remained indifferent to Babalon's allure. Falling into one of his frequent fits of rage, an

exasperated Crowley slit the goat's throat, and was soaked with the creature's spraying blood.

"What shall I do now?" asked a flustered Crowley.

"I'd have a bath if I were you," Butts responded, with aplomb.

One of the explanations Crowley gave for his archaic spelling of magick with a k, was that the k symbolized *kteis*, Greek for the female genitals. And yet even this apparent left-hand path reverence for the *yonis* as matrix of *maya* is not demonstrated in practice. The female genitals – not to mention the female magician those genitals are attached to – are accorded an extremely inferior role in Crowley's Thelemic sex magick. Without doubt, this subordinate status of the female sexual partner and her vulva in the Crowleyan system is in keeping with Crowley's innate disdain for the feminine. But it's also rooted in the Great Beast's personal preference for an orifice he found infinitely more fascinating than the vagina. The cynical may be of the opinion that Thelemic sex magick is a religion dedicated to worshipping an asshole – one Aleister Crowley by name. But it is a fact that one of the key doctrines of Crowleyan sex magick is a worship of the anus, and all of its functions.

Translating his predilection into ancient Egyptian terms, one ardent bout of anal sex once moved the Beast to jot in his diary: "Oh, how superior is the Eye of Horus to the Mouth of Isis!" Here, Crowley is not only identifying the anus with the god Horus, who was anally violated by his uncle Set; he is also praising the superiority of his self-proclaimed Aeon of Horus, the child, over the earlier Aeon of Isis, the Mother. The Mouth of Isis

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was a common archaism for the vulva.

Elsewhere in his magical journals, Crowley expressed the same thought in the arcane symbolism of the O.T.O., "I am inclined to believe that the XIth degree is better than the IXth degree." The XI° is the highest degree of Crowley's version of O.T.O. sex magick, signifying anal sex, usually of a homosexual nature. The addition of anal congress to Reuss's pre-existing O.T.O. repertoire was one of Crowley's major innovations to the Order. The IX°, as we have mentioned, was the grade of male-female genital sex magic, which Crowley consistently believed to be of far less magical power than his beloved buggery. In his *Liber CXCIV*, a once secret O.T.O. document prepared by Crowley in 1919, he hints at the exalted place which the mysteries of the anus held in his magical scheme: "Of the Eleventh Degree, its powers, privileges, and qualifications, nothing whatever is said in any grade. It has no relation to the general plan of the Order, is inscrutable, and dwells in its own palace."

Another aspect of Crowley's magical understanding of the XI° in his sex magick is the theme of anal birth, an abstruse theme he returns to several times in his writings. The sex-magical creation of demonic/elemental entities by mingling secretions in the anus – as opposed to the more common concept of the vaginal generation of such beings – is an important facet of the Beast's practice. Although Crowley also provided his students with traditional instructions for the birth of a homunculus or "moonchild" to be conceived heterosexually, he believed a daemonic creature spawned through anal sex magick would be of a much higher order, a "Spirit ... partaking of both natures, yet boundless and impersonal because it is a bodiless creation of a wholly divine nature"

Crowley was intrigued with the Middle Eastern sex-magical tradition dating back to ancient Egypt which posits the breeding of psychic intelligences via male homosexual union. He writes in his privately printed 1910 paean to buggery, *The Scented Garden Of Abdullah The Satirist Of Shiraz*: "When the power of the Crescent menaced that of the Cross, sodomy was put down with Draconian rigour because the Turks believed that the Messiah (a reincarnation of Jesus) would be born of the love between two

men. Sodomy was thus a religious duty with the Turk; at any moment his passion might be used to bring about the millennium; so with the Christian it became heresy, and was punished as such."

As always, Crowley's primary intention is to shock any Christian who may have inadvertently stumbled upon his writings. His claim that "sodomy was a religious duty" is wishful thinking that would find little agreement among scholars of Islam, despite the prevalent British slang word "Turking" to describe anal intercourse. Almost forty years later, a diary entry recording a waking nightmare reveals that the Beast's always cloacal imagination is still

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gripped by the concept: "A most frightful semi-dream (between two normal motions) of giving birth to a foetus *per anum*. It was a mass of blood and slime. The nastiest Qliphotic experience I can remember."

Through the eyes of the *Vama Marga* initiate, who experiences the entire human body as the Temple of the Nine Gates, Crowley's religious fixation on this orifice is no stranger than the more traditional left-hand path veneration of *yonis* and *lingam*. If we are to give Crowley the benefit of the doubt, and assume that his anal mania, like his coprophilia, is based on something other than personal fetishism, it must be admitted that all religious ideas – even anus worship – can only be interpreted subjectively. And yet, throughout his magical diaries, Crowley repeatedly notes that this or that magical working was performed *per vas nefandum*, "by the unmentionable vessel" – his favored Latin euphemism for anal intercourse. Even if in jest, his constant use of such a disparaging term for an activity to which he supposedly accords sacred status seems contradictory, if not simply puerile. One comes away with the impression that Crowley's preference for the inverse opening is based as much on the social stigma then commonly associated with its enjoyment as any more mystical rationale.

Compulsory Sin

One of the glaring weaknesses in Crowley's practice of sex magic is his apparent inability to transcend his need to be a very bad boy. Breaking taboos is of course important to left-hand path initiation, but the Beast, for all his talk of liberation, seemed stuck in the futile recreation of the initial transgression of taboo, which is only a preliminary step in self-deification.

He didn't make the necessary progression to truly transcending the conditioning that grants any taboo its power in the first place. Crowley once wrote ambitiously to his follower Norman Mudd: "my whole plan is to clean all germs out of the sexual wound ... My object is not merely to disgust but to root out ruthlessly the sense of sin." But without the sensation of vice or perversity to goad him on, Crowley seemed uninspired – it is doubtful that he ever erased the "sense of sin" he inherited from his puritanical Plymouth Brethren family, despite his Herculean efforts to do so. This is not so much a criticism of Crowley as an indictment of the lasting psychic injuries such sexnegative creeds can inflict on their young victims.

How deeply the sense of sin was imbedded in Crowley's psychosexual programming – despite all outward appearances – can be ascertained by the curious fact that he maintained that sex performed for any other reasons than the Great Work of initiation was immoral. Despite his seemingly sincere conviction that homosexual anal sex allowed for the zenith of magical attainment, he wrote reprovingly in his *Magical Record Of The Beast* that "homosexuality is an infirmity" Elsewhere, he condemned any act

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of male-to-male sodomy dedicated not to magic but for pleasure alone as "abominable." These stern admonishments of erotic pleasure for its own sake, and many more besides, were recorded in his private writings. So we must assume that they reflect Crowley's actual beliefs, and are not simply propaganda designed to make his sex magick appear more acceptable to the public.

Those who dismiss Crowley as a mere libertine and hedonist are mistaken – no matter how far he goes in his nearly scientific personal exploration of every imaginable debauchery, he can never escape from the shadow of sin that is his patrimony. If the Plymouth Brethren of his youth preached that sex for any purpose other than the Christian duty of procreation was sinful, then the sexual morality of Crowley's own synthetic Thelemic religion is equally restrictive. In both sects, whether dedicated to the Magus Christ or the Magus Crowley, Eros outside the boundaries of the faith is anathema to the true believer. The fact that one sect is based on such notions as a virgin birth and celibate angels and the other is dedicated to ritual shiteating and the magical powers of sperm is really only a technicality. Crowley's Thelema, with its obligatory Mass and wafer, its Saints, its Book, its Law, its catechisms and its Prophet, can be viewed as a kind of quasi-Christian sect in itself. Both theologies share the Beast 666 and Whore of the Apocalypse as central figures. And despite the lingering confusion that would label Crowley a "Satanist," a full study of his work makes it evident that he is much more of a Gnostic Christian who fully accepts the divinity of Christ in his creed.

The sexologists Eberhard and Phyllis Kronhausen, witnessing some of the desperate failings of the 1960s sexual revolution, once remarked that "there is nothing more depressing than the pretense of sexual freedom on the part of reactionary and guilt-ridden people who are acting under the compulsion of taboos rather than from genuine joie de vivre."

This observation is just as pertinent to the arch-reactionary Crowley, who in so many ways anticipated the attempt of middle-class Western youth to overcome their upbringing through the collective drugged mystical orgia of the 1960s. One also comes away depressed from a consideration of the Beast's decades of exhaustively reported sexual adventures – there is so little sense of joy, delight, or freedom in the compulsive nature of his couplings. What the Old and New Testaments so zealously condemn, Crowley's *Book Of The Law* just as devoutly makes mandatory. But both extremes are informed by the same autocratic spirit of – Thou Shalt Not" – a spirit that cannot be reconciled with left-hand path liberation from all such hallucinatory commandments.

Alys And Aleister – Punishing The Inner Whore

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In light of Crowley's rejection of the Shakti principle, as expressed in the inferior role he accorded women in his system of sex magick, it is ironic that few modern male magicians have explored their own feminine sides with such intensity. Crowley was very much aware of the Jungian anima within him from a very early age. And like Jung – who he referred to contemptuously as "Junk" – he recommended that his students of either gender should develop the qualities of the contrasexual opposite sex within their beings as a necessary means of creating psychic balance. The correspondence of this practice to the universal sinister current bears analysis.

In Thelema, the Beast and Babalon are one obvious pair of contrasexual forces that can be compared to Tantric Shiva and Shakti, Gnostic *Logos* and *Sophia*, Taoist *Yin* and *Yang*. But it is probably closer to Crowley's own understanding to say that he envisioned the universal feminine in the form of Nuit, the ancient Egyptian goddess of the starry night sky. The masculine principle he designated as an invented male solar divinity he rather obscurely called Hadit, although the Egyptian pantheon actually includes no such deity. For Crowley, Nuit represented Shakti-like darkness and matter, the phenomenal universe perceived by human senses, and Hadit symbolized solar light and motion, a Shiva-like invisible consciousness. Through sex magick, his theory that "these two infinities can not exist apart" is demonstrated in physical form as Nuit and Hadit are drawn to each other

by desire "unit[ing] in explosive rapture" in an "explosive holocaust". But Crowley also instructed his disciples to unite these forces within themselves, through workings of esoteric Hermaphroditism.

The name hermaphrodite blends the names of the love goddess Aphrodite and Hermes, messenger of the gods. An Hellenic legend tells us that the son of these deities, Hermaphroditos, inspired such fervent passion in the nymph Salmacis that she desired total union with him, a longing which fused their bodies into one being. Crowley, product of a classical education, would have been well aware of this myth.

As much as the Beast admired the virile, rational, athletic type, as he described himself, he acknowledged that even he would be imperfect without cultivating the contrary feminine traits. He was of course less convinced that women were capable of acquiring the characteristics he understood as masculine, such as intelligence, logic, and force of will, but he encouraged them to try anyway. The importance of a Kundalini-like hermaphroditism in Crowlean thought is also indicated by his strong identification with the bisexual god/dess of the Templars, Baphomet, who he described as "the androgyne who is the hieroglyph of arcane perfection." He sometimes speculated that his prophesied Aeon of Horus would contrast with the previous Aeons of Isis, the mother, and Osiris, the father, in that Horus

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represented a Dionysian androgynous child of both sexes. In this aspect of his teaching, the Beast reflected his immersion in the alchemical and Rosicrucian notion of the inner androgyne, a doctrine that's similarity to the left-hand path has already been discussed.

This reconciliation of opposites, as manifested in his own spirit, Crowley once described as "Male-female, quintessential, one, Man-being veiled in Woman-form." On the physical plane, he made note of a "hermaphroditism in my physical structure," which he sometimes ascribed to his many prior incarnations as women. Among the incarnations Crowley claimed to have remembered through the visionary results of sex magic was his ancient existence as a sacred prostitute, named Astarte or Artemis, slave of the goddess in an ancient Sicilian Temple. (The origins of the Whore of Babylon in the goddess Astarte may well have played a part in the details of this past life.) Like so many of the tragic previous selves Crowley recalled, this sacred courtesan died a violent death. Whether Crowley actually believed this tale or not is actually irrelevant to our purposes. The psychological value of his putative recollection lays in its revelation of a key element of Crowley's understanding of his own anima. Invariably, he envisioned the female side of his soul as a whore deserving of punishment and even death.

Indeed, Crowley's awakening of his interior Feminine Daemonic seemed almost entirely dedicated to subjecting "her" to his masochistic desire for sexual chastisement. We will outline in full the practical application of consensual erotically charged pain and submission to left-hand path selftransformation in a later chapter. But a brief consideration of Crowley's experiments in this neglected area of sex magic makes for a useful introduction to these methods.

Among Crowley's many magical identities, ranging from Frater Perdurabo, the Master Therion, and Baphomet, not the least important to him was the feminine alter ego he transformed himself into during these sadomasochistic rites of androgyny. He personalized his inner feminine shadow with the name Alys. Alys, according to Crowley, was not only the quintessence of the prostitute, she was also a "tribade", an archaic word for a lesbian derived from the Greek *tribein*, to rub. In *The Magical Record of 1920*, Crowley carefully reported a cocaine-fueled all-night working, in which Alys/Aleister assumed the submissive "femme" role in a rite performed with Leah Hirsig at the Abbey of Thelema. He describes how his Scarlet Woman "tore from me the last rag of manhood" in a "frightful ordeal

of cruelty and defilement." The grand finale of this extended act of gendertransformative slavery was the previously described forced feeding on his mistress's feces as a "Host ... of excrement, that I can consume in awe and adoration."

Like so many components of the Beast's sex-magical methodology,

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even his histrionically expressed passion for "bleed[ing] under the whip's lash" can be traced to his strict religious upbringing among the Plymouth Brethren. While attending the sect's rigorously disciplined school, the often disobedient young Crowley acquired a life-long taste for being flogged with the birch – a predilection the French have long since labeled the *vice anglais*.

It should be noted that despite his masochistic tendencies, Crowley most commonly assumed the role of the dominant in his sexual opera – his desire to hurt and be hurt were part of a continuum. And like many masochists, he was always really in charge of these ritual humiliations, despite his seeming subservience to the Scarlet Woman/dominatrix. Crowley's comment that "I drown in delight at the thought that I who have been Master of the Universe should lie beneath Her feet, Her slave..." makes it evident that his acts of sexual submission were partly designed to illustrate the superiority of his state of being, if only by contrast with his temporary reduction to abject slavery. Even non-magical rites of dominance and submission are rarely as clear-cut as they may seem at first; when magic is brought into play, the power dynamics involved are even more complex.

Elsewhere, Crowley declares his submissive devotion to Babalon, longing "to abase my Godhead before my lady I want my crown crushed by Her feet; I want my face fouled by Her spittle. I want my heart torn by Her boot-heel ... my soul to be her privy" In another diary entry, Crowley addresses his "Holy Guardian Angel" Aiwass, the unknown superior who dictated *The Book Of The Law*, in similar terms, assuming the persona of a debased prostitute: "I am to Thee the harlot, crowned with poison and gold, my garment many-coloured, soiled with shame and smeared with blood, who for no price but of wantonness have prostituted myself to all that lusted after me ... I have made my flesh rotten, my blood venomous, my brain hagridden, I have infected the round world with corruption."

Crowley's self-identification with the archetype of the prostitute as contagious carrier of "the venomous blood" of venereal disease was a fairly common artistic theme among the Decadent writers and artists of the 1890s. But the Beast developed this syphilitic *fin de siècle* aesthetic to an apotheosis even the likes of Baudelaire would not have imagined. In his youth, he acquired syphilis from a Scottish whore, an experience which caused him to recommend the clap as a positive medicinal benefit for great minds like himself. Crowley theorized that "it would be salutary for every male to be impregnated with the genus of this virus in order to facilitate the culture of individual genius". When his young, sheltered American student Israel Regardie came to sit at the Master's feet in 1920s Paris, the Beast promptly sent him to one of the local *filles de joie* for an evening's pleasure. When

Regardie reported that he had acquired syphilis during the encounter, Crowley pronounced that a major turning point in his disciple's initiation had

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occurred. For Crowley, "the scars of syphilis are sacred and worthy of honor as such." Depending on one's point of view, Crowley's pro-syphilis stance could have been a deliberate provocation of bourgeois morality, stated with tongue in cheek, or a mystical comment on the hidden holiness of every phenomenon, a perception in keeping with left-hand path transcendence of duality. No interpretation of Crowleyan thought should be made without taking the Beastly sense of black humor well into account.

Just as he worshipped the indiscriminate and infectious promiscuity of the Whore of Babylon as enacted by his Scarlet Women, he sought to

match them in their whorishness in his Alys persona. In this sense, Crowley's understanding of Babalon is similar to the left-hand path dual manifestation of the Feminine Daemonic as the male adept's external sexual partner and his inner *shakti*. In his solemnly consecrated *Oath Of The Beast*, a promise to his Lady Babalon, he vowed to "freely prostitute my body to the lusts of every Living Creature that shall desire it," a promiscuous promise that echoes his earlier *The Vision And The Voice*, which exults, "beautiful art thou O BABALON, and desirable, for thou hast given Thyself to everything that liveth...'

It's easy enough to interpret this sacred pledge as nothing more than a quasi-religious justification for Crowley's already well-established habit of fucking everything that moved. But to leave it at that would be to ignore the real power of regularly evoking and invoking so potent a force as the Whore of Babylon. The issue of whether such divine forces can be said to objectively exist as independent beings outside the mind of man occupied Crowley throughout his life; he never reached a conclusive answer. But whether this is true or not, Crowley's decades-long exaltation of Babalon unquestionably tapped into an ancient psychogone that could be traced back as far as the Great Whore goddesses of eldest pre-Christian antiquity, Inanna/Ishtar/Astarte, the patronesses of the lost spiritual discipline of sacred prostitution.

Crowley's understanding of the *shakti* he called Babalon was surprisingly limited; he barely looked beyond the Bible scare story in *Revelations* that had so transfixed him as a youth. Much of what he taught his followers about Babalon was simply wrong, subjective, or rooted in fantasy, and these errors persist today in some quarters of the Thelemic community. But a magical oath taken in the name of such an entity, even when it is based on incomplete and distorted information, will have its effect. If Crowley accomplished nothing else, he set the wheels in motion for a revival of the forgotten tradition of Inanna-Ishtar-Astarte, the cult of the Scarlet Woman, that is one of the most viable approaches for Westerners to the sinister current. Who is to say that Crowley's oath to prostitute his body to all who desired it – despite the Beast's vulgarity – was not the first step in restoring

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the principles of a true erotic initiation once conveyed through the mystery of temple prostitution?

When Cecil Frederick Russell, a young Thelemite discharged from the Navy for use of cocaine, turned up at the Abbey for spiritual training, Crowley unleashed his inner sacred whore on him in an attempt to fulfill his licentious Oath. Here's Crowley planning the working in his diary: "Now I'll shave and make up my face like the lowest kind of whore, and rub on perfume and go after Genesthai [Russell's magical name] like a drunken twobit prick-pit in old New Orleans." As it turns out, the ailing, strung-out Beast was not particularly appealing; the aphrodisiac assistance of the Scarlet Woman was needed. "Operation, very lengthy. Alostrael had to masturbate Genesthai to effect erection, and her hand introduced his penis into my anus." Replying cattily to his long-dead former teacher, Russell remarked in his own 1970 autobiography *Znus Is Znees*: "What really happened, my dear Master Therion, in this case, your Circean enchantment didn't give me a bone-on".

Russell, after the inevitable break from Crowley that all but a few were compelled to make, went on to found the Choronzon Club, an influential but forgotten American sex magic society that was actually far more successful in its time than Crowley's O.T.O. The Choronzon Club, centered in Chicago, eventually became the G.B.G. or Great Brotherhood of God. This group was eventually revived in the late 1950s by the American Louis Culling, an alumnus of a small '40s era Los-Angeles based branch of the O.T.O.. Out of this distant Californian outpost of the Beast's scattered ministry, known as the Agape Lodge, the Babalon Current would

unexpectedly remanifest from Crowley's narrow-minded Victorian concept into a timeless vision of the Feminine Daemonic truly worthy of the left-hand path.

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Cults Of The Scarlet Woman The Babalon Working And Beyond

"Of all the strange and terrible powers among which we move unknowingly, sex is the most potent... Conceived in the orgasm of life, we burst forth in agony and ecstasy from the center of creation. Time and again we return to that fountain, lose ourselves in the fires of being, united for a moment with the eternal force, and return renewed and refreshed as from a miraculous sacrament ... Sex, typified as love, is at the heart of every mystery, at the center of every secret. It is this splendid and subtle serpent that twines about the cross, and coils in the core of the mystic rose."

—John Whiteside Parsons, *Freedom Is A Two-Edged Sword*, 1950

John Whiteside Parsons – Antichrist Of The Space Age

On the dark side of Earth's moon, located at 37 degrees North and 171 degrees West, a crater splits the lunar surface. Since 1972, lunar maps have designated this desolate moon pit as Parsons, in honor of pioneering rocket scientist John (Jack) Whiteside Parsons (1914—1952), whose innovations in rocket fuel and explosives led directly to the first human efforts to explore outer space. There could hardly be a more fitting memorial for a magician whose work focused with such passion on the lunar feminine principle in all of its mystery. Parsons' stormy love affair with the Feminine Daemonic, in the form of Babalon, also took him to dangerous regions of *inner* space, a singular initiatory journey that ended with his death in just the kind of explosion he had specialized in investigating.

When life is lived so fiercely, and ends with such violence at a young age, all of the ingredients for legend are firmly set in place. In the case of Jack Parsons, only 37 when he died, the ever-present tendency to cast the *maya* of romanticism upon past events is intensified. This has led many to place their idol Parsons on a pedestal, glossing over the everyday banalities of any human existence, only to submit to a larger-than-life cult of personality. Parsons' brooding good looks, Yankee rebelliousness, and fiery early death have transfigured him into the James Dean of sex magic, one of those Byronic "live fast, die young" figures that tantalize with the lost promise of unrealized potential. Even his flamboyant home for the last decade of his life, a huge, gloomy Victorian mansion inherited from his father, sets a stage suitable for a wizard from the pages of fiction. The archetype of the otherworldly doomed genius has rarely been so fully realized in flesh and blood.

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In our own researches conducted into the Parsons phenomenon, we were fortunate enough to meet, speak or correspond with many of those who actually knew Parsons as man, magician and scientist. From them, we learned of a vulnerable, quietly pensive, socially maladroit, absent-minded individual who was apparently as notable for his physical clumsiness and peculiar perspiration problem as for his now-vaunted brilliance and mystique. Many of Parsons' scientific colleagues and their wives regarded their associate's interest in magic as little more than a goofy eccentricity, a harmless hobby. More than a few of his associates related to us the impression that his little-understood sexual magic was psychologically conflicted by a cloyingly close relationship with his mother, and the painful absence of his father. Parsons' work with the goddess Babalon must be placed in context with what he himself described in his incisive

autobiographical sketch *Analysis By A Master Of The Temple* as a "dangerous attachment" to his mother. In that same document, Parsons perceptively notes that his "invocation of Babalon served to exteriorize the Oedipus complex." (Sensation seeking biographers have since twisted this aspect of the magician's psychosexual constitution to justify their unfounded accusations of actual physical incest between Parsons and his mother, a charge for which no supporting evidence exists.)

His search for a paternal figure, aggravated by his own father's early abandonment of him, is made abundantly clear in the blind filial reverence he showed to his magical mentors Wilfred Smith and Aleister Crowley, from whom he eventually broke to forge his own way. All sex magicians of the sinister current, to fully understand their relations with their sex partners and with the esoteric forces of masculinity and femininity, should carefully analyze the often hidden psychological dynamics of parental influence, which so decisively shape one's ideas of male and female. Parsons' exacting sexual self-analysis provides a useful prototype for this aspect of the lefthand path adept's ongoing process of erotic understanding.

Many of those we interviewed verified Parsons's own analysis of himself as one given to "romanticism, self-deception and reliance on others"; these traits manifested themselves disastrously in the appallingly bad character judgment he demonstrated repeatedly in his brief life. From some second-hand accounts, one would get the impression that Parsons' scientific prowess made him into a magical Einstein. But it must also be said that some of his scientific peers *viewed him* as a bright but self-educated pyromaniac with *no* college education, an undisciplined idiot savant who got a reckless kick out of danger and blowing things up. The phrase "mad scientist" came easily to the lips of those who described their first-hand impressions of Parsons to us. He had a capacity for hare-brained schemes that led him to flirt with selling American aerospace secrets to foreign powers – this amateur

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espionage, along with his strident liberalism, brought him to the attention of the FBI during the paranoid days of the cold war Red scare. Parsons, like many magicians, was very much a man on the outside looking in; his voyeuristic tendency to live through the lives of others is expressed in his habit of collecting odd and colorful characters to examine. If the straight arrow aerospace scientists he worked with considered him to be something of a flake, the occult bohemians of the Hollywood and Pasadena O.T.O. were impressed that he held down a real job with government security clearance. Moving between two such disparate worlds, Parsons was an enigma to both milieus.

With one foot firmly placed in the rigors of the scientific method, Parsons had in many ways a more realistic and practical mind than the average occultist, who is so often lost in sheer subjective fantasy. But a passion for pulp science fiction and fantasy novels and the then-new fad folklore of UFOs often led him into utopian flights of fancy. This capricious tendency in Parsons was noted by Crowley in a letter to his student Jane Wolfe: "Jack's trouble is his weakness, and his romantic side – the poet – is at present a hindrance. He gets a kick from some magazine trash, or an 'occult' novel (if only he knew how they were concocted!) and dashes off in wild pursuit." (Crowley knew well of what he spoke, having authored several hastily composed occult novels of his own.) And yet Parsons must be counted as a genuine visionary in at least one respect; even in the 1930s, he earnestly believed that manned flight to the moon was possible.

Parsons' last years have often been described as a period of encroaching madness. His decision to legally change his name to Belarion Armiluss Al Dajjal Antichrist in 1948, upon taking the oath of a Magister Templi, has been cited as the obvious act of a lunatic. One of the last letters he ever wrote, in 1952, to his Thelemic colleague, Karl Germer, certainly

seems to presage impending psychic collapse: "The operation began auspiciously with a chromatic display of psychosomatic symptoms, and progressed rapidly to acute psychosis. The operator has altered satisfactorily between manic hysteria and depressing melancholy stupor on approximately 40 cycles, and satisfactory progress has been maintained in social ostracism, economic collapses and mental disassociation." His still unexplained death shortly thereafter leaves the question of where these symptoms of mania may have advanced open to interpretation.

A full portrait of Parsons is beyond the scope of this study, but these preliminary remarks must be made to progress beyond the common posthumous legend of Parsons as a kind of sex-magical superhero. Some day the definitive biography of the many sides of Parsons will be written, but for now, let us extract the most applicable elements of his legacy to the left-hand path sex magician. Primarily, we have concentrated on those aspects of

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Parsons' magical practice that may be practically applied by the left-hand path adept to the task of summoning a fit sex-magical partner of either gender for his or her own Great Work of erotic alchemy. This cannot be understood without first depicting something of the curious magical environment in which the self-anointed Antichrist of Kali-fornia developed.

"A Love Cult"

Beginning left-hand path sex magicians may be inspired by this book to form their own groups for the investigation and practice of erotic alchemy. We discuss some of the considerations that should inform the development of one's own sex-magical society in the last section of this study. But there could be no better illustrative preamble to some of the practical problems that can potentially arise in sex-magical groups than a brief overview of Jack Parsons' involvement with the O.T.O. Agape Lodge. Men and women of the sinister current may sincerely seek liberation from the limitations of societal and personal sexual politics. But once the organizational factor enters the picture, as the chronicle below makes clear, you must be prepared to encounter such *pashu* behaviors as possessiveness, power struggle, and the hypocritical pretense that every ordinary expression of lust is of a "spiritual" nature.

In March of 1941, Wilfred T. Smith, the expatriate Englishman authorized by Crowley to lead the Agape Lodge in Los Angeles, reported to the Great Beast concerning a new O.T.O. initiate. Of the 26-year old, Smith wrote: "I think I have at long last a really excellent man, John Parsons. And starting next Tuesday he begins a course of talks with a view to enlarging our scope. He has an excellent mind and much better intellect than myself ... John Parsons is going to be valuable." This was welcome news to Crowley, long dissatisfied with the work of his Californian disciples, who he dismissed as mere "fans." Only six years before his death, and in poor health, the Beast was anxious that a new generation of Thelemite leadership arise to carry on his mission.

Another member of the Agape Lodge, the silent film actress Jane Wolfe, who had studied with the Beast in Cefalu, was equally impressed by the newcomer, writing of Parsons in her magical diary that "I see him as the real successor of Therion [Crowley's magical name]."

Based on such enthusiastic reports, Crowley began to consider Parsons as the logical leader of the Agape Lodge, increasingly distancing himself from Wilfred Smith, whose abilities he had long held in question. Just as Parsons had showed an early brilliance in science, conversing authoritatively as a teenager via telephone with the great German rocket scientist Werner von Braun, so had magic been a life-long fascination for the prodigy. In 1927, at the age of 13, according to his *The Book Of Antichrist*, Parsons attempted to evoke the Devil to visible appearance, an operation that

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he claimed was met with success, although he rebuked himself for "showing cowardice when He appeared." Parsons' apparently sincere acceptance of the Devil as a literal being with whom man can communicate differed sharply from Crowley's relative disinterest in the Satanic mythos. The modern reader, accustomed to the prevalence of superficial, trendy youthful Satanic posturing in our time must keep in mind how unspoken a thing Satanism was in the America of the 1920s. That the adolescent Parsons would have explored such arcane realms without the encouragement of the kind of mercantile occult subculture that exists today clarifies just how far from the norm he was, even at the beginning of his initiation.

The literary agent Forrest J Ackerman, who included L. Ron Hubbard among the many authors he represented, knew Parsons in the 1940s from their mutual membership in the Los Angeles Science Fiction Society. Ackerman described Parsons to us as "a Howard Hughes type, tall, slender, dark, good-looking." Along with his wife Helen, also an aspirant to the O.T.O, the young, attractive couple injected some gladly received new blood to the sex magickal circle.

With his vigorous intelligence, natural inclination for magic, and scientific approach to initiation, the rocketeer appeared to be the potential leader that Crowley and the failing O.T.O. had long sought. But from the first, Parsons showed an independent streak ill-suited to the hierarchical and doctrinaire structure of Crowley's O.T.O.. Although he accepted Thelema unreservedly as the foundation of his religion, and admired Crowley as his "beloved father," Parsons took a far *more* creative, forward-looking view than his Lodge fellows, who went strictly by the book (of the Law).

Odd though it may seem considering Crowley's own unrestrained sexual appetite, the reportedly charismatic Smith's tendency to seduce almost every willing female member of the Lodge particularly rankled the Beast. One of the sisters of the Lodge whom Smith took as his mistress was Helen Parsons. This affair, true to the Thelemic injunction that "there shall be no property in human flesh" was engaged in with John Parsons' knowledge and agreement. The younger man viewed Smith as a paternal mentor – even as the "Avatar of a God" – and was loath to interfere with his True Will, even if his own marriage were to suffer as a consequence. This cultivated overcoming of societal conditioned sexual jealousy was part of Parsons' effort to liberate himself with the mores of his time and upbringing, and remained a central aspect of his approach to sex magic. But his tendency to be vulnerable to exploitation in this regard would prove to be a perilous theme in his abbreviated life. In any event, Parsons turned his amorous attentions to his wife's younger sister, Sara Northrup, known as Betty, who also joined the O.T.O.

Parsons later interpreted this incident as a turning point in his erotic

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initiation, writing of himself in *Analysis By A Master* from the distance of the third person: "Betty served to effect a transference from Helen at a critical period. Had this not occurred your repressed homosexual element could have caused a serious disorder. Your passion for Betty also gave you the magical force you needed at the time, and the act of adultery tinged with incest, served as your magical confirmation in the Law of Thelema."

Crowley, struggling for survival in dire war-time London, was less forgiving when he heard of these far away Californications, which he felt reduced the ideal of sexual initiation to a banal soap opera. In one of many scolding letters to Smith, Crowley accused him of providing the O.T.O with "the reputation of being that slimy abomination, a 'love cult.— Since Crowley had been accused of much the same thing for the past twenty years, we must imagine that this sudden outbreak of puritanism in his old age was merely a ploy to depose Smith, whose increasingly authoritarian guidance of the Lodge was inspiring sedition among the already feud-riven brothers and

sisters of Agape.

Crowley installed Parsons as the acting master of the Lodge, despite the Beast's accurate observation that he was "very young and easily swayed by passing influences." Complicating this accession to power over the Lodge was Parsons' tenacious devotion to his excommunicated predecessor Smith, whom Crowley had pronounced *persona non grata*. Parson's young wife Betty apparently despised Smith, which must have exacerbated the already existing tensions considerably.

Parson's early interest in Satanism and the darker expressions of the divine had always separated him from the more conventionally benevolent magicians in the Lodge. Now he began to develop an ominous reputation, enhanced by his fascination with the evocation of demonic entities via Voodoo and the more malevolent manifestations of witchcraft, practices almost entirely unknown to Americans in the 1940s. Agape Lodge members wrote to Crowley in England to complain that their new leader's experiments were creating a sinister atmosphere in the communal house where meetings were held. Parsons seemed uninterested in undertaking the duties of the Lodge, as his focus shifted away increasingly from the performance of orthodox Crowleyan rituals in favor of more personal sex-magical adventures.

He even dared to reprimand Crowley himself, complaining that the Beast's rather sadistic treatment of the disgraced Wilfred Smith was unfair. As protest, Parsons resigned from the O.T.O. in 1943, an event Crowley recorded in his diary, with a typically misogynist snipe at Parsons' wife: "Letter of resignation from puppy Jack; his snout glued to the rump of an alley-cat." Despite his anger at this insubordination, the Beast persuaded Parsons to remain in the fold, which tells us something of the admiration he must have held for his promising if refractory student, who many still

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considered a likely successor to the Thelemic throne. Although he remained the nominal head of the Lodge until as late as 1946, Parsons' growing fascination – one might even say obsession – with the seductive feminine mystery of Babalon was to lead him to a heresy that would finally cause him to characterize the O.T.O. as "an excellent training school for Adepts, but hardly an appropriate order for the manifestation of Thelema." As must happen with any true magician, Parsons graduated from apprenticeship in a dogmatic school to remanifestation as his own independent entity.

And as is the mark of the left-hand path initiate, it was the fascination exerted upon him by a woman who led him gloriously astray. Not just any woman, but Inanna, the Great Whore of Babylon, her ancient allure risen again in a desert far from the sands of Iraq.

Dangers Of The Babalon Working

Certainly the best-known aspect of Jack Parsons' meteoric passage through life is the calling forth of a feminine elemental he and an associate performed between January 4 – March 4, 1946, a sex-magical operation he termed the

Babalon Working. In its form and methodology, this Working is really nothing extraordinary; Parsons and his magical colleague followed the basic conventions of Hermetic ritual as they had been practiced since the

Elizabethan period, albeit with the inclusion of sex magical techniques derived from the O.T.O. Its significance to the left-hand path magician lays primarily in the fact that few Western magicians have left such an instructive record of contact with the Shakti force, an adhesion between man and deity that's violent ripples in space and time can still be felt today.

Sinister current sex magic is not merely a matter of harnessing the energy unleashed by physical sex with a partner for initiatory objectives. One of the least analyzed manifestations of erotic initiation is the summoning of a sex partner of either sex in physical form for a specific magical goal. In practical terms, the Babalon Working demonstrates to the left-hand path

adept one of the more dramatic historical examples of the conjuration of the sex-magical mate. In Carl Jung's theory positing a contrasexual being that lays undeveloped in every human psyche – the female anima for the male, the male animus for the female – these opposite gendered entities are understood to be unrealized aspects of the self. For the sinister current initiate, bringing forth a suitable magical consort of the opposite sex is realized literally in the flesh through beings independent of the adept, not merely on the psychic plane. To find such a companion is exceedingly rare. It is only fair to say that the majority of magicians will never truly encounter his/her perfect alter ego, the one who also finds the outer manifestation of his/her inner anima/animus in you. But when this does occur, as Jack Parsons at least sincerely appeared to believe had happened for him as the result of his Babalon Working, each partner's power as a magician is enhanced tremendously

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Parsons had clearly given a great deal of thought to the concept of the magical couple, the bipolar representation of the mystical androgyne. In 1948, two years after the Babalon Working, he wrote in *The Book Of Antichrist* of a vision he experienced:

"And one heavily robed and veiled showed me the sign, and told me to look, and behold, I saw flash before me four past lives wherein I had failed in my object. And I beheld the life of Simon Magus, preaching the Whore Helena as the Sophia, and I saw that my failure was in Hubris, the pride of the spirit. And I saw my life as Gilles de Retz, wherein I attempted to raise Jehanne D'Arc to be Queen of the Witchcraft, and failed through her stupidity, and again my pride... And again as Count Cagliostro, failing because I failed to comprehend the nature of women in my Seraphina."

Here we have the common occult phenomenon of the magician who believes he or she was once this or that illustrious adept of the past, a conception so subjective that it must be of little value to any objective observer. More important to us, however, is Parsons' sense of continuity with the Western tradition of male magus and female initiatrix, a legacy most recently manifested in the modern cult of the Scarlet Woman. The first magical couple he mentions, Simon Magus and Helena, are of course directly tied into the Babalon current. The sex-magical powers unique to the Tyrean prostitute Helene, who may well have been an initiate of Astarte's temple of sacred harlotry in Phoenicia, was a major inspiration in Parsons' conception of Babalon, always more historically correct than Crowley's despite the younger magician's fatal indulgence in romanticism. Don Webb, in his *The Seven Faces Of Darkness*, proposes that Simon Magus was himself carrying on a much more ancient teaching of female mysteries, which he sees flowing from Simon's teacher Dositheous, a fellow Samaritan Gnostic. Webb describes Dositheous as "the author of the great Sethian gospel known as the *Three Steles Of Seth*... [who] likely introduced – or revealed from older sources – the myth of the Scarlet Woman." This provides us with yet another interesting connection between Babalon and the god Set, a link in the chain from the ancient Egyptian myth of Astarte and Set's sexual coupling to the effects of the Babalon Working on the modern-day revival of the Temple of Set.

Parsons was evidently intensely conscious that his seeking of a Scarlet Woman connected him to a tradition that stretched back into antiquity, an historical bond he believed was a recurring theme in his former reincarnations. It is also notable that he was also very much aware of the potential dangers inherent in the evocation of the Feminine Daemonic in human form that he had undertaken. Simon Magus, at least according to

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myth, had been destroyed by the Christian cult despite the protective magic of his deified Whore Helene, the spirit of Gnostic wisdom embodied in human flesh. The second "past life" as a magician Parsons recalled, that of

Baron Gilles de Rais, also ended in disaster – de Rais' fall from grace took him from the pure vision of the warrior feminine principle incarnated by the shamanic shakti Joan of Arc to eventual execution as a serial killer who used the blood of children for his alchemical experiments. Cagliostro was the most notorious occultist of the Age of Enlightenment, an alchemist, hermeticist and dabbler in Rosicrucian Masonry, still acclaimed as a great adept by some and dismissed as a thoroughgoing charlatan by many others. His partner in crime was his beautiful young mistress Serafina, to whom he attributed his powers, and can easily be understood as a Scarlet Woman figure. Both came to a bad end, Cagliostro finding an ignominious death in prison.

An important magical lesson is concealed in Parsons' integration of these earlier semi-mythical magical role models into his psyche. By adopting Simon Magus, de Rais, and Cagliostro as his blueprints – individuals who he judged to have failed at the Great Work – it must be wondered to what extent he set into motion the mechanism of his own failure and catastrophic death, a self-fulfilling prophecy of doom. The magician must exercise extreme caution in selecting prototypes from myth and history lest the overlooked self-destructive characteristics embodied in such prototypes overshadow one's own unfolding of consciousness. Parsons ignored this methodology to his peril, just as the magician today who unthinkingly adopts the glamorous Parsons legend into his or her own subjective universe is embracing a very unstable and hazardous energy. One might also mention in this regard the countless sex magicians who proudly proclaim themselves to be reincarnations of the Great Beast 666, never considering the built-in pattern of self-destruction, poverty and mania imbedded in the invocation of Crowley into one's own being.

In our estimation, Parsons is no hero to emulate, but a cautionary example of the archetype of the Pure Fool in search of the Graal of the Feminine Daemonic. Wise – even brilliant – in many arcane and specialized ways, but lacking all common sense, Parsons conjured an overwhelming force that destroyed him in very little time. Abused, robbed and exploited, the price he paid for grounding the sinister power of the Babalon current in our time was immense, leaving him in the end as little more than a charred sacrifice to the Goddess he adored.

"Thou shalt become living flame before she incarnates..."

Jack Parsons conjured two of the most important protagonists in his strange destiny, his partners in the Babalon Working, through the simple expedient of a classified ad. After Parsons' estranged father died in 1942, the young

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scientist was surprised to learn that he had inherited a stately, European-style mansion in a well-heeled neighborhood in conservative Pasadena. Jack dubbed his new abode "the Parsonage," promptly commencing an experiment in free love, drugs, and communal living that presaged the hippy lifestyle which would not fully come into being for another twenty-five years. (Not a few commentators have speculated that the spirit given birth by the Babalon Working took shape in the Sixties phenomena of sexual revolution and female emancipation that later expressed itself in such dramatic forms in California.) To attract the kind of liberated spirits Parsons and his new consort Betty sought as companions, and to generate the requisite income, they placed an ad in the local paper, letting it be known that "Only atheists and those of a Bohemian disposition" were welcome as tenants. Parsons faithfully sent whatever extra earnings were produced from his lodgers off to Crowley, whose earlier Abbey of Thelema surely served as a role model for the Parsonage. Respectable scientists, engineers, and physicists mingled with marginal magicians, artists, and well-known science fiction writers as Robert Heinlein, A. E. Van Vogt and Ray Bradbury, long before their work was accorded serious literary status.

Alva Rogers, one of the many struggling writers who found their way

to the Parsonage, wrote in a 1962 memoir of his eccentric host that "Mundane souls were unceremoniously rejected as tenants. There was a professional fortune teller and seer who always wore appropriate dresses and decorated her apartment with symbols and artifacts of arcane lore. There was a lady, well past middle age but still strikingly beautiful, who claimed to have been at various times the mistress of half the famous men in France. There was a man who had been a renowned organist in the great movie palaces of the silent era. They were characters all."

Parsons' wealthy neighbors did not take kindly to the rambunctious parties that now rocked their once quiet neighborhood, and rumors of "black magic orgies" eventually brought the police to investigate one particularly raucous celebration. When a naked woman was observed jumping over a fire in imitation of pagan festivities, Parsons cut short an official inquiry only by presenting his credentials as a scientist working on top secret weapons work for the U.S. government. Parsons' FBI file makes it clear that the scientist's sex-magical pursuits and unconventional living arrangements kept him within official radar; Uncle Sam was made nervous by the idea of a war-time researcher keeping company with atheists and bohemians, anti-social types which sounded suspiciously like Communists. One of the largest rooms in the house – in sight of an imposing portrait of Crowley – was reserved as a temple for the increasingly irregular Agape Lodge meetings. Parsons' lodgers became accustomed to the mediaeval sight of robed Thelemites wending their way to the incense-laden ritual chamber with candles in their hands.

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This provocative convocation of potentially explosive forces was brought to a head by a new arrival on the scene in the late fall of 1945 – a 34-year old pulp fiction writer on leave from his service as an officer in the United States Navy. Parsons, who devoured the numerous sci-fi magazines for which Lafayette Ron Hubbard (1911—1986) wrote, was delighted to welcome a known author among the bohemian enclave assembled at the Parsonage. Hubbard was described by his fellow Parsonage roommate Alva Rogers, as "a persuasive and unscrupulous charmer, not only in a social group, but with the ladies. He was so persuasive and charmingly unscrupulous that within a matter of a few weeks he brought the entire house of Parsons down around poor Jack's ears. He did this by the simple expedient of taking over Jack's girl for extended period of time." Just as Wilfred Smith had enthralled Parsons' first sex-magickal partner, his wife Helen, away from him in the Agape Lodge, the scenario was repeating itself with Hubbard and Betty. Arthur Jean Cox, who knew the young Hubbard of this period, recalled

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to us that L. Ron already had a reputation in science fiction circles for "cuckolding other men's wives with his sexual magnetism."

Parsons, at first, chose to see things in a more optimistic light, as this 1945 letter to Crowley reveals: "About three months ago I met Ron ... a writer and explorer of whom I had known for some time ... He is a gentleman ... is honest and intelligent, and we have become great friends. He moved in with me about two months ago, and although Maggy [a nickname for Betty] and I are still friendly, she has transferred her sexual affections to Ron." Parsons praised Hubbard's untrained but innate gift for magic, suggesting that as "the most Thelemic person I have ever met" he would be an ideal magical partner for the "experiments" he had in mind. Of Betty, Parsons wrote to the Beast: "I cared for her rather deeply, but I have no desire to control her emotions, and I can, I hope, control my own." Parsons also noted that his charismatic guest claimed to be in touch with a Feminine Daemonic being, "a beautiful winged woman with red hair, whom he calls the Empress, and who has guided him through his life, and saved him many times." This may or may not have been Hubbard telling his impressionable host what he wanted to hear, but the symbolism of a woman with red hair makes for an interesting

synchronicity, as events will prove. The possibility that this supernatural female was the projected anima of L. Ron Hubbard, whose flaming red hair was one of his most distinctive features, must also be considered.

In January 1946, Parsons decided to "[invoke] a spirit or elemental into tangible existence," inspired by Crowley's instructions in Chapter Eight of *Magick In Theory And Practice*. "I decided upon the use of the Enochian Tablets obtained by Dr. John Dee (1527—1608) and Edward Kelley," Parsons wrote, referring to the Renaissance era British magicians whose celebrated 1584 operation had included the first mention of the word "Babalon." It has frequently been noted that the partnerships of Dee/Kelley and Parsons/Hubbard, although separated by centuries, possessed curious similarities. The court alchemist Kelley was often described by his contemporaries as an unscrupulous charlatan and criminal exploiting the brilliant but gullible John Dee, one of the great scientists of his time. Just as Parsons had asked Hubbard to serve as his "Scribe" in the planned invocation, so had Dee relied on Kelley to fulfill the same role in their collaboration. (Parsons's description of Hubbard as his scribe is rather contradictory, since it is in fact Hubbard who dictates his visions to Parsons throughout the Working.)

Even the sexual dynamics were comparable. Kelley, who reportedly was as captivated by Dee's young wife as Hubbard was with Sara (Betty) Northrup, claimed that a spirit named Mandini had instructed him that the two mages should use each other's wives "in common" – an invitation to spiritually motivated wife-swapping not unlike Parsons' tolerant acceptance of Hubbard's seduction of Betty. In 1950, looking back on the personally

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disastrous consequences of the Babalon Working, Parsons himself commented on the similarity between Hubbard and Kelley, speculating that some discarnate intelligence had entered the minds of both Kelley and Hubbard during ritual, with shattering effects on their psyches. Parsons wrote that, "The voice, speaking from Kelley, resulted in a sinister dissociation of Kelley's personality. The parallel with my own Working with Ron, is appalling. After this Kelley robbed Dee, absconded with his wife, and developed a criminal confidence career." Clearly, Parsons suspected that his use of the Dee/Kelley Enochian Tablets had necromantically brought something of these men's essences into the Babalon Working.

For eleven days, Parsons performed VIII° sex magick as he had learned in the O.T.O. – in other words, focused masturbatory ejaculation – designed to "obtain the assistance of an elemental mate," his ideal Scarlet Woman who would presumably take physical form in his ritually produced semen. This magically spawned female sex partner – which may be compared to the Eastern left-hand path summoning of the *dakini* in human form – was intended to be the mother of a daughter who would supposedly be the living avatar of the Whore of Babalon on earth. This child, horn of Parsons and his sexually summoned Scarlet Woman, would, he hoped, be the homunculus of the alchemists brought into being through the union of physical sexuality. (Parsons told others in his circle that he had in fact created a homunculus via alchemical procedures, which he claimed to have kept locked in a secret room in his home.)

The ultimate apocalyptic goal of the Working seems to have been the literal birth of the Whore of Babalon, the Bride of the Antichrist – the fulfillment of *Revelations* as advent to a new spiritual compensation for mankind. This Aeonian objective bears resemblance to the Eastern *Vama Marga's* positive understanding of the Kali Yuga, the age of darkness necessary to open the eye of Shiva.

Hubbard, never officially inducted into the O.T.O., but learning fast, communicated visions purportedly observed on the astral plane while Parsons emitted the elixir needed to ground the elemental in terrestrial

matter, smearing his sperm on talismans as proscribed by Crowley. Often, these autoerotic rites, which Parsons gingerly characterizes as "replenishing material basis" in his *Book Of Babalon*, a brief account of the Working, were carried out two times daily. But no clear sign of the erotic elemental he had asked for manifested itself. Despite the intensity and frequency of the sexual invocation, the only immediately noticeable results were a few freakish windstorms, poltergeist phenomena, unexplained rapping and a "great pressure and tension in the house"; Parsons was disappointed, but was soon to be elated, as he described:

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"The feeling of tension and unease continued for four days. Then on January 18 at sunset, whilst the Scribe [Hubbard] and I were on the Mojave Desert, the feeling of tension suddenly stopped. I turned to him and said "it is done", in absolute certainty that the Operation was accomplished. I returned home, and found a young woman answering the requirements waiting for me. She is describable as an air of fire type with bronze red hair, fiery and subtle, determined and obstinate, sincere and perverse, with extraordinary personality, talent and intelligence."

The striking twenty-four year old artist whom Parsons understood to be the result of his invocation was Marjorie Cameron (1922—1995), who exactly like Hubbard, had come to the Parsonage in search of a room while on leave from the U.S. Navy. This brash, Iowa-born All-American gal type, still in her Navy uniform, would at first seem like an unlikely Scarlet Woman for the dreamy Parsons, whose taste had previously been for sylph-like girlish blondes. By all accounts, whatever Cameron may have lacked in magical experience was made up for in the mutual erotic magnetism that instantly drew the two strangers to each other. Within a few days of arriving, Cameron became his magical student, and agreed to participate in the next stage of the Babalon Working, which according to Crowley's instructions *De Homunculo Epistola* required that "the man and woman copulate continuously ... in a ceremonial manner in a prepared temple." For Parsons, Cameron was the Helene to his Simon, the Sophia to his Logos, the invisible thought of Shiva made real in the flesh of his Shakti. Some of Parsons' long-time friends, such as Jeanne Forman, wife of the scientist's best friend and fellow rocketeer Ed Forman, told us that the brazen manner and almost mannish demeanor of Cameron (known as Candy) made for a startling contrast with Parsons' own soft-spoken and introverted manner. As is frequently the case in magical biographies, apocryphal anecdotes created to validate seemingly arbitrary details of the magician's profile abound. The subject of Marjorie Cameron's nickname of "Candy" is no exception to this rule. Some accounts claim that Parsons gave Marjorie Cameron the name Candy as an abbreviation of her magical name of Candida. Conversely, Jeanne Forman told us that Cameron was already known as Candy when she first arrived at the Parsonage. Whichever the case may be, Marjorie Cameron referred to herself simply as Cameron, and it is under that name that she has been remembered.

On February 23, 1946, Parsons jubilantly wrote to Crowley: "I have my elemental! She turned up one night after the conclusion of the Operation, and has been with me since ... She has red hair and slant green eyes as specified ... She is an artist, strong minded and determined, with strong masculine characteristics and a fanatical independence." Considering that the Babalon Working had been directly influenced by Crowley's own writings on

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the sex-magical creation of elementals and homunculi, and in light of the legendary status this operation has gained in recent years, it should be mentioned that the Great Beast was not at all pleased by the elaborate operations being carried on in his name. The first chilly words of Crowleyan admonition that came back from England could not have been warmly welcomed by Parsons, prophetic though they later turned out to be: "I am

particularly interested in what you have written to me about the Elemental, because for some little while past I have been endeavoring to intervene personally on your behalf. I would however have you recall Levi's aphorism 'the love of the Magus for such beings is insensate, and may destroy him.'"

Despite this clear warning from the Master Therion, the smitten Parsons married Cameron in October of 1946. In Hubbard's presence, Parsons and his Scarlet Woman repeatedly performed IX° O.T.O. sex magick designed to impregnate Cameron with the spirit of Babalon. The most immediately obvious result of this erotic invocation of the Whore, according to Parsons, was his reception of an inspired document called *Liber 49*, which he believed to be not only a fourth chapter of Crowley's *Book Of The Law*, but a direct communication from the Goddess to Her High Priest. Although Parsons was cryptic in his description of this event to Crowley, he did characterize the hearing of *Liber 49* as "the most important – devastating experience of my life ... I believe it is the result of the IX° working with the girl..."

This brief but impassioned manifesto, fueled by sex magic, is filled with the lascivious imagery one would expect from Inanna-Ishtar, who commands her scribe to "Let me behold thee naked and lusting after me, calling upon my name ... Let me receive all thy manhood within my Cup, climax after climax, joy upon joy ... my laughter is the drunken laughter of a harlot in the house of ecstasy..." True to the aspect of Inanna-Ishtar as goddess of war, the text resounds with proclamations of military conquest, speaking of "a trumpet in judgement halls, a banner before armies ... Set my star upon your banners and go forward in joy and victory ... call upon me in your loves and battles in my name BABALON, wherein is all power given!" *Liber 49* also orders her disciples to create a revival of witchcraft, suggesting a break with the pseudo-Masonic structure of the O.T.O.. The incarnation of Babalon will "wander in the witchwood" in "the covens of old...". This often overlooked element of the book Parsons later attempted to realize through the creation of his own magical school, which he called the Witchcraft, long before the popular rise of Wicca had emerged.

One of the more startling themes running through *Liber 49* and the Babalon Working, considering the nature of Parsons' fiery death only a few years after he wrote/received this text are the many apparent allusions to flame and mortality, seeming premonitions of his personal inferno to come.

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Surprisingly, for an invocation to a goddess of sexual ecstasy, the operation is imbued with repeated intimations of fiery death. Babalon states that "I shall come as a perilous flame..."

During a series of rites Hubbard and Parsons conducted in the wake of the reception of *Liber 49*, the roof of the Parsonage guest house caught fire. Hubbard, supposedly communicating astral messages, conveys such cryptic phrases as "Mortality ... is this accepted, are you willing to proceed?" To which Parsons answers, "I am willing." Hubbard then states, "should'st thou falter again, we will sure slay thee." During one phase of the rite,

Hubbard suggested playing a recording of Rachmaninoff's spectral composition, *Isle Of The Dead*, as "background music." Other possible prophecies of Babalon's destructive effects uttered by Hubbard during the Babalon Working include: "She is flame of life, power of darkness, she destroys with a glance, she may take thy soul. She feeds upon the death of men ... Beautiful--Horrible." In this last juxtaposition, Hubbard's vision of Babalon approaches the desirable yet hideous essence of Kali known to adepts of the *Varna Marga*. He continues in this vein: "Light a single flame on Her altar, saying: Flame is Our Lady, flame is Her hair, I am flame ... Display thyself to Our Lady; dedicate thy organs to Her, dedicate thy heart to Her, dedicate thy mind to Her, dedicate thy soul to Her, for She shall absorb thee, and thou shalt become living flame before She incarnates. For it shall

be through you alone, and none else can help in this endeavor."

Whether such oracular declarations were spoken by Hubbard in a genuine state of heightened consciousness or not, it's these haunting and recurrent synchronicities that lend weight to Parsons' contention that the Babalon Working did in fact open the line of communication to a transhuman force. Parsons himself obviously interpreted this imagery as a divination of his own fate, writing in one of his fragmentary commentaries on the Babalon Working, "And in that day my work will be accomplished, and I shall be blown away upon the Breath of a Father, even as it is prophesied."

With the introduction of the reportedly highly sexed Cameron into the already intense Working in her role of Scarlet Woman, Hubbard's instructions to Parsons inevitably took on an increasingly erotic cast.

"Embrace her, cover her with kisses," Hubbard dictates to Parsons at one point, "Think upon the lewd lascivious things thou couldst do. All is good to BABALON. All." Parsons is compelled to "consecrate each woman thou hast raped ... until the flame of lust is high ... Recall each lascivious moment, each lustful day ... The lust is hers, the passion yours, Consider thou the Beast raping." Hubbard has often been assigned a secondary role in the Babalon Working, but clearly he was the director of the operation, functioning in much the same capacity as the *chakresvara* in the Tantric circle rite. Parsons, by contrast, plays a much more passive part, transcribing Hubbard's

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proclamations and dutifully following his partner's ostensibly inspired edicts.

Parsons continued to report back to Crowley concerning the final stage of the Working, still reverently addressing him as "Beloved Father." But the cranky, junk-sick 71 year old Beast was unimpressed, writing to his enthused magical son Parsons that "You have me completely puzzled by your remarks. I thought I had a most morbid imagination, as good as any man's, but it seems I have not. I cannot form the slightest idea of what you can possibly mean."

Another letter from Crowley to his associate Karl Germer was more directly damning: "Apparently Parsons and Hubbard or somebody is producing a moonchild. I get fairly frantic when I contemplate the idiocy of these louts."

In breaking with the stodgy and static Masonic configuration of O.T.O. sex magick as Crowley understood it, Parsons had brought the Babalon Current into an unexpected area the Master Therion was not prepared to comprehend. It would not be the first or last time in the history of the Western magical revival that the student went much further than the teacher. Crowley's disapproval of the Babalon Working may also have been his misogynistic reaction to Parsons' joyous acceptance of the full potential of the feminine principle and the younger man's unqualified love and admiration for women. Parsons was unambiguous in his exaltation of Cameron as Scarlet Woman, and his liberatory vision of Babalon as a powerful divinity in her own right. This positive understanding of the Feminine Daemonic was worlds apart from Crowley's concept of "Babalon under the power of the magician, that ... hath submitted herself unto the work." For Crowley, women (Scarlet or otherwise) were dispensable, interchangeable love dolls, merely the "shrine of the God."

But for Parsons, like all authentic adepts of the left-hand path, women were potentially sacraments of the sinister force, objects of veneration and mysterious awe. In one of his many attempts to come to grips with the vision vouchsafed to him through the Babalon Working, an essay entitled *The Star Of Babalon*, Parsons wrote that "the adept may have a mate upon the plane of earth, or among the elementals; and if he will, let him conceive of this mate as partaking of the nature of his deity, for herein is a subtle and beautiful practice of love." This of course is one of the core practices of the left-hand path, the deification of the female sex partner. In

this same piece, Parsons affirms his belief that "BABALON is now incarnate on the earth in the form of a mortal woman," but goes further to state that "it is now abundantly evident that the spirit of BABALON stirs in the women of the world. The demand for increased freedom, the rejection both of the tyrannical husband and the child lover, the increase of feminine polygamy and lesbianism, all indicate the development of a new type of woman, who

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will have a whole man or none."

Both in his visionary recognition of the divinity in woman and in his prophetic intuition in the 1940s that a "new type of woman" was on the horizon, Jack Parsons came into his own as the pioneer of a left-hand path tradition unique to the West.

The Last Work

Like Crowley, the O.T.O. Agape Lodge that Parsons still vaguely supervised was also disinclined to accept the implications of the Babalon Working.

Parsons' claim that he had theurgically received a fourth chapter of the Beast's sacred *Book Of The Law* smacked dangerously of Thelemic heresy, and Parsons soon separated from the Crowleyan version of the Ordo Templi Orientis, although he continued sporadic correspondence with Crowley. From henceforth, the few remaining years of Parsons' life traced a missile in downward trajectory.

In the midst of their brief but influential magical collaboration, Parsons and Hubbard also entered into a business partnership known as Allied Enterprises, which was in fact to quickly mark the end of their turbulent affiance. The full details of this sordid episode have been covered in many other sources, and shed no light on the relevance of the Babalon Working to left-hand path sex magic in the West. Suffice it to say that Hubbard and Parsons' former flame Betty absconded with the naive scientist's savings, which led not only to a full-blown magical war, but a messy lawsuit, continuing the litigious tradition that had marked O.T.O. activity since the days of Theodor Reuss.

Crowley expressed a rare flicker of compassion for his wayward adherent in a letter concerning this incident to the sex magician Louis Cuffing: "About J.W.P. – all that I can say is that I am very sorry – I feel sure that he had fine ideas, but he was led astray firstly by Smith, then he was robbed of his last penny by a confidence man named Hubbard." But the Beast's final words on Parsons, written to Cuffing a year before his own death, are more stinging and final: "I have no further interest in Jack and his adventures; he is just a weak-minded fool, and must go to the devil in his own way. *Requiescat in pace.*"

Cameron, the ideal Scarlet Woman, eventually separated from Parsons, like Helen and Betty before her, causing him to observe, in his *Analysis By A Master*, that "Candy appeared in answer to your call, in order to wean you from wet nursing. She has demonstrated. the nature of woman to you in such unequivocal terms that you should have no further room for illusion on the subject." However, the couple resumed their stormy union and their practice of sex magic during the last two years of Parsons' life. As the result of a government investigation into suspicions of "subversion," Parsons'

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security clearance was taken away in 1948, which left him in desperate straits professionally. This drastic turn in fortune was a direct result of Parsons' experiments in sex magic; government documents cite "his membership in a religious cult ... believed to advocate sexual perversion" as a potential security risk.

On Halloween of 1948, – or so Parsons asserts in his 1949 *The Book Of Antichrist* – he was again contacted by the goddess Babalon. He seemed to have an unshakable intuition that he was not long for this world, writing that "I began the last work", stating later in this text that some unidentified

beings informed him that "it is not certain that you will survive, but if you survive you will attain your true will, and manifest the Antichrist." During this initiatory ordeal – which Parsons called the Black Pilgrimage – he took the oath of a Master of the Temple from his old Lodge master Wilfred Smith.

Assuming his self-appointed office of Antichrist, he vowed, among other things, to end the lying hypocrisy of Christianity" with its repressive sexual "prudery and shame ... guilt and sin." Never before or since has there been such a total spiritual repudiation of the anti-sexual tyranny of the Church, based on a theurgic identification with the apocalyptic contrasexual figures of Antichrist and the Great Whore, whose physical manifestation he predicted would become evident in 1955.

The reader today, accustomed to the crude anti-Christian fulminations of modern Satanism, may suppose that Parsons' ideas can be considered a forerunner to the ignorant church-burning "devil worship" of our era. This is not true; his magical war is clearly targeted primarily at the sexual shame fostered by what he called "formal Christianity" In Parsons' brief *The Gnostic Doctrine*, the magician reveals his immersion in esoteric left-hand path Gnostic Christianity, acknowledging that "the Holy Ghost is the feminine counterpart of Christ – the Sophia." Furthermore, the self-proclaimed Antichrist declares that "In the teachings of [the original] Christ there are no prohibitions of the enjoyment of life and of the world ... and sexual love." Here again, Parsons stands firmly in the Gnostic tradition of Simon Magus and his whore of wisdom. Only a few years after the discovery of the sexual mysticism of the Nag Hammadi library, Parsons observed in his fragmentary notes for a magical curriculum that "Books of the old and new testament that contained the sexual doctrines and revolutionary ethics of all true religion were thrown out bodily, and in some cases totally obliterated."

This curriculum, which was never completed or published in his lifetime, Parsons intended as the course of instruction for his own proposed sex-magical school, known only as the Witchcraft. In notes written for the Witchcraft, Parsons explicitly identifies himself and his students as "Helpers on the Left Hand Side," an explicit reference to his own increasing understanding that his application of the Babalon current was a manifestation of the left-hand path – in contradiction to Crowley's identification of

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Thelema with the right-hand path. This is made clear in his explanation of "the universe as an interplay between the yin and the yang, or the Lingam and the Yoni." The congruence of Parsons' developing post-O.T.O. philosophy with the universal sinister current is made evident by his passionate description of Babalon in these papers, a Western Tantra alive with his vision of the Feminine Daemonic:

"For is not BABALON the whole of Nature – and is not the cup she beareth That in which all things are conceived? ... It was she who sat at the temple gate by the waters of Babylon and gave herself to a stranger. Not to one man did she give herself in that rite, but to all men, and therefore to God ... Look upon her now in her nakedness, this glorious whore called woman. Behold her chanting a war cry, riding a steed of the Sagas – Semiramis, Vicingetorix – Brunhild. Is she not admirable? behold her in the chambers of the night, her cheeks flushed, her eyes large, her mouth moist with honey and sweet with

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fire, giving the ecstasy and anguish of her body utterly in love. Is she not magnificent! ... Call to her – fear her not – for is she not woman – tendermysterious-alluring? She is the essence of woman – raised to her own power, set loose in herself."

But Parsons' left-hand path teaching was never to come into its full maturity, leaving others to carry on the work of Babalon. In June of 1952, while Cameron and he were hastily packing for a suddenly conceived move to Mexico, Parsons was rapidly clearing out his makeshift laboratory, in

preparation for their departure. He accidentally dropped a small tin container of the extremely volatile chemical fulminate of mercury, which unleashed a huge explosion. Parsons, acutely conscious of mythical correspondences as he was, would have known that Mercury is the messenger of the gods, who as Hermes is both god of science and escort of the dead to Hades. Critically maimed by the blast, Parsons held on to life for an hour, but died shortly after being rushed to a nearby hospital. As Parsons (whose imagery was invariably erotic whether he was describing his phallic rocketry experiments or the mysteries of initiation) wrote two years before his explosive passage, "at the last, our life closes in the orgasm of death."

The headline announcing Parsons's demise in the *Los Angeles Mirror Times* newspaper established the tone of later accounts for decades to come: "SCIENTIST SLAIN IN BLACK MAGIC CULT."

The Spawn Of Babalon

What objective result did the Babalon Working, surely the most famous sex magical Working of the twentieth century, have? Jack Parsons himself firmly believed that it would lead to the physical incarnation of a living female who would embody the spirit of Babalon. Other than that, he seemed unwilling to speculate, writing cautiously that "this operation is accomplished and closed – you should have nothing more to do with it – nor even think of it, until Her manifestation is revealed, and proved beyond the shadow of a doubt. Even then, you must be circumspect..."

Other commentators have been less guarded, speculating that the Great Whore Babalon did not manifest in human form but as a metaphysical spirit, a liberating current of creative chaos observable in the world at large.

In *Satan Wants You*, a breezy and not always accurate study of diabolic movements, author Art Lyons surmises of the Babalon Working: "It was thirteen years later, the period of human maturation, that twins were born in San Francisco – the counterculture and the Church of Satan." Others, taking a slightly more materialistic view, have inferred that the daemonic entity brought into being actually entered into human form and experienced the normal term of gestation. In his commentary to *The Book Of Coming Forth*

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By Night, Michael A. Aquino, founder of the Temple of Set, makes note of the synchronicity that he was born in 1946, "precisely nine months after a Working by Crowley's California disciples to create a homunculus per a secret instruction of Crowley's to the IX^o of his Ordo Templi Orientis." And Typhonian Thelemite author Kenneth Grant has speculated that the Babalon Working was one of the terrestrial events that incited the post-World War II UFO phenomenon.

As previously noted, the sex-magical forces brought to bear by Parsons, Hubbard and Cameron during their now infamous rite of erotic theurgy have also been held accountable for such diverse post-World War II phenomena as the woman's liberation movement, the 1960s sexual revolution, the advent of California as Earth's apparent occult capital, and much else besides. To attribute such complex social detonations to one magical operation seems a simplification at best, but these notions illustrate how an obscure sex-magical act can inflame the imagination, and be elevated to the stature of myth. They also demonstrate the important sex-magical principle of non-natural creation, the practical application of which we will examine in a later chapter.

The lion's share of interest in the Babalon Working phenomenon has tended to focus on Parsons, but less attention has been paid to the legacy of Cameron, the *shakti* power of the operation, whose embodiment of the Feminine Daemonic was essential to the rite's enigmatic attainment. Because she never conveyed her own magical ideas in the linear written form that has been so important to the Western occult tradition, her contribution as a force in the modern sinister current has sometimes been undervalued. Cameron's

magic was communicated not through books of instruction but through her evocative art, and her physical presence as an avatar of Babalon.

In shock after her husband's death, she moved to Mexico alone, and became involved in the artist's colony at San Miguel d'Allende. Returning to Los Angeles, she chose to live a life of cultivated obscurity, only sporadically interrupted by incursions into public awareness. She is probably best remembered for her iconic appearance in the Thelemite Kenneth Anger's 1954 film *Inauguration Of The Pleasure Dome*, in which she powerfully takes on the appropriate roles of Babalon and Kali. Anger's casting of Cameron in his film, which is really an audiovisual ritual in itself, has left us with an unforgettable document of the severe magical authority she commanded. Cameron and her paintings is the subject of Curtis Harrington's short film *The Wormwood Star*, named after one of Jack Parsons' unpublished writings. (For a more complete account of Cameron's films, see Creation Books' *The Satanic Screen*, by Nikolas Schreck.)

Cameron gave a few public lectures on magic during her life, but by some reports, these were arcane to the point of incoherence. She remained devoted to what Parsons described as the "spirit of BABALON stir [ring] in
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the women of the world", and maintained a correspondence with Joseph Campbell, the acclaimed mythologist. Since her death in 1995, her magically themed art has been the subject of several exhibitions, and seems likely to be her real legacy. Although she described herself as carrying on the work she and Parsons had begun in the 1940s, and facilitated the publication of some of her husband's writings in 1989, Cameron never permitted a comprehensive interview, which allowed her to retain a Sphinx-like mystery.

"Get Thee Behind Me, Thetan!" – L. Ron Hubbard After Babalon

Only a few years after serving as Scribe in the sexual evocation of the Whore of Babylon, Hubbard had gone on to gain fame as the author of Dianetics, and as the founder of the Church of Scientology.

In 1969, when Hubbard was headquartered in England, the British newspaper *The Sunday Times* first made Hubbard's role in the Babalon Working known to the general public. In response, it should be pointed out that representatives of Hubbard's Church of Scientology were quoted as saying that Hubbard had been assigned by Naval Intelligence to infiltrate Parsons' circle only to "break up a black magic ring." Hubbard, or so his Church officials protested, had "rescued a girl they were using. The black magic group was dispersed and destroyed and has never recovered." As for Betty Northrup, the "girl" Hubbard had "rescued" from Parsons, she married the founder of Scientology in 1946. Betty was one of the first to be exposed to her husband's newly developed "science of mind," Dianetics, which takes its name from the Greek word for logical reasoning, *Dianoia*. However, Betty, the last link to Hubbard's friendship with Parsons, divorced him in 1951, in a scandal that led to unwelcome newspaper headlines for the budding religion.

"Ron was fascinated with the magick," Betty confirmed to interviewer Bent Corydon many years later, in a 1980s conversation recalling her tumultuous life as the companion of Parsons and wife of Hubbard.

Indeed, the resemblance between many key points of Scientology and the magical system devised earlier by Aleister Crowley are fairly obvious. Although Scientology certainly does not present itself in such a light, these resemblance between Thelemic and Scientological methods make it clear that

Hubbard brought a great deal of what he learned from his sex-magical association with Jack Parsons into the development of his own religion. In this respect, Scientology can be understood as a late development in the magical revival that produced Theosophy, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and Thelema.

In the first issue of *The Journal Of Scientology*, Hubbard wrote:

"Thought is the subject matter of Scientology. It is considered a kind of 'energy' which is not part of the physical universe. It controls energy, but it

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has no wavelength. It uses matter, but it has no mass..." Although Hubbard's aesthetic and language couch his ideas in a more avowedly scientific mantle than that used in traditional magical circles, it takes no great stretch of the imagination to see that he is describing the basic principles of magic. One of the objectives Scientologists seek to achieve through their mental mastery of this energy separate from the physical universe is to follow a course of graded initiation that supposedly leads to becoming an Operating Thetan, the highest grade of Scientology, derived from the Greek letter *Theta*. This is a spiritual being who can communicate, see and act free of the restrictions of the physical body – much like the bodhisattvas, unknown superiors and Secret Chiefs of Eastern and Western magical tradition. Some early adherents of Hubbard considered him to be the Western spiritual teacher presaged by Madame Blavatsky in her work, and he himself made several broad hints that he was actually the foretold red-haired reincarnation of the Buddha known as *Meitreya*, which indicates the presence of left-hand path self-deification in the Hubbardite cosmology. Hubbard's emphasis on the importance of past-life recall in his training is firmly in line with the importance both Crowley and Parsons placed on the cultivation of such memories as a means of discovering one's True Will.

In the very early days of Scientology, Hubbard at least acknowledged familiarity with Crowleyan magick, referring in one of his Philadelphia Doctorate Courses in 1952, to "a fascinating work ... a trifle wild in spots..." that he attributes to "the late Aleister Crowley – my very good friend." In 1957, in *The Professional Auditor's Bulletin*, Hubbard wrote that "I have been very fortunate in my life to know quite a few real geniuses ... One chap by the way, who gave us solid fuel rockets ... and all the rest of this rocketry panorama ... The late Jack Parsons..." Even such oblique references to Hubbard's sex-magical past as these were soon abandoned as he sought more respectable status. Interestingly, between 1949—1950, even as sophisticated a mystically inclined intellectual as Crowley's old friend Aldous Huxley was provided with personal Dianetics training from Hubbard, which attests to the seriousness with which his methods were at first received. The many interesting points of comparison between Hubbard's Scientology and Crowley's Magick are deserving of further study, for in many ways Scientology can be considered the most successful organizational offshoot of the Great Beast's work, having achieved a world standing and impact the various O.T.O.s and other Crowleyan derivatives have not been able to command. But in regard to left-hand path sex magic and the cult of the Scarlet Woman, Scientology does not teach any form of erotic initiation as part of its official curriculum.

However, there have been some indications that Hubbard himself continued to privately pursue the Babalon current he had evoked so

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powerfully during his ill-fated collaboration with Parsons and Cameron. It must be said that since Hubbard left behind no known account of continuing work with sex magic, that these elusive traces, suggestive though they are, cannot be conclusively proven. The most compelling evidence for Hubbard's application of a form of left-hand path sex magic after his parting with Parsons was revealed by his own son, L. Ron Hubbard, Jr. (also known as Ronald DeWolf. Hubbard, Jr., whose stepmother for five years was Sara Northrup, was privy to his father's private side during the early days of Scientology in the 1950s, and was himself a Scientologist until he left his father's Church in 1959. According to Hubbard Jr., his father confided in him the belief that he was the successor to the Beast prophesied in a coded passage in Crowley's *The Book Of The Law*. In Hubbard Jr's 1985 brief

memoir *Philadelphia*, which is quoted in *L. Ron Hubbard: Messiah Or Madman?* – a 1987 biography he wrote with ex-Scientologist Bent Corydon – he alleged that his father remained embroiled in the Scarlet Woman concept as of November, 1952, six years after the Babalon Working:

"In preparation for the next day's lecture, he'd pace the floor, exhilarated by this or that passage from Aleister Crowley's writings.

Just a month before, he had been in London, where he had finally been able to quench his thirst; to fill his cup with the true, raw, naked power of the magick. The lust of centuries at his very fingertips

To stroke and taste the environs of the Great Beast, to fondle Crowley's books, papers, and memorabilia had filled him with pure ecstasy!

In London he had acquired, at last, the final keys; enabling him to take his place upon the 'Throne of the Beast' to which He firmly believed himself to be the rightful heir ... 'I've made the Magick really work,' he says. 'No more foolish ritual. I've stripped the Magick to basics – access without liability.'

'Sex by will' he says. 'Love by will – no caring and no sharing – no feelings. None.' he says. 'Love reversed.' he says. 'love isn't sex. Love is no good; puts you at effect. Sex is the route to power.' he says. 'Scarlet women! They are the secret to the doorway. Use and consume. Feast. Drink the power through them. Waste and discard them.'

'Scarlet?' I ask.

'Yes Scarlet: the blood of their bodies; the blood of their souls,' he says."

If this account is accurate, it would seem that Hubbard's understanding of sexual magic was entirely of a one-sided vampiric nature, much more like Crowley's misogynist concept than the Shakti-centered liberatory practice of his erstwhile fellow magician Parsons. The method Hubbard Jr., ascribed to his father is also in keeping with the ancient Chinese

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Taoist tradition, in which the male partner is enjoined to sexually consume his female partner's potent *yin* force, while losing nothing of his own *yang*, a devouring of erotic energy which theoretically leaves her permanently drained.

A further intriguing intimation that Hubbard may have observed similar rites designed to "use and consume ... the power" of Scarlet Women well into the 1970s is provided in another passage in Bent Corydon and Hubbard Jr's biography of the Scientology founder. They claim that this description of a possible Hubbard sex-magical ritual was excerpted from a sworn affidavit made by a former Scientology member whom they identify only under the alias Heidi Forrester. This incident is said to have occurred in late 1975, when "Heidi Forrester" was supposedly ushered into the wellappointed private suite of a "heavy-set older man" with "reddish grey hair, slightly long in the back." The affidavit continues:

"He didn't say a word and slowly got up, motioned me to follow him into the next room. I didn't know if it was Hubbard, and wondered if I was to *have* either an auditing session or an interview I followed him.

I found myself in a lavish bedroom. This still didn't worry me as sometimes interviews and sessions were held in bedrooms ... Without a word he suddenly began to undress me. I was repelled by him.

I did not want to sleep with him. Yet, I felt really chilled and cold to the bone at that moment.

I acutely sensed real fear and danger in the room. In an instant I realized the calculated power coming from this person. If I resisted I knew that my punishment would be extreme. His eyes were so blank, no emotion, no interaction, nothing was there.

I made the decision to not resist no matter what happened ... He was so strange that I realized that if I provoked him he could he extremely

dangerous.

I let him undress me without resisting.

I was totally unprepared for what happened next.

He lay on top of me.

As far as I can tell he had no erection. However, using his hand in some way he managed to get his penis inside me.

Then for the next hour he did absolutely nothing at all. I mean nothing! ... I felt as if in some perverse way he was telling me that he hated me as a female. I then began to feel that my mind was being ripped away from me by force ... I really felt he "coveted" an aspect of my personality and he wanted it ... This was weird, total control on a level I could not fathom at that time ... After half an hour I really thought I was going *crazy*. I couldn't move my body from underneath him, and I could feel he still had no erection.

He wouldn't look at me, but instead kept his head averted to the side

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and just gazed into space.

I had to discipline myself to keep from screaming because I felt I was having a nervous breakdown ... After an hour he got up and walked out ... I wasn't afraid of becoming pregnant. I was so afraid of whatever had been going on in this man's head."

Considering the lack of verifiable proof for this allegation, and the frequency with which wealthy, notable men are falsely accused of sexual harassment, we can only chalk this up to one of the many mysteries the Babalon current has left in its wake. However, the technical details of prolonged but immobile sexual penetration, the sensation of psychic melding with the sex partner, and the claim that this all took place in a seemingly deliberate silence allowing for extreme mental concentration, all unmistakably recall certain Eastern methods of left-hand path union. These techniques, like all magical methods, can and have been applied for any number of objectives, unrelated to considerations of morality, ranging from the ecstatic self-deification of both partners we have explained earlier to the so-called "malevolent rite" of *vasikaranam* which uses sexual energy as a control device, as apparently described above.

The odd experience Heidi Forrester alleged to have occurred was eventually revealed to echo the Babalon Working's central purpose, which was Parsons' attempted sex-magical impregnation of Marjorie Cameron with the spirit of Babalon. Later in the affidavit cited by Hubbard Jr. and

Corydon, Forrester claims to have been told by a fellow Scientologist that "Ron works in eight-year cycles ... You were born in the eighth month of the year. Orders had come down lines that you are to conceive a child." After being informed of this, or so the document testifies, this male Scientologist putatively subjected Heidi to the same extended psychosexual rape she had undergone earlier at the hands of the nameless "heavy-set older man." In tears after this joyless copulation, she claimed that she asked him for an explanation and was told:

"Heidi, you haven't seen the OT [Operating Thetan] materials ... yet, but you know what you are. You are an invisible spirit operating your body. You and I actually live in a totally different universe, far away from this one. This Earth, this galaxy, our bodies are just pictures we are mocking up to play and have a game. Sex for a thetan is nothing. It's the postulates and control of mind and body that is the prize.

If I postulate you will have a baby from the viewpoint of my home universe, then you will. You are under my command coming from far away. I can make your body do what I want."

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The use of the word "postulate" as a willed mental conception that must manifest, a key element in Hubbard's theories, mirrors Crowley's own magical axiom that "Every successful act has conformed to the postulate," a

concept that can in turn be traced to PR. Randolph's 19th century notions of volancia and decretism. As for the sex-magical implications of the initiated conception of a child which an Operating Thetan is held to be capable of in the above chronicle, the reverberation of Crowley's theories of the Moonchild and the 1916 attempt of Hubbard and Parsons to realize that theory in the flesh are evident. In a *Penthouse* interview in June 1983, Ron Hubbard, Jr. claimed explicitly that his father "was very interested in ... the creation of what some people call a Moon Child... He thought of himself as the Beast 666 incarnate ... the Antichrist." Of course, it goes without saying that the vast majority of Hubbard's followers are for the most part entirely unaware of the sex-magical history of the man they refer to reverently as "Source", and that the Church of Scientology has vigorously denied his son's claims.

The Process – Robert and Mary Anne DeGrimston And The Three Paths Of Sex

One of the intriguing traces of the Babalon Working that has not previously been situated in its proper context is that elusive phenomenon which during the thirteen years of its tempestuous existence was called Compulsion Therapy, The Process, and finally, the Process Church of the Final Judgement. If there was a transmission of the Babalon current from Parsons to Hubbard to the Process, it came about in 1962, when Robert Moor, a charismatic young architectural student born in colonial Shanghai, met – and was thoroughly captivated by – one Mary Anne MacLean, an attractive fellow student taking a London Scientology course with him. The couple applied what they had learned of Hubbard's techniques to the creation of their own school of psychoanalysis, which they dubbed Compulsion Therapy. The group rapidly attracted a following, which took on semi-religious overtones. Hubbard had taken the magical techniques he had learned from Parsons and repackaged them as a nominally scientific self-help philosophy. Moor and MacLean now reversed the procedure, repackaging methods they had squirreled away from Scientology in a more magical Satanic/Luciferian guise.

True to the spirit of Babalon, Mary Anne had been a high-priced call girl whose clients included the rich and the prominent. If Moor provided the written doctrines of the team's budding vision, MacLean was evidently the tutelary Scarlet Woman energizing the partnership with chaotic Shakti dynamism. One of the key terms and practices the pair appropriated from Hubbard's lexicon was "Processing," which is a series of Socratic questions asked by Scientology auditors to their subjects in order to assist them to discover themselves. After marrying, the couple were known as the

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DeGrimstons, and they renamed their group the Process. Not surprisingly, considering Mary Anne's former occupation and the obligatory freeing of erotic inhibitions that characterized the "Swinging London" environment from which the Process emerged, sex (if not sex magic per se) became a major theme for the sect.

According to Process legend, a revelation was visited upon Mary Anne DeGrimston during a 1966 group pilgrimage to an isolated region in the Mexican state of Yucatan, and she suggested that the unorthodox psychology group should mutate into a full-blown religion. The DeGrimstons and their cadre of Processeans emerged from this 1966 experiment in communal living extolling the Process theology, based on a trinity of Satan, Lucifer and Jehovah, the "Three Great Gods of the Universe." The trio of deities would be united by "Christ the Emissary" whose return would bring the enemies Satan and Christ together "to execute the [final] judgement." In essence, the Process taught that enlightenment could be reached only by following one of the three paths embodied by these spiritual principles, the "three basic human patterns of reality." The world was on the brink of a violent apocalypse, the DeGrimstons concluded, and Processeans were compelled to choose one of these three divine principles as a guiding light.

This choice, as explained by Robert DeGrimston in his 1968 essay "Sex – Humanity Split Four Ways", from the handsomely produced *Process* magazine, was seen as inextricably linked with each individual's experience of sexuality "Where do you belong?" asked DeGrimston, "Are you Jehovah's man, taking the stringent road of purity and rejoicing in the harsh strength of self-denial? Do you follow Lucifer, pursuing the ideal of perfect human love in a blissful atmosphere of sweet self-indulgence? Is Satan your master, leading you into dark paths of lust and licentiousness and all the intricate pleasures of the flesh? Or do you take the road to nowhere, half-in half-out, half-up half-down, your instincts and ideals buried in a deep morass of hypocritical compromise and respectable mediocrity." Ominously, DeGrimston added: "Three paths and a quagmire. And time is running out."

In the same issue of *Process* magazine, three Processean Advocates make their pitches for their chosen God and His sexual path. Christopher Fripp, a Jehovan, declares: "Sex is death. It is the incumbent of the Devil ... sick satiation and the gluttony of a spirit insensible to light ... the perverter of man." The Luciferian Isabel Rennie lovingly pictures the manifestation of her God in "the joining together of two beings, male and female, man and woman ... cast aside the barriers of fear and guilt and shame ... jealousy and petty rivalry ... become one soul, exhilarated in its transcendence of all human wrong ... one body, ecstatic in its exploration of strange and wonderful delights ... stand proud beside your counterpart whom He shall give you ... a welded unit of combined nobility. And Lucifer, the Light-

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Bearer, shall lead you to your paradise." Satan's Advocate, Mendez Castle, includes among a long list of breathlessly described Satanic sex scenarios, a variety of couplings "in a dingy brothel", with "an older woman, grotesquely misshapen ... or a cripple, or perhaps a half-wit..." whores "[performing] delicious acts of sensual depravity" including the "delicious pain" of flagellation, "a touch of necrophilia" with prostitutes painted to appear dead, and finally the emergence of Satan, "black and lowering" over a "naked girl, fair haired and in the very prime of youth ... like a human sacrifice upon the altar, snow white against the black velvet of the altar cloth."

The fourth sexual path, the "quagmire" upon which the vast majority of mankind trudged along miserably, was the way of the "Grey Forces," DeGrimston's disparaging term for the middling masses against which the *Process* positioned themselves. The Advocates of Jehovah, Satan and Lucifer all had their rightful place in the *Process* scheme, but the faceless and lukewarm Grey Forces were anathema, as DeGrimston spelled out:

"There is a fourth attitude to sex, which leads nowhere and is not a path to a goal but an endless circuit of repression and frustration. It is the attitude of the person who has sex, but always in moderation: for whom it is more important to be respectable than to test himself in the fires of intensity; who might like to experiment a little more, and secretly envies the experiences of those more courageous than himself, but remains within the bounds of the reasonable and the rational, clinging always to safety, and avoiding the possibility of the social condemnation that is the experience of all who follow to extremity urges they feel within them. In this attitude there is no courage, no idealism, no purity and no true experience of self: only a tepid and insipid limbo where the watchwords are moderation and compromise, and the end product is spiritual sterility and hidden self contempt."

DeGrimston's exhortation to his adherents to test themselves in "the fires of intensity" led Processeans to experiment with all imaginable excesses as a medium of self-transformation. They formed alliances with groups at the furthest edges of left-wing and right-wing political extremism, the Hell's Angels and other notoriously violent biker clubs; everything and anything, so long as it evaded and baffled the safe, linear thinking of the Grey Forces. At a time when pacifist protest against the Vietnam conflict was at its height,

DeGrimston contrarily praised the Satanic virtues of War. Far from courting the elusive respectability and social acceptance desperately desired (and almost never won) by most new religions, the Process often went out of its way to invite deliberate disrepute. Again, we observe the left-hand path method of maintaining a calculated pariah outcast status, much like Gurdjieff's knavish striving to remain *malamal* (blame-worthy). To this end,

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the Process very consciously played up its image as a "dangerous cult." To a London magazine which had published a negative report on the group, this sarcastic letter was sent to the editor:

"Dear Sir...

The Process combines the worst aspects of both Nazi Germany and Communist China. Our methods bear a striking resemblance to the techniques of brainwashing and we incorporate all the components of an authoritative regime. In fact, we are the most authoritative authoritarian, Nazi, Communist, brainwashing organisation in the business. Members of the Process are both anarchist and fascist, dangerous megalomaniacs and brainwashed zombies (on alternative days) ... One thing surprises us. Your two sleazy would-be exposers managed to invent so much other rubbish about us, but no sex? No orgies? No perversions? Not one sex maniac amongst the lot of us? Or would this make us too acceptable to your readers?"

The intrinsic irony of the Process stance, as typified by the above letter, invariably went right over the heads of those against whom it was aimed.

The Process expanded its war against the Grey Forces, spreading out from its posh headquarters in London's chic Mayfair district to several major cities in the United States. The Satanic and Luciferian side of the Process trinity attracted by far the most attention, and Processeans dressed in flamboyant black cloaks and medallions bearing the symbol of the Goat of Mendes soon became a familiar sight in the counterculture communities that sprouted up like so many psilocybin mushrooms in the late 1960s. Soup kitchens, a radio show, a Lucifer-themed coffee house, and the omnipresent *Process* magazine sold on the streets; all spread the Processean evangel to its mostly young constituency. After settling on the harsher name, Process Church of the Final Judgement, the DeGrimstons became increasingly autocratic, leaving behind the more experimental mode in which they had begun. Robert DeGrimston now styled himself as the archetype of Christ the Emissary, and his image and personality became the glue holding the Church together, much as the messianic figure of L. Ron Hubbard had dominated Scientology, from which the DeGrimstons had learned so much. Mary Anne DeGrimston, ex-prostitute, made for an ideal Mary Magdalene for the cult.

Robert DeGrimston's portrayal of Christ from a *Process* magazine in 1968 – which can probably also be read as a self-portrait – is in keeping with our earlier description of Jesus as a left-hand path inspirer of insubordination:

"Christ is an outsider. Christ will always be an outsider ... He is a rebel, a non-conformer, a protestor, a disturber of the peace, a thorn in the flesh of the self-righteous and self-satisfied, a despiser of the accepted norm, a wanderer

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of the wastes, an outcast, a destroyer of accepted values and a caster aside of convention." Although it is unlikely that he was aware of his work,

DeGrimston also mirrors Jack Parsons' Gnostic view of Jesus. The DeGrimston concept of Satan and Lucifer as distinctly separate entities who will preside with Christ over a coming new age is also reminiscent of the sexmagical theology of Naglowska's Golden Arrow and Gregorius's *Fraternitas Saturni*, both of which presented a similar Satanic Gnosticism replete with an Aeonic concept.

After the arrest of Charles Manson in 1969, and the subsequent media exposure of his claimed identity with Christ and Satan, the Process

found themselves with a public relations disaster on their hands that even their well-honed irony could not evade. Tagged as an inspiration for the Manson murders, the Process began to disintegrate. The inevitable tension between the Satanic/Luciferian wing and the Jehovan/Christian side of the Process intensified under this pressure. Coupled with the DeGrimstons' failing marriage, these traumas ultimately led to schism. In 1974, Mary Anne unsuccessfully attempted to reform the Process as a strictly Jehovan denomination.

Despite its origins in the Babalon current, the Process does not appear to have been a genuine manifestation of the left-hand path, although several of its methods are useful for those who follow the Western way of the sinister.

One direct connection to the cult of the Scarlet Woman was the DeGrimstons' ultimately unsuccessful attempt to purchase Crowley's abandoned Abbey of Thelema on Cefalu and refurbish it as a religious center. At the heart of the cult stood the contrasexual energy emanated by the DeGrimstons, very much a latter-day Simon Magus and Helene. Although the DeGrimstons' sexual teaching may have been a useful method for freeing Processeans of inherited social conditioning – an essential initial step of lefthand path liberation – this reprogramming was not followed up by any coherent system of sexual self-awakening. Was it all a sophisticated mind game, an archetypal 1960s put-on? A cynical business enterprise designed to milk a generation of gullible spiritual seekers? Since the group's demise, unreliable conspiracy theorists have accused the Process of masterminding a Satanic crime network of monstrous proportions. Such unfounded hearsay almost seems like a logical consequence of the Process's often reckless provocation of the Grey Forces and its sacred cows. In a conversation with one of the authors in 1989, Robert DeGrimston, unwilling to court publicity concerning his notorious 1960s experiment in social anthropology and religion, politely dismissed the Process as merely a "youthful phase." No doubt, this reasonable assessment is more enlightening than all the hysterical rumor-mongering that has been the unfortunate legacy of the Process.

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Kenneth Grant – Typhonian Sex Magick From Outer Space

Say what one will of the work of the controversial British sex magician Kenneth Grant (b. 1924), he must at least be given credit for inspiring strong reactions. Grant, one of the few Thelemites to identify themselves unambiguously with the left-hand path, is revered and loathed with more or less equal intensity. Taking Thelemic sex magick far beyond the Crowleyobsessed limitations of others working more dogmatically in the Beast's tradition, Grant has written of the Babalon Working in his *Outside The Circles Of Time* that "Parsons opened a door and something flew in." Grant's sex magical teaching has been conveyed through the vehicle of the so-called Typhonian O.T.O., a name which acknowledges the importance of the sinister Set-Typhon to his cosmology. Grant applies sexual ecstasy and the erotically charged raising of the kundalini fire serpent to communicate with what he understands as extraterrestrial entities, noting that the first UFO sightings occurred in 1947, shortly after the Babalon Working.

Grant has also theorized that the first nuclear explosions in 1945 also played a part in unleashing the same "powers from the other side" that

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Hubbard and Parsons were simultaneously calling forth through sex magic.

Odd though this latter idea may seem, it is relevant that even a strict rationalist like the scientist Robert Oppenheimer, one of the developers of the atomic bomb was spontaneously inspired to utter a sacred litany from the Indian *Bhagavad Gita* – "I am become Death, destroyer of Worlds" – upon witnessing the first experimental mushroom cloud looming before him like an apparition of Kali.

Grant met Crowley in 1944, and knew him until his death in 1947, a

period in which Parsons was in steady correspondence with the Beast concerning the Agape Lodge and the Babalon Working and its consequences.

In 1945, after meeting this promising young initiate, Crowley wrote to his associate Louis Wilkinson that "I am trying to get him to look after me and my work," uncharacteristically praising the novice Grant as "a definite gift from the Gods." Despite Grant's later attempt at developing Crowley's system of sexual initiation, the subject of sex magick was apparently never mentioned during his apprenticeship to the old Ipsissimus.

"I wish I'd been aware at that time of the great importance in his system of sexual magick," Grant later told the author John Symonds, "because I would have asked him a lot of questions on that subject ... When I did bring up the subject he was evasive. I remember on one occasion he brushed my query aside with the words, 'There'll be time for that later. – Presumably, the Beast did intend to reveal the sexual magick of the O.T.O. to Grant, as it would seem that he quickly viewed his student as a potential leader, commenting in a March 1946 diary entry: "Value of Grant: if I die or go to U.S.A., there must be a trained man to take care of English O.T.O.""

Save for a few sensational journalistic accounts focusing primarily on the L. Ron Hubbard angle, it was Grant's work, beginning with his first and perhaps most lucid book, *The Magical Revival* (1972) which most forcefully kept memory of Parsons and the Babalon Working alive for many years. Grant's heir apparent in the Typhonian O.T.O., Michael Staley, has also contributed a great deal to the arcane field of Babalonogy, especially his essay *Beloved Of Babalon*, an objective Parsons biographical essay first published in the 1980s in the Typhonian O.T.O. magazine *Starfire*.

Taking off in the "heretical" direction from which Parsons left off, Grant makes a valiant attempt to move Thelemic sex magick firmly into the left-hand path tradition, in contradiction to Crowley's own self-identification as a brother of the right-hand path. The most useful aspect of Grant's books to the left-hand path sex magician is his learned introduction of authentic *Vama Marga* lore and methodology into a Western magical context. Typhonian O.T.O. rituals replace the Masonic theatrics of Crowley's time with genuine Tantric techniques. In keeping with both the *Vama Marga* and the Parsons innovations in the cult of the Scarlet Woman, Grant recognizes the dark

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feminine esoteric principle and the physical female body as the Shakti source of left-hand path initiation, especially as incarnated in the trained *devadasis* and *sivasinis*. Grant's work frequently credits his wife Steffi, a talented graphic artist in the Spare tradition, as his Scarlet Woman, magical partner and a frequent illustrator of his books.

Although Grant does acknowledge Crowley's value as a teacher, he shares none of his mentor's prejudices concerning the inferiority of womankind. Indeed, Grant's writing suggests that Crowley, in his phallocentrism, completely failed to understand the essential role of woman in sex magic. In his *Typhonian Trilogy*, Grant places special emphasis on the unique magical properties of the sexual *amrita* secreted by the Shakti during the secret rite of Tantra, and the vaginal emanations of the *yogini* during *Vama Marga* operations of ecstasy. In Grant's left-hand path reworking of Crowley's O.T.O. system of degrees, the XI° consists of copulation with a menstruating female rather than the homosexual anal sex rite that the Great Beast considered the summit of sex magical power. This doctrinal divergence from Crowleyan scripture, which is more in line with the yonicentric Tantric left-hand path, has led some more traditional Thelemites to accuse Grant of homophobia.

Along with Grant's creative efforts to replace the anti-*yoni* energies of Crowleyan orthodoxy with a Western sex magic that gives pride of place to the sinister authority of the Feminine Daemonic, his work is also interesting historically as the first written source to link the ancient Egyptian

deity Set and the left-hand path. Grant repeatedly strives to establish Set as the hidden patron of an ancient sex magical current, which Grant terms the Draconian, or Typhonian, tradition. For him, Set is the original essence of the Yezidi Shaitan, the Judeo-Christian Satan, and the Great Beast 666 of *Revelations*. (He seems to have based this last doubtful theory on an obscure 1916 book entitled *The Two Babylons*, written by Alexander Hislop, a minister with an interest in the religions of antiquity) Accordingly, Typhon, the Greek manifestation of Set, and an interdimensional gate known as the "Tunnels of Set" play important roles in the Grantian interpretation of lefthand path erotic illumination.

Unfortunately, it must be said that some of Grant's work is seriously flawed by his penchant for indulging in subjective and unscholarly occult fantasies, which often rival the muddled theories of Madame Blavatsky in their dazzling flights of incoherence. For instance, the serious student of the sinister current sex magic tradition will find little enlightenment in Grant's hypothesis that the left-hand path as it survives in India is actually a degenerated remnant of a cult that not only goes back to ancient Egypt, prehistoric Africa, and the ever popular Atlantis but was originally imported to Earth from extraterrestrial beings from "Trans-Plutonic" outer space. According to Grant, Tantric sexual initiation is simply one of the "cults of the

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shadow" descended from this alien strain, which also survives among us earthlings as Voodoo and Thelema. As one proof of this connection between Egyptian magic and Indian Tantra, Grant suggests – in defiance of any accepted Egyptian and Sanskrit etymologies – that the Sanskrit *Shakti* (power) is connected to the Egyptian *Sekhem*, which also means "power."

To glean what may be of actual use for the practice of sinister sex magic in Grant's writings, one must also work through surreal descriptions of sperm-sucking Mayan squid-bats surviving in abandoned chapels, aetheric monsters that breed in menstrual blood, and the premise that apes are the result of prehistoric human copulation with extraterrestrials, all hung together with obfuscatory detours into Quabalistic numerology. Your head will spin when confronted with such typical Grantisms as "clepydral horologue", "infra-liminal vibrations" and "sexo-somniferous magnetization."

Nevertheless, there are those sex magicians who swear by this stuff, apparently operating on the questionable postulate that whatever is written in a sufficiently obscure style must conceal extremely precious secret information.

Another major aspect of Kenneth Grant's legacy is his single-handed devotion to bringing the work of the once obscure British sex magician and inspired artist Austin Osman Spare (1886—1956) – whom he befriended in the last decade of his life – to prominence. Indeed, Grant's interpretation of Spare's sex-magical theories, communicated to him first-hand, has been far more influential than the sometimes unintelligible writings of Spare himself. Grant specifically describes Spare as a magician of the left-hand path in his *Images And Oracles Of Austin Osman Spare*.

Crowley, who briefly knew Spare in his youth, also damned the artist as "a black brother," that is to say, a follower of the left-hand path. Primarily, this seems to be due to Spare's magical philosophy of "self-love," which Crowley considered to be a destructive and ego-affirming practice. A crucial aspect of Spare's self-love was the magical creation of elementals through masturbation.

According to Grant, Spare, who seems to have been a half-mad old hermit by the time Grant encountered him, believed himself to be in perpetual sexmagical congress with these autoerotically engendered astral creatures. These entities, which Spare considered as his familiars, were supposedly born of his semen like the succubi of old. Spare informed Grant that these esoteric organisms "copulated among themselves, engendering offspring

simultaneously" Describing Spare's younger days, when his dashing good looks were still capable of attracting real (rather than astral) women, Grant wrote that "such was [Spare's] hunger that in one night he copulated with eighteen woman, calling these outbursts: Dionysiac spasms of pansexualism in which he had visions of all things fornicating all the time," an idea similar to Crowley's description of Babalon as "constant copulation or *samadhi* on
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everything." Spare's recognition of the Feminine Daemonic is a major part of his work, as illustrated by his claimed magical tutelage as a youth by a woman he described as a "witch."

It is primarily through Grant's explication of Austin Osman Spares's magical practice that the sexual utilization of sigils has become such a commonplace practice among modern magicians, although it is the advocates of the school of Chaos Magick that have taken credit for this trend.

We are of the opinion that Spare's magic was most effectively communicated through his often erotic artwork. Thus our sparse coverage of his oblique theory and practice, which in its extreme subjectivity seems to have been more of a personal method than a teaching communicable to others. Nevertheless, the visionary creation of powerful images, in which Spare excelled, is in itself an act of magic. Spare makes for an instructive example that the sex magic of the left-hand path need not be communicated only through the left brain's rational prism; the surreal image-producing faculties of the right brain may be an even more forceful medium. (Much the same could be said of the accomplished magical artist Rosaleen Norton, whose practice of a demonic sexual magic and her erotic esoteric paintings scandalized her native Australia, but who left behind no specific teaching or practical written record of her thought.)

Grant, as long ago as the 1950s, was also the first magician to posit the fictional dark gods of H. P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos as a genuine pantheon of deities. This line of thought, in its most debased form, has unfortunately led already delusion-prone magicians to adopt Lovecraft's horror tales as a form of religious scripture, even inspiring some to perform erotic rituals to attempt contact with these fictional beings. Lovecraft, himself a sworn atheist and sexual prude who rejected all forms of magical thought and recoiled from feminine contact, must truly be spinning in his grave at the idea of sex magic for Cthulhu. But in his often derided connection of the UFO phenomenon and Lovecraftian fantasy fiction with sex magic, Grant is also very much in the otherworldly lineage of Jack Parsons, for whom the distinction between sci-fi daydreams and sexual sorcery was often blurred.

And yet, even if his scholarship often stands on shaky ground, Grant must be counted as a force to be reckoned with as the first author to firmly place Western sex magic and the Babalon current in context with the authentic left-hand path, which he accurately describes as the *Vama Marga*. Rather than rest on Crowley's laurels, he provided modern sex magicians with untried Eastern keys to erotic enlightenment, propounding a sex-magical apocalypse that can be seen as a Western emanation of the Kali Yuga. He has been accused by his detractors of humorlessly wallowing in the slime of an adolescent obsession with naughty sexual depravity for its own sake. His admirers just as ardently hail him as a sinister visionary who will be remembered as the only creative and original sex magician to emerge from
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the group of young men who were Crowley's final students.

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BOOK THREE: The Sinister Current In Action

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IX.

Sex-Magical Self-Initiation

A Crash Course For The Kali Yuga

What is the good of talking? To speak of such things means nothing. If one worships with the flowers of the menses, that one possesses power over destiny. Worshipping often in this way, he may attain liberation. The initiate should seat a Shakti in a circle. She should be lewd, lovely, lacking all shame and disgust, naturally captivating, infinitely seductive and beautiful. After bestowing vijaya upon the Shakti, one should worship her with the greatest devotedness. She should be seated on his left, and he should worship her yoni.

—Yoni Tantra

The shape of the map to the left-hand path that we set out to delineate should now be clear enough. After reading the foregoing sections of this book, it becomes evident that while the outer forms of the sinister current have taken an astounding multiplicity of shapes in their manifestation in time, some even seemingly inconsistent with each other, the inner essence is remarkably similar. It is this timeless and elemental substance of the way of the left, expressed though all of the diverse magical systems we have considered, that we have sought to isolate.

We have already provided more than ample indications throughout the preceding chapters – sometimes explicitly, sometimes more subtly – as to how the various historical methods of the universal sinister current can be applied to your own life. You may well have already taken upon it yourself to experiment with some of the sex-magical processes of illumination outlined in the previous pages. If not, the preceding sections of *Demons Of The Flesh* have been constructed to be reviewed with the idea of translating the concepts explicated therein to the conditions of the reader's current level of initiation. There are not – indeed there cannot be – any fixed rules for sexually awakening the daemon that dwells in your flesh.

Each must find his or her own way to embody the sinister current in the nine-gated temple of your body. There is the voyage that takes one through the traditional training of Tantra that leads from *pashu* to *divya* by the arousal of the fire serpent under the power of Shakti. As a Scarlet Woman, an embodiment of the ancient Babalon current, you may become the

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priestess of Her shrine. As a consequence of the forced exodus of Tibetan teachers from their homeland, the secret knowledge of the *Vajrayana* may be communicated to those who brave the wrathful lemons to enjoy the blissful embrace of the *Dakini*. Regardless of your gender, you may be empowered by the gnosis, transformed into a magus or thaumaturge like Christ and Simon through the descent of the Holy Spirit of Sophia, She of the Left Hand. You may follow the path of the troubadour and the knight, in truth to the unattainable Lady, in search of the Feminine Daemonic materialized in the Graal. The *yin-tao* practiced in the royal bedchambers of the Chinese emperors promises immortality to those who master its discipline. By comparison, much less objective data remains to induct modern initiates into the Northern sexual mysteries of the *seithr*, or the ancient Egyptian erotomagical cult of Set, but this has certainly not stopped the romantic and the fanciful from trying to resurrect these practices.

The names and the symbols have changed a thousand tunes. But the primordial act that yokes the two halves of male and female in its ecstatic coupling, sending its signal from left to right, creating the mystery of the third consciousness, transcends all words and images. The adept of the sinister current in this age is no longer compelled to follow only one route to illuminated libertinage. Unlike your ancient forebears, limited in their access

to information, you can afford to take an eclectic approach in accomplishing the magician's task enumerated in the introduction: namely, to "integrate complex symbolic systems, synthesize them with personal experience, and create from this synthesis [your] own unique direction on the left-hand path".

These final three chapters are more specifically directed to begin placing theory into practice, words into action, as we enter that place where abstract explanation must finally be realized in the workings of the body.

This section provides the would-be adept with a number of exercises and experiments that can, at the very least, open the gate that leads to the left-hand path, while allowing for a treatment of several aspects of erotic

initiation only briefly touched on earlier. Among these is the initiatory application of autoeroticism and same-sex eroticism, which may at first seem contradictory to the sinister current, based as it is upon the transmission of sexual energy between two consorts of the opposite sex. The succeeding chapter sets forth a left-hand approach to the initiatory utilization of the orgy, the aspect of sex magic that, to our experience, always seems to attract the most foolish speculation and uninformed prurient interest. Finally, we conclude with a guide to the maya-transforming incorporation of that nexus of painful pleasures and ecstatic pain that is generally known as "sodomasochism" – for some the furthest unexplored periphery of sinister sex, for others an everyday aspect of their erotic interactions. These chapters will concern themselves largely with the relatively clear-cut goals of sexual

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sorcery – and to a lesser extent theurgy – on the supposition that the higher mode of left-hand path erotic mysticism must be discovered by each individual adept on his or her own terms. Sexual sorcery, based as it is on the realization of specific goals, is a discipline that will provide the initiate with useful lessons in the nature of *maya* that can hardly be learned through any other means. Sexual mysticism, a stage to which the successful sorcerer may eventually proceed once sorcery's lessons are impressed upon the mind, dispenses with goals altogether as a more comprehensive communication with the daemon inhabiting your flesh is facilitated.

The recommendations for action we offer here are rooted entirely in our own experiences teaching the methods of the sinister current to contemporary Westerners, and are accordingly aimed at the unique psychosexual and cultural conditions that hold sway in the modern world. In our view, these peculiar circumstances cannot be sufficiently addressed by attempts to import Eastern left-hand path methods to Western minds. It is not our desire to transform Western initiates into Indians or Tibetans, as sometimes seems to be the case in more traditional *guru* to *chela* relations. This commonly observed practice makes as little sense to us as attempting to introduce the traditional European style of magic, with its medieval robes and bells, its candles and its swords, to initiates in Calcutta or Lhasa. As we enter the 21st century, we find neither of these methods to be efficacious – as noted earlier, our goal is a distillation and a synthesis of the most universally applicable of what has come before, an alchemy that leads to a sinister current truly suited for our times.

The suggestions that follow, it must be clarified, can only lead one to take the very first steps on the left-hand path. In no way should your explorations end with the reading of this book. The direction you should take after choosing to follow these experiments, or rejecting them, according to will, cannot possibly be predicted. However, we have noted one very general consequence that tends to arise when a magician opens him/herself towards accepting the energy of the sinister direction for the first time. You will know that you have indeed begun to separate from the confining limits of the *pashu* world and entered the heroic route to sinister liberation, the *Svecchacari* way of doing as one wills as what one Tantra calls "a living Shiva on earth", because an infinite number of choices will present themselves to you.

Teachers, Schools And Sirens

You may be fortunate enough, for example, to come across a genuine teacher, most likely in an entirely unexpected form, who can escort you much further on the path. The absolute necessity of personal face-to-face communication spoken from mouth-to-ear in left-hand path initiation – in contrast to written transmission – has already been made clear. The following

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aspects of left-hand path initiation can only be learned in person from one has already experienced and mastered them. Just as no book can convey these somatically-based objective facets of the sinister current, it is also absurd to suppose that internet mailing lists, websites or instruction via email can transmit digital initiation. As you may have surmised from the previous sections of this guide, some of the basic techniques that only a physical teacher can communicate to you are:

- Reliable ability to reach heightened states of consciousness
- Discovery and manipulation of the subtle and causal bodies (by whatever names you choose to call them) within the physical vessel, including out-of-body experiences
 - Arousal of Kundalini
 - Mastery of breath control
- Control of the inner optic faculties, allowing for sustained visualization
- Vocal control and the realm of sonic magic, including proper enunciation of mantras and other vocal techniques
- Physical posture, flexibility and stamina of the body, inner and outer muscle control, including strengthening of the perineum and genitals necessary for sexual magic
 - Techniques of prolonging and sustaining orgasm as a means of consciousness alteration
- Stilling of extraneous thought at will, for purposes of attaining deep psychic focus and transcending verbally based thought processes

It may well be that you will require the assistance of several different teachers to acquire all of these skills, which will invariably necessitate accepting those aspects of a teaching that are personally useful, while consciously rejecting what is superfluous to your objectives. Augmenting these skills by learning any concentrated physical discipline, such as martial arts, dance, or yoga can only be an advantage for the sex magician. These systems of cultivation will center your body, the primary tool of the sinister current, bridging the illusory break between mind and body encouraged by our overly cerebral and verbal culture.

It's very likely that you will undergo the bitter but often necessary learning experience of being led astray by any number of false teachers. As with any esoteric discipline, there is no limit to the amount of would-be teachers and gurus who will gladly volunteer to personally initiate you into the mysteries of sex magic with private lessons. These magnanimous offers dramatically increase based on your attractiveness, youth and *naïveté*.

Wouldn't such a helpful person be the ideal sex-magical ally? All things considered ... not necessarily. The extreme potential for exploitation and self-

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delusion that any teacher/student power dynamic potentially provides becomes even more intensified once sex magic comes into the picture.

In all erotic interactions, the untrained will tend to project subjective overlays upon their partners. These projections can be deliberately utilized during sexual magic for sorcerous or initiatory objectives. When the partner is ostensibly one's spiritual teacher, one can easily fall prey to unconscious imaginings that cloud the actual nature of the supposed teacher, idealizing or vilifying him or her according to circumstance. A legitimate teacher will know how to work around these projections, but an unscrupulous charlatan will manipulate them to his or her advantage. That being said, a teacher can

be most useful for encouraging an initiate to go beyond the limits he or she is comfortable with, but the danger of being taken advantage of exists and must be cautiously observed and avoided. This is simply one of the possible dangers of the left-hand path that one must come to terms with. It is a quest of liberation that takes place in the real world, necessitating the always potentially risky and disillusioning contact with the unstable and unreliable chaos of humanity. If you desire absolute safety, the way of ascetic solitude and retreat – the way of the monk – is probably better suited for you than the left-hand path.

You may also, for a time, encounter an authentic school of initiation that will provide you with the friction and opportunity for comparison one needs to develop. But as already mentioned, the inbuilt conflict between essentially control-dominated human group dynamics and the radical liberatory objectives of the sinister current often limits the value of such group alliances.

Finally, there is an archetypal tradition in almost every culture and mythology, that as soon as the initiate takes the first step towards his or her liberation, or approaches a new breakthrough in the Great Work, an obstacle, disguised as a blessing, reveals itself as a test. Not infrequently, this manifests as a sexually desirable man or woman. Victor Neuburg, Crowley's much abused student, wrote poetically of this ordeal in his *The New Diana*, in 1912: "There is one who all but fell into the abyss, through the Wiles of a Syren; for she by her seductions closed against him the way of Initiation ... even to the brink of Hell was lured that Disciple; the White Breasts and dark eyes of Lilith stood even between him and the Great Gods, wherefore the gods smote him heavily for his Perfidy to Them and his Master. And this Syren was the Projection of the Disciple himself upon the Screen of the visible Universe, even as Lilith was a projection of the god Adonia."

Neuburg was referring to a young woman with whom he fell in love at a crucial juncture in his training. Since the poet envisioned himself as a walker of the right-hand path, he naturally interpreted the wiles of the "Syren ... Lilith" as a lure from his course. The adept of the left-hand path, would be

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more likely to interpret the appearance of such a "Syren" – whether male or female – as the manifestation of the opposite-sex sex-magical consort with whom the *unio mystica* of the left-hand path can be realized. Neuburg's metaphor of "the Screen of the visible Universe" as a "Projection of the Disciple" aptly describes the left-hand path idea that the magician is partially responsible for the creation of his or her consort, through the workings of *maya*; the infinitely desirable Shakti is created in her adoring Shiva's mind. But developing sufficient discernment to judge the difference between those manifestations of *Shakti-maya* that lead one to gnosis and those that are delusive mirages is the work of many years of testing one's self against the complexities of the shifting phenomena of the wide world. Thus, the blind optimist who selectively prefers to see only "the good side" of all human beings is as hopelessly crippled by self-created *maya* as the bitter cynic who can only see the worst aspects of humanity. The adept observes the spectacle of humanity with both eyes, and from as many possible viewpoints as possible.

From considering our own lives, and the actual experiences of longtime sex magicians, it seems to us that the true teachers of sex magic will appear in the course of your initiation when you least anticipate them and not necessarily as intentional teachers. For the most part, the initiator or initiatrix that guides you into sex-magical breakthroughs of authentic meaning is far more likely to manifest spontaneously as part of your everyday life, rather than in the formal guise of guru. Until that teacher, school or sex-magical alter ego does appear, the following exercises and experiments will prepare you for the journey ahead.

Sexual Deconditioning And Reprogramming

As the preceding pages have demonstrated, left-hand path sex magic actually begins in the workings of your mind, which has truly been called the most important of the erogenous zones. One of the great advantages of sex magic is that it is a very pure form, physically requiring nothing more than the body and mind of the magician to be efficacious. For those who would gladly dispense with the quaint bric-a-brac of the traditional magic of yore, there is no more direct and powerful method of achieving one's external and internal magical goals.

Many advocates of the traditional Tantric left-hand path techniques described in the first section of this book may find that their sex magic is enhanced by the use of *mandalas*, *yantras*, incorporation of the five M's, and other ritual objects. But by no means should the pragmatic sinister current sex magician feel that such external properties are mandatory. The essential principles of the *Vama Marga* can all be internalized, paring the operation down to the only truly necessary sex magical tool – the body. The magician who discards the colorful crutches provided by the conventional apparatus of

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Western and Eastern ceremonial magic is immediately confronted by the challenges of working only with the stark biological-psychic fundamentals of basic existence. This dramatic stripping down to the core of your physical being can be – and should be – a daunting initiatory shock if considered in all of its ramifications.

With any magical study, it is easy to forget that the magician is inextricably bound into a social and cultural context that inevitably influences his or her magical practice and ideas. The sinister current seeks to isolate the self from external influence as much as possible, but recognizes that we are all creatures of our particular environment. To accurately estimate whether or not you are personally equipped to undergo the erotic-magical journey offered by this book's teaching, you must first consider yourself in light of your relation to the everyday life you actually live. The method of magic we teach is not intended as casual entertainment. Nor is it designed as a means for trivial "fun" that takes your mind off of your mundane concerns, alleviating that tedious discomfort that comes with self-awareness.

On the contrary, the sinister current as delineated here will only increase your awareness of the realities of your self, not serve as a distraction from them. This is a magic firmly rooted in the larger world of Kali Yuga with all of its frustrations and demands, not a gateway to a never-never land of soothing occult fantasy. Naturally, erotic sorcery offers joys and ecstasies of the body and psyche that few ever experience in the normal run of habitual somnambulism that passes for most human sexual pleasure. However, those ecstasies must always be grounded in the reality of the magician's daily existence, and do not serve as a ready-made opiate stupefying the senses and numbing the consciousness. There is a very good reason why most human beings prefer the great slumber of *Supla* to the awakening of *Bodha*: moments of awakening from delusion are at first painful, usually leading the awakened to run screaming back to the comforts of sleep. This is true whether one applies the Tantric method of awakening through arousal of the Kundalini, attempts the "super-efforts" of Gurdjieffian practice, the attainment of the gnosis, or any of the many other viable techniques that exist.

We begin by impassively examining sex, the motor that drives the sinister current, as the energy that holds humanity in its thrall. In our view, sex is simply a force of surpassing power, similar to radioactivity or electricity. Much like these other energy sources, Eros cannot be objectively described as positive or negative – such assessments depend entirely on circumstance and the perspective of the observer. Those who condemn it as depraved and degrading are as misguided as their opposite number who sing

the praises of the orgasm as the greatest good in the universe. In the West, centuries of relentless Christian abomination of the flesh have finally yielded

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to a somewhat more objective understanding of sexuality. However, the realization that Eros is not a shameful Satanic agent of sin does not mean that sexuality should be fatuously romanticized either. Eros, like all truly numinous forces, surpasses both good and evil and is ultimately neutral. The left-hand sex magician who wishes to marshal this notoriously unpredictable power to his or her own desires must also examine the abyss of the shadow side of Eros as well as its more beneficent aspects.

To determine your deepest and most authentic sexual tastes and desires, as opposed to merely adopting the standard issue images generated from external societal sources, one must also severely cut away the images of ideal sexual partners picked up by proxy from your family, friends and wider human environment. Although this process may seem like a fairly straightforward – even mundane – process, there is actually a fundamental spiritual component hidden within this task. For when we forcefully reject the received and inherited models of objects of desire in favor of our own archetypes of lust, we come closer to revealing the inner image of the opposite sex alter ego that truly energizes our sexual essence – the anima and the animus. There is no formula guaranteeing that the mysterious affiliation with one's sexual alter ego will actually come about on the physical plane – the discovery of the inner mate in the outer phenomenal world is actually a rare feat of magic. But the female left-hand path sex magician's quest for her "brother soul" will never be accomplished if she has been programmed to find her mother's conception of a perfect consort, just as the male sex magician is unlikely to find his "sister soul" if his criteria derives from an airbrushed, sanitized image in *Playboy*.

In a culture that at least pays lip service to the virtuous properties of the erotic, the sinister current sex magician can learn much from analyzing the flip side of the popular view. One quickly ascertains that the same force that the illuminated libertine applies to self-transformation and liberation is overwhelmingly utilized as a control mechanism and tool of persuasion in Western society at large. So overwhelming is the power of the sexual experience on the human psyche that both the explicit and sublimated expression of Eros suffuses the entire cultural landscape. Sexuality is certainly the primary selling point compelling the consumer to sacrifice to the faceless gods of capitalism. A copious flow of sexual fluid oils the wheels of Western commerce. Products with not the least apparent connection to sexuality, including automobiles, Internet service providers and ice cream are merchandised as indispensable aphrodisiac devices possessed of boundless seductive allure. The fashion industry and the cosmetics and beauty businesses aggressively sell women the comforting idea that their wares will make them utterly irresistible. Every branch of the mass media generates a breathless orgy of sexual and pseudo-sexual imagery cannily designed to

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captivate its transfixed prey.

The music industry offers endless variations on the theme of carnal passion, pitched to the specialized tastes of a wide array of erotic demographics. Mass market films and television offer their spectators idealized dreamworlds of erotic bliss, allowing fantasists to safely enter into vicarious libidinal reverie with their favorite celebrities; the ultimate in safe sex. One of the strangest mass psychosexual developments of the twentieth century was the rise of the erotic cult of the celebrity, a fetishization of the popular idol that has often proven how lethal thwarted sexual fantasy can become.

It is not enough for the left-hand path sex magician to smugly be aware of these phenomena as something that happens to other people "out

there" somewhere. Examine your own psyche and behavior and carefully note whether or not you are also drawn into the sexual seduction so skillfully plied by advertising and the mass media. What subtle or blatant sexual cues have persuaded you to purchase a given product? How have your own sexual preferences and tastes been molded by media imagery of supposedly desirable sex symbols? Once you have become more conscious of the hypnotic effect that this omnipresent sea of sexual imagery exercises on you, you will be better equipped to resist its external allure. Now you can pay closer attention to your inner sexual world., which is most likely constructed along very different lines than the pre-packaged ready-to-eat mass media presentation of erotic icons. You may well be challenged by the disturbing realization that the sexual fantasies and fetishes you imagined were your own have been programmed to a surprising degree by years of exposure to mass culture's ubiquitous reservoir of ceaseless audio-visual data.

Such a realization can be the turning point that inspires you to turn off the source of the programming and take control of your own sexual conditioning, a necessity for any left-hand path sex magician. Very often, the first important act of sex magic in the modern world consists of grasping the persuasive power of mass culture on the libido and taking charge of one's own erotic desires. No one whose erotic being has developed under the bombardment of the mass media can completely be free of the implanting picked up via the incessant sexual signals and symbols generated from the cultural atmosphere. The magician, however, can willfully transform this process from an unconscious reception of external programming to a wakeful awareness of how sexual desire is shaped by blueprints originating in the mass media. It isn't enough to merely take our word for the following observations – examine with brutal honesty the roots of your particular sexual conditioning, the previously ignored Pavlovian training that shaped the architecture of your desires. And when you have identified these possibly hidden erotic motivators, decide which ones are truly yours and which have been unthinkingly learned from the constant barrage of media signals to

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which every man and woman in the West is subject.

Assessing The Human Factor

From reading the previous chapters, the novice left-hand path sex magician might presume that the ideal sexual partner who can serve as the deified male or female consort of the sinister sexual union can be found in the body of *any* sexually functioning human being. Indeed, one Tantra suggests that liberation can be found by properly trained initiatory congress with "all yonis." Arguably, those initiates who have attained an advanced ability to understand the deceptive swirl of *maya* may indeed be able to discover the transhuman alter ego in all sacralized sexual partners, and not only in his or her anima or animus. However, there are most definitely partners who will be far less suitable for this task than others. The left-hand path magician must be as alert to the criteria that rule out a potential sexual companion as he or she should be engaged in the quest for a suitable sex-magical accomplice.

Despite the potential for joy inherent in the expression of sexuality, any careful observer of human behavior will quickly recognize that the majority of human beings are actually trapped in sexual relationships that provide them with little pleasure or erotic fulfillment. The medical and psychiatric professions are inundated with sexually frustrated patients seeking to attain the boundless erotic delights the media has suggested are so universal, but which the average person so often finds elusive. While sexuality is theoretically touted as the greatest joy that human beings can experience, it has frequently proven to be a source of their deepest misery and anxiety.

When one considers the general state of relations between the genders from a detached point of view, there can be little wonder that sex is very often

far from the endless delight it is so often painted as and why these characterizations play such a needed role. Despite a few superficial and cosmetic changes – most of which have manifested on the political/economic level rather than in the erotic sphere – men and women are still confined to the playing out of hackneyed roles of the most shallow order. Since these sexual personae are largely the result of societal conditioning and programming, erotic interplay between the sexes tends to be as rigid, unimaginative and lacking in spontaneity as the robotic culture that spawned them. One can hardly expect the profound and transformative sexual energy required for left-hand path erotic magic to be raised during the formulaic machinations that normally passes for sex between men and women. It is telling that the standard lingo of sexology and popular journalism alike speaks of "sexual performance". Indeed, the standard sexual interaction between men and women is all too often nothing more vital than a performance, a woefully artificial act that dramatizes sex according to an inflexible, badly written

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script. Such performances reduce the potentially illuminating and sacred power of Eros to a ludicrous caricature.

Mercilessly consider your own daily erotic experience with these thoughts in mind, and when you have discovered elements of your sexual life that are false, obligatory, or in any way untrue to your deepest desires, carefully but completely remove these factors from your existence. We will cite just two of the most common examples of sexual hindrances that must be removed to free one's self to be a competent left-hand path sex magician; no doubt you will detect others. If you are romantically or erotically involved with a partner who consistently leaves you feeling drained and unenergized during and after sex with him/her, this erotic energy leak must be brought swiftly to an end. (Julius Evola, in 1958's *Metaphysics Of Sex* coined the phrase "psychic vampirism" for this particular phenomenon, a coinage that has, aptly enough, since been appropriated without credit by many a psychic vampire in the occult world.) If you find yourself involved with a sexual partner with whom you simply cannot be aroused without constantly imagining sexual fantasies concerning other more desirable partners as an aphrodisiac during the act, this is another situation from which you must extricate yourself. Sexual energy is the chief weapon of the left-hand path magician, if it is continually forced to operate under such false conditions, it will be poisoned and substantially weakened. Tolerating sexual mediocrity; which is the norm for most human beings, cannot be accepted by the adept of the sinister current.

Once having begun the process of consciously disconnecting from media and familial/ societal imprinting concerning sexuality, and then separating from hypocritical or depleting erotic entanglements – both of which are ongoing processes – the added clarity and understanding of your erotic essence can then be applied to thoroughly exploring the sexual power with surgical precision.

The Shadow Side Of Sex

This exploration is not best originated with a superficial examination of the euphoria and ecstasy sexuality can potentially create. Before we can productively chart these more pleasant realms in ourselves, the looming shadows of destruction cast by sexual desire must first be confronted squarely and without whitewashing. As any student of human nature knows, the powerful emotional and physiological changes that sexual pleasure can induce in the somatic and psychic centers also frequently give rise to jealousy, hatred, and irrational actions of the most unpredictable kind.

In our generally sex-negative society, a few fleeting moments of orgasm has often led to literal and emotional blackmail. Sex is used by the powerful as a weapon of intimidation, and many women are forced to tolerate

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abusive sexual situations, using their bodies as the only means of sheer survival available to them. Quite apart from the practice of sacred prostitution and those who freely choose to work as prostitutes, there is the far more prevalent practice of sexual exploitation by pimps, and the literal sexual slavery forced upon deceived immigrants. Child pornography is a booming business, and child molestation is an ugly open secret of the Catholic Church and an alarming number of families. Overpopulation in impoverished countries is a veritable plague produced by sex, not to speak of the literal plague of AIDS and other venereal diseases that may be released by the ephemeral satiation of desire.

All of these ruinous phenomena are produced by the thoughtless use of the very same blind force of sexual desire that the left-hand path initiate consciously harnesses to transcendent initiatory objectives. The actions of the irresponsible have distorted and created a biased public opinion about those who are open and responsible about their use of sexual magic. Eros, which can potentially be a bridge to self-deification, has much more frequently been a descent into sub-human states of being. To close one's eyes and pretend that Eros is an entirely benign power is simply foolish – it was not simply a poetic flourish that inspired the authors of the Tantras to describe the work of the left-hand path initiate as "walking on the edge of a sword".

Criminologists and law enforcement personnel have long been aware that one of the quintessential side-effects of sexuality is the so-called crime of passion, that most common of homicides. While many fear the unknown assailant, it's actually the person you've known the most intimately that could most likely be your murderer. The annals of crime offer abundant evidence that some of the most savage and excessively cruel slayings visited on the human body have been the handiwork of the victim's lover.

This fact alone speaks to the dark power of Eros, whose chthonic ecstasies can lead the human heart to bliss or to bloodshed with equal ardor. The deep connection between Eros and Thanatos is as ancient as our species itself. The increasing prevalence in the industrialized West of the sexual serial killer, once a relatively rare aberration but now a banal staple of the daily news, clearly demonstrates how strong the synergy between carnal desire and destruction can be.

Left-hand path sex magicians must come to terms with this concealed element of Eros if they are to fully appreciate the terrible power inherent in erotic desire and how to best master that desire. Writing of the sexually rapacious aspect of the god Pan in his introduction to *Pan And The Nightmare*, the psychologist James Hillman observed that "Pan the raper is a potential within every sexual impulse. Every erection may release him, implying a need for psychic deflowering." And as confronting such sinister

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goddesses as Kali and Babalon will make clear, the female of the species is just as prone to the darker, more destructive potentialities awakened by Eros as the male.

When the sex magician invokes the demons of the flesh, he or she should realize that the bestial atavisms that lay just beneath the surface of socialized, civilized sexuality are never far from consciousness. Taking a hard look in the mirror of the psyche to analyze these atavisms in the magician's own being is an often overlooked necessity of erotic initiation. This contemplation is the beginning of reprogramming the mental circuitry that creates the primitive *pashu* instincts of jealousy and sexual ownership that must be nullified before left-hand path initiation can get very far.

The Sexual Cosmonaut

In a letter of paternal advice to the magician Charles Stansfeld Jones, Aleister Crowley once wrote: "I think that sexual knowledge should be based broadly on intercourse with, say, 1,000 women chosen from, say, 80 to 100 races and

sub-races. Other branches of the study are easily mastered, except Sapphism, which is hard even to witness, as you have to be on very intimate terms with one of the girls, and if both are real exclusive sapphists, you can't be, unless you can work your Point of View as an artist or student of sex. I had an awful blow last November when a girl asked me 'Have you ever been pricked with needles in the dark?' and I had not. The red brand of shame sears my forehead to this hour."

As is so often the case, Crowley was exaggerating to push the boundaries of a student he considered to be in need of a shock, but the underlying principle he defines is sound enough. Eros is the predominate medium through which the sinister current adept seeks liberation. It only follows that the wider his or her scope of experience is, and the more methodically the initiate pursues the infinite permutations of sexuality, the greater one's sex-magical repertoire will be. Each magician's journey to discover the full spectrum of sexual expression at his or her disposal must inevitably take vastly different forms, but a few general areas of pursuit can be suggested.

You will have reached the desired objectivity in relation to sexuality when you can consider any sexual act calmly and without undue emotion. Whether or not you feel that you must personally experience each possible sexual variation to attain this level of detachment is of course an entirely personal decision. To varying degrees in different Western countries, sex is placed in a strange niche that can hardly be compared to any other bodily activity. For some, fucking can only be discussed in nervous whispers, for others it arouses prurient giggles; both a sure sign of the incipient fear and apprehension it commonly inspires. Demonized as a filthy, guilt-ridden

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degradation or placed on a pedestal as a holy act only to be performed under the aegis of love or marriage; both perspectives reveal the essential abnormality with which sex is still viewed by many. All of these conditioned responses must be mastered and transcended.

According to various regional codes, there are "appropriate" times and places allowing even for the discussion of sex, let alone its actual enjoyment. And although the mass media, as noted earlier, sells its wares aggressively through sexual symbolism, this apparently open demonstration of the erotic consistently conveys a signal that sex is anything but an ordinary aspect of human existence. To approach the sleeping serpent of sex magic with any degree of efficiency, the adept must first be able to regard sex as clinically as any other entirely normal function of the human body. Perhaps paradoxically, it is only then that the use of sex as a potentially sacred instrument of consciousness transformation can take place.

The majority of men will not have a problem with the idea of fully researching their sexual mechanisms and breaking the conditioned borders of their erotic identities; the instinctive and natural biological imperative of the male body to spread his seed wide already provides men with a desire for sexual experimentation. The female sex magician, however, must often contend with the powerful instinct that encourages her to nest with one mate, with whom sexuality is deeply connected with notions of monogamous love. Although not every woman is bound by such innate biological restraints, the vanquishing of these natural instincts is often a challenge requiring a conscious act of opposite-doing to accomplish.

The left-hand path initiate must strive to deeply understand the workings of his or her libido in a comprehensive manner that most humans would prefer not to consider. To do this, the adept's sexual reactions, capabilities, quirks and deficiencies must be tested, challenged and overcome in as many situations as possible. What forms this process of ascertaining sexual self-knowledge will take must vary according to the diversity of each magician's personal erotic essence; outlining a standard program would be

purposeless.

However, some explorers of sexual frontiers have been aided by considering the omnipresent mystery of Eros from two sharply divergent perspectives. The first, the esoteric point of view, goes some way toward providing a rationale explaining the tremendous power to fascinate possessed by sex. It derives from the Tibetan sacred text *Bardo Thödol* – popularly known as "The Tibetan Book Of The Dead" – technically, a guide for the recently dead aimed at the avoidance of reincarnation.

There, we learn that in one of the *Bardos*, or levels, of after-death consciousness experienced by the bodiless spirit, the soul freed from its physical vessel is enthralled by the sight of copulating couples. If the soul does not exercise the most severe caution, it will be drawn inexorably

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towards the orgasming bodies, descending into matter. This descent guarantees rebirth as a male or female through the medium of sex. Henry Miller once joked: "Sex is one of the nine reasons for reincarnation. The other eight are unimportant." If there can be said to be any objective truth to the *Bardo Thödol*, Miller was right: our daemons return again and again to fleshly form because of the absorbing power exerted by sex.

Looking at sex from an entirely exoteric angle, through the prism of science, we find no less mysterious hidden factors at work. For even if we can erase some of the sexual conditioning imprinted in our minds by social/familial influences and modern media, millions of years of evolutionary and genetic imprinting has made each of us especially receptive to particular sex partners. We follow the unspoken commands of desire and attraction built into our brains by genetically conveyed erotic aesthetics that respond to specific smells, shapes and patterns totally beyond conscious control.

With good reason, the unmistakable experience of "falling in love" has often been compared to the effect of drugs. As it turns out, this is literally true. When we encounter someone who accords to that inbuilt evolutionary ideal, the brain is automatically flooded with a pleasant rush of calming morphine-like endorphins, sealing our attraction with chemical reinforcement. Oxytocin, secreted by the pituitary gland during sex, secures the bond with a chemically-induced blast of tranquillity. Three potent naturally produced amphetamines are also pumped through the transfixed lover's brain; dopamine, phenylethylamine, and norepinephrine, all of them creating a euphoric high that can last as long as three years (an interesting statistic when compared to the average length of many marriages).

Between the two esoteric/exoteric extremes of Tibetan reincarnation theory and the clinical measurements of Western sexology lays the mystery of your own erotic universe. Examine its uncharted secrets with the poetry of the mystic and the precision of the scientist; the sinister current adept is a meticulous cartographer of his or her sexual self.

Sex Profane And Sacred

We have also found that the most successful Western initiates of the left-hand path maintain a satisfying sexual existence independent of their sex-magical practice. This is only one of several reasons why we actively discourage magicians from transforming each and every sexual act into a ritual, and why we argue against attempting to use every orgasm she or he experiences in the course of daily life as a magical tool. Although this is a rather common practice among certain sex-magical schools and traditions, we have found that this overuse of sexual magic runs the risk of trivializing sex-magical work and diffusing the necessary supply of sexual energy for any meaningful

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working. In reducing the powerful force that can be unleashed by sex magic to a commonplace occurrence, as routine as brushing one's teeth, one almost certainly lessens the potential usefulness of the act to the magician's goals.

Just as importantly, by forcing every sexual encounter into the context of a magical working, the purely pleasurable, aesthetically pleasing and physically gratifying nature of profane erotic interaction as an experience worth enjoying for its own intrinsic value is minimized. The sex magician should ideally approach sex and the erotic arts as possessing a beauty and power unto themselves, not only as a useful tool for magical work. To limit one's sexuality to sex magic alone would be akin to an artist that only used her eyes when engaged in creating artwork. Although a robust sexual desire is evidently a basic requirement for the effective orchestration of erotic sorcery, it cannot be stressed enough that sex magic should not be the only outlet for the satisfaction of your lust. The well-balanced sex magician should experience a rich and fulfilling erotic existence that is deliberately unrelated to one's strictly sex-magical workings.

There is one very practical reason for this: unless you have a preexisting active sex life that more than adequately fulfills your psychic and physical erotic needs, chances are you probably won't achieve anything more magically profound than the physical release of orgasm while performing sexual magic. It should be noted that there are specific instances when the sex magician might find that a period of sexual abstinence is useful before commencing a working of sex magic, but this doesn't mitigate the importance of integrating sex magic into the larger context of a well-rounded erotic life.

Another commonly beheld phenomenon motivates this recommendation. It is all too easy for sex magicians to delude themselves into interpreting every one of their sexual fantasies as magical and initiatory in nature. We have observed ludicrous attempts to justify what is basically only a wish to satiate a sexual attraction under the mysterious cloak of magical motivation. As we have made clear, sex magic does require the activation of strong desire to function, but one must be wise enough to be able to distinguish the sometimes subtle but nevertheless significant difference between an act of left-hand path erotic initiation and a good fuck. To confuse the two is to degrade the value of both expressions of Eros, each of them worthwhile in their own right.

The Orgasm – Ten Seconds In Eternity

To grasp the essentials of left-hand path operations, we must first cast a cold eye on the basic human sexual experience in general. Since all magic – including the magic that is channeled through the flesh – is primarily a phenomenon of the psyche, we are immediately compelled to ascertain what exactly goes on in the human psyche during sexual activity. While one must

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be extremely careful about making generalizations in a realm as personal as erotic experience, a few fundamental phenomena seem to be so widely prevalent that they provide us with a viable launching pad for our investigation.

Your garden variety specimen of homo sapiens is likely to experience a fairly standard psychic response to the sexual act. Whether that act is consummated through masturbation, or sexual congress with one or more partners doesn't significantly affect the end result of most human sexual activity. During the various levels of excitation and physical exertion that ultimately conclude with the climax, the human being is typically rewarded by sexual pleasure with a profound moment of forgetting. In this sharp instance of temporary amnesia, awareness of the individual self is briefly but intensely obliterated. All mindfulness of the existence of the psyche as an independent agent and determinant of consciousness is temporarily wiped out by the waves of pleasure that culminate in the orgasm.

Since the keen awareness of the psyche's solitude is something that most human beings find rather uncomfortable to bear, the attainment of the transitory brain chemistry alteration which orgasm allows is effectively used as a tranquilizing drug, a means to numb individual consciousness. For

human beings who actively seek to forget themselves as much as possible, sex is just one of many tools available to distract the self from the self. Watching television, reading books, imbibing sedating chemical substances and any number of other trance-inducing techniques can be used to this end, but sex certainly provides one of the most intense feelings of psychic relief from the encumbrance of individual consciousness.

Thankfully, not all human beings reduce the keen pleasures of Eros into the dreary numbing of consciousness we describe above. There are those sensual connoisseurs who do approach sexuality in an alert and purposeful manner, although they might never consider themselves to be sex magicians.

The magician of the sinister current, in opposition to this general human drive to divert the attention from the psyche, strives not to forget. This is the first essential characteristic of left-hand path sex magic, and it is so important to the successful praxis of the art that we will be compelled to repeat it in other contexts.

Going against the normative human urge to lose one's self in an undifferentiated flow of sensation during the sex act, the left-hand path sex magician consciously utilizes the powerful physiological and psychic energies unleashed by eroticism to attain an even sharper perception of the many selves for very specific magical and initiatory purposes. Even at the moment of orgasm, which is often a time in which the psyche shuts down altogether in the swoon of bliss, the sex magician of the sinister current focuses sharply on sorcerous and/or self-transformative desires. To

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accomplish this singular state of mind while the body undergoes the ecstasy of sexual climax is a skill that does not come naturally but must be deliberately acquired through practice and discipline.

As we have already established, the left-hand path is consistently fueled by the breaking of natural instincts, the yoking of instinctive biological urges to the magician's will. It is sometimes incorrectly assumed that sex magic consists of nothing more than the spiritualization of the everyday sexual functions, and that the only skill required to perform this art is the ability to experience normal sexuality. If that were so, almost every human being would be a born sex magician, and no training or aptitude would be required. The significant point here is that the sex magician must develop a reliable ability to exercise mental control and concentration during erotic activities that would usually distract the practitioner utterly from any goal but the attainment of physical pleasure.

The reader who has never previously experimented with sexual magic may assume then that such a practice would rob sexuality of all of its pleasure. In fact, the opposite is the case; the retaining of self-awareness during the sexual act greatly increases erotic pleasure, which in turn provides the magician with more energy for magical use. As we shall see, the effective practice of erotic magic requires the magician to build up a state of energized lust far beyond what is normally required to stimulate a simple orgasm.

If sexual pleasure for the left-hand path sex magician is not a means of momentarily losing one's psyche in sensation or of blending one's psyche with one's lover, as it is can generally be described for most human beings, what indeed is it? Fundamentally, sex is viewed by the initiate as one of the most powerful and easily accessible altered states of consciousness available to creatures of the flesh.

Indeed, the intense exultation of sexuality is very often the only transcendent experience most human beings will ever know. Some moralists will consider this observation to be a sad commentary on mankind's low level of spiritual attainment, but for the sex magician it is simply a neutral fact of some considerable relevance to understanding the erotic instinct and its perennial fascination. During the four basic phases of human sexual response, which can generally be broken down to (1.) excitement, (2.) intensification of

sexual tension, (3.) orgasm, and (4.) resolution, the entire complex of body and mind is engaged in a process that allows a distinct transformation to occur. The sex magician does not merely passively experience these somatic changes, he or she takes control of these intense biological events and controls them for magical purposes.

Although the sex magician can eventually learn to make magical use of his or her entire sexuality in an increasingly subtle fashion, eventually transcending the sexual climax altogether, the first magical weapon of use to

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the sex magician is the orgasm. Furthermore, it is important for male magicians to understand that the orgasm is not necessarily the same thing as the ejaculation. As we have already described, some of the most intense orgasms are experienced as whole-body events that produce no emission of semen. But before that realm can be entered, the first key to successful sex magic is developing the acquired skill of remaining fully alert and focused through the intensifying stages of sexual arousal and especially during the moment of your sexual climax.

This training, which essentially fights the tendency to relax that the orgasm usually triggers, is best experimented with at first through masturbation, since nobody is as sensitive to your own idiosyncratic pattern of sexual response as you. Another advantage of beginning sex magical training with autoerotic practice is that even the most sympathetic sex partner can provide distraction from the work of coming to learn one's sex-magical capabilities. Gradually, the increased control over the altered state of orgasm can be extended into magically directed sex with a partner or partners.

Magically speaking, the orgasm is best understood as a profound release of energy occurring during a transformed state of psychic awareness. The magician taps into this energy to effect transformations of his or her inner (subjective) world or outer (objective) world – remaining fully conscious of the hidden connections between these two seemingly divergent manifestations of *maya*. For the left-hand path magician, it is especially significant that this orgasmic energy is generated from within the very body of the magician, rather than from an external source. It is also *very* useful that the orgasm in both males and females produces a physical manifestation in the form of sexual fluids, since these fluids can be utilized by the magician as an organic symbol of the magical desire at hand, as we have already described in the historical tradition of the left-hand path.

The moment of orgasm is of importance magically as a clear demarcation point, a liminal experience denoting the end of a deliberate build-up of energy. By concentrating one's focus on the realization of the magical goal at this zenith of sexual arousal, the magician has a clear and dramatic physical target upon which to fix his or her attention. Almost all of the established spiritual traditions of the world teach their adherents some form of psychic focus, although they almost universally condemn the states of altered consciousness attainable through sex as immoral, animalistic, or negative in some sense or the other. The orgasm can provide this sharp moment of heightened consciousness with a reliability and strength that few other techniques can match. It is no coincidence that mystics and visionaries have so frequently described their religious ecstasies in terms that resemble the physical bliss of the orgasm.

Like any altered state of consciousness, the orgasm can also provide the magician with profound visionary experiences that extend far beyond the

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utilitarian goals of sorcery alone. In the beginning phase of mastering sexual magic, the orgasm is usually the summit of the sex-magical operation – the juncture at which the amassed sex-magical energy of a working is unleashed to create your desires in the worlds. However, the preceding period of arousal is equally important. Generally speaking, the longer the magician remains in a

high state of stimulation before achieving orgasm, the more powerful the working will be.

For that reason, it's important that you have a very clear idea of what you personally find sexually exciting, and that you practice keeping yourself in an aroused state for as long as possible. Remember that this may be more of a challenge than it seems, since it is crucial that you simultaneously establish a very high level of mental concentration and focus while continually pushing your plateau of erotic tension higher. Male sex magicians have sometimes expressed the misconception that it's necessary to have many orgasms during a working. Although multi-orgasmic capabilities might serve some specific magical operations, it's usually preferable at first to focus the attention on one very powerful orgasm that brings the working to a definitive closure than dissipating the gathered energies in many separate climactic events.

The typical orgasm, for men and woman alike, usually lasts no more than six to ten seconds. Through experiment, male magicians will notice that this period of climax is customarily accompanied by four to six contractions of the penis, which release different mixtures of prostatic fluid and semen. The accomplished magician can easily vividly imagine his or her intended magical outcome in that time, by paring the desired occurrence down to its clearest and most easily grasped imagery or verbal expression. The beginning sex magician often relinquishes control over his or her working at this point, losing sight of the exact magical aim in the waves of pleasure released by the orgasm. These are the physical/mental phenomena that the sex magician first seeks to control in his or her own body, an authority over the flesh which allows the normal erotic experience to be transformed into a more effective magical tool.

Autoerotic Exercises

Many a neophyte sex magician, eager to jump into the licentious orgies that they have always heard were an integral part of sex magical practice, has been quite disappointed to learn that sex magical training begins with autoerotic exercises. However, considering that left-hand path sex magic is so centered on self-knowledge and self-control, it is appropriate to begin with the sexual energies of the self before moving on to the more complex interactions of sex magic with partners. (And no, you need not restrict your autoerotic manipulations to your left hand only.)

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In that the final aim of left-hand path sex magic is self-deification, many an aspirant has skipped the hard work of remanifesting one's being in progressive stages and jumped ahead to merely proclaiming him/herself a divinity in the flesh. It hardly needs to be said that with so high an aim megalomania is the most common psychic danger of the sinister current. If the left-hand path was a physical road, it would be littered with the burnt-out wrecks of all those who crashed at full speed into their own self-delusions.

To begin the process of understanding and undoing the seductive spell of *maya* upon the evanescent stuff of the mind, a gradual revelation of the hidden workings of reality that may ultimately lead the initiated percipient to discover the mystery of his or her own divine identity, we will begin with the most simple of *maya*-shaping methods – autoerotic experiment.

Although the left-hand path is defined by the interaction of two contrasexual energies – of both a biological and spiritual nature – the work begins in solitude. A very common misconception is that autoerotic sex magic is only a beginner's technique. In fact, masturbation workings remain an important aspect of the experienced sex magician's repertoire. It could be argued that the "selfish," self-centered nature of autoeroticism – which must not be confused with the delusional glorification of the superficial *ego persona* – lends itself particularly well to the individuating goals of the left-hand path.

However, continued exploration of the unique relation between your

independent consciousness and the body it inhabits remains an essential lifelong quest of the sinister current. There are facets of the erotic-magical self that can only be understood in solitude. This is not to say that the initiatory benefit of sex magic performed with partners is not equally valid. There has been, however, a persistent tendency among some sex magicians to maintain that a reliance on autoerotic techniques is somehow less advanced than working with partners. It must be stated that while the advantages of partners – and even groups of magicians – in sex magical rites is important to a complete erotic initiation, the solitary autoerotic magician should bear no stigma at all. That such a disclaimer even needs to be made illustrates the distrust generally felt for the deliberate isolationist in a compulsively social and collectivist culture.

Just as the left-hand path sorcerer/initiate is determined to maintain the ferocious independence of his or her autonomous consciousness, so must the actual physical practice of this form of sex magic begin in that state of aloneness that is sacred to the left-hand path. By inaugurating your erotic initiation through acts of self-pleasure, you take sole responsibility as the magical technician in charge of your own ecstasy. To embark on this quest through autoeroticism, rather than sex magic with others, serves as a reminder that the left-hand path initiate can never truly be initiated by another; he or she is ultimately undergoing a process of self-initiation. Even in the traditional guru-student relationship of the Tantric *Vama Marga*, it is

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understood that the guru or initiatrix merely guides the adept until the point he or she can hear the voice of the inner guru.

According to the cosmogony of ancient Egypt, the first divine intelligence was Atum. His consciousness existed alone in the entire universe, rising from the primeval waters of *Nou*, the first matter, to come into being as an independent entity. Atum, according to a Pyramid text, "put his penis in his hand that he might obtain the pleasure of emission thereby." His masturbatory hand was revered as a goddess, Atum's female partner in the rite. From this first act of autoerotic magic, Atum was said to have ejaculated all creation in successive stages, beginning with the incestuous siblings representing air and moisture, *Shu* and *Tefnut*. Similarly, the lefthand path sex magician, isolated in the universe, creates his or her magic from self-pleasure, beginning the semi-divine process of self-creation through an autoerotic deed. A modern understanding of this may be gleaned in the concept of self-love so central to the sometimes abstruse theories of the magical artist Austin Osman Spare, who we have already described as using autoerotic workings to communicate with transhuman entities he described as "astral."

The awakening of Self-love, as expressed through magical autoeroticism, can in itself be a rite of passage, separating the initiate from a culture whose emphasis is overwhelmingly focused on altruism and selfdenial.

Sexuality is often excused, or tolerated, only with the condition that *Eros* is directed toward another human being, ideally under the guise of love. *Eros* directed toward the self, however, is still condemned as a sterile act of selfish narcissism. Exploring this expression of sexuality, free from any connection to others, can be a key to left-hand path consciousness and the creation of a fully individuated psyche.

Your first physical exercise is simply to experience orgasm in a more self-aware and focused manner than you have formerly attempted. This will be your first deliberate attempt to know the orgasm not merely as an intense physical pleasure familiar from non-magical sexual stimulation, but apprehending its magical potential as an altered state of consciousness. During ordinary sex, we are usually so beguiled by pleasure alone that we pay little or no attention to the subtle psychic changes that orgasm engenders,

except in those cases when accidental awakening of profound altered states of consciousness occurs. This experiment prepares you to approach the orgasm from the more wakeful perspective of the magician.

At night, in a partially darkened room, bring yourself to orgasm using whatever method suits your preference. The only condition is that you do not use any external visual stimulation as an aphrodisiac agent, since you'll need to be centered on what's going on within your mind. The hours of darkness, as we have explained, are said to be reigned over by the Feminine Daemonic, according to the traditional left-hand path teachings. Nocturnal workings also

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allow you to concentrate more fully on your internal landscape, whereas light draws the attention away from the self. This is one of the many underlying reasons why sinister current magicians in every culture have always been attracted to the symbolism of darkness.

Concentrate on that six to ten second period of orgasm with an attention you have never previously brought to bear upon it. Some of the questions you should try to remain alert to are: What have you never noticed before about the orgasm's effect on your mind? What exact thoughts or impressions manifested in your mind during orgasm? Each individual magician will undergo entirely different mental phenomena. Some will notice that entirely trivial thoughts, meaningless fragmentary sentences or seemingly absurd images flash into the mind during climax. Others may experience intensely realistic but fleeting erotic hallucinations. Perhaps there will be an absence of psychic content altogether. At this point, the actual results are less important than the fact of your keen observation of them. The very act of focusing your attention on a phenomenon you normally take for granted subtly begins to change it. This step will eventually allow you to proceed to actually shaping the orgasm for magical purposes. Central to the magical principles of the left-hand path is the concept that if a magician can separate his or her consciousness from a given occurrence, he or she can also control it.

Experiments with autoeroticism as a consciousness-changing agent should then be engaged in with eyes closed, while seated in a position that allows the spine to be held upright. This posture reinforces the desired physiological conditions of wakefulness and concentration that are easily lost when attaining arousal and orgasm in a prone position. Practice maintaining a calm, deliberately detached state of mind, while periodically observing the exact nature of your orgasmic state of consciousness, an inner event which manifests differently for each of us. At first, it may prove difficult to remain sexually excited while simultaneously assuming an attitude of detachment from yourself, but with repetition this balance can be achieved.

The goals here are fairly clear-cut. The first is to simply develop an automatic ability for lucid perception of the stages of your own sexual arousal and climax that are normally obscured by sexual excitement. Secondly, you will be aiming to build up the faculty of sustaining unwavering psychic pointedness and attention even during the distracting trauma of the orgasm. Initial attempts should be made to prolong the pre-orgasmic plateau for as long as possible. More rigorous training in extending the duration of orgasm is best conducted with the assistance of a qualified teacher; this exercise is only an experimental beginning, designed to test your own capabilities.

Once you have experimented with your own ability to utilize autoerotic sorcery, it's also useful to conduct autoerotic experiments in

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tandem with another skilled magician. Some very effective workings have been carried out in this manner. For example, when both parties are separated by a long distance, coordinating a synchronized time to work towards a mutual goal can be beneficial. Similarly, this can be undertaken with a trusted accomplice by telephone. This method can be very effective for a number of

reasons. Because direct sensory contact between initiates is limited to only the auditory, all of the other senses become slightly more heightened, in much the same way as one who has lost his or her sight then finds an increased clarity in the remaining senses. Because the heightening of sensory awareness during a working is one of the key factors in its effectiveness, this is yet another means of achieving that goal. (This practice also makes for a surprisingly effective prelude to some of the unsettling phenomena of sex magic performed with a partner during the out-of-body experience.)

One final example of the dual autoerotic working is when the two partners are together, face to face. Although this would not qualify for the usual left-hand path rite melding of sexual fluids and energies via coitus, it can be a potent alternative. The advantages to this method are the heightened sensory and sexual stimulation of being in each other's company during the rite and yet remaining separate entities. It's also often easier to synchronize both orgasms to occur at exactly the same moment for the simple reason that each party knows what they need to do to prolong and control their climax. In this case, the sexual fluids may still be commingled immediately afterwards by way of a talisman or other object which is significant to the working.

Autoerotic Orgasm Prolongation

The skill of orgasm prolongation is actually focused on prolonging the state immediately prior to the orgasm.

The most immediately evident sign of orgasm prolongation in both genders is obviously that the wave of climactic pleasure continues past the usual threshold. However, since the body's apprehension of pleasure can be an extremely subjective phenomenon, you will need to take more objective physiological differences into account as well. When the female orgasm commences, for instance, the vagina typically begins to contract rhythmically, with each clenching action lasting for approximately one second. Integrating deep breathing into autoerotic exercises can very often allow women to significantly increase the number of vaginal contractions, which will be accompanied by an extension of orgasmic pleasure. By prolonging the pre-orgasmic state, these clenching actions become noticeably slower than during the usual orgasm, with each contraction lasting a few seconds. By continuing deep breathing and relaxation, in opposition to the body's tendency to resist the feeling of "letting go" that often hastens the orgasmic response, some women can prolong the pre-orgasmic phase for

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many minutes, even as long as a half-hour to an hour or more before actually climaxing. After becoming more skilled at this technique the female adept will find that the contractions during the eventual orgasm are longer and spaced farther apart than a normal orgasm, thus creating a prolonged orgasm.

When you first reach this plateau of pleasure, it can seem almost excruciating, a strange mixture of pain/pleasure that in itself sometimes discourages women from continuing in this state. In your initial attempts to prolong the pre-orgasmic phase, one must become accustomed to the added intensity that a longer build-up to climax brings, which is of such a different nature than the short, sharp burst of pleasure we usually encounter in everyday sexuality. This then transcends strictly physical response and becomes a matter of strengthening the will to open one's body up to previously unexpected levels of pleasure. Here you will begin to approach an understanding that the average experience of sex is of little use to the sinister current – much more powerful states of erotic energy are needed. The untrained mind's automatic inclination to pull back from altered states of consciousness and settle back into comfortable normalcy is the main force that stands in the way of orgasm prolongation.

If you can endure the first few minutes of prolonged orgasm, you will notice that the pleasure sharpens and recedes, ebbing like the flow of waves. Sexual arousal remains in a ever-rising state of excitatory tension,

rather than being suddenly relieved as with ordinary climax. Many women, capable of multi-orgasmic pleasure during sex, have confused the prolonged orgasm with the ability to climax repeatedly, which seems to be a relatively common occurrence. While this can also be useful for sex magical operations, it should be clear from the above description that the prolonged orgasm is quite different from the experience of many individual orgasms in a short period.

When male magicians are presented with the concept of the prolonged orgasm, they often wonder if we are speaking of an incessant, and possibly painful, ejaculation. This understandable misconception can be traced to the general confusion that endures concerning the difference between orgasm and ejaculation, which despite their frequent simultaneous manifestation, are not necessarily the same thing. In fact, the prolonged male orgasm, similar to its female counterpart, does not aim to increase the duration of the ejaculation itself, but to extend the far more intense period of pleasure that immediately precedes ejaculation. This phase of the orgasm, sometimes alternately referred to as the emission or peak state of the male climax, is usually experienced as the sharpest sensation of pleasure in the orgasmic process. It is typically experienced by many men as the "point of no return", the intense moment when ejaculation seems inevitable. In the normal sexual encounter, there is no compelling reason to resist surrendering to this

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overpowering feeling. During sex magical action, it is obviously desirable to seize on to this pinnacle of ecstasy for as long as possible.

While deep breathing and the concomitant bodily relaxation it causes during male autoerotic exercises does tend to slightly extend the pre-ejaculatory emission phase, the male magician will need to take added measures to make any dramatic difference in orgasm protraction. Again, this largely depends on how sensitive you are in applying stimulus to your own body during erotic excitation, a procedure of sexual self-learning that you can only measure by success. Your objective will be to continually bring yourself to the point of ejaculation as many times as you possibly can, repeatedly coming near to the edge, and then deliberately pulling back. It is important to understand that a steadily rising state of sexual arousal should be maintained throughout; it will defeat the purpose if you control the ejaculation by actually decreasing your level of excitement. Using a clock to measure your efforts, try to increasingly lengthen the period in which you sustain full erection at the peak of arousal without ejaculating. It is possible for some men to consistently prolong this phase of the orgasm for as long as an hour as mental control begins to work automatically with the increasingly trained physical response.

The physiological reaction you are ideally seeking to effect is the extended flow of clear prostatic fluid (commonly known as "pre-cum") from the engorged penis while remaining in a state of complete sexual tension. As your exercises continue, you will eventually be able to choose the exact moment to allow ejaculation; this phase of the orgasm should not be allowed to surprise you. It is not uncommon for the ejaculation itself to last considerably longer than usual after a prolongation of the emission phase of orgasm, with considerably more intense sensation than is normally evident. Controlling this aspect of your sexual response will not only greatly expand your physical opportunity to perform sex magic at a suitably high level of arousal and altered state of consciousness; it will also provide needed training in completing your orgasm at the desired time-point in future sex magical workings.

Regardless of gender, there are certain shared features to the prolonged male and female orgasm that bear analysis. It must be emphasized that the magician does not strive to prolong orgasm as a form of superficial athletic accomplishment. Although the trained augmentation of orgasmic pleasure definitely enhances the capacity for pleasure in one's non-magical

erotic life, the magical foundation of these exercises should be kept at the forefront.

If orgasm prolongation is achieved, even slightly, you should now have more opportunity to observe how the particular characteristics of orgasmically induced altered state of consciousness manifests in your mind. The greater the plateau of pleasure available to the sex magician, the greater is his or her ability to achieve sorcerous and initiatory aims. The dramatic

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physiological transformations created by orgasm are some of the most essential tools of the sex magician. When men and women undergo ordinary orgasm, we can expect predictable changes in bodily function. Blood pressure is elevated and the pulse increases, as well as the previously discussed changes in breathing and muscle tension. However, prolonging the orgasm seems to alter this pattern: after a while, the autonomous breathing rate, heart rate and blood pressure begin to drop, and a more profoundly apparent altered state of consciousness manifests. Even though the body remains in a heightened level of sexual excitement beneficial to the sex magician, presence of mind sharpens rather than relaxes.

Studies into prolonged orgasm have indicated that prolonged states of

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orgasm also increase alpha wave activity, simultaneously increasing synchronicity between the right and left hemispheres of the brain. The production of pleasure-inducing endorphins, activated by all orgasmic activity, is significantly increased. These are keys of far more value to the erotic initiate than all of the combined revealed texts and mystical revelations handed down by occult lore. Many of the mysteries of sex magic, long confined to the obscure domain of the occultist, are gradually coming to light in the laboratory. If science has been slow to examine the altered states attainable through sexuality, many sex magicians also tend to stubbornly resist the insight science can provide to magical practice. Considering how deeply rooted sex magic is in that "material world" so often despised by many magicians, we can only recommend that the left-hand path sex magician actively integrate the latest data from scientific sexological research into his or her magical work.

The Stilling Of The Mind And Autoerotic Visualization

When you have achieved some success with the above exercises, experiment with the stilling of any verbally formed thought during sexual arousal and orgasm; your goal is to achieve complete mental silence during arousal and orgasm. If your mind operates like most, you will find it nearly impossible to willfully stop the internal babble it generates. Should you already have applied yourself to the discipline of yogic training, you may have learned to stanch the flow of this naturally occurring hemorrhage of uncontrolled thought. Any form of magic, which is the reshaping of macrocosmic *maya* by reshaping the internal microcosmic *maya* of the psyche according to will, is impossible to execute until this thought-stilling skill has been secured. For the adept who is specifically drawn to the sexual magic of the left-hand path, this talent is best mastered through autoeroticism before engaging in sex magic with others. If nothing else, attempting the stilling of the mind during sexual arousal and orgasm will make you realize why the Tantrikas of the *Vama Marga* devote at least a year to breathing, mantra, and basic meditation techniques before the secret rite with *a shakti can* be performed.

Now select a familiar, simple image from your immediate environment to focus on, preferably an inanimate object. Study the object for as long a time as you require to memorize its appearance in detail. You may notice how little attention you actually pay to all but the most obvious features of any given material phenomenon. With eyes closed, in a darkened room, or under the night sky, attempt to visualize the image for a given period of time. During your first attempts, you will probably notice that the

image has a tendency to change drastically. Its size will alter, it will change color, it may even become something else altogether. As the mind wanders from the original image upon which you were concentrating your attention,

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you will realize that the object is a clear visual symbol of how difficult it is to focus for any prolonged period on any one thought form without distraction. As your ability to control the visualization of the image improves, so will the related capability for maintaining a chosen thought, an invaluable aid to magical work.

Repeatedly practice your ability to keep the imagined object from transforming, attempting to entirely stabilize the appearance of the image.

When you can reliably visualize the object in your mind's eye with no subsequent transformation of its appearance – an achievement that might well require a great deal of practice – begin cautiously experimenting with deliberately changing the appearance of the image. Select different colors for the object, or modify its size and shape. When you have attained the ability to decide what the object will look like at will with your eyes closed, try to visualize the object with your eyes open. Note that this is also best attempted in darkness; light provides needless distraction.

Test your ability to recall visual data accurately. Study a photograph until you believe you've memorized its appearance in detail. Close your eyes and try to see the photograph in its entirety. Then open your eyes and locate the details of the image that you somehow failed to include in your mental image. You will learn that the mind tends to absorb visual information in a

kind of impressionistic shorthand, often glossing over major factors, preferring to see what it wants to see rather than what's really there. One of the most useful techniques for perfecting your inner visualization is simply to painstakingly train the eye to be a more precise recording device. Persons gifted with a so-called photographic memory are endowed with a great advantage that can be exploited for magical work.

When you are satisfied that you've achieved reasonable proficiency with controlled visualization, attempt to combine this exercise with autoerotic stimulation and orgasm. Your aim should be to retain keen and detailed sensory awareness of the visualized image even in a heightened state of erotic excitement, and especially at the peak of orgasm. Initially, you may find that the augmentation of deep breathing and sexual arousal diverts your attention from the image, causing the visualized object to flicker or vanish completely.

Some are able to successfully keep the image within view only until the instant of orgasm. Others find that the mental focus needed to concentrate on the image substantially reduces sexual desire, not allowing for climax.

With repetition, you should be able to achieve both fully controlled visualization and forceful orgasm with no appreciable diminishing of sexual arousal or mental concentration. Although we have not yet added the crucial factor of a resolute desire to this exercise, the ability to balance the generation of a consistent mental image with simultaneous build-up and release of sexual energy has introduced you to the basic psychosexual

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functions needed for sexual sorcery. Once you have conquered this difficult facility, the remainder of your sex-magical training consists primarily of refining this ability and adding increasingly personal layers of meaning to your sex magic experiments. Once you have attained a consistent level of success at projecting one visual image on your mental screen, you should make a habit of frequently utilizing other images, adding increasing complexity to your exercises. Once inanimate objects have been mastered, move on to less easily fixed images, such as human beings. Practice the realization of accurate visualizations of people you know well, as well as of individuals you haven't seen in years.

During autoerotic exercises, attempt to project believable three-dimensional

films in your mind, peopled with a cast of your choice. During this phase of your self-initiation, meaning is less important than accurate visualization. Allow these internal scenarios to run wild, pushing the boundary of your imagination to its furthest frontier. Success in this exercise will have been reached when your visualizations are as vivid and as detailed as your most memorable dreams. Indeed, magical visualization might be thought of as a kind of dream, differing from ordinary dreams in that you are fully awake and that you are deliberately orchestrating and controlling the visual content you observe.

Do not be dissuaded if your initial attempts are rather flat, marked by dim color, and a general murkiness in the fine points. Daily practice will enhance your efforts tremendously. As your visualization powers become more refined, your first clumsy attempts will give way to much greater clarity, vividness of color, detail, and depth of perspective. In creating an ever more sophisticated and complex inner world composed of visualizations, you are developing something much more than a sharpening of imagery. You are actually exercising the god-like ability to create an accurate mirror of the world. This magical reflection of reality will soon be altered by your sexually energized will, thus creating alterations in the world itself.

Autoerotic Evocation Of Sexual Elementals

We are astonished at the frequency with which modern magical manuals and Orders teach that the invocation and evocation of deities is a simple little thing, one of the most elementary of tasks, as effortlessly accomplished as picking up the phone to order a pizza to be delivered. The aspiring magician is often led to imagine that theurgy consists of nothing more than obligingly addressing a pre-written text to the divine or demonic intelligence in question. Whether by lackluster delivery or with earnest Shakespearean bellows, the recitation alone is often presumed to be powerful enough to bridge the immense gap between the human and the divine realms. That the invoker/evoker may know next to nothing about the God or Goddess being

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summoned, and has learned none of the objective body of lore needed to form a sacerdotal link with the divinity seems to be of little concern.

"Dear Aphrodite/Set/Lucifer/Lakshmi/Tiamat/Whoever," the magician may implore, "I beseech you to appear and grace me with your powers." Now why the hell would any self-respecting deity show up in a total stranger's living room, just because He or She was invited? Don't gods and demons have better things to do with their time than entertaining the whimsical needs of curious humans? In contrast to this casual approach to communication with the Gods, we believe that a genuine theurgic working is one of the most difficult of magical undertakings. Theurgy necessitates a great deal of disciplined education concerning the precise nature of the intelligence sought, and an intense preparatory period of opening up one's body and consciousness to the deity's particular spiritual attributes. Ideally, setting a solid groundwork for human communication with the divine may require pilgrimage to the places in the world that were once shrines to the god/dess, study of the language most associated with the deity, and other liminal

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experiences that attune the psyche of the magician to the theogonic energy.

The left-hand path adept ultimately invokes divine forces to dwell in his or her own body during ritual sex as a phase that ultimately leads to the adept's own self-deification. However, this is an experience best worked up to in stages; to expect immediate results with sexual theurgy is to greatly underestimate the gulf between human and divine states of consciousness. However, the novice to the sinister current can begin the tricky business of communicating with non-human spiritual intelligences with a far more modest goal: the autoerotic summoning of sexual elementals. We have described the Eastern form of this practice, which in *Vajrayana* Tantricism

usually consists of the male adept's magical evocation of the *Dakini* as his sexual consort. (The same basic technique can of course be used by female initiates to create a male sex-magical elemental.)

In the West, these subtle-bodied sexual elementals have most commonly been known as the *succubi*. European demonological tradition

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associates the female succubus with the Hebrew demoness Lilith, Adam's disobedient first wife, whose long history can actually be traced to her earliest incarnation as one of a fairly minor Sumerian family of desert demons known as *lilu* (a male creature) and the females *lilitu*, and *ardat-lili*.

The 1610 Douay Bible calls Lilith a *lamia*, a word used by the ancient Romans to describe a sexual vampiress. The word *lamia* is derived from the Greek *lamōs* "a gaping mouth," a reference to this entity's reputedly voracious labia, which reputedly drinks semen from the erections of sleeping men who dream of her. The position she traditionally favors, sitting astride the male, can be compared to the *shakti's* position in the left-hand path rite. Women have just as frequently reported intercourse in their dreams with the male of the species, the incubus, a lascivious creature medieval demonology considered to be only one of the many forms taken by the Devil. *Incubo* is Latin for "nightmare", personified as a creature that literally weighs down on a sleeping person, a commonly recorded sensation described throughout the ages by those who have undergone a nocturnal rendezvous with these elementals, who are just as likely to be terrifying as they are desirable.

At the turn of the last century, The Irish poet W. B. Yeats, an initiate of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, famously described that MacGregor Mathers, the Order's leader, was beset by women undergoing incubus infestations. Yeats wrote that "one has called to ask his help against phantoms who have the appearance of dead corpses, and try to get into bed with her at night. He has driven her away with one furious sentence, 'Very bad taste on both sides.'"

Leaving aside the colorful legendry of Eastern *dakini* and Western *succubi* and *incubi*, it is apparent that men and women in every culture known to man have reported the realistic sensation of sexual congress with such beings. These visitations usually occur as the percipient hovers in the hypnagogic state between sleep and waking, but are not typically felt to be a dream. Quite often these phantom visitors take the form of a much-desired living person of the host's acquaintance. Encounters with such beings are hardly limited to those who consider themselves to be magicians; in fact, the uncanny sense of tangible reality that sex with these elemental creatures provides has often been the turning point that has convinced ingrained materialists to first explore esoteric study.

To experiment with the autoerotic evocation of sexual elementals, you will utilize the abilities of orgasm prolongation and controlled visualization with which you have already worked. At night, assume the same vertical seated position as previously, physically arousing yourself for as long as possible while visualizing with increased intensity the naked form of a sexually desirable partner. The elemental may be patterned after the appearance of a real person whom you find sexually appealing, or may be an

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entirely imaginary construct. One cautionary note; if visualizing a real person, don't allow this rite to be transmuted into a simple lust ritual aimed at casting a spell upon the visualized object of desire. It would defeat the purpose of the exercise if the initiate is merely trying to send a signal to another mortal – a far easier act of sorcery than the summoning of an elemental being.

Going beyond the mere visualization of the elemental, attempt not only to vividly see him/her, but to awaken all the other erotic senses. In successive exercises, strive to hear the elemental's breathing, and its voice; to

smell the alluring fragrance of its pheromones signaling its own sexual excitement. As your exercise proceeds to progress from these sense impressions, you will create the touch of its skin, and feel its touch on your skin, eventually being able to sense the very subtle physical aura of its presence in the material world. Only when you have been able to sustain these other sense impressions consistently will you proceed to consummate your sexual union with the creature you have called forth, during which you will taste its kiss and the flavor of its skin.

It is interesting that many magicians performing this exercise have felt that the elemental conjured was their own elusive anima or animus, an experience which can sometimes lead to an unexpected initiatory breakthrough in sexual self-understanding. Other magicians experimenting with the evocation of the elemental have found that the vivid realization of these internal beings has actually precipitated the arrival of a living person into their lives bearing great resemblance to the imagined elemental. It is not uncommon that a few successfully realized exercises of this type will lead to the spontaneous, unbidden, and not infrequently alarming appearance of the elemental in dreams or in other states of consciousness. Those who created elementals based on individuals already known to them have reported apparent telepathic experiences with the "real" subject. No matter what objective results this training of the sex-magical faculties leads to, its primary purpose is to accustom the adept to the art of deliberately controlling the stuff of *maya* in his or her mind, which is, after all, the act of creative generation exercised by the gods. Like Shiva, the initiate's consciousness has begun to project internal desires into a semblance of credible reality.

On the other hand, it would be all too facile to automatically assume that all communication with sexual elementals is only a startlingly realistic mechanism of the imagination. To do so would be to deny the possibility that your experiment has unsealed the gate between the mortal world and the other realms, facilitating contact with any number of the transhuman beings that haunt the left side of what was once referred to as "the land of (faerie."

With good reason, it will be remarked by some that schizophrenics, paranoiacs and mentally ill individuals in general suffer from an over-

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abundance of this "talent" of all too believably imagining what is apparently not really there. This is true, and it may well be that the magician's power of deliberate visualization partakes in some yet unknown manner in certain elements of the same brain chemistry disturbance that afflicts the mentally ill.

"Magical thinking" is in fact a commonly described symptom of various forms of mental illness. From the broader perspective of the magical tradition, we can only admit that while the regular awakening of these little-used imaginative faculties can be dangerous for the unbalanced individual, they can also be of immense value to the magician grounded solidly on terra firma.

Rather than simply dismissing magic as madness, as the clinically inclined are wont to do, the visualization and imaginative powers required by the magician may have much more in common with the almost hallucinatory realism experienced by creative artists in the process of projecting their personal worlds into forms detectable by the senses of others. Artists, like magicians, have served as mediums, bringing into consciousness those aspects of reality unperceived by most minds. Of course, the connection between madness and artistic creativity has not gone unnoticed. Very much to the point, Salvador Dali once remarked that "the only difference between Dali and a madman is that Dali is not mad". So it is with the magician, who routinely enters worlds that other humans spend all of their energies avoiding.

As with all left-hand path practices, the inherent pitfalls of even this first foray into the mental generation of elementals cannot be overlooked.

One of the most useful and practical approaches to sex with daemonic entities has been provided from a perhaps unexpected source: the author

William S. Burroughs, whose writings and interviews consistently reveal a perception and working knowledge of erotic initiation rarely observed in more traditional magical specialists. The biographer Victor Bockris, who was interviewing Burroughs in 1980 for his *With William Burroughs: A Report From The Bunker* mentioned that he had experienced what he described as "extremely intense ... sexual... hallucinations." Considering that Bockris was, by his own confession, entirely ignorant of the traditional magical lore of the succubus, it is interesting to note that his experience is entirely in accord with classic descriptions of such visitations. Clearly, the phenomenon known as the succubus/incubus – by whatever name one prefers to call it – is not a phantasm inspired by religious indoctrination, but a fairly universal aspect of human sexual experience, albeit one confined to the unspoken shadow side of our erotic existence. Bockris described his disturbing guest to Burroughs:

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been having the most intense sexual fantasies morning and night for three months. Confused, I initially thought she'd come over to see me and wondered how she's gotten in. Then I realized that this 'wasn't really her'. But whatever it was, here she was and my strong sexual desire for her was being fulfilled. The creature's presence was extremely delicate and I realized that I must move slowly and calmly, making no sudden lunges, or she would evaporate. Now what was that?"

Burroughs replied that this was "a visit by the demon lover, my dear!" Acknowledging his own frequent encounters with these mysterious erotic creatures, Burroughs recommended that "We urgently need explorers who are willing to investigate these uncharted possibilities and at least consider taking a positive attitude toward sex with other beings," citing Robert Monroe's discussion of sexual encounters during out-of-body experiences in his book *Journeys Out Of The Body* as the "most objective modern description of sex with a succubus."

"If we are going to investigate incubi and succubi seriously, I really feel that we must begin by admitting that psychiatrists have no more objective proof that they come from our imaginations than priests have that

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they come from the devil ... we may be able to throw some light on this mystery if we can learn anything from recent sexual research on the brain. We have only just become aware of the brain's being the primary erotic zone in humans." Speculating on the possibility that the succubus/incubus image may have a physical origin in the right hemisphere of the brain, Burroughs suggested that "when we consider the possibility of electronic brain stimulation we could create an incubus or succubus of our choice at will, which would lead to the development of the Electronic Whorehouse, where anybody could get satisfied without the encumbrance of the physical body."

Anyone interested in pursuing the arcane pleasures of elemental eroticism will do well to consider Burroughs' pragmatic rules of thumb regarding the potential hazards of intercourse with these beings: "As I see it, an incubus or succubus can be harmless, or it can be destructive. Like any sexual situation, the danger depends on how you handle it. Not to control such a situation can undoubtedly lead to negative effects, but we need not adopt the uniformly negative opinions of the church, psychics and psychiatrists that these are necessarily evil or dangerous beings. All sex is dangerous.... How many people have been ruined by a sexual partner? Sex does provide a point of invasion and the incubi and succubi simply make us intensely aware of this ... Certain things are clear to me: I would say that

people who are visited by someone they want to fuck in the form of the incubus or succubus usually stop having sex with the body of the desired person. The obsession itself would seem to become more important and desirable. The magnetic nature of the sexual attraction between these beings and their subjects interferes with other physical sexual forces. Any strong sexual hallucination I have had has cut down on my actual sexual experience, and has proven to be quite destructive from that point of view. Secondly, I believe it is wise not to let the person who has visited you in the form of a succubus know about it because they may realize the power they have over you and use it. Thirdly, anyone attempting to make contact with a succubus should know that they are apt to be a nuisance, difficult to get rid of, and can be exhausting if they get out of control. A succubus can be a good servant.

He or she is always a bad master."

With those words of caution, we move on to consideration of left-hand path sex magic performed with even more unpredictable entities – human beings.

When Two Becomes Three – A Rite Of Creation

The measure of control obtained over orgasm and mental phenomena through the preceding preparatory exercises can now be applied to the more challenging interaction with a sex-magical consort. It is only in the sexual

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union of the two contrasexual forces of anima and animus that the full powers of the left-hand path can be encountered. The next recommended step is to return to the first section of Chapter Two, entitled *Playing With Maya – Left-Hand Path Magic*, and the entirety of Chapter Three.

What you read the first time as theory can now be read again through different eyes and adapted to your own practice with a partner. Again, the purpose of this exercise is not to painstakingly recreate the traditional *Vama Marga* secret rite in its Indian form – unless, of course, that form would exercise a strong effect on your psyche – but to transfer the essential principles embodied therein and render them in a vital manner to the conditions of your own current situation. For example, what taboos of relevance to your own specific limitations would you and your chosen consort need to ritually break as a consciousness-altering prelude to the sexual *maithuna*? How do 21st century Westerners, raised in a largely secular culture, effectively utilize symbolism to allow themselves to ritually transform their sexual partners into divine beings? Even an initial consideration of these and other questions related to the creation of your own secret rite will make it clear why the old era of dictatorially guided magical instruction provided from above has come to a welcome end. In such a fragmented and chaotic environment, with so little common ground, the only successful magus and adept will be he or she *who* has the vision and imagination to build a personally constructed bridge to illumination.

At its most sublime metaphysical and mystical level, left-hand sexual union is an act revealing the divinity of one's sexual partner and one's self in the flow of the sinister current. The female partner becomes Vama herself, the multi-formed "She of the Left," who with her wild dance of seduction conquers and illuminates He on the Right with her Shakti power. For those only beginning to gain an apprehension of this essentially nonnatural experience – non-natural because, as Swami Satyananda Saraswati points out in his *Kali Puja*: "She is in the universe, yet separate from it" – a symbolism that more closely mirrors the pattern of the familiar natural world can be enlightening. By initially confining a couple's use of sexual energy to the more objectively observable actions of sorcery, a gradual approach to the remote summit of left-hand path liberation can be inaugurated.

Heterosexual coitus in a sex magical context is obviously a powerful liminal action, which is one of the many reasons it has always been accorded a ritual status. Whether you are being penetrated or you are the penetrator, the act of intermingling the genitals physically crosses a border and binds

both magicians. It also is the sexual act most likely to make both magicians more sharply aware of the symbolism of magic as creation, an impregnating of will into the matrix of the world. Sacralized copulation can be likened to the proverbial electrical plug (male) and socket (female) being united to

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create a voltage flash (the creation) --both are needed to ignite the current. Therefore, the orgasms of magicians who seek to "give birth" to a common magical force might best be experienced during ritual coitus, an act which will support their mutual understanding of the act of left-hand path sex magic as creation. One psychic element that always plays its part in any sexual magic, even if it is deeply unconscious, is the diversion of reproductive energy from the possible physical creation of a human child to the less tangible generation of magic. Just as the genetic material of two parents remanifest in their child, so can the erotically intermingled thought processes and magically conceived desires of two magicians give birth to a subtle brain-child which owes something to both magicians, but is more than the sum of its parts. This is the exteriorization of the inner creation of the divine androgyne revealed in the alchemical *unio mystica*.

This model is a useful one to experiment with since it teaches the erotic sorcerer an important aspect of magic usually ignored; like children, magical creations are comprised of the inherited genetic material of their parents. Don't be surprised if your magical goals, once realized, have all the same strengths and weaknesses that you do. They were, after all created in your body/mind. Similarly, there is a certain amount of "nurturing" of the magical creation required by the magician. Anything that is brought into being, whether on the biological or Daemonic level, needs guidance if it is to mature. As with flesh and blood offspring, one must be prepared for a magical creation to also develop a will of its own, independent in unpredictable ways from the originating will of the "parents." This unavoidable element of chance that arises in sex-magical creation reflects the previously described living relationship of the left-hand path magician with the ever-shifting *maya* of the phenomenal universe, as opposed to the magical model that posits the fixed imposition of will on a dead, static universe.

Two left-hand sex magicians can convey the raw substance of sexual creation from engendering biological birth in the material world to more esoteric levels of creation on subtle planes of reality. Such a willed elevation of sheerly animal sexual energy to the divine mode of being is a simplified expression of what Eastern initiates would understand as the rising of the sexual energy to the crown *chakra*. After attaining a state of union with each other that fuses the two broken halves of sexual essence into a transcendent androgyne consciousness, the *hindu* of the sorcerer's semen flows forth – in outer ejaculation or an inner state, according to desire – to give birth to the creations of the couple's united will, the brain-children of their melded psyches. The male magician knows his seed is being absorbed into the vulva of the Feminine Daemonic, his *shakti*, the hidden divine intelligence of the left-hand path, just as she knows that she is become the secret mother, whose eggs already embody the form of the couple's mutual desire. After a period of

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gestation in the womb of the Feminine Daemonic, the magical goal is born into the world. One might conceive of the couple's magical goal, once realized, as a Daemonic child, a living intelligence born from the marriage of the human and the divine.

If you knew that the potential father or mother of your child was likely to bestow some hereditary disease on your progeny, you would think twice before conceiving. The same caution should be exercised in creating a child of magic with a sex magical partner – if your consort seems unclear, confused or skeptical about your mutual goals, that uncertainty, confusion, and skepticism will most certainly manifest in the results of your working.

When one looks at sexual sorcery as a kind of non-corporeal parenting, the importance of choosing one's sex magical partner judiciously becomes apparent. Surprisingly, this question has been little addressed in previous modern works on sex magic.

The Mystery Of The Other

The aspiring erotic initiate who wades through the extant Western sexmagical literature – most of it superficial dross aimed at a sentimental, emotion-driven New Age market – will find detailed charts of how to choose an appropriate "lover" or "soulmate" based on such factors as astrology, tarot cards, and other popularized divination systems. This prevalent – and irrelevant – women's magazine approach is grounded on the fixed idea that sex magic can only function properly if the connection between the two partners conforms with maudlin popular notions of love. But as we have previously taken pains to establish, the mysterium of the sinister current sexual exchange rises above the social casting assigned to the genders symbolized by that frequently debased and trivialized panacea called "love." Indeed, once confronted with the hidden nature of sexuality and gender that left-hand path union can ideally reveal, it becomes increasingly impossible for the initiate to return to that stunted soap opera. Therefore, it should be understood that the unique bond between left-hand path erotic consorts does not fall under the aegis of the relatively recent pop psychology concept of the "relationship," which is invariably a charade shackling the transcendent powers of sex and desire to the safe playing of societally scripted roles. The harmless but ill-informed bastardization of some Tantric left-hand path techniques by profane marriage counselors and sex therapists for couples has also contributed to spreading the false idea that sexual initiation must automatically be centered on discovering or preserving a romantic relationship.

Other sex magical texts are written with the apparent assumption that the reader already has at his or her disposal the ideal companion with whom the sexual mysteries of the Other may be effectively accessed. But as we

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have previously suggested, once the would-be magician examines the actual erotic environment of his or her own everyday life – as opposed to romanticized occult fantasies – this may not at all be the case. We have explained earlier why the sexual vampire and the partner who awakens no desire in you must be ruled out. But what pragmatic criteria should you be looking for? If you wait for the perfect consort to materialize before your experiments begin, an error we have often observed among those new to the left-hand path, you will never develop the basic skills required for physical initiation. There is no way of avoiding the fact that initiation in the modern world is often a trial and error affair. You may be fortunate enough to locate a sex-magical consort with some prior experience and knowledge, a situation which can greatly maximize your opportunities for genuine awakening. But it is just as likely that you will make your first attempts at erotic initiation with a partner who can teach you nothing – a case of the blind leading the blind which can prove to be a frustrating dead end.

The traditional criteria for a sexual initiator or initiatrix sought by the Eastern Tantrika, as outlined in Chapter Three, are obviously of little value in the modern West, although one can attempt to adapt some of them to contemporary culture. Let us consider a few examples of viable sex-magical alliances, drawn not from distant Tantric lore, but from the real lives of some current practitioners of the left-hand path.

Long-Term Partners

If you are currently romantically and/or erotically involved with one specific sex partner, you might presume that this person would logically be your best preference in choosing a sex-magical associate. The advantages of working with the sexual energies of many different partners has long been a tradition

in almost every imaginable school of erotic magic, but there is no reason why strictly monogamous couples of any gender combination cannot be equally effective sex magicians. Certainly, many beginning sex magicians *have* had the fortuitous experience of discovering that their current "significant other" (to use the unfortunate bureaucratic phrase) is also an ideal companion for erotic sorcery. If so, the trust, proven compatibility and sexual familiarity enjoyed by some long-term companions can allow for a wider berth of experimentation, based on intimate knowledge of each other's idiosyncratic pleasure thresholds and predilections. This can sometimes permit a couple to explore profound depths of sex magic that partners with less proven compatibility with each other may find difficult to reach.

However, like any extreme of sexual behavior, monogamous sex magic must be grounded in a certain amount of discipline. If the sex magician with many partners is often confronted with the problem of adjusting to entirely unexpected sexual energies, the monogamous sex magician faces the

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opposite dilemma. He or she must learn to attain very high levels of sexual arousal conducive to ecstasy in conditions that may well be more comforting than exhilarating. Most strictly monogamous relationships are motivated because of religious custom, legal or financial considerations, a desire to please others (family, friends, the neighbors), bondage to jealousy or other unknowable fears. On the other hand, simple cowardice and laziness is very often the glue that holds many such bonds together.

Safety and serenity, two widely observed practical benefits of happily monogamous couples – as opposed to merely miserable ones – are not traits that tend to inspire the awakening of the sinister current in the psyche. If this is your situation, you and your partner will need to develop conscious strategies to integrate the element of surprise necessary in all workings and to keep your erotic interaction wakeful. Some monogamous sex magicians do this by introducing previously untried sexual acts into their mutual workings, experimenting with unfamiliar sexual role-playing as an adjunct to magic, or exploring fetishes or personal sexual taboos within their workings. The remanifestations created through initiation on the left-hand path can be so fundamentally transformative that the constant regeneration of an initiated couple's selves can be enough to provide the needed electricity to their erotic relations.

However, despite all of the doubtlessly adorable traits the person you're presently enamored of might possess, a serious sex magical interest, proclivity and proficiency might not necessarily be among them. Just because you may take stock in and understand all of the preparatory prerequisites for sinister current sex magic doesn't mean that your intended other half of the equation does. Indeed, considering how often it is that individuals are attracted to each other because of their profound differences, rather than due to their similarities, it would even be surprising if a leaning toward this shadowy art was automatically shared by your customary erotic partner.

Therefore you must be at least prepared for the possibility that the person you are most emotionally and erotically bonded with is simply left cold by the whole idea of sex magic. For any number of reasons he/she may find the whole topic absurd, frightening, stupid, boring, or any other of the variety of reactions this subject has been known to elicit. The relevant prerequisite in that case would be the psychological strength and selfawareness to know how to wisely pursue your interest in sex magic without the participation of your primary emotional/erotic partner. Forcing an uninterested party to take part in the potentially transformative and psychedisruptive operation of erotic sorcery as a favor to you, or out of a sense of duty to your "relationship" practically guarantees lack of magical success.

The left-hand path places a high premium on individual autonomy and sovereignty; demanding that a non-magical mate engages in magic against

his or her will is contrary to sinister current ideals of liberty.

Should your existing mate be unreceptive to sex-magical experiments, absolutely nothing of magical value will be gained by trying to "convert" them. Half-assed and lukewarm sexual magic is about as potent and worthwhile as any other activity engaged in without conviction. However, if your partner is not threatened by the alternative of your seeking sex-magical partners outside of the limits of your already established emotional-erotic alliance, and you feel that your bond is secure enough to survive whatever emotional strains may be incurred, a ready solution has been found. However, as practical a route as this may be for some, due to our observation of many real-life sex magicians, we do not recommend this choice for individuals whose pre-existing relationship does not already mutually allow for sexual contact outside of the primary relationship. The reason for this is simple: the powerful emotions and unexpected sexual transformations that can be tapped in to through sex magic of any variety always open up individual possibility of self-change. That self-change can – and frequently does – lead the magician to consider his or her life in a new light, with an obvious emphasis on the reexamination of one's entire erotic being.

All too often, the pursuit of sex-magical partners is used to "magically" legitimize what is actually nothing more spiritual than a run-of-the-mill affair, or to enliven a sex life grown tired through familiarity. Only you can ascertain whether those are your real motivations. In any event, be cognizant that using the exotic camouflage of sex magic to mask the desire for a wider variety of sex partners is a kind of self-delusion that will most likely work significantly against the likelihood of magical success. One of the little discussed beneficial side-effects that serious sex magical work can effect in the psyche is to destroy some of the hypocrisy and anhedonic sexual mores that still afflict sexual relations despite some of the superficial openness evident in the last few decades. By sharply focusing the individual's attention on what his or her real sexual desires consist of within the context of the intense magical experience, much of the culturally and religiously inherited repression of full and open erotic experimentation tends to wither away.

The result is that sex magicians incline towards applying a measure of honesty toward their sexual lives that society generally shrinks from -- if for no better reason than that they must for the sake of effective magical work. Therefore, to name only one example, the whole guilty soap opera of slinking around to have an affair so typical of the general run of romantic relations is often transformed into an entirely open environment of sexual adventure enjoying the full knowledge of both partners in a couple.

Of course, we have known sex magicians whose erotic sorcery is only performed in secret with partners unknown to their mates, long-term lovers or

spouses, who claim that this "forbidden" practice provides their erotic sorcery with an extra jolt of illicit force. Often those requiring such subterfuge to activate the needed sexual energy to perform their magical workings are the products of anti-erotic religious upbringings, and their "breaking of the rules" is a phase of rebellion against familial and social taboos. Considering the unique erotic needs that span human sexuality, we would never presume to regulate the personal lives of sex magicians, but would merely point out that our personal experience has indicated that openness seems to be of far more abiding use to magical success.

Even those couples who do successfully entertain a long-range collaboration in erotic sorcery learn that specific sex magical work may require the introduction of another partner more suitable to that particular operation. For instance, one partner may wish to explore the magical benefits of sexual submission or dominance in an erotic sorcery context, but find that

one's current partner is unsuited or uninterested in taking the needed opposite role required for such work. Considering the unpredictable variety of human sexual desires and the wide range of fetishes and specialized erotic practice that can be useful to the sex magician, any number of possible combinations can be imagined that may fall outside of the boundaries of a well-suited sex magical couple's repertoire.

To sum up, no matter what the self-imposed limits or possibilities of your erotic situation, once one opens the Pandora's box of left-hand path sexual magic, the need to be ready, willing and able to deal with the deepseated metamorphoses that may occur to one's inner erotic identity and one's external relations with those closest to you must be taken into account. The whole emotional minefield of jealousy, envy, competitiveness between sex partners, unexpected outbreaks of possessiveness, and many more primordial anthropoid behavior patterns can easily be activated as side-effects of this art. Many sex magicians have consciously used erotic sorcery to overcome these emotional constraints that arise in the psyche. Others have been hopelessly mired in them, losing sight of their magical goals altogether and destroying long-term friendships and erotic alliances in the process.

There are a few pragmatic methods that have helped some long-term partners to fortify the intensity of sinister current energy needed for their workings.

Couples who customarily sleep in the same bed every night might try sleeping apart from each other, in different rooms, for a few days prior to a working, so that individual consciousness can be more acutely appreciated during the rite. This is not only useful for the individual sex magician, it allows one's partner to more clearly perceive you as a separate entity apart from the sometimes blurred identity lines of coupledness. It can also strengthen a sex-magical working performed by a regular couple to separate completely

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for a few days, reuniting at a preplanned time and place suitable to the working's goal.

A deliberate and strictly observed period of abstinence has been observed to bring energy to all sex magical operations, but can be of particular service to couples who enjoy an active sex life with each other (it's less useful for couples who only have sex with each other infrequently). The interval of self-denial marks the sexual working as a more deliberate and focused application of Eros than is experienced in ordinary sexuality. The breaking of a prolonged sexual fast provides much added impetus to a working, signaling the psyche to pay attention, because something important is happening. As has already been explained, any symbolic action that removes the working from ordinary experience clarifies the liminal function of ritual to the magician's mind – when this crossing of a threshold is rooted in the body, it is all the stronger. On a less esoteric level, abstinence can greatly increase the level of sexual desire felt by both partners, with an ensuing elevation of erotic energy that can be magically manipulated

Strangers

Some sex magicians insist on always informing their partners if they are utilizing their sexual energy for magical purposes. Others perform sexual magic with unknowing accomplices with no pangs of conscience. So long as the actual sexual activity engaged in is with the full consent of your partner, we do not consider it necessary to communicate the magical operations going on in your own psyche. Each individual left-hand path magician must develop his or her own code of conduct according to personal – rather than tribal – morality.

In some cases, rather than carefully choosing a partner, the magician performs his or her sorcerous action with a stranger. Some workings will benefit from incorporating the entirely random element of what is known colloquially as the "one-night stand". The energy unleashed by the unalloyed

lust of two complete strangers – a lust uncomplicated by the often dampening presence of domesticity, familiarity or romantic endearment – can provide powerful fuel for sex magic. The contemplation of Eros in its pure form can be an initiatory event in its own right, allowing the initiate to access the sacred and numinous power of sheer desire.

Such random encounters often allow the sorcerer to focus on his or her magical goal without the hindrances that a psychological connection with a known partner can sometimes breed. In a heterosexual context, the distinct male and female polarities can be focused on free of attachment to any specific biographic details. Under ideal circumstances, the relative anonymity of the random erotic pairing permits the couple to temporarily become the primordial man and woman, Shiva and Shakti, *lingam* and *yonis* as eternal symbols separated from normative time and space. This deliberate anonymity

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and depersonalization of the sexual partner *has* also frequently been obtained by engaging prostitutes for this purpose. Here, we see the same principle at work that informed the nameless union of the *ishtaritu* and her visitor in the rites of sacred whoredom referred to earlier.

The left-hand path erotic sorcerer can derive auxiliary power from sex magic with strangers by using these encounters to engage in sex practices not normally indulged in. The anonymity and transient nature of these encounters might allow the magician to access aspects of his or her erotic being never intimated with familiar partners. In the ritual space/time of a rendezvous without a future, the magician can test the boundaries of the self, temporarily taking on sexual personae quite unlike those assumed in everyday life. At the opposite extreme from exploring your unfulfilled fantasies, violating your personal sexual taboos with a stranger can be of equal magical value. The expansion of sexual identity into previously unexplored territory can blast an opening in one's fixed conception of self, making all levels of the psyche plastic enough to be reshaped by the will during the ecstatic peak of the working.

The Purely Sex-Magical Alliance

Some magicians find it useful to develop a working collaboration with another magician that is limited exclusively to the practice of sexual magic, thus channeling the mutual erotic energy raised to magical objectives alone.

These agreements allow the magicians involved to concentrate their time together purely on carnal initiation without diffusing the powers of arousal and orgasm in non-magical sex or romantic complications. One advantage of such alliances is that the magicians can very easily enter ritual time-space together, since they only meet for this one specialized purpose.

This kind of alliance encourages the creation of a magical atmosphere unclouded by small talk or other social niceties. Both parties are then freed to explore the heights and depths of pure sex magic as it exists beyond the ordinary conventions of human behavior, and return to their respective separate lives when their workings are completed. The clarity and precision of this form of sex magic has much to recommend it, since it is normally so easy to trivialize the sacred character of sex magic.

The very sight of such an ally can be enough to signal the psyche to open the inner gates to the Daemonic realm, a process which can be harder to achieve under less precisely defined circumstances. In this regard, whenever and wherever the two collaborators converge an instant sex-magical ritual chamber is created, a mutual psychic zone reactivated and strengthened with each encounter. An arrangement like this is often suitable for the magician who is involved with another sexual partner or spouse who is simply not interested in sex magic, or who does not make for an appropriate sex-magical

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partner. Those sex magicians who wish to investigate the possibilities of sadomasochistic erotic magic may also prefer to do so within the context of

work with another sex magician, outside the boundaries of one's primary romantic/sexual bond.

Very powerful magical results can be obtained by occasionally dedicating all of your sexual energies to sex magic alone for a specified period of time, deliberately curtailing any non-initiatory use of Eros. Two long-term sex-magical allies might have cause to carry out a prolonged working that lasts many weeks or even months. Under such circumstances, sexual intensity and psychic focus on the long-term goal can be maximized by limiting all of your sexual activity to the series of workings with one designated ally. This repeated generation and release of sex-magical energy between two magicians – as opposed to a one-time working – is a technique that lends itself best to the realization of very long-range transformations in the psyche or in the manifestations of the external universe. The successive waves of sex-magical energy activated in this manner might also be aimed at periodically bombarding a particularly stubborn or deeply entrenched magical target not likely to be altered by only one working.

Although the sex-magical alliance dedicated completely to initiatory activity alone may work well for months or even years, it has happened that these bonds can become less clear-cut with the passage of time. Any interaction involving the unpredictable power of Eros and the messy ambiguities of human emotion is likely to develop unforeseen complications. Should you form such a magical affiliation, don't be at all surprised if the strong emotional covenant created by such intense focus on sex magic leads to the intrusion of romantic passion or interpersonal conflict, with a corresponding lessening of magical clarity. Even without such emotional entanglement, any magical bond may simply run out of steam. The left-hand path magician welcomes spontaneous change and transformation. However, he or she will not cling to situations that have radically evolved beyond their original starting point and no longer provide what the initiate needs. Indeed, you should be somewhat suspicious of any magical collaboration that remains unchanging; stagnation is a sure sign that the vitality of your magical practice has been lost.

The Third Sex And The Left-Hand Path

The Majesty of Set said to the Majesty of Horus: "how beautiful are thy bullocks." —Hieratic Papyri from Kahun and Gurob

The heterosexual reader may be inclined to skip this section, assuming that it will surely have no pertinence for him or her. However, the illuminated libertine has something to learn by contemplating every facet of erotic initiation, even those that present no personal attraction. On a pragmatic level,

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successful dual-erotic sex magic *per se* is not dependent on the genders or genitals of the magicians involved. The disciplined build-up of sexual arousal to intense heights of ecstasy, the process of visualization and altered state of consciousness, and the release of the magician's will during wakeful, fully conscious orgasm can be effectively achieved through any sexual act – magic is completely blind to one's sexual preference and chosen mode of pleasure.

The traditional *Vama Marga* teaching, in its transcendence of all taboos and establishment of the individual adept as arbiter of morality, condemns no human or divine action as perverse, immoral or unnatural. If anything, the left-hand path celebrates the "unnatural" as a manifestation of divinity, an expression of the initiate's heroic transcendence of the boundaries restricting the *pashu*. While not technically a Tantric cult, among some devotees of the erotically abandoned Indian deity Krishna, male adepts take on the appearance of the voluptuous *gopis*, the god's ever lascivious female consorts, whose lustful frenzy in his presence is reminiscent of the devotees of Dionysus. These male sacred androgynes even go so far as to retreat from society during the lunar cycle of menstruation, observing the widespread taboo against menstrual blood. The Tantric left-hand path, it has been said,

rejects nothing, least of all individual erotic predispositions. Nowhere in the Tantras does one find the vilification of male or female homosexuality that abounds in the Western magical tradition revived in the nineteenth century.

We have already described Crowley's ambiguous attitude to homosexual magic, despite his own introduction of a homosexual grade to the O.T.O.'s sex magick curriculum, and his own frequent use of male-to-male buggery as a magical sacrament. Crowley's fellow Golden Dawn alumnus, Dion Fortune, was no less damning. In her influential *Sane Occultism*, she sniffs that the "unnatural vice known as homosexuality ... [is] a very cruel form of vice, as the victims are usually boys and youths on the threshold of life." Madame Blavatsky held much the same views on "the love that dare not speak its name", which did nothing to stop the leading Theosophist C. W. Leadbetter from indulging his taste for young boys, a predilection that led to no small amount of scandal for the puritanical Madame's sect. The homosexual sex magician who turns to the classic texts of the occult revival for inspiration will find little more than the prejudices of the Victorian age transmuted into esoteric language.

All of this outraged moralizing is thankfully absent from left-handed Tantra. However, the homosexual sex magician of either gender must come to terms with some of the basic principles of left-hand path erotic initiation that might not be immediately apparent. It would be very easy, for instance, to mistakenly apply the absolute liberty sought by the left-hand path adept to modern politicized conceptions of sexuality. But just as we have urged the reader not to confuse the left-hand path reverence for the feminine power of

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Shakti with mundane feminism, so must it be made clear that the left-hand path does not presume that heterosexual and homosexual sexuality are exactly the same phenomenon.

In fact, it recognizes that very distinct magical energies are released in magical operations conducted between a man and a woman, a woman and a woman and a man and a man. Not necessarily better or worse, but very definitely different. This would seem to be only common sense, but for those who would like to erase all sexual, racial and gender differences in one undifferentiated blur of enforced equality, offense is sometimes taken at any suggestion of drawing a distinction between disparate forms of eroticism. As the first section of this book should have made amply clear, there is no getting away from the fact that the traditional left-hand path is inexorably focused on the unique qualities of sexual metaphysics evident in male-female eroticism. The *yonis* and the *lingam*, *Shiva* and *Shakti*, semen and menstrual blood, the lunar left and the solar right: the prevalence of all of these symbols in the sinister current illustrate that this is primarily a magic concerned with the mingling of sexual polarities, physical opposites incarnated most tangibly in the coupled bodies of the male and female initiate. Its magic is essentially the magic of bipolar electromagnetism bonding and surpassing its limitations through sexual ecstasy.

Same-sex magic, obviously, is monopolar in character. The effects it achieves are based on the principle of like unto like, rather than on the transcendence of opposition manifest in heterosexual sex magic. The traditional Tantric left-hand path teaching, while it does not condemn homosexuality, does maintain that the sexual polarity in a homosexual's body operates differently than in a heterosexual's physical organism, being essentially reversed. Due to the contrary-flowing stream of bodily energy, it is understandably thought that a male homosexual will not derive the same magical benefit from the transmission of shakti power conferred from a female initiatrix in left-handed sex rites. Of course, this leaves aside the technical issue of whether a male homosexual would have any desire to perform the traditional *Vama Marga* ritual with a female *mudra*. Then there is the decided centrality of the Feminine Daemonic to the

left-hand path, which as we have explained, is very much the Way of Woman. Contrary to popular stereotype, many male homosexuals are not particularly effeminate; in fact, they are just as likely to be hypermasculine. As Matt Ridley states in his study of human sexuality *The Red Queen*, many "homosexual men behave like men, only more so." For men that choose to live in a world of men, dominated almost exclusively by the male principle, and sometimes exhibiting exaggeratedly macho behavior and values, one might ask what place the feminine power of *shakti* would have in their initiatory lives? Indeed, many heterosexual men, who have yet to explore the mystery of their anima, must ask themselves precisely the same question

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before embarking on the left-hand path.

We have occasionally observed that some male homosexual magicians' erotic tastes are formed not primarily by a positive attraction to other men, but by a negative animosity towards women in general. If this characteristic describes you, you need to consider that the previously described left-hand path emphasis on exaltation of the Feminine Daemonic as a metaphysical principle central to all sinister current sex magic cannot be ignored. Of course, this same proviso equally applies to many male heterosexual magicians, who often evidence a conscious or unconscious misogyny in their relations to the feminine principle and women in general.

One answer to these quandaries lays in the fact that the Feminine Daemonic is not entirely physical in nature. To a certain extent, *shakti* operates outside of biological gender as a metaphysical essence, and thus a skilled male magician could theoretically be able to generate enough *shakti* within him as to embody the feminine role in homosexual magical rites. Traditional left-handed gurus would most likely not consider this to be a satisfactory replacement for the special qualities said to emanate from an initiated female perceptor. However, it should not be forgotten that Crowley often assumed the role of feminized "sacred prostitute" in his own attempts to shape Tantric practice to his own disposition. Although his results appear to have been doubtful, many homosexual left-hand path initiates have succeeded where Crowley failed. The reason for their success is often due to the lack of Crowley's underlying bitter hatred of womankind in their own makeup, a psychological block which can never truly be suited to left-hand path practice.

To state the problem in anthropomorphic theological terms, the Great Goddess who stands at the center of all *Vama Marga* erotic operations is bound to reject any would-be initiate of her way who is not thoroughly enchanted with her charms.

The Kaula sect does occasionally practice ritualized male homosexuality, but such acts are usually performed as a deliberate shattering of personal sexual conditioning and taboos for primarily heterosexual initiates, rather than for any specific magical function attributed to same-sex energy. While this use of homosexuality for taboo-breaking may have salutary magical effects for the heterosexual left-hand path magician, it would obviously be pointless for the homosexually inclined magician, for whom the "taboo" activity in question is his or her usual pleasure. Along these lines, confirmed homosexuals might find it equally challenging to experiment with heterosexual sex magic.

Although the Tantras make no specific reference to this practice that we are aware of, there is no doubt that anal sex conducted while in a prolonged altered state of consciousness has been known to awaken the flash of the *kundalini* up the spine to the third eye in the passive partner. The primary reason for this phenomenon is probably the stimulation of the area

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traditionally associated with the root chakra, or *muladhadra*, that occurs through anal intercourse. In some heterosexual left-hand path rites, the female initiatrix incarnating the *shakti* penetrates her consort's anus with her

finger at the peak of his arousal. This not only magnifies the male's orgasm via stimulation of his prostate, but is also aimed at activation of the root chakra. Through anal copulation, homosexual magicians can apply the same principle.

Earlier, we have described how one approach to sex magic finds a male and female couple generating their will in the world through a process of sexual creation – combining their bipolar sexual energies to magically "conceive" an ethereal daemonic thought-form – rather than a physical child – to accomplish their bidding. The symbolism of using magically charged semen to give birth through either visualized coupling with the Feminine Daemonic in an autoerotic act, or actual congress with a female initiate may be more immediately apparent to heterosexuals. However, male homosexual partners have used this technique as well. The Feminine Daemonic is not a biological phenomenon connected to one's genitalia, but rather a psychic eidolon beyond the physical realm. Therefore, a male sex magician (whether homosexual or heterosexual) can incarnate the Feminine Daemonic in such a rite just as well as a biological female, if he so chooses.

The Middle Eastern idea of homosexual magical birth, with which Crowley was so intrigued, can be traced back much further than the time of the Crusades. The ancient Egyptian *neter* of wisdom, Thoth, the original prototype of Hermes of Hermetic tradition, was conceived by the homosexual union of the gods Horus and Set. As one ancient Egyptian text states: "I bring you the beautiful green plants on which you have emitted your seed, which is hidden there, which the effeminate one [Set] has swallowed. Your seed belongs to him and he will conceive for you a son, who will come forth from his forehead." According to one version of the myth, it is by consuming the semen of Horus, placed by Isis on the lettuce, that Set becomes pregnant with Thoth. Lettuce, more specifically endive, is traditionally one of the sacred foods of Set; the fact that it was considered to be an aphrodisiac in Egypt tells us something of this god's deep connection with Eros.

The homosexual elements in Set's persona play an important part in two of the most well-known myths associated with him; the rape of his nephew, the falcon-headed sky god Horus, and the contendings of Horus and Set, in which Set's testicles are violently removed by the falcon god. Scholars have wondered why Set, whose testicles are torn off, is nevertheless depicted as the hypostasis of forceful virility, a personified essence of indiscriminating all-devouring lust that can be viewed as a male counterpart to Babalon. Set was also connected to Baba, the deity of the erect phallus, as a magical invocation in the tomb of a man petitioning the gods for continued sexual

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pleasure after death indicates; "My phallus is Baba. I am Set." In identifying himself with Set, the dead man becomes the spirit of eternal lust. An important distinction; despite his strong association with sexual extremes, Set is unique in that he does not fall into the fertility god category of many other sexual gods or goddesses. He is not connected to the natural cycle of procreation, but is instead a divinity embodying erotic power channeled into such non-procreative expressions as abortion, miscarriage, sterility, homosexuality – not exoteric physical birth but esoteric psychic creation.

Set's unruly sexuality has long made him a prominent deity in the rites of modern Western left-hand path sex magicians. But it is the distinctly homoerotic aspect of his mythos that has exerted a specific attraction to homosexual sorcerers practicing the Black Arts, for whom mythology has provided few sinister prototypes worthy of emulation. Magicians drawn to working with the homosexual factors of the Setian god-form should of course research this particular dimension of Setian energy for themselves before integrating it into personally created ritual. However, a few points of departure may prove helpful.

One of the many epithets by which Set was known in Egypt was

Hmty, or "the effeminate one." *Hmty* would have been an entirely derogatory phrase in deeply conservative Egyptian society, which deplored male homosexuality as an aberration of the natural order, a sign of Set's identity as the epitome of anti-social subversion against divine law. As the leading scholar of this god, H. Te Velde wrote in his classic 1969 *Seth, God Of Confusion*: "Seth's homosexual act threatens to change the cosmos into chaos." As such, the homosexual magician who invokes Set as *Hmty* in his rituals takes upon himself the powers conferred by making any deliberate break from societal norms, a basic necessity of left-hand path practice. Set as *Hmty* is the scorned outsider, but his very separation from the community of acceptable gods is what grants him his indestructible strength. In another Egyptian tale, Set in the form of Bata is seen to transform himself into a woman. In William S. Burroughs' 1981 novel *The Cities Of The Red Night*, he depicts a credible homosexual sex magic rite which begins with an invocation of Set.

The lesbian magician of the sinister current can also assume either of the opposite poles of sexual being symbolized by Shiva and Shakti, regardless of gender. In her case, she may very well already be deeply immersed in the erotic-magical power of shakti and the Dark Goddess. Since the left-hand path is the Way of Woman, it can be argued that the lesbian's connection to the lunar flow of the Feminine Daemonic makes her a pure expression of the sinister current. It is a curious fact that in the Western world

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far more men than women are interested in the left-hand path. Perhaps this is because the left-hand path is itself a feminine force to which males are attracted. As a more complete understanding of the Feminine Daemonic principle's centrality to the left-hand path becomes known in the West, it will be interesting to see if lesbian initiates will develop the modern sinister current into previously untested areas.

It is unfortunate that the exploration of lesbian sex magic in the modern West has so often been tainted by assuming that the celebration of purely feminine sexual energy must incorporate the rhetoric and ideology of political feminism into same-sex rituals and cosmology. This is most evident among the Wicca movement and its variants. Just as male magicians holding women in contempt would find little of value in the left-hand path, female magicians of the "man-hating" variety would not be able to fully integrate the needed polarity of masculine and feminine sexual principles into their work. Should there be any confusion on this point, this use of male/female powers in the left-hand path does not necessarily mean that sexual congress with men is required of lesbian magicians, only that they must not be adverse to evoking the masculine principle as a spiritual value independent of biological gender.

Although the Feminine Daemonic is venerated by sinister current sorcerers, we do not preach a message of "female superiority" as is currently manifest in more politically motivated spiritual creeds. While any human endeavor may be interpreted as hearing a political message of some sort, there is no explicitly politically activist component to left-hand path sexual magic, nor is our sorcery directed to the correction of perceived social injustice or the balancing of equality between the sexes. Even if the practice of left-hand path sexual magic may have the side-effect of influencing these factors, it should be obvious that the numinous sphere of consciousness in which such operations take place cannot conform with any political bias.

Although much given to the symbolism of individualism, personal freedom and celebration of difference, it must be admitted that many elements of the gay cultural milieu that have developed in the past few decades are hampered by the same restrictions of proscribed role, predictable tastes, code, and rigid conformism observable in the most conservative strata

of "straight" heterosexual society.

Homosexual left-hand path magicians of either gender are potentially provided with the many advantages to sinister current work allowed by any innate or self-created difference that separates one from the statistical norm of humanity. If one chooses to live in the self-imposed ghettoization of an exclusively homosexual world, with all of its cultural limitations and expected behavior patterns, one relinquishes the sweeping perspective initiation demands in exchange for the relative safety of fitting in with yet another form of tribal collectivism. Homosexual magicians shouldn't

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appropriate any of the stifling stereotypes arbitrarily associated with their sexual preference any more than heterosexual magicians should strive to imitate the "normal" lifestyles routinely promulgated by television commercials. Fluid self-creation shaped from exploring the unknown personal darkness within, rather than fixed socially dictated identity absorbed from without, is always a primary law of the sinister current.

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X.

Of Orgies Ancient And Modern

Group Sex Magic

The Organized Orgy

The word orgy is etymologically derived from the Greek *ergon*, or work/action. Hellenic magicians of antiquity would have been consciously aware of the link between their magical actions or *ourgia* and the sacred sexual rites of *ta orgia*, an established aspect of many of the initiatory Greek mystery religions. This very ancient affinity between the magical working and the orgy is no less pronounced for contemporary sinister current adepts. Before analyzing the sometimes complicated magical mechanics one should take into account before experimenting with the orgy, there are other factors worthy of scrutiny.

Although the Western operations of group sexual energy were very different in their aims from the left-hand path *Chakra Puja* and *Choli Marga* orgies described in Chapter Three, any act of collective sexual energy transmission obeys certain underlying psychic principles. Such is the sensational reputation of the orgy – a phrase most commonly used today in the lowest kinds of journalism – that these are often difficult for modern minds to analyze objectively.

As open practitioners of the left-hand path, we have frequently been called upon to explain our magical practices in various public arenas of drastically differing levels of sophistication. Invariably, we have noted that when the general public gives any thought to those practices they dimly conceive of as "black magic" or "Satanism", wild and fantastic fantasies of debauched orgies are among the cluster of clichés that first come to their minds. Whether such orgiastic flights of fancy are considered to be deeply horrifying, illicitly titillating, or a prurient cocktail of both reactions, depends entirely on the conditioning of the audience in question.

To a certain degree, this automatic connection frequently presumed between magical and orgiastic activity is understandable. The combined weight of Church-inspired fantasies of sexually licentious Black Sabbaths during the witch hysteria, the historical examples of the British Hellfire Clubs and the nineteenth century Parisian Black Mass, and the lurid depictions of magical operations in Hollywood horror films, have created an indelible storehouse of potent images that exercise a tenacious hold on the popular imagination. The facts of the matter can hardly make a dent in the

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fantasy.

In actuality, although we shall demonstrate the orgy's usefulness to

left-hand path magical work, orgies play very little part in the majority of organized magical associations that describe themselves as left-hand path in the Western world. This has often been a source of no small measure of disappointment to potential members of these organizations, who sometimes assume that their most fondly cherished fantasies of sexual abandon will be instantly realized by becoming a member of said societies. Due to the extreme persecution and bias left-hand path groups have had, to contend with in the past decades from secular society, they very often find themselves walking a delicate tightrope. For those more high-profile magical groups that are open to the general public, they must overcompensate in proving that they do not fulfill any of the public's wildest fantasies of supposed antisocial behavior. Therefore, orgiastic rituals are almost never a part of their official curriculum or practice.

One must take into account the unique bond of physical attraction, erotic aesthetic, sexual preference and shared magical worldview that the successful orgy of the sinister current requires of its celebrants. Considering these criteria, we have found that it is far better to form a group consisting of those that the magician does feel such a bond with, rather than arbitrarily assuming that joining one of the larger magical associations will provide a bevy of congenial partners. It is difficult enough to find magical peers that one would find suitable for even non-sexual group magical working within such societies. Forming the singular alliance requisite for the efficacious operation of group sex magic is even less likely. We shall turn to the challenges involved in forming your own group sex magic sodality later in this chapter.

Although the orgy is hardly evident in modern Western left-hand path groups, despite the orgy's important place in the history of the *Vama Marga*, several groups that deem themselves to be "right-hand path" or "white magical" in nature, *do* include orgiastic activity in their curriculum. Most notable among these are the many conflicting off-shoots of Reuss's Ordo Templi Orientis, and the wide-spread Wiccan movement, many of whom (but not all) engage in ritual group sex activity. The objectives of such sexual group operations, which are usually directed toward using sexuality to dissolve the ego and the individual self into harmony with Mother Nature and/or the Universe place these orgies into direct opposition with the self-directed, self-intensifying aims we have been focusing on. This phenomenon only proves how rarely any human activity – especially the magical – can be placed into any tidy, logical or consistent categorization.

A secondary practical reason for the perhaps surprising lack of condoned group sexual activity in nominally left-hand path magical societies

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is that very few individuals are psychologically prepared to deal with the sometimes explosive psychosexual transformations that the magical orgy often initiates. Even secular orgies involving no magical or daemonic elements have proven to provoke unexpected emotional challenges to those who participate in them. Such extreme emotional changes on the sexual level of being can be extremely disruptive to the often delicate mechanism of group dynamics, which is as fragile in most magical societies as in any organized human activity. The sublimation and discouragement of sexual extremes serves the same tranquilizing and conformist purpose in highly structured magical groups as it does in secular society in general.

In light of the teachings of the traditional left-hand path, one might reasonably argue that the creation of such dramatic opportunities for selftransformation is an essential agent of all left-hand path praxis, so that this deliberate avoidance of sexual orgia in many left-hand path groups might seem to be a contradiction in terms. Nevertheless, at this point in the relatively early stages of development the Western left-hand path finds itself in, it remains a fact that *organized* activity tends to focus almost entirely on

the intellectual/cerebral aspects of initiation, while actively discouraging the expression of the traditional erotic component that provides the very definition of the phrase *Vama Marga* in the first place.

There is a less obvious third factor that discourages group sexual activity in modern left-hand path organizations. Despite some dramatic advances in erotic liberty in the Western world, the orgy is still generally regarded as a socially taboo activity. The orgy unambiguously calls into question the sanctity of the monogamous relationship that forms the basis of society's approved consumer demographics, breaking with the societal collective orientation toward breeding and family.

From a sociological standpoint, we have noticed that many of those drawn to joining structured magical organizations – in contrast to those left-hand magicians who work alone or with only a loosely linked group of associates – are motivated by a sometimes unconscious desire to strongly *affirm* their social acceptability, despite their explicit involvement in organizations that are largely disapproved of by society in general. This not uncommon human desire to "have one's cake and eat it too" leads to a certain amount of philosophically inconsistent fence-straddling. Although nominal left-hand organizations in the West pay lip service to the unequivocally rebellious nature of the Prince of Darkness as that hypostasis is manifested in various cultures and epochs, there is still a strong collective urge encouraging an essentially safe – or purely symbolic – expression of dissent that almost never actually crosses the border into activity that really does challenge one's comfortable place as a harmonious unit in the social vector.

This brings us to one of the ironies of the orgy as it applies to the sinister current in the modern world. The orgy is a group activity requiring

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that several magicians work on a "team effort" of the most intimate kind. Paradoxically, it is the very fact that erotic magic is being performed within a *group* setting that contributes to separating it from the larger group mind of social control, which still overwhelmingly disapproves of sexual activity performed outside of the romantically linked or procreative couple. Romantic love between two partners, as defined within the limits of collective conformism, is at least potentially related to melding the couple into a larger societal framework. The orgy, perceived as a possible threat to the couple/family unit, is no longer accorded any useful social function, as it was in the very different psychoerotic atmosphere prevailing in earlier times.

Religious Orgies Of Antiquity

It must be recognized that the notion of separation and taboo attached to the orgy is really only applicable to the current era. In antiquity, the metaphysically motivated orgy was a recognized rite of organized religion for thousands of years. To many ancient civilizations, including Greece and Rome, the sacred orgy was as much a part of the established orthodoxy of societal belief as a religious marriage ceremony is in our own era.

Ancient orgiastic ritual activity in the Western world was almost always condoned by the religious authorities, and understood to serve a greater and collective social good, rather than an individual magician's personal purpose. Obviously, magical activity of any kind that tends to appease external social or religious convention cannot be considered germane to the left-hand path, a fine point easily lost when viewing the orgies of the ancient world from the contemporary standpoint.

The extent to which the fading but still virulent Judaeo-Christian morality continues to distort our perceptions of the pre-Christian world forms an obstacle to understanding the orgy in its proper light. Since Judaeo-Christianity and Islam have so roundly condemned the "wickedness" of the pagan age, particularly the perceived sexual depravity of orgiastic religious customs, some left-hand path magicians have mistakenly assumed that these ancient practices are all intrinsically relevant to the activation of the sinister

current.

Nothing could be further from the truth; the orthodoxies and mass religious festivals of other times – no matter how much they have fallen into current disfavor – are as useless to the left-hand path magician's goals as the prevailing popular religious practices of our own epoch. The left-hand path cannot be defined as a revival of pagan practices for their own sake, as is so commonly assumed.

Therefore, the magical application of the orgy to the sinister current must first be approached by understanding how fundamentally the formalized, institutional nature of the sacred orgiastic festivals of the pre-Christian era differ from the individual needs of the left-hand path magician.

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There are, to be sure, certain facets of the ancient religious orgy that can be applied to modern left-hand magical praxis, and a brief consideration of these elements is worth our while before examining the significance of the magical orgy today. Since we have already examined the orgy as it manifests in the more extreme sects of the Tantric left-hand path, a comparison with group sex magic in the Graeco-Roman classical world will be instructive.

The ancient *orgia*, for the most part, were carefully designed and proscribed collective actions that temporarily allowed the community's erotic desires to operate without license for a limited period of time, usually under the patronage of a specific god or goddess. Ancient Rome hosted three of the most famous of these great orgiastic festivals, the Saturnalia, the Lupercalia, and the Bacchanalia. During the Saturnalia – dedicated to the agricultural god of time Saturn – social constraints were momentarily dissolved, and unlimited sexual activity crossing the socially defined boundaries of class and marriage was allowed during the holiday, a promiscuous revelry fueled by officially sanctioned intoxication. By allowing normally sober and sexually restrained citizens this brief period of libidinous abandon, a collective catharsis was permitted on a sacred level.

Saturnalia

The celebrants of the Saturnalia considered that they had momentarily returned to that primordial era before Saturn had imposed the laws of time, a period preceding the establishment of human law and morals. Only under these special ritual conditions were they allowed to break with the civil and religious code of the community. They were just as forcefully required to return to those same restrictions when this period "outside time" had terminated.

The Saturnalian orgy symbolically cleansed the minds of the community, allowing them to return to their profane lives refreshed by a collective blowing-off of steam thought to be a healthy and necessary release of pent-up sexual energies. In upholding the religious tradition of the Saturnalia, the Roman establishment was not in any sense celebrating the individuating and liberating aspect of erotic metaphysics which are so crucial to the sinister current. Quite the opposite; the organized civic-religious orgy merely provided an escape valve that allowed its sated participants to uncomplainingly return to the restraints of their ordinary existences as social creatures after a short-lived sexual vacation from the monotonous grind of everyday life. A modern-day equivalent might be the businessmen's convention in which normally staid husbands and family men are expected to temporarily indulge themselves in drunken sex-sprees with the local prostitutes, only to return once again to their customarily regulated existence when the convention has ended.

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There were certain disruptions of social role common to the Saturnalia that might be deemed as being superficially relevant to the lefthand path practice of opposite-doing. For instance, the relations between masters and slaves, so important to Roman society, were temporarily

inverted. The master was seen to serve the slave, and was even obliged to tolerate being beaten by his servant as long as the festival lasted.

The Saturnalia was celebrated during the same time of year during which the modern Western world celebrates its Christmas holiday. If one ignores the barely acknowledged overlay of Christian myth that surrounds the

Yule season today, one can still recognize an extremely watered down continuance of the Saturnalian tradition at the contemporary secular Christmas party, with its official toleration of seasonal drunkenness, mandatory smooching under the mistletoe (a plant strongly associated with the disobedient trickster Loki of Nordic lore), temporary indulgence of adulterous sexuality, and general mood of relative erotic license. Again, one notes that this temporary sexual freedom is actually a manifestation of social control, briefly freeing its grip before clamping down for the rest of the year.

The left-hand path magician, by contrast, has stepped *permanently* outside of the social stream, and does not operate in the mandatory and obligatory nature of the ancient orgiastic festivals, or the contemporary Christianized holidays that perform a similar function. The magic of Eros that can be so energetically channeled through the orgy of the sinister current is not directed to making restraint and routine more bearable; it is applied instead to deeply personal ends, utterly separated from the demands of social control.

Lupercalia

Just as many familiar elements of the Saturnalia orgy live on in the Christmas celebration, a dim echo of the savagely sadomasochistic Roman Lupercalia festival – observed in ancient Rome and her colonies on February 14 – can still be detected in the modern world's rather more benign St. Valentine's Day. For the Romans, February was designated as a month of purification, a religious concept closely connected to the Greek "purge". It must be understood that the ancient concept of purification has little to do with the more recent Christian idea of casting out sin. It was instead intended to magically invigorate the carnal sphere of existence which can so easily become enfeebled.

During the Lupercalia, the practically naked boys and young men of the town were given license to roam the streets dressed in wolf skins (alternately goat skins, in some regions of the empire), brandishing leather straps. Essentially, the celebrants took on the predatory nature of the wolf, hunting the girls of the town, who had to submit by exposing their flesh to be

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flagellated by the leather thongs. Despite the violent nature of this festival, this mock hunt was apparently regarded as a pleasant diversion; the Roman historian Livy described the Lupercalia as being conducted "*per ludum et lasciviam*" (for fun and in a lascivious manner).

The exact origin of the name *Lupercalia* is lost in the ancient pre-Roman Etruscan genesis of the rites. It's generally presumed that there is a connection to the patroness of the Roman state, the she-wolf Lupa, honored as the goddess Luperca Dea who suckled the heroic founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus. Considering the role that sacred whoredom plays in the left-hand path veneration of the Feminine Daemonic, it is interesting that the Sabine word *lupa* was also used to affectionately describe the harlots of Rome.

According to the erudite werewolf expert Robert Eisler, in his essential 1948 study *Man Into Wolf*, Luperca is connected to the Greek word meaning "who acts as a wolf", or a werewolf. Eisler also explains that the word *lup-erca* is related to the Greek word *ergon* (action), and thus to the "meaning 'act', cf. *orgia* for the ritual actions in the mysteries." It would seem that the lycanthropic goddess Lupa, with her association with harlotry, predation and the orgy is an ideal divinity to invoke or evoke during magical workings that draw on such energies. For female magicians especially, Lupa

is a neglected divinity linked to a form of archaic *shakti* feminine power, a door to the shadow realm of the interdicted pre-human consciousness.

The legacy of the Lupercalia persists in typically defanged Christianized form in the original St. Valentine's Day tradition of boys "hunting" girls with Valentine's hearts or sweets; a far cry from the sacred affirmation of sexuality's predatory aspect once observed in Classical times.

Just as the Saturnalia created a liminal sacred space allowing the orgiasts to briefly experience the idealized freedom of anterior time, the ferocious chase of the Lupercalia ritually returned its celebrants to the atavistic, pre-human state of being. Essentially a period of enforced lycanthropy, the ceremonial donning of the wolf-skin and ritual flagellation permitted the youths and maidens of the town to reconnect with the animalistic and predatory aspects of the sexual chase that predate the more civilized courting rituals performed on Valentine's Day.

The Christianized West, with its religious affirmation of absolute human superiority over the animal allows for nothing like the spiritual acknowledgment of the bestial roots of mankind celebrated in the Lupercalia. The left-hand path magician, who freely explores the full spectrum of his or her bestial, human and divine consciousness in its totality, has much to gain from breaking the taboo of identification with the bestial atavism that lurks beneath the thin veneer of civilization that the Lupercalia venerates. The difference, as with the Saturnalia, is that initiates of the sinister current do not

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delve into such primordial states of being at the behest of socially dictated cues but according to their own free will.

A Lupercalia-themed orgy among a closely-knit group of sex magicians has proven to be a welcome initiatory diversion from the insipid commercialization of Valentine's Day, so long as it is carried out in the ancient spirit of lascivious fun referred to above. To say that such a magical working requires a high level of trust and rapport between its celebrants, as with almost all orgiastic working, is an understatement.

Dionysia And Bacchanalia

Perhaps the best-known of the ancient orgiastic festivals were the Bacchanalia. In Rome, these wild revels were held in honor of Bacchus, the god of the new wine, who originated from the elder mysteries of Dionysus in Greece. Like much of the organized erotic magic of antiquity, these Dionysian *orgia* were motivated by an eminently pragmatic purpose: the successful growth of the crops so necessary to the survival of a basically agrarian people. It is easy for modern magicians to be distracted by the legendry and exoticism of ancient spiritual customs, which leads one to forget that orgiastic magic through the ages has almost always been motivated by very straightforward goals.

While most modern magicians needn't be overly concerned with the cultivation of his or her crops these days, the sexual energy activated and harnessed by magical orgies can still be effectively applied to very practical needs, as well as more specifically initiatory purposes. For instance, the orgy is particularly well-suited to providing vital energy to the inauguration of any new project, or long-range undertaking.

Just as the male celebrants of the Lupercalia were transformed into an animalistic state during the festival, so were the female adherents of Dionysus, the *maenads*, metamorphosed by *theolepsia*, or communication with the god, into feral creatures usually described in ancient accounts as "raving women." The state of divinely inspired intoxication reached by the dancing *maenads* was such that they were actually held to be dangerous to encounter.

Chronicles tell of the *maenads* literally tearing animals and humans apart with their bare hands while experiencing the Dionysian sexual frenzy. The *maenads* are closely related to the nymphs, ecstatic followers of the

god's entourage, who joined in with the orgiastic celebration. These furious orgies, held nocturnally in the wilderness on the outskirts of towns and cities, resemble much later accounts of the licentious witch's sabbath that haunted the imagination of later European history with such murderous results.

The archetype of the "wild woman" so powerfully embodied by the *maenad* is almost entirely neglected by modern female magicians,

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conditioned as they are to more restrained models of female behavior. Nevertheless, the *maenad* offers an undeniable power for female magicians to tap into, a dark and forbidden aspect of the Feminine Daemonic that connects to an atavistic source of initiation of especial application to the sinister current. Women interested in experimenting with the Dionysian mysteries should note that the female participants in these orgia traditionally

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abstained from sex for nine days before the rites began, so that their frenzy would be all the greater once they entered into ritual intercourse.

Drawing from the ferocity of the *maenads* – also known in antiquity as "the bitches of the Dionysia" – has been found particularly useful for the modern sexual domina, especially in the consensual ritual "rape" of male or female submissives.

The ecstatic dance – sometimes leading to acts of divination or prophecy – was an almost universal characteristic of the *maenad*, a physical expression that can still be used to create a state of trance for the modern magician. Of equal use to the male sex magician is the icon of the eternally erect satyrs that followed in the Bacchanalian train, and Dionysus himself, whose magical origins we have already discussed in our inquiry into Kundalini.

Although the Bacchanalian orgia were eyed with some suspicion by the Romans as a "foreign cult", they were at first officially authorized in southern Italy, despite their excesses. It would appear that the Roman Bacchanalia became an even more violent affair than the Greek Dionysia. By the time these orgiastic mysteries reached

Rome, the chronicler Livy wrote disapprovingly to the senators of the capitol of the Empire: "You know well, senators, that the Bacchanalia, which have long been widespread in Italy, are now flourishing in Rome: you know this not only by hearsay but by the noises and shrieks which resound through the city at night."

When the ecstatic and fundamentally antisocial nature of the Bacchanalian orgy was deemed to have gone too far, over seven thousand *bacchantes* were prosecuted, resulting in mass executions. The festival was banned outright in 186 B.C., not because of any perception of erotic immorality but because the mysteries were considered to be a threat to the state's ability to control its citizenry or draft young men involved in the cult into the Roman army. Even in the relatively more permissive sexual atmosphere of antiquity, erotic rites could be seen as fundamentally threatening to the established order, a fact which still pertains to the general distrust and suspicion in which the sex magician is held today.

Basic Principles Of Group Sex Magic

We turn from these considerations of the ancient orgy and its potential application to the modern magician's work to the core magical principles at the root of all orgiastic rites. Julius Evola, in his *The Metaphysics Of Sex*, sums up the underlying magical foundation of the orgy admirably. He wrote: "The most immediate and obvious purpose of orgiastic promiscuity is the neutralization and exclusion of anything concerning the 'social individual' ...

Whether they are orgies of primitive and outlandish peoples or kindred festivals of Western antiquity, the common denominator is the temporary removal of all prohibitions, all differences of social status, and all bonds that normally hinder the manifestation of eros in its elementary form. In principle, the practice of promiscuity excludes not only the conditional qualities of the social individual but even qualities of the deeper layer of the individual as a personality. It tends, therefore, to bring out an almost total freedom."

The left-hand path orgy draws some of its initiatory effect from deliberately bringing the chaotic power of chance into magical play. One effective method to disrupt established social structures within the group is to borrow a procedure from the traditional Tantric *Choli Marga* rite. The celebrants can select their consorts using any system of chance to assure that the orgiastic energy created is generated through the union of randomly coupled sexual partners rather than pre-established affinity. The random pairing of men and women in the *Choli Marga* was partially designed to break the taboo of caste, and sometimes incest. In the contemporary left-hand path orgy, the same depersonalization of sexuality is cultivated, permitting the initiate to experience the eternal essence of male and female sexual powers in their purest state. Once removed from the familiar specifics of name, biographical details, and known identity, the adept can more easily approach his or her consort as a divine being.

For the magician, a taste of the absolute liberty accessible through the sex-magical orgy can potentially reveal and transform previously undiscovered strata of the psyche, opening his or her eyes to possibilities of self-creation and self-identity that other forms of sexual congress may obscure. However, from the frankly elitist standpoint of the sinister current, it is understood that allowing the ordinary and uninitiated person to experience "total freedom" – an experience of profoundly disorienting and destabilizing potential – can sometimes be akin to handing an infant a loaded revolver. If the sexual magic of the left-hand path can be profoundly disturbing and unexpectedly life-transforming for even the experienced and prepared practitioner with only *one* sexual partner, the added complications that the magical orgy can bring to bear on the unguarded consciousness might well

be intolerable for some.

Of course, this disorientation might also be exactly the initiatory shock required. Deciding when and if you or another magician is likely to benefit from the intense energies unleashed in the magical orgy must be an entirely subjective decision, with very few reliable guidelines. One might presume that magicians who've already experimented with a great diversity of sexual experience in their profane lives are better candidates than less sexually adventurous types. However, sometimes wholly unpredictable individual quirks often arise in the complex chemistry of the orgiastic rite that play havoc with expectations and likelihoods. This element of the random adds much of the electrifying power to group sex magic in general.

The magical orgy is very likely to erase sexual borders that transcend the individual's normative social context, sometimes radically expanding his or her notion of self. For the practiced magician, whose consciousness can deliberately be made fluid without losing the sense of personal identity, this can be a great spur to willed transformation and remanifestation. For the beginning magician, whose psyche is usually a fairly fragile and rigid construct, and who is only first experimenting with the potential for selfprogramming and deconditioning, the magical orgy is usually not the best introduction to sex magic. As always, there can be no hard and fast rule applied that suits all individuals in all situations but experience indicates that a preliminary experimentation with sexual magic conducted between a couple should be explored in depth before bringing other partners into one's work.

Another practical reason for applying caution in such cases is that the powers of concentration need to be well-developed to effect desired magical change in *any* sexual operation. The added distractions of the orgy can be such a strain on one's incipient will-power and focus that magical objectives can easily be abandoned altogether. There's certainly nothing wrong with enjoying a secular orgy for its own sake as a celebration of eroticism in general. However, if magical or initiatory aims are your principal motivation, the more skill you acquire at attaining a high level of will, focus, and altered state of consciousness in sexual situations *before* trying out the orgy as magical tool, the more likely it is that your magical goals will be executed efficiently.

Considering how much effort it takes to build an adequate magical rapport even between two sex magicians that share a tested emotional bond, the creation of such a psychic link between the celebrants of a magical orgy is even more challenging. In a certain sense, one of the basic principles guiding all group magical work applies just as well to the orgy. Namely, the more magicians that one involves in any working, the more diffuse becomes the focus of the action. An orgy involving only three or four magicians is obviously going to be far more precise and controllable than group sex

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workings performed by a larger gathering.

With the magical orgy, as with all human experiences, one must realistically factor in the law of the lowest common denominator: the weakest link in a crowd seems to bring down the quality of the experience considerably. Just as a lecture given to an audience composed of a few experts in any specialized field is going to differ substantially from a lecture directed at a much larger, less informed assembly, so it is with the orgy. Like the theoretical lecture, any effective act of magic – even the most non-verbal orgy – involves the accessing and synthesizing of communicated information. It isn't that a magical orgy can only function if performed by a group of exclusively experienced magicians but there can be no denying that the presence of novices will radically alter the outcome.

This does not mean that those just learning the Black Art should

necessarily be excluded, only that magicians planning an orgy should be cognizant of the subtle and drastic changes that the very different energy of the beginner can bring to a working. Occasionally, this unknown factor can even be an asset.

Considering the additional complications that come into play when shaping the magical orgy, in comparison to the relative ease of sex magic performed alone or by a couple, one might well ask: why bother? Very simply, group sex as magical working allows for unique advantages that cannot be realized through any other method. As with any group magical working, when magical orgiasts do succeed in forming a strong rapport, the end result of many focused wills operating together in an altered state of consciousness charged by Eros can create an especially powerful interference in the natural course of things. This group intrusion into the predictable cycle of nature sometimes allows for more radical change in the microcosm or in the macrocosm than the individual magician can bring into being.

As with any tool, one must determine what situation is most appropriate for application of the special qualities inherent in the orgy. Primarily, the orgy is most useful in providing an additional reinforcement to any desired magical change that exceeds the personal boundaries of any one magician.

Coming to the metaphysical realization central to the sinister current that one's psyche exists in complete spiritual division, separate from all others, does not mean that you cannot draw on the undeniable power accessible in group magical workings. The orgy, for the left-hand path sex magician, is not aimed at losing awareness of one's individual essence in the safety of the group. However, there are times when it is fitting for a group of left-hand path magicians to temporarily unite their wills for a mutual cause.

Possible Goals Of Group Sex Sorcery

Group sexual sorcery can manifest itself in an infinite variety of forms, each providing specific advantages for the magical task at hand. The possible

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combinations extend far beyond the standard image of what constitutes an orgy. There are occasions when two magicians might perform sex magic while a third magician observes, while other workings might require the pairing off of many couples into separate areas. Another option is the deliberate formation of a circuit of energy physically linking many celebrants together in a chain of flesh, allowing the erotic magical current to be released simultaneously – a variation of the Tantric "spider web" rite.

Several examples of specific sorcerous goals that have been advanced through the allied power raised by magical orgia can be illuminating. As we have noted earlier, The intrinsic character of the lefthand path will always gamer enemies. Not only is it a path of conflict deeply connected to the divine aspect of war, its essential philosophy seems dangerous to many, or simply insane to the more charitable. Sometimes these self-created enemies of the sinister current mount campaigns designed to cause tangible harm to the left-hand path as a whole, which has frequently taken the form of scapegoating, attempting to criminalize, or spread disinformation concerning the practice of the Black Arts.

Usually, magicians are able to deal with such attacks on an individual basis but this is one situation where there is often strength in numbers. A great deal of destructive energy can be focused and unleashed through the magical orgy, energy which can be directed as a group effort against those who seek to cause genuine harm to the *kaula* of the sinister current as a whole. The orgy has also psychically bonded magicians together for a struggle that serves each of their individual needs to fight such an attack, sexually creating the rapport an army needs to destroy its opponent. The odd symbiosis that exists between extreme eroticism and extreme belligerence comes into play here, the alchemical sexual bond of Venus and Mars. The heightened aggression and erotic tension intrinsic to a sadomasochistic orgy is obviously

well-suited to such workings of desolation but any form of sexuality can be drawn upon. The willed imagination of the object being realized is far more important than the particular methodology.

Obviously the same assembled erotic force that can be raised to fight attacks against the left-hand path generally can also be mounted against any individual or group which genuinely seeks to harm a magician or group of magicians for *any* purpose. The basic principle here is simply that the group power created by an orgy is especially useful when combating a group of any kind. The reader will recall that the left-hand path *Kaula* of medieval India were also asked to perform group sexual magic on behalf of princes preparing to do battle.

One practicable method of orgiastic sorcery is for each celebrant to create a mutually agreed upon force of destruction against the chosen party and releasing this force at the very height of erotic arousal, energizing the force through the amassed strength created by the celebrants' orgasms. Before

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the orgy, a group of magicians might preordain the bringing into being of a specific "demon" in the traditional sense that is released against the target at the summit of group sexual agitation.

Other sexual sorcerers might use every means at their disposal to forcefully envision at the moment of orgasm a specific desired outcome that works against the offending body (a specific ruling by a judge, a very likely accident, or other "forcing of the card" of a pre-existing situation.) One method of creating a more tangible magical link between the orgy's purpose and the intended goal is to create a talisman containing some of the orgasmic secretions of each celebrant. The talisman can be sufficiently disguised and given or sent to the target, or somehow secured at a physical locale associated with the intended victim of the curse.

No matter how powerful the collective will achieved by magical orgiasts, the execution of the desired objective can be greatly assisted by bringing some physical product of the working into the vicinity of the designated object. The very fact that several magicians are mutually aware that they have shared a powerful sexual moment that created the talisman works to convey the desired information on that mysterious level where magical will is communicated. Simply having a number of magicians involved with the process – assuming that they were each sufficiently focused on the mutually needed outcome – increases the likelihood of actualization.

The erotic-magical force created by magical orgy has also been utilized to augment the healing of a person honored by the group, using exactly the same essential techniques. It must be added that the left-hand path magician does not interfere with the perhaps unconscious desires of an individual he or she respects. Therefore, healing should only be directed against those who actually express a desire to be cured. It is very possible that the ill person actually wishes to experience an illness, or has brought an illness upon themselves for purposes the outside observer may not understand. For this reason, guided by the sinister current's general avoidance of altruism, workings of healing must only be engaged in with the agreement of the afflicted person. This principle is in striking contraindication to the commonly observed alleged altruism of the New Age movement, so relentlessly determined to heal the entire world whether it wants to be healed or not.

It should be noted in this regard that left-hand path magicians are not generally so superstitious as to believe that destruction or healing can be effected through magic alone. On the contrary, magic is always best used *in conjunction with* pre-existing conditions that can sometimes be pushed over the edge by sorcery. This necessitates keen powers of observation on the part of the magician. For instance, if one's chosen enemy is known to be a

diabetic who also injects heroin, the group vision should generally concentrate on *that* detail, rather than the less likely happenstance of the individual suddenly coming down with leprosy. Similarly, if the healing is directed towards an individual suffering from cancer, this specific ailment should be taken into account rather than the healing of the entire body in general.

Such fine-tuning is easily accomplished with one or two sex magicians but much harder to accomplish when several magicians are involved. This is only one of the reasons why orgies require far more preliminary discussion of goals desired than less populous workings.

The orgy is also very useful for magical acts of inauguration, that is to say the orgiast's group release of willed erotic energy can be directed to the vitality and strength of any project in its beginning stages. A magical orgy held as an inaugural "house-warming" for magicians inhabiting a new dwelling, designed to instill the chosen location with certain pre-specified qualities is a very appropriate application of this particular technique of sex magic.

Among some magicians working together on common goals it has also been useful to initiate the commencement of a mundane project with ritualized group sex operations pointed toward the successful accomplishment of the goal. The orgy not only builds up a group magical spirit – or egregore – that can be tapped into during the specific enterprise, it actually increases the camaraderie of the magicians before the non-magical undertaking begins.

Collaborative artistic endeavors demanding a high degree of *esprit de corps* have been charged by orgies, including musicians preparing for a concert, and tightly knit crews preparing to make a film or stage a theatrical production. One hardly needs to be an artist to partake of the inaugural strengthening provided by the magical orgy; the opening of any enterprise, such as a new place of business, can also benefit from these methods.

Theurgy And The Orgy

Magicians of the left-hand path have also found group sex workings to be advantageous for theurgic workings, those operations aimed specifically at the invocation or evocation of divine or non-human intelligences. Particularly with groups of magicians who share a common theological belief system, the lines of communication with the deity can very forcefully be activated through the orgy. For those left-hand path sex magicians whose approach to initiation is essentially religious – that is to say, whose magic involves the communion and exaltation of deities as a means of deifying themselves – the orgy can be a very direct link to the entity one seeks communication with. If we recall that the word religion evolved from the Latin root *religare* (to bind again, to bind strongly) the physical and psychic binding of the orgy can be

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seen in a new light.

We must leave aside for now the intriguing question of whether the god/goddess who "appears" to the orgiastically linked magicians is generated solely by the mutual imagery and shared subjective referents of those involved or is an actual manifestation of a being independent be healed or not.

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We must leave aside for now the intriguing question of whether the god/goddess who "appears" to the orgiastically linked magicians is generated solely by the mutual imagery and shared subjective referents of those involved or is an actual manifestation of a being independent ritualistically proclaiming that the qualities of the divinity or demon are gradually appearing in the *avatar*. This process of psychic transformation can conclude with the incarnated divinity engaging in ritual copulation with one or many of the other magicians in a manner appropriate to the myth in question.

For instance, if a female magician allows herself to be incarnated by Kali, she might choose a partner (or partners) to serve as her male consort, the eternally erect Shiva. True to the sexual symbolism of Kali, the magician would very energetically ride the erect phallus of "Shiva" from above, while her partner remained perfectly still, in keeping with the Indian concept of the active Feminine Daemonic, Shakti, and the immobile male force. A magician inhabited by the Mesopotamian-Hebraic succubus Lilith, very similarly,

would also mount her partner(s) from above, the position traditionally favored by the demoness who deliberately broke God's commandment ordering the missionary position. A magician ritually transformed into the Egyptian *netjer* Set might engage in anal penetration of his partners, a sexual activity integral to the mythology of this violent god.

Obviously, such recreations of the erotic attributes of the gods would be entirely meaningless if performed among magicians that have no interest in, or knowledge of, the mythological background involved. When experimenting with incarnatory theurgic operations of this type, it is therefore essential that all magicians involved in the orgy have been prepared well in advance to understand the often obscure symbolism of such rites. The larger the orgy, the less likely it will be that all magicians participating will understand the same ritual "language", which can all too often result in a working as hollow as any traditional religious ceremony. Sufficiently laying

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the groundwork for such magical actions is often the key to their effectiveness.

As stated earlier, there is no reason that the incarnation of a male or female divinity must be limited to a human magician of the same sex; heterosexual male magicians have made for perfectly appropriate goddesses, and traditionally "feminine" women have proven to serve as effective gods. In such cases, the theurgist is tapping into a cosmic feminine or masculine current unrelated to the biological realm. Also, the gender and sexual preference of the magician is not as important as the degree of psychic resonance with the specific divinity called upon.

Once the magician has achieved the altered state of consciousness, sexual interaction with other orgiasts may be utilized to bestow some specific qualities of the divinity through erotic communication. Through this method, left-hand path sex magicians literally or symbolically ingest the essence of divine beings through sexual congress.

A Group Rite Of Sexual Initiation

A group of magicians dedicated to the veneration of a particular god or goddess might perform an induction ceremony a literal rite of initiation into the group, that involves ritual sex with a magician representing the deity performed in the presence of those already initiated. Although very different sexual modes are called for when evoking or invoking specific deities, there are certain archaic forms of group initiation that can most effectively be adapted to need. One that accesses timeless regions of the psychic storehouse of imagery is the orgiastic rite of sexual rebirth.

All initiation to a new state of being involves not only a dying to one's previous self but a rebirth into the expanded level of consciousness. For this reason, and due to the ancient veneration of the vagina as the physical gate of creation, ancient temples were very often designed as symbolic vaginas that led into the hidden matrix or *sanctum sanctorum* where the god or goddess was concealed. The narrow pylon entrance allowing entrance into Egyptian temples, in particular, were deliberately designed to be symbolic recreations of the tight passage out of the vagina. This symbolism can easily be applied to an initiation rite in which the celebrants of an orgy form a magical birth canal for the initiate to be reborn from.

The performance of this rite requires twenty or more magicians to be carried out most effectively. In an entirely dark chamber, one celebrant invokes the desired god or goddess to dwell within him or her, and takes his or her place at the furthest distance from the door, on a bed or other trysting area. The other magicians form two lines, standing directly across from each other, leaving only a very narrow passageway between the two "walls" of the symbolic birth passage which they form. At a certain time, the magician

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being initiated into the mysteries of the tutelary deity knocks on the door of

the room.

The less the initiate knows about what will occur during the rite the stronger the initiatory impact will be. However, the left-hand path sex magician's unswerving concern for the principle of consent and exercise of free will necessitates that the initiate understands and agrees in advance that intense sexual activity will transpire.

A pre-appointed celebrant – perhaps the most aggressive and forthright of the group – serves as the guardian of the gate. The initiate bids entry and is challenged by the guardian, who roughly asks why the initiate should be permitted entry into the sanctuary of the deity. If, after repeated and intimidating challenge, the guardian eventually finds the answer satisfactory; the initiate is brought to the opposing lines of celebrants and told to force his or her way through the "birth canal".

As the initiate squeezes between the narrow way of ingress allowed by each magician with great difficulty, he or she is sexually stimulated by each of (or many of) the magicians on either side. This process of moving through the lines should take long enough for the initiate to be in a very high state of sexual excitement by the time he or she is allowed to exit at the other side of the living pylon, effectively reborn through the vagina created by the group.

Immediately before the initiate at the opening of the symbolic *yonis*, the god/goddess is positioned, who brings the already agitated initiate to orgasm through *whatever* form of sexual congress is mythologically appropriate. This release of the sexual energy built up throughout the rite marks the initiate's official entry into the company of the magicians, and the level of group sexual energy created can now be released through uninhibited orgiastic climax, which brings the rite of passage to its closure.

Any number of alterations are possible building on this basic outline. For workings that call for sadomasochistic energy, a bound and fettered initiate forcing his or her way through the line can be forced to endure a variety of consensually agreed upon torments, including flagellation, burning, cutting, verbal humiliation, the application of clamps, etc. before being allowed to orgasm with the deity presiding over the rite. The more unexpected the bodily shocks applied, the more significant the element of initiatory surprise and fear can be.

It is also possible for an entire group to go through this initiatory ordeal of rebirth. Each celebrant waits silently outside the door, seeking admission to the temple. After orgasm with the deity, the newly initiated magician forms part of the birth canal, helping the next initiate through the same process they have just undergone. The only possible disadvantage in this variation is that the last magicians going through the line will have much

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more opportunity for reaching a sufficiently high level of excitement. Also, it should be noted the designated magician serving as the god/goddess will require a great deal of physical stamina to take on as many as twenty "reborn" magicians! For strictly heteroerotic groups, a male and female magician can both invoke the god, initiating the magicians of the opposite sex.

Psychological Hazards Of Orgiastic Theurgy

While incarnation of a deity during *orgia* can be a powerful theurgic experience, it is important that care is taken that the new initiate does not imagine that the actual human being who temporarily stands for the god or goddess is in fact a super-human being worthy of worship when the rite is completed. One of the main differences between the right-hand and left-hand paths, as we have seen, is that the left hand path magician aims at selfdeification, while the right-hand path initiate is content to merely worship the divinity (*bhakti*). Although the sinister current initiate can certainly learn something of the divinity through choosing to venerate the entity in a specific

rite, his or her main goal is always directed at transformation of self, not submission to a higher power.

The *avatar* who comes away from the orgiastic working convinced that he or she has permanently become the god or goddess invoked is an all too common phenomenon, which can lead to serious mental disturbance. Indeed, the history of occultism is a veritable lunatic asylum filled with such psychic casualties.

Similarly, the celebrant who has sexually venerated the incarnated god or goddess during the working may have difficulty making the transition back to mundane consciousness, which can lead to the harmful idealization of the magician who serves as the deity even after the working has been completed. Because of these possibilities, it's important that such workings always end conclusively with a clear-cut ritual removal of the divine force from the *avatar*, a process that brings all celebrants "back to earth".

One way to avoid the obvious potential for exploitation inherent in such a rite is to allow *all* of the group's members to take turns serving as the divinity in subsequent workings, rather than allowing one particular magician to be accorded special status. The possible danger of invoking divine intelligences into one's own psyche and body during orgies is just as perilous for the magician serving as *avatar*. The mixture of the magician's own altered state of consciousness when erotically fused with the numinous awe that is sometimes visible in his or her ritual sex partners can be as explosive for unstable egos who perform this function as it can be for the sometimes vulnerable psyches of the initiate encountering the incarnated deity.

One of the advantages of the group orgiastic setting, as opposed to

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such work between couples, is that the observation and participation of others can set limits on the possible psychological hazards such practices occasionally produce. While the initiate of the sinister current has much to gain from experimenting with the sexual summoning of divine beings, and observing the effect of such operations on one's own psyche, there is nothing useful in the engendering of the all-wise *guru*/subservient student game played by so many occultists, in imitation of Crowley and his kind. Group sexual magic, like any psychologically potent magical activity can often be a breeding ground for such nonsense. Narcissism and hero worship are frequent side-effect of the sinister current's effect on the psyche. Vigilance against such delusions must be always be customary psychological hygiene for the left-hand path illuminated libertine.

The deliberately unequal power dynamic between submissive and dominant sex magicians engaged in sadomasochistic interaction is a different matter, since the submissive magician has *agreed* to submit to the dominant.

In such relations, there is no pretense of advanced *guru* and lowly student, based on the supposed spiritual superiority of the *guru* figure: the sinister current requires that all actions undertaken are always motivated by the free will of the magician. The goal of *self* deification is the primary motivation.

Forming A Left-Hand Path Group

The intensity of even one such sex-magical orgy, (assuming it is successful) can very often result in the decision to found a more cohesive magical group to experiment more comprehensively with left-hand path magic. Considering the vast diversity of human reaction to involvement with any group, it would be presumptuous to offer anything more specific than a few rough guidelines on this subject.

For any number of reasons, many sex magicians have simply not been able to locate or form a sympathetic group of fellow magicians for the purpose of orgiastic experiment. Many organized magical groups, even those of an adventurous bent, draw the line at group sex workings or consider such activity depraved or otherwise abhorrent. Of those magical groups that *do* allow for orgiastic work, you may well find that you're simply not physically

attracted to enough of its members for successful results to incur. For this reason, many sex magicians have therefore participated in profane group sex activity, hoping to apply the energy raised for their own magical purposes, unbeknownst to his or her partners. While any circumstance can theoretically be bent to serve the will of a magician, the undisciplined nature of secular group sex cannot be expected to provide the same remarkable power and unique phenomena observable during the deliberately magical orgy. We strongly recommend that orgiastic work be developed organically within a circle of friends that can accept the non-doctrinaire spirit of experiment that

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such operations call for. Two couples who have already independently achieved demonstrable results with sinister current sex magic have often formed a strong nucleus for building a larger group.

But the likelihood of such groups surviving beyond the first few flurries of excitement generated by group sex-magical activity depends entirely on the personalities of the celebrants involved. It has been our experience that such groups work most effectively when they allow for the maximum amount of flexibility and change.

In founding any magical society, there is a natural human tendency to over-organize. The nascent group may needlessly dissipate much energy devoting a great deal of attention to the design of the group's "official" symbols, the construction of artificial hierarchies, replete with titles, degrees, and ranks, the devising of complicated rules and regulations, and the general systematic codifying of the group's living experience into the stasis of dogma. All of this is guaranteed to be a waste of the initiate's valuable time. You need only consider the endless doctrinal and interpersonal bickering that characterize the various O.T.O.s, *Fraterniti Saturni* and other Western magical schism groups to observe how *not* to organize a left-hand path society.

We have often observed how easy it is for the magical vitality of lefthand path groups to be strangled by the heavy hand of conformity that is one of the inevitable results of any collaborative enterprise. In many ways, the radical individualism of the left-hand path is resistant to all attempts at systematization. It may be that the very idea of a left-hand path organization is a contradiction in terms. The dangerous, unpredictable force of Shakti, whether she is symbolized in the traditional Eastern *Vama Marga* form of Kali, or in the Western Babalon current, actually defies all human efforts at structuring. One way or the other, her chaotic energies will burn through any fetters constructed to hind her to predictable patterns. Many a magician has learned that trying to control the Shakti power within the form of a formal group is as futile an effort as attempting to catch a hurricane with a butterfly net.

Any left-hand path group can eventually become deadened by social obligation and the surrender to routine once the original fire of inspiration that brought the group together subsides. This fire can be ignited afresh only if the celebrants cultivate a willingness to follow new directions, a strength of imagination, and a willingness to break with the desensitizing traditions that inevitably gather like dust over any group activity, even the orchestration of magical *orgia*.

The burgeoning magical group dedicated to the study of sex magic will remain vibrant and open to transformation only to the degree that its members actively avoid this social disposition to creating itself according to

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a rigid scheme. Once you have given a name to the group, for instance, you have magically bound yourself to being defined by that name and its associations forever more. Some of the most effective sex magic groups have operated under no official name, which allows for an atmosphere of freedom that encourages evolution instead of stagnation. If the group progresses

according to desire and in accordance with changing circumstance, there is a chance for survival. Once the group becomes fixed in an attempt to squeeze itself into an overly cerebral abstract ideal that may no longer be relevant to actual conditions, the magical work becomes brittle and rigid. We have often observed that this is the phase when most groups disperse.

The group dynamics that we have all inherited from our ape cousins is another problem that will inevitably rear its primordial head. Once any group is solidified, subtle power plays begin to manifest. The pecking order of the pack begins to assert itself, even among magicians that have the highest respect for each other. There can be no denying that some magicians possess innate or learned leadership capabilities that others lack but any group of left-hand path magicians must strive to avoid the pyramidal power structure that shapes profane society. Left-hand path coalitions will function to the degree that they are based on the free consent of all parties involved. They will self-destruct or stagnate into orthodoxy to the degree that they become expressions of *pashu* government, with its leaders and followers.

Magicians of the sinister current would be foolish to free themselves from the control mechanisms of the larger societal macrocosm only to meekly submit to the control mechanism that so easily develops in the smaller magical group microcosm. Although the comforting fiction that all human beings are equal is rejected by the sinister current, a group of lefthand path magicians working together is compelled to avoid falling into the automatic conformism of profane society. Authority will organically develop in any gathering of human beings but such leadership must be an extremely fluid aspect of group mechanics if the work is to continue beyond the novelty of the initial experiments.

In short, an attitude of spontaneity and wakefulness on the part of all participants will provide the energy a magical group needs to sustain itself. That same spontaneity necessitates being able to determine when the group's activities have outgrown their usefulness, and degenerated into stale repetition. The left-hand path initiates struggle ceaselessly to resist falling asleep in the comfort and safety that any group offers. This possibility is particularly acute when operating within an association of apparently likeminded magicians.

Western magicians, working outside of the strict *guru* relationship of traditional left-hand path initiation, and unaffiliated with the tightly linked *kaulas*, or clans in which much Eastern left-hand path work takes place,

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have yet to find a suitable alternative. A magician of the left-hand path, determined to maintain the sanctity of solitary and self-created identity, is always confronted with a paradox whenever he or she participates in group magical activity, including the orgy. This is an enigma of left-hand path praxis that can only be resolved by the individual magician. George Blaine, in his un-organization *Acephale*, attempted to come to grips with the possibility of a leaderless group but only with mixed results.

The Egregore Of The Orgy

Whether sex magic is performed in a temporary group that will disband when the specific working is completed, or in a more structured group that regularly conducts orgiastic operations, a curious phenomenon has often been observed to take place. We refer to the creation of the *egregore*, a collective spirit or daemon that is almost always generated by the effective performance of any intense magical group operation. Perhaps the clearest way to depict the *egregore* is as a thought-form generated by the group consciousness that so often forms during magical work. (In Tantric terms, the Western *egregore* may be compared to the Tibetan *lulpa*, a thought-form brought to visible appearance by a disciplined yogi or yogini.)

For instance, after one orgiastic rite experimenting with the evocation of the traditional Goetic demon called Marbas, all six magicians involved

independently described the vision of an intense blue lightning flash during the deepest trance phase of the working. In subsequent group sex rituals, the magicians meditated on this image of Marbas before commencing the rite as a means of forming a sorcerous link between their psyches. This image became the reservoir for the combined magical energy of the group, serving as a power source to be tapped into when needed.

While such spontaneous creations of the *egregore* are not uncommon, a group of orgiasts might also deliberately set out to artificially devise a daemonic intelligence that unites the group, providing an initial focus. Choosing a particular image of a pre-existing divinity is one option but there is also something to be said for the creation of an entirely synthetic entity in the imaginations of the magicians, a god-like act of creation quite suitable to the self-deifying nature of the sinister current.

An *egregore* could be as abstract as an interlocking series of symbols representing each member of the sex-magical group, or each celebrant could draw a different feature of an imagined face, until a unique entity emerges from the collective imagination of the magicians.

The image of the *egregore*, which can be constructed in the form of a sculpture, a drawing, or collage can be charged with the combined sexual fluids of the orgiasts, a proven method of providing a semblance of daemonic life to any creation. Indeed, such beings have a peculiar way of taking on

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lives of their own as the group's sex-magical work intensifies, which can be an instructive lesson in how magic operates in the world. The *egregore* can then be utilized by the group as a kind of elemental, a thought-form that can be exhorted to accomplish the group's bidding in the daemonic realm.

Leaving aside such experiments with sorcery and the creation of artificial mental beings, the most practical reason for working with the *egregore* is that the creation of such an elemental in the minds of each orgiast forms a dynamic centre for the magical action. With any group of individuals endeavoring to accomplish a collective goal, there are always difficulties involved in engineering a smooth transition between normative group consciousness – typically diffuse and unfocused – and the self-imposed limits of ritual time and space.

Creating Group Focus

Very often, there is a chaotic swirl of nervous tension and exuberant high spirits before any magical orgy. As each participant arrives at the designated site of the working, a certain amount of small talk and trivial chit-chat ensues, a wholly expected phenomenon that precedes almost all group activity among humans. This disordered energy needs to be controlled and directed to the aim of the orgy, rather than simply allowed to dissipate of its own accord. Certainly, the success of the operation will not be well served by allowing this mechanical social behavior, which is mostly the result of conditioning, insecurity, and habit, to be permitted into the working itself.

The magical orgy requires an altered state of consciousness to be reached, allowing for true *ekstasis* to be achieved, a phase of operations in which the will of the magicians communicate their desires in the daemonic realm. That requires discipline. If the orgy commences with the mood of a casual cocktail party, it's unlikely that the required shift in consciousness will occur. There are several ways to break this distraction; each group will find the most effective method through trial and experiment.

The host/guide of the orgy can expressly forbid *any* conversation in advance of the working, so that each celebrant silently arrives and takes his or her place in darkness without uttering a word. This can create an emotional tension that lends itself to the creation of a suitable mood for magic.

A period of silent mental preparation, during which music

appropriate to the working is played, can be observed until the guide senses that ritual space and time has been entered. For those groups with some yoga experience, a group breathing or meditation exercise can be a simple but effective break with mundane consciousness before the orgy. Such relaxation exercises create an entirely different atmosphere than the

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aforementioned silence – each working will reveal different requirements and no formula should be rigidly maintained.

A collective reading of an appropriate magical, religious, or even sexually exciting erotic text, with each participant reading a designated section aloud, can serve to focus the attention on the intended purpose. If an erotic text is chosen, it's important to have a fairly accurate idea of the sexual aesthetics of the group – what one celebrant finds tantalizing is often ridiculous to another.

Effective means of disrupting the normally choppy and erratic flow of group energy and harnessing it to sex-magical ends can often appear quite spontaneously. For instance, any shared adventure or ordeal requiring a focusing of attention can be a powerful prelude to orgiastic magic.

One ideal example required a group of magicians to climb over arduous mountain terrain before reaching an isolated cave and body of water where the rite was to be celebrated. This physically demanding journey into unknown territory proved to be a very effective means of opening a ritual space for erotic magic, separating the group's consciousness from mundane matters long before the actual orgy began. The wild, primeval landscape at twilight was an ideal setting for the working, and the fact that it was held at sunset – the border between day and the mystery of night – was eminently suitable for the border-crossing that sinister current magic always involves. Any destination reached through difficulty can become a perfect temple for the performance of magic.

The Orgy Guide

When one thinks of the word orgy, there is a certain implication of an anarchic free-for-all, an undirected release of sexuality with no particular aim but intensification of pleasure. This same free flow of erotic energy – so enjoyable in a profane sexual orgy – is exactly what left-hand path magicians seek to willfully manipulate and direct toward magical objectives in an orgiastic working. The magical orgy of the sinister current, far from being a haphazard and indiscriminate unleashing of orgasmic force, is actually a highly controlled exercise requiring the same focus of concentration and will demanded by any left-hand path operation. To assure that the specific sorcerous or initiatory purpose of the orgiastic working is not cast aside in the diversion of ecstasy, it is sometimes advisable to choose one of the celebrants as a guide for the working.

In the traditional left-hand path rite of the *chakra puja*, the group energies are ritually conducted by the *chakresvara*, who radiates control from the center of the circle. While we do not recommend that Western adepts today should attempt to emulate the literal form of the Tantric orgies in every respect, the circular formation of the copulating couples in the *chakra* rite continues to provide a psychologically powerful symbolic structure to

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orgiastic workings.

The guide (or guides, depending on how many celebrants are involved in the orgy) can be an active participant in the sexual magic or he or she might act as a fairly uninvolved observer. In both cases, the guide works to control the collective direction of sexual excitement. It's sometimes very difficult for the celebrants of a magical orgy to be aware of the larger picture of the complex exchange and build-up of erotic energy they are so intimately involved in. With each celebrant swept up in the sometimes overwhelming surge of sexual force an orgy can activate, a guide can serve as the eyes of

the entire group, keeping the essential magical objective in mind. Depending entirely on circumstance, the guide can offer an unobtrusive suggestion designed to subtly intensify or minimize the intensity of the working or he or she may be required to aggressively change the entire direction of the operation if it seems to be losing its focus.

The guide should be selected well before the orgy begins, and it should be mutually agreed that whatever suggestions are offered by him or her should be followed without complaint for the greater purpose of the working's success. The basic guidelines and purpose of the working should be well understood by all participants long before the orgy commences; nothing is more annoying or more certain to destroy the correct atmosphere than petty dispute over details during the heat of the rite.

The motives and intent of any magician who cannot accept the necessity of such discipline during magical operations must be suspect, so discussion of the guide's exact purpose should be discussed among all celebrants long before the rite commences. To avoid unnecessary distraction from the magician's own sometimes fragile concentration and altered state of consciousness, simple verbal or physical cues can be agreed upon in advance. The celebrant who has the most experience with sexual magic will make for the most efficient orgy guide, since only a great deal of skill at this art will assure the proper sensitivity to the fine points of group sexual magic.

It has been observed that the best guides can provide a direction to sex-magical workings without interceding in the action in any obvious or tangible manner. The simple knowledge of the guide's presence can and should be enough to oversee the working in the appropriate direction. This is a question of the personal authority of the magician, the development of that quality known as *charisma*, which we use here in its archaic magical sense and not in its more contemporary meaning.

The more previous experience a given group of magicians has in exploring the strong currents of the orgiastic working with each other, the less obtrusive the guide's actions need to be. Sex magicians in particular become highly receptive to nonverbal cues, and it is not at all uncommon for a strong sense of telepathic communication to manifest as one of the subjective

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alterations of consciousness attainable by the celebrants of a magical orgy.

Whether such apparent telepathy is a quantifiable phenomenon measurable by the apparatus of traditional scientific method is beside the point. Far more important is the fact that this shift from ordinary mentation has proven of practical value to reaching magical goals while engaged in the orgiastic working. The guide very often makes use of this field of seemingly interconnected consciousness to direct the course of the rite to its literal and figurative climax.

The role of a guide in more explicitly sadomasochistic workings can, of course, be far more direct, since the nature of such operations are often founded on the following of clear-cut commands and orders. The same essentially ritualistic aspects of dominance and submission, master and slave, that so lend themselves to the control of sexual energy in general is also well-suited for the guidance of orgiastic rites.

The looser magical orgy, following its own course with no designated leader, tends to reveal its own pattern and takes on a less deliberate, more organic rhythm. Magicians who have developed a long-standing rapport with each other through experimentation with more controlled group magical sexuality can find such completely spontaneous workings quite effective. However, it would be unrealistic to expect a roomful of magicians who have never worked together before to automatically achieve the focus and discipline needed for successful orgiastic magic.

The Trial Run

The first orgiastic experiment for any unfamiliar combination of sex

magicians is usually best dedicated to building a sense of erotic and magical affinity, learning thresholds of pleasure and pain (depending on the nature of the work), and ascertaining purely physical compatibility. In some cases, magicians not customarily given to jealousy might unexpectedly experience such emotions when witnessing the powerful link that can form between your usual partner and another magician. These unexpected bursts of possessiveness must be transcended if the working atmosphere is not to be poisoned, and are best confronted in a preliminary orgy designed to work out the kinks, so to speak.

Magical *orgia* are most effective when the social construct of sexual restraint has been thoroughly discarded, and this usually – but not always – requires a few initial forays to achieve. The less ambitious the magical goals of these introductory explorations the better; sophistication of technique and subtlety of objective can be refined once inhibition has been reduced.

The unpredictable and erratic nature of group sexual chemistry has sometimes allowed the first trial run to work surprisingly well. Such random and unforeseen factors as anonymity, anxiety, or simply the lucky accident of

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performing the maiden working at the right place and at the right time can all contribute to an atmosphere conducive to a high level of sex-magical energy that exceeds expectations. Although such results are the exception, not the rule, the occasional surprise successes only prove that group sex magic is the branch of the Black Art least amenable to fulfilling any preconceived notions.

After The Orgy

We have already discussed a few approaches to focusing and aiming the dispersed group energies radiating in every direction before a magical orgy is entered into. The period immediately following the peak of the orgy – when the magical will of the magicians is transmitted to the solid and subtle layers of reality – is of equal importance. This climactic moment is when the guide's ability to take an overall view of the working is so invaluable. If at all possible, every celebrant's erotic energy should be satisfactorily released, and a clear-cut completion of the operation should be made apparent. If invocation or evocation of a divine/daemoniac being occurred, the celebrant incarnating the being should be guided back to human consciousness. The heightened group concentration, will, altered state of consciousness and orgasm should gradually be lowered back into normative space/time, slowly reorienting the consciousness of each magician to a more profane state of awareness.

In most cases, the considerable libidinal energies stimulated by the working can then be allowed to dissipate in non-magical sexual interaction.

Very often, a state of exhaustion is reached which can allow for each celebrant to privately fall into a light trance useful to strictly personal purposes. Divination or revelation very often occur in such a state, and such private experiences can be an augmentation to the principal aim of the working itself. It can be effective to then return to the point at which the orgy began, providing closure by coming full circle through another extended period of silence, meditation, or reflection on the group *egregore*.

As with all left-hand path workings, the celebrants have no fear of the entities or power called upon, so traditional banishings are uncalled for. As ever, no inflexible regulations apply. For instance, there are times when the goal of a working can be best accomplished by actually choosing to bring the energies achieved at the height of the orgy out of the ritual space and time and into the world at large. In such cases, the celebrants can simply leave the orgy immediately after they've each attained their peak experiences, carrying the specific power attained into their everyday lives. This method is most appropriate when very tangible, quantifiable changes in the lives of the magicians are sought.

It's almost always worthwhile for the celebrants of a magical orgy to

meet again at some later time to exchange any relevant experiences that may

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have occurred after the orgy. Magicians learn how effectively their wills have disrupted the world around them by paying attention to the synchronicities and odd coincidences that so often manifest in the wake of a working. The intense bond forged by sex magicians during the orgy can last for a considerably long time, with the side-effect that strange or unlikely parallels and repeating themes will often emerge in their separate lives. It can also be quite interesting for celebrants to compare their dreams in the weeks following an orgy, for the same reason. Collating this post-working information, should it surface in any significant manner, can often provide the catalyst for future group incursions into the daemonic realm.

Alone Together

Finally, the left-hand path magician who considers the orgy as a possible tool for his or her sorcery and initiation must keep in mind an essential paradox. The sinister current strives to steer clear of plugging into group consciousness, preserving the severe isolation of the magician's self-created state of independent being. The orgy, of course, derives part of its great power for effecting internal and external change from the deliberate linking of many magician's psyches through shared erotic energy. And yet, this very linkage – strengthened by the inexorable pull of sexuality over the nervous systems of the celebrants – can actually serve to distract from the sovereign and autonomous nature of the self. How easy it is for any act of sex magic to *lessen* rather than sharpen that distinct sense of self-awareness that drives the sinister current. The overwhelming excess of sensation and psychic melding that takes place at the height of an orgiastic rite multiplies this risk, and necessitates well-developed powers of self-control.

Few other magical methods can be forged into such a forceful weapon for bending the stuff and substance of matter and mind as the group sex working. But as with any weapon worth its weight, orgiastic magic requires that its explosive powers are handled carefully for maximum efficiency.

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XI.

Pain/Lust

The Rites Of Dominance And Submission

I teach the art of turning anguish to delight.

—Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*

A Heritage Of Sacred Suffering

Little remains to document the precise nature of the mystery religions of Greece and Rome but we know that the initiatory application of erotic pain played a role in some of these rites of self-transformation. Although the exact form of these rites is now lost to us, the so-called Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii, preserved beneath volcanic ash for centuries, permits us a glimpse into a lost tradition. On the wall of one of the chambers in the villa, a remarkable succession of murals illustrates a secret process of initiation presided over by Dionysus, or Bacchus.

In the first painting in the series, a sacred text appears to be read, perhaps an invocation of the god of erotic frenzy and divine intoxication. Then, offerings are made, which result in an act of divination. The phallus of Dionysus is unveiled to his newest female initiate. She then undergoes a ritual death, enacted by submitting to flagellation, kneeling before another initiate, who seems to be comforting her during her ordeal. She is then portrayed performing the Dionysian dance of the *bacchante* as preparation for the *hieros gamos* – the sacred marriage to the god, most likely carried out

through sexual induction into the cult.

The flagellation phase of the Dionysian initiation, it has been theorized, was not only a yielding to the death of the initiate's former self to her new identity but a kind of purification through pain. Physiologically, the endurance of pain would also have raised the adrenaline level of the novice, freeing her inhibitions to the inspired dance, and making her ready for the ecstatic culmination of the marriage to the god.

Something of the same Dionysian combination of ecstasy and pain can be observed in the practice of some Sufis, especially among the "whirling dervishes". At the height of the dervishes' spinning dance, which propels them into a profound altered state of consciousness, the reeling dancers will mutilate their flesh with sharp hooks especially devised for this ritual. In the ecstasy of the dance, pain is transmuted into pleasure, overcoming all opposites and dualities – a practice much in keeping with the goals of the left-hand path.

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Modern readers can easily accept that altered states of consciousness were attained through eroticized suffering in ancient times, in exotic cultures, among people safely removed by time and space into an abstract category of otherness. But this archaic legacy of initiation through ecstatic pain continues today in the rites of dominance and submission practiced by devotees of S&M.

S&M = Sadism And Magic?

It can truly be said that human sexual behavior takes on a ritualistic – even religious – aspect when viewed through the magician's eyes. All lovers engage in certain repetitive actions in the course of their erotic interaction that can well be compared to the ceremonies of the magician. The intricate (lance of courtship and flirtation that precedes even the most unimaginative libidinous dalliance consists of a complex communication of spoken and unspoken verbal and physical signals. This relay of hidden information on an unconscious level partakes of many of the same principles that inform the magical worldview.

During the sexual act itself, these rituals continue – the shift into a favored position at just the right juncture, the familiar endearment (or expletive) at the moment of orgasm, the exactly right touch to obtain the desired increment of pleasure – all of these ritual activities performed by lovers are the carnal equivalent of the transmissions the magician makes to the daemonic realm in the course of a working. Indeed it's because sex is such an obviously contained and semi-ritualistic event occurring in a distinct space of its own that magicians have always tended to utilize the powerful energies activated thereby for sorcerous and initiatory purposes.

If all of this is so for any run-of-the-mill population, these qualities of religious/magical ritualism are even more prominent in the complicated formalities attendant to the erotic art generally known as sadomasochism. The administration of sexually charged pain and pleasure in all of its forms is epitomized by such features as an esoteric language incomprehensible to outsiders; strictly systematized training programs; a tradition of enforced etiquette understood by all initiated into the cult; as well as uniforms; implements and symbolism coded with archetypal meaning.

In short, the subcultural world of sadomasochism is astoundingly similar to the subcultural world of traditional magic. Not the least of these similarities is the fact that both the S&M and magical spheres are (literally) dominated by individuals answering to the title of Master!

In many ways, the precisely defined erotic experience many S&M practitioners are wont to call a "session" is analogous to the "working" of the magician. The experienced devotee of pleasurable pain is already aware that the detailed preparation, build-up of adrenaline, and highly stylized and

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controlled behavior that characterizes most erotic acts of dominance and submission very often creates a ritual in and of itself.

These pre-existing elements, familiar to most non-magicians who have undergone this sexual experience, are what makes the application of magical purpose to these operations so effective. We have noticed that the qualities of discipline and concentration that typify the dominant/submissive exchange can quite easily be applied to sorcerous and initiatory purposes even by individuals relatively unlearned in magical theory. For many beginning sex magicians just trying to get the hang of magical principles, the dominant/submissive rite may often be the best introduction to sex magic, assuming of course that they are psychosexually suited to such work.

What could be more natural, then, but for the left-hand path magician to combine these two events, harnessing the intense erotic potential of sexual pain for magical objectives? It is not surprising that many long-time S&M devotees have noticed the spiritual aspects of the sadomasochistic ritual.

However, the rather more conservative magical community has been significantly slower in realizing – or admitting to – the similarities it shares with the praxis of a sexual subculture currently afforded roughly the same degree of suspicious but begrudging tolerance magicians currently enjoy in the slightly more tolerant attitude of this era.

Although many left-hand path magicians like to think that their metaphysical concerns have placed them on a higher plane in society's eyes than the strictly sexual pursuits of the S&M aficionado, the plain fact is that both subcultures are generally viewed in the same light by society at large: as possibly harmless but potentially dangerous maniacs pursuing interests of no value to any sane citizen. As we have seen, spiritual deviance and sexual deviance are often closely allied, although it would be a generalization to say that this is always the case.

Even in the non-magical world of profane S&M, one finds striking parallels with the traditional left-hand path practice of Tantra. Consider that the erotic subculture of dominance and submission is heavily populated by men – often those established in outwardly powerful roles in society – who delight in being abused and degraded by prostitute-dominatrixes dwelling at what conventional moralists would consider the lowest rung of the social ladder. Here we have a ritualized inversion of the normative balance of things very much in keeping with the left-hand path practice of opposite-doing. The exaggerated female domination of the male that forms the basis of so many S&M experiences can be viewed as a secular manifestation of Shakti, in her darkest, most wrathful form.

Like the left-hand path Tantrika's transformation of man into woman, and night into day, the submissive's replacement of pleasure with pain, and awareness of the thin line between the two sensations, is a powerful example of reversing apparent opposites that we have already seen is so

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important to the left-hand path. For most humans drawn to such erotic experiences, this is of course entirely unconscious. However, the sinister current sex magician will see how the ritualized tension of diametrical forces and inversions of social roles inherent to S&M can consciously be applied to erotic initiation.

The Magical Roots Of S&M Literature

Dominique Aury, the French author whose masterpiece of willing sexual slavery, *The Story Of 0*, was written under the *nom de plume* Pauline Réage, perfectly captures the ritualistic and numinous aspect of the S&M experience. She also wrote perceptively of the hidden theurgic and sacerdotal elements of the master/slave bond in her introduction to Jean de Berg's potent novel *The*

Image:

"... the all powerful slave, dragging herself along the ground at her master's heels, is now really the god. The man is only her priest, living in fear and

trembling of her displeasure. His sole function is to perform the various ceremonies that center around the sacred object."

In the same vein, Réage comments on the hieratic elements of the sadomasochistic relationship described in *The Image*, describing "the hierarchy of postures ... the rituals, the churchlike setting, the fetishism attached to certain objects." The sexual slave, according to Réage, is the "divine object, violated, endlessly sacrificed yet always reborn, whose only joy, achieved through a subtle interplay of images, lies in contemplation of herself."

This description, irrespective of the submissive's gender, serves equally well to characterize the left-hand path initiate, whose deliberate transformations of self have much in common with the guided metamorphoses intrinsic to S&M praxis. For those unfamiliar with the dynamics of sadomasochism, the notion that the slave takes on a god-like status may seem puzzling. Yet, it is very often the case that the submissive is the center of the rite, while the master is frequently the servant. Certainly, the master or mistress can also be said to undergo a process of selfdeification appropriate to left-hand path practice but the shifting polarities that inform all sexual magic are especially ambiguous in sadomasochistic relations.

It should not be surprising that Auly/Réage placed her *Story Of 0* and her other fictional celebrations of S&M into a magico-religious context. Her infamous novel originally began as a series of love letters to Jean Paulhan, a participant in the school of Satanic sex magic established by Marie de Naglowska in the years between the World Wars. It's also probably not coincidental that one of the first serious reviews of the novel came from the

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pen of Georges Bataille, Paulhan's fellow alumnus of the de Naglowska circle.

Describing Réage's submissive title character 0, who places herself at the sexual mercy of a secret society to please her master, Bataille elucidates his mystical vision of surrender to ecstasy as an initiatory death and rebirth. "The paradox of 0," he writes "is that of the visionary who dies but does not die." Within the diabolic quasi-Tantric sexual rites taught by de Naglowska, Bataille would have encountered a similar comparison of orgasm to death and resurgence. Getting at the heart of the mystical urge to dominate and submit, Bataille noted that "the executioner is the victim's accomplice." The excesses of Bataille's own texts of visionary pornography have caused him to be described as the de Sade of the twentieth century.

The obscure rites of such European left-hand path orders as de Naglowska's *La Fleche d'Or* and Bataille's own *Acephale* indicates an intriguing cross-current flowing between genuine sex-magical activity and the French neo-Sadean erotica that so defined the modern aesthetics of S&M. No wonder, with such a lineage, that the Chateau Roissy – the fictional Order of aristocratic sadists central to the narrative of *The Story Of 0* – has inspired any number of fantasists in the occult and S&M subcultures to spuriously claim to be the real thing.

In Bataille's final work, 1959's *The Tears Of Eros*, he presented the ultimate refinement of his theory postulating a "fundamental connection between religious ecstasy and eroticism – and in particular sadism." For Bataille, "between an ultimate pain and an unbearable joy" lay a mysterious union, physically exemplified in a photograph taken in 1905 depicting the excruciating death by torture of a Chinese assassin. The photograph records the terminal agonies of the dying man as he is physically dismembered by his executioners, whose facial expression, according to Bataille, revealed a mystical joy even in the face of unendurable pain.

"I have never stopped being obsessed by the image of this pain, at once ecstatic and intolerable," he wrote of this cruel icon that became the

focus of a powerful fetish. Bataille used the grisly photograph as a consciousness-altering meditation device, a magical springboard for contemplation of the "perfect contraries, divine ecstasy and its opposite, extreme horror." The author understood from his study of yoga that this melding of contraries was a Tantric practice, and was for him sufficient to plunge him into an inner state of rapture.

Bataille's life-long fascination with the coupling of mystical illumination and ecstatic cruelty also led him to study the historical excesses of the aristocratic sexual sadists Countess Erzébet Báthory of Hungary and Baron Gilles de Rais of France. Although the crimes of these human predators have entered into the annals of legend, Bataille was particularly

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interested in the obscure magical underpinnings that seem to have inspired their savagery. Báthory, whose glamourized image has become the prototype for the lesbian female vampiress of popular culture, was inspired in her erotically tinged sadistic killings of over 600 girls by the local folk traditions of Magyar witchery. De Rais, associated with the legend of Bluebeard, confessed to the lust-murder of hundreds of boys in the process of performing alchemical experiments and supposedly Satanic conjurations. In the lives of these brutal beings, Bataille discovered objects of contemplation allowing him to consider the mysterious thin line separating cruelty and gnosis. As creatures who had transgressed all comprehensible boundaries of the sacred, Báthory and de Rais had, according to Bataille, taken on that numinous and transcendent power he called "sovereignty."

This is not to say that he in any way condoned their crimes. Rather, Bataille's focus on such epiphanies of erotic morbidity must be understood as analogous to the Indian left-hand path adept's immersion in the ghastly atmosphere of the cremation ground, or the *Vama Marga* rite of imagining one's lover as a decomposing corpse – a method of facing up to, and integrating, the mingled ecstasies and terrors of the Kali Yuga age.

William Carney's 1968 novel *The Real Thing*, although it possesses none of the visionary insight of Bataille, did much to inspire the now established rites of the international sadomasochistic subculture, and also noted the esoteric nature of dominance and submission. Carney's imagined sadistic secret society, like so many magical orders, is composed of four grades of initiation, the Oblates, the Purists, The Exemplars and the Perfect – names that recall the Gnostic heresies. Like Pauline Réage before him, Carney describes the relations between master and slave in the language of the sacred, writing that the master is

"... devoted to the task of breaking the victim he confronts in the manner of the priest who creases and splits the host. He contemplates his victim, worshipping him with studied savagery; and the victim, broken, is consumed. The lives of these uncorrupted Exemplars are oriented toward the attainment of such singular moments of transcendence ..."

Binding the ceremonial of lust/pain more directly to the left-hand path, Carney points out that the hierarchy of dominant and submissive is coded through symbolism also encountered in the Tantric tradition.

"... left side is sinister, sadist, top man, teacher, master, shepherd, S; right is dexter, masochist, bottom man, boy, slave, mutton, M ..."

Learning The Ropes

Before turning to the actual practice of this sex magical mode, a few

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important preliminaries should be addressed. Our task in this chapter is to provide a sound theoretical basis for pain-oriented sex magic, so that the reader will be able to experiment with these methods with a firm grounding in *why* these operations are useful to the magician, and some suggestions as to experiments that we have seen to be useful. We do not provide the mechanics of the arts of bondage, discipline, and pain application. Nevertheless, before

you actually begin to experiment with these procedures, it is crucial that you take the time to learn the physical skills required to perform these acts in a controlled and disciplined manner. More than any other branch of sex magic, the application of erotic pain requires a certain amount of specialized technical knowledge.

The beginner who ties his partner incorrectly and with little knowledge of the body's thresholds of pain can quickly cause severe – even irreparable – damage. The art of body suspension is a particularly effective technique for sex magic that also requires a great deal of trained skill before attempting. Suspending a submissive in a manner that requires him or her to support their entire body weight for longer than a few minutes can easily cause nerve damage. Broken arms and even broken necks are not the kind of pain you are seeking to cause but can certainly be the results of poorly executed suspension. The use of needles or any sort of ritual body modification without training in the technique involved can also lead to chronic nerve damage and other health risks unless the dominant has a fairly thorough understanding of anatomy, sterilization and the nervous system.

There are several comprehensive training guides available offering the beginner a basic knowledge of these techniques. However, as with any magically relevant training, we highly recommend that the magician seeking to incorporate pain/pleasure into his or her workings seek out an experienced dominant or submissive who can demonstrate and teach the skills required directly. For instance, the dominant must acquire proficiency wielding the various flagellation devices due to the very different levels of pain they can cause.

The infliction of pain in an erotic context is an art, and like any art, it is best mastered through education. Many cities now offer training courses for dominants and submissives, and these are a useful prelude to any magical experimentation with these practices. Many of these training courses and professional S&M houses require prospective dominants to begin training in the submissive role first so that they will fully understand the art of administering erotic pain from within rather than from without. If the psycheexpanding results of true magic are always potentially dangerous, mixing this phenomenon with the physical dangers inherent in the extreme endurance of pain is an additional risk that must be taken into account. By no means do we wish to discourage any magician from exploring this form of sex magic; but such exploration should not be entered into before the needed skills are

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secured.

Just as we advise that the sex magician in general should have an active and satisfactory erotic life before engaging in sexual magic, the dominant or submissive sex magician is wise to gain varied experience in the realm of pain-oriented sexuality before turning these techniques to magical purposes. Clumsy or ill-prepared performance of sadomasochistic magic is unlikely to be successful, as the distractions and frustration beginners invariably experience can only diminish the ability to focus and concentrate the will that all workings require. Novice dominants should probably perfect their initial pain/lust skills with a patient and seasoned submissive with a fairly high threshold for pain who can guide you in modifying your technique. Beginning submissives are also ill-advised to make themselves vulnerable to a dominant who has no idea what he or she is doing.

The eager amateur should begin experiments with such easily controllable techniques as bondage through handcuffs and application of pain with the bare hand, paddle or a short riding crop before attempting riskier methods.

With whom should you perform these workings? Although it would be foolish to ascribe rules for something as subjective as the bridge between

sexuality and magic, it seems that the most effective workings of dominance and submission occur between partners that have already created a strong emotional bond. The dominant who has little understanding of the psychology of his or her submissive will simply be performing a mechanical function with none of the emotional depth required to make sex magic soar to the heights it can ideally reach.

Autoerotic Experiments

Like all forms of sex magic, any number of possible human combinations are possible with pain/lust workings. Many magicians have achieved extremely powerful magical results through strictly individual workings that involve the self-application of pain to their own bodies. For instance, the solo practitioner might attain a high level of erotic excitement by simply affixing painful clamps on his or her nipples or genitals. Bringing his or her self to orgasm at the peak of agonized ecstasy, the solo magician concentrates on the attainment of his or her magical desire at the sharpest moment of orgasmic trance, just as with previously discussed autoerotic magic.

One submissive magician of our acquaintance who was also a photographer set up his camera on a remote control shutter so that he could photograph himself at the moment of greatest pain/pleasure, thus fixing the precise second in which he transmitted his magical will into the sorcerous time-freezing medium of film. The subsequently developed photograph was then used as a talisman to focus the mind on the magical goal. There's something about bringing together the heated organic processes of the flesh

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with the cold and anonymous functions of technology that serve magic well – perhaps such weddings of skin and machine draw on the energy sparked by any forced conjunction of polarities.

Many sexual submissives begin experimenting with their personal threshold of pain through very elaborate masturbatory rituals involving pain, actions limited in complexity only by the imagination of the individual magician. Just as all left-hand path sex magic practice is probably best instigated with masturbation, initial attempts at learning what forms of pain are most stimulating very often begin alone with the magician manipulating his or her own flesh.

Even if the magician is drawn to a dominant role in sex magic, beginning one's experiments with autoerotic work can be useful, since it allows the magician to experience both sides of the S&M equation. The dominant who has endured some measure of the pain he or she will be applying to the submissive will be a more adept technician of ecstatic agony than the magician who knows only one level of this delicate interplay of opposites.

At the opposite extreme, pain/lust is very often shaped into a transcendent energy for self-transformation by the participation of many sex magicians. The presence of several sex magicians in a rite of dominance and submission can magnify the desired emotional humiliation of the submissive(s) involved and step up the intensity of actual pain delivered, along with other more subtle augmentations of the working.

SM, XY and XX

The observable differences between male and female sexuality also come to bear on the choice of partner. The female submissive very often attains her greatest pleasure from submitting to one particular master. While male submissives are also sometimes linked to one specific dominant, men seem more inclined to gain equal pleasure from submitting to anonymous dominants. For this reason, many male submissive sex magicians have enjoyed effective magical results through relations with professional dominatrixes, which is always an option when no willing partner is available.

While there are always exceptions to such rules of thumb, it seems to us that men's sometimes more indiscriminate sexuality allows them to reverse

the powers of a dominant as an abstraction – an impersonal form of *shakti* – removed from the actual identity of the individual wielding the whip, while women are far more inclined to require a solid empathy and trust with her dominant.

With both men and women, however, it seems to be true that the ability of submissives to endure extreme levels of pain that would normally be unendurable depends largely on the degree of erotic bond felt for the

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dominant. Most submissives will not respond favorably to just *any* pain; it must be pain meted out within the aegis of strong sexual excitement for the dominant.

Tools Of The Trade

Although illuminated libertines will doubtlessly discover methods of applying pain to the body that are unique to them alone, there are a few basic mediums that should be familiar to all experimenters in this realm. One of the most common is immobilizing the submissive through bondage, which can be simply realized by a pair of handcuffs and a four-poster bed, or can be developed into an elaborate art form of its own, replete with complicated knots and contorted body positions.

One facet of bondage is suspension, a method of hanging and securing the body which allows the submissive to be approached from all sides for maximum manipulation. The use of any kind of squeezing appliance, ranging from common household clothes pins to specialized metal clamps applied to sensitive areas of the flesh, is one of the dominant's most important tools. Flagellation can be accomplished with the bare hand, the riding crop, the cane, the paddle, the cat o' nine tails, or any number of variations of striking instruments.

Piercing the flesh is another delicate operation that should only be attempted after training and always requires the use of sterile equipment. The application of melting candle wax to the flesh and other uses of extreme heat or extreme cold can produce desirable effects with less risk of permanent injury.

The advanced practitioner will learn that every sense can become a source of pain. Blindfolding the submissive properly can obliterate all light and be extremely disorienting but bright light directed in the eyes can be just as effective. Creating a disturbing sound pattern during the working can be quite unendurable but this method can sometimes be just as painful to the dominant as to the submissive.

Due to the endless variety of erotic aesthetics, such accouterments as vinyl or leather uniforms designating the dominant or submissive role are entirely a matter of choice. There is certainly no pragmatic reason for the sex magician to arbitrarily adopt the entire wardrobe associated with the traditional S&M lifestyle. Just as the effective performance of magic in general does not require the antiquated robes and ceremonial gear of yesteryear, powerful left-hand path magic does not necessitate any special costume unless your personal taste so dictates. As a rule, the left hand path sex magician should always be careful not to appropriate the ready-made fetishes of others but should take the extra effort to discover one's own. These may or may not have anything to do with the stereotyped regalia of the

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S&M subculture.

There are only three reasons to consider wearing special clothing during rites of dominance and submission: either the outfit provides an extra level of erotic arousal that can be drawn on to increase the sexual power of the working; the act of donning this clothing signals to your mind that the ritual space has been entered; or as a means of confirming the magical/sexual roles of the celebrants, when such symbolism is necessary. Harnessing the erotic energies of the dominant/submissive bond to magical aims is always

focused on the *internal* process; such rites should not be reduced to the empty pageantry and posturing so prevalent in the recent commercialization of fetish fashion.

The Chemistry Of Pain/Lust

Perhaps the most useful way to approach this subject is to pare the function of sadomasochistic magic down to its most basic, physiological rudiments.

All workings of sexual sorcery require an alteration of the magician's consciousness in which he or she can forcefully transmit the focused will at a peak moment of psychic awakening, a summit of daemonic energy that elevates the magician far above ordinary awareness. For the sex magician, the psychically enhanced moment of orgasm, an organic and easily accessible trance state open to every sexually functioning man and woman, provides the gateway for transmission of the will into the worlds. Alternately, the altered state of consciousness attained through ecstasy can be utilized for purely mystical and initiatory purposes, abjuring the mechanical goals of sorcery altogether.

The magician who adopts sadomasochistic techniques into his or her repertoire opens up access to another easily attained trance state – the application of pain to the body-mind-psyche complex. Intense pain, like intense pleasure, allows for sharp, distinct, deliberately created consciousness modification, which is exactly the kind of tool the magician requires to do his or her work. When this extreme pain is wedded to an equally high level of sexual arousal, the duality of pain/pleasure can be transcended. A new dimension of ecstasy is opened, an aperture in the fissures of sensory reality permitting the magician to alter the *maya* of world and self.

In the methods of sinister sex magic we have explored thus far, the augmented genital or full-body orgasm is one of the principal mechanisms of the flesh which the magician manipulates. While orgasm may certainly occur during the ritualized application of pain, the intensity of the altered states attainable through its infliction sometimes makes actual sexual climax unnecessary. Unlike strictly pleasure-oriented sexual magic, lust/pain, properly activated, can create an atmospheric force of erotic agitation for both dominant and. submissive that can be sustained without orgasm but with

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equally dynamic effects.

The sinister current technician should learn as much as possible about the scientific basis of the sexual alchemy he or she creates. Some misty-minded occultists have objected to us that grounding magical work in physiological reality ruins the romance of it all. Be that as it may, magicians seeking to control the body for initiatory purposes are obliged to understand something of its mechanical workings. This is especially relevant for magical operations involving pain, one of the riskiest techniques available.

One of the main differences between the physiological reactions caused by strictly pleasurable sensation and by the administration of pain is that the latter manipulation of the body releases powerful endorphins, the morphine-like peptides secreted by the brain as a natural pain- killer. The surge of endorphins discharged during erotic torture allows the magician to enter altered states of consciousness perfectly suited for magical transformation.

When analyzed in this purposely clinical manner, it can be observed that the magician who limits his sex-magical activity to activating extreme pleasure alone while avoiding extreme pain is basically demonstrating nothing more than a personal taste. Logically speaking, there is no meaningful difference marking one strong sensation as more preferable or appropriate for magical work than the other. The magically directed cultivation of pain and pleasure are simply flip sides of the same coin, and experience has shown that either polarity of feeling is of practical advantage for the sex magician.

Of course, this exercise in logical deduction deliberately ignores the psychological and symbolic dimensions of the question, those ephemeral qualities that provide personal meaning to any magical experience. The intangible aesthetic and poetic interpretation of the S&M experience is just as invaluable to the magician as the physiological release of endorphins. The factor of *who* is applying the pain, and under what circumstances, are essential ingredients in any working of this nature. The conscious awareness and manipulation of the entirety of somatic and symbolic information accessed through pleasure/pain, culminating in the direction of this complicated mixture toward magical aims are the factors that separate the magician from the simple fetishist, although the border between the two roles is admittedly fluid.

For many sex magicians, using strictly pleasurable sexual interaction for magical purposes is deemed to be "normal" and dignified, while those who incorporate dominance and submission, bondage, erotic torture and other pain-oriented techniques into magic are automatically condemned as "sick and perverted", utterly beyond the pale of the "respectable" sex magician (is there such a thing?). As biased as this view may be, it must also

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be said that there are many sex magicians who exclusively utilize S&M procedures in their magic but who smugly dismiss sexual penetration as "vanilla sex", with the implication that such practices are tediously unimaginative and boring. In our view, both prejudices are limited, tending to restrict rather than expand the spectrum of techniques available to the sinister current sex magician.

Whether S&M seems detestable or attractive to you, experimenting with its methods can add much to your magical arsenal, shedding light on undiscovered regions of self that can only be accessed through these means.

While many traditional magicians are loath to explore this domain, the illuminated libertine will not hesitate to integrate any useful technique into his or her corpus of knowledge.

Algolagnia

Before we examine the basic techniques available to the sex magician experimenting with the agony and the ecstasy of pain manipulation, some reference to the nomenclature surrounding the subject is not inappropriate. Thus far, simply to facilitate general ease of comprehension, we have utilized the terms sadomasochism or its popular abbreviation S&M. For several reasons, we find this term magically unsuitable for the task at hand. Taking into account the elementary mantric principle that names have a power of their own which can significantly distort or clarify that which they signify, the diagnostic phrase "sadomasochism" is particularly loaded with distracting and misleading associations.

The words sadism and masochism were originally coined by the German neurologist Dr. Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840—1902) in his famous *Psychopathia Sexualis*, an encyclopaedic record of sexual practices designated by the good *Herr Doktor* as psychotic aberrations. Since illuminated libertines do not consider that the conscious and consensual erotic manipulation of pain, or any other fetish for that matter, can be characterized as a psychological condition requiring cure, we must reject Krafft-Ebing's clinical description as irrelevant to the sex magician.

In this, we would agree with Aleister Crowley, who in reading the accounts of "perversion" in *Psychopathia Sexualis* as a young man, concluded that these supposed depravities could all be understood from an initiatic perspective as "magical affirmations of perfectly intelligible points of view." Of course, as we have seen, a major part of Crowley's sex-magical initiation was exercised through the most extreme rites of sexual submission and degradation.

Many a dull-witted brute or compulsive serial killer can he classified

as a sadist. For the most part, these torn souls have no choice in the matter – they are often driven by powerful psychic compulsions. The mindless cruelty of such individuals' actions bears no relation at all to In both cases, those

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typically described as sadists or masochists usually lack *control*, and control is one of the essential factors of the left-hand path. Also, there is not necessarily an erotic component to the actions of the sadist or the masochist, and without eroticism we are no longer speaking of the left-hand path. Sigmund Freud, who condemned all magical impulses as "neuroses", was the first to place Krafft- Ebing's coinages together, seeing sadism and masochism as shades of a continuum he dubbed "sadomasochism" in 1938.

Then there is the matter of the historical personages whose names were combined to form the word: the infamous French *philosophe* Donatien Alphonse Francois Marquis de Sade (1740—1814) and the lesser known Austrian literary figure Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1835—1895), the author of *Venus In Furs*. While certainly each writer's works are interesting in their own light, much of what they wrote is simply irrelevant to the sinister current sex magician.

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It is easy to misinterpret the Sadean *oeuvre* as a conscious celebration of Satanism, a romantic concept which has been inspired more by de Sade's posthumous legend than anything the man actually wrote in his voluminous novels. De Sade was a thoroughgoing atheist who clearly recognized no spiritual force in the universe other than man, an attitude quite typical of the so-called Age of Enlightenment. He avidly considered Nature to be the highest good, the arbitrator of unbreakable laws that men should ideally surrender to. De Sade's exaltation of Nature has much in common with Jean-Jacques Rousseau; both men preached in favor of a naive return to an imagined utopia when man was presumably a "noble savage".

This philosophy, despite de Sade's undeserved Satanic reputation, could not be less in keeping with the metaphysical orientation of the left-hand path, whose magicians deliberately work *against* the predictable flow of nature to realize their objectives. Nor does the Divine Marquis' obsessively articulated hatred of Christianity qualify him as an advocate of the left-hand path, despite popular misunderstandings of this point. Although the Marquis de Sade's elaborate erotic fantasies may serve as fuel for the imagination of the sex magician, his basic philosophy and approach to existence seeks above all to attune mankind with Nature, understood as an impersonal force that inspires all of man's desires, including his love of torture and murder.

One has to admire the audacity of his vision, a yearning "to attack the sun, to expunge it from the universe, or to use it to set the world ablaze – these would be crimes indeed!" Although such savage declarations are superficially transgressive of societal and sacred taboo, they seem ultimately hollow. Perhaps this is due to the fact that the Divine Marquis, who spent much of his life in prison, never actually had the freedom to explore the extravagant erotic fantasies he wrote about. This lack of any basis in reality weighs De Sade's novels down with a monotonous sterility, and the flights of his fantastic imagination never really leave the page.

Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, actually the more gifted writer of the two, demonstrated a greater magical understanding of erotic pain but the regrettable reduction of his name to a negative psychological diagnosis reduces its suitability for the sex magician. Nevertheless, Sacher-Masoch's *Venus In Furs* is an evocative study of a thinly disguised Sacher-Masoch's exaltation of a savage archetype of the atavistic huntress, the cruel Feminine Daemonic in human form, an impassioned submission to *shakti* power bordering on the sacred.

For the specific purposes of this study, we prefer to classify activities centered on the erotic application of physical or psychological pain with the

less familiar term algolagnia, a modern neologism constructed by Dr. Albert Schrenk-Notzing from the Greek *algos* (pain) and *lagneia* (lust). In contrast to the rather vague sadomasochism, the more precise concept of pain/lust

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cannot be misconstrued as anything other than an erotic activity. Algolagnia neatly sidesteps the entire muddle of literary and psychiatric symbolism that sadomasochism conjures, allowing the sex magician to constructively view the art of sexual pain through fresh eyes. The utilization of erotically charged pain in magical and religious rites predates both de Sade and Sacher-Masoch by millennia, and the magician who rejects the strictly time and culture-determined phrase "sadomasochism" for a more eternal understanding of this initiatory activity can approach such work from a purer perspective. For those of you who have previously been content to describe your proclivities as sadomasochistic, now you know that you were actually an algolagniac all along.

Left-Hand Path Dominance And Submission

Some of our readers may be experimenting with this branch of sex magic for the first time, while others may already have a great deal of experience in such workings. In either case, it is necessary to first isolate the essential magical characteristics of the sexual personae most commonly assumed during the rites of pain/lust. Although the specific techniques used in the rite differ from the classic *Vama Marga* union, the dominant and submissive are really only incarnating non-traditional manifestations of the contrasexual Shiva/Shakti forces.

If Shiva is consciousness, and Shakti is that consciousness made visible, as Tantra teaches, the obedient submissive (of either sex) might also

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be a form of Shakti, embodying the thoughts of his/her dominant in the physical world. Alternately, the male or female dominant may represent the Shakti force, active in contrast to the submissive's Shiva-like immobility: In

either case, left-hand path dominance and submission is based on an awareness that the seemingly opposite forces are actually mysteriously united, transcending the apparent duality. In the mystical conjunction of Shiva and Shakti, the dominant knows that the slave's flesh being tormented is really his/her own. And the slave knows that every cruelty suffered at the dominant's hands originates in his/her own mind.

Each of these roles offer unique possibilities for the accomplishment of specific magical desires, and need to be examined in further depth than the superficial stereotyping of popular imagery allows. The external relations of master and slave, submissive and dominant, would appear at first to be one of the most easily understandable manifestations of opposite polarities.

However, even in the non-magical orchestration of dominant and submissive sexual energies, great psychological complexity can arise. This complexity is multiplied incomparably once the destabilizing influence of left-hand path magic is brought into the equation. Therefore, an understanding of the underlying magical theory of magical dominance and submission is required before entering the volatile arena of this extreme form of erotic magic.

The advantages accessible to the dominant magician are perhaps more *immediately* clear-cut than those available to the submissive. In most cases, the master/mistress is the god or goddess whose will rules absolutely over the entire magical working. Now, a magician in a non-sexual working commonly manipulates some inert symbolic material in the microcosm to effect changes in the macrocosm. Let us say that he or she creates a magical sigil distilling the desire in the case of some abstract aspiration. Perhaps, to use an easily grasped example, a standard issue voodoo doll is crafted that stands in for the external force the magician wishes to influence. In typical ceremonial magic, the entire panoply of symbolic dagger, chalice, candle,

altar, etc., suffices.

In contrast to these low-energy methods, the dominant sex magician has an infinitely more powerful and sensitive canvas to paint his or her will upon. The dominant can utilize the willing body and psyche of the submissive as the medium through which the dominant's requisite alterations are wrought. In effect, the dominant magician's exercise of complete control over the slave mirrors the desired control over some aspect of the universe he or she seeks to transform. To say that using a living human being as one's magical tool far exceeds the more common magical practice of utilizing some inanimate object is a vast understatement.

In fact, (luring the interval outside of normal space and time during which the working is performed, the submissive is no longer the individual

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they were before the rite began; they have effectively become that discrete facet of the cosmos you wish to effect. By binding, flagellating, branding, or any other algolagniac manipulation of the utterly compliant flesh and blood that has submitted to you, you are directly exercising your mastery over the daemonic or mundane plane of existence you most need to target.

The added fact that your submissive (the symbolic universe) has *willingly* submitted to your desires and is actually experiencing an intense level of sexual excitation as you work your will upon him/her provides a push of *lila* energy to realizing your magical goal that cannot be underestimated. At that moment of exchange, the universe, as personified in the living flesh of the submissive, changes according to the dominant's design. The dominant creating these changes in the submissive receives the will-affirming signal from the obvious erotic enjoyment his or her mastery creates in the submissive that *maya* is literally bending to the will's command.

The options here are infinite, and the threshold of your imagination is your only limit. The submissive could serve as a stand-in for an abstract principle in your life or in yourself that you wish to transform, or as a specific person you seek to control for some purpose advantageous to you, to name just a few possibilities. Depending on how erogenously receptive to pain and

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the physical act of obedience your slave is, the submissive's orgasm can signal that the universe has utterly bowed down to your magical demand.

No single set of conditions is best for every situation; but such workings of mastery require a careful consideration of the actual mechanics involved before the rite actually commences. Should you verbally express your commands to the submissive as if you are addressing that aspect of reality you seek to dominate, or should this be communicated wordlessly through the more primal sexual interaction alone? Keep in mind that ordering your submissive around as if she or he is the particular facet of reality that you wish to alter may be considerably less exciting than less specific imagery, thus draining some of the power from the working.

Will the working be more successful if the submissive is fully aware of the symbolic function they are expected to serve, or should the dominant withhold this information, adding the power of mystery to the operation? In

some cases, when the submissive is a skilled magician, he or she can consciously attune his or her consciousness to the selected magical target, although this requires a great deal of psychological flexibility and acuity.

Equally positive results have been attained using any number of combinations; the dominant alone must decide what seems appropriate.

In all cases, it's always important to remember that the flow of genuine sexual excitement between both parties must be kept at its absolute height; this can easily be bogged down by adhering to too tight a "script" for the working. A certain amount of play-acting can be stimulating to some but it can just as likely be distracting.

Another factor that must always be considered is the endlessly

unknowable nature of the human mind. The magician learns that he or she can never fully fathom his or her own psyche, which is constantly being recreated, let alone the psyche of another. A general magical rule is that *one* will is always easier to focus and control concerning a given objective than two. Couples that share a long-standing magical and sexual rapport are sometimes an exception to this rule but even this cannot always be reliably counted on.

If such hidden ambiguities of the dominant/submissive link must be taken into account in fairly straightforward acts of sexual sorcery, they are even more consequential when performing initiatory acts of magic.

The Submissive As Oracular, Theurgic Or Necromantic Tool

A more directly initiatory purpose of dominant/submissive magical interaction, and one requiring a far more subtle measure of control is the working in which the submissive actually symbolizes an *internal* aspect of the dominant's being. In this case, the dominant is effectively forcing a disobedient facet of his or her own psyche into submission. Such operations

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can range from the mastery of a certain personality trait to the deeper understanding of some unknown element of the dominant's being. By externalizing this aspect of one's self in the body of a submissive, the dominant temporarily allows the intangible inner quality to become a malleable, three-dimensional, living being that can be manipulated at will.

The methods applicable to this end are boundless but a few practical examples may spur your own experimentation.

To utilize the first method, which might best be termed "the interrogation," it is recommended that your submissive be accustomed to altering his or her consciousness into deep trance through the vigorous employment of erotic pain. It is also best if the submissive is not informed as to the purpose of the working in advance, a condition which allows for more intrusion of possibly useful random and unpredictable information into the submissive's psyche.

The dominant firmly establishes in his or her own willed imagination that the submissive is the physical incarnation of the inner quality in question. Through whatever combination of bondage, discipline, and controlled application of pain is deemed best suited to the work, the submissive is brought to a trance state. For such workings, the prolonged physical agony that can be brought about through clamping of the flesh or extreme forms of bondage is most effective; the sharper, more periodic bursts of pain achievable through flagellation is less likely to accomplish the desired results.

When the submissive is in the summit of a pain-engendered trance sufficiently disruptive to normal personality reactions, the dominant asks the submissive important questions he or she needs to know about this hidden manifestation of his or her own psyche, an interrogation of the externalized self through the medium of the submissive.

While it is more than possible that the submissive's responses may not *all* be relevant to the dominant's needs, such interrogations performed during the erotic trauma of a high level of erogenous pain can provide a surprisingly high ratio of useful information. In effect, the submissive becomes an oracle, opened up to divinatory utterance through the endurance of pain/pleasure.

Jungians will conclude that the crossing of the submissive's erotic pain threshold has permitted access to the "collective unconscious", the same symbolic region attainable in dreams. Whatever the language one resorts to when describing this mysterious phenomenon, the uncanny experience of seeming to speak to a hidden part of your own self during a sex-magical working dramatically demonstrates the perplexing fluidity of *maya*, the misty border between the microcosm and the macrocosm, the inner self and the

This same interrogatory technique is equally applicable if the dominant seeks to communicate with the intelligence of a chosen divinity or demonic being. Just as the submissive may be used as a means of contacting a specific region of the dominant's inner self, the submissive's body can serve as a vehicle for the entity invoked through pain. The infliction of erotically charged pain as a means of invoking a divine consciousness in the sufferer

has a long precedent in pagan religious practice, and even survives in a distorted form with the penitents and other Christian cults of flagellation of the flesh.

The body of the submissive, brought to a high state of ecstasy through pain, can also be used as a vehicle for necromancy, allowing the dominant to communicate with the dead. Regardless of the particular entity being sought, the release of endorphins in the brain through algolagniac handling of the body seems to be the physiological foundation upon which all such workings are based.

The Dominant As Deity

Naturally, it is also appropriate for dominant sex magicians to invoke a specific divinity within themselves. Even in non-magical relations between dominants and submissives, it has been noted that the submissive very often submits to his or her master or mistress in an attitude bearing much similarity to the religious devotion and veneration usually accorded to a deity. When this pre-existing "worship" of the dominant is energized through magical theurgic operations, one of the most powerful expressions of divine invocation accessible to the magician can be realized.

To fully understand this phenomenon we must go beyond the outer manifestations of such acts and explore what goes on in the psyche of the dominant sex magician. The left-hand path magician seeks the selfdeification of his or her consciousness in this lifetime. There are few sensations that so keenly demonstrate this god-like transformation in the flesh as the experience of witnessing the submissive willingly relinquish all control to you.

Indeed, many non-magical dominants have also had their will and sense of self strengthened by this ritualistic submission to their mastery, finding it an extremely addictive sensation in many cases. The effect on the awakened consciousness of the dominant magician, who directs this feeling of divinity to sorcerous and/or initiatory objectives is all the mightier. During the working, the submissive at your feet – who has agreed to obey your every whim – represents *Maya* subject to your command.

When the dominant in this position opens his or her consciousness to any of those gods or goddesses of darkness appropriate to the sinister current, he or she is literally transformed. Once having attained this altered state of

consciousness, the dominant/divinity uses the body of the submissive as a means of changing the phenomenal world of manifestations. The whipping, body modification, torture, humiliation, forced penetration or other modes of pleasurable pain applied upon the submissive's flesh should have a profound symbolic correspondence with the changes the dominant seeks to create in the world. Necessarily, these correspondences and meanings need not make the slightest bit of sense outside of the subjective world of the dominant, and indeed the more personal these meanings are the more power they will exercise.

For instance, the dominant can order the submissive to obey certain verbal or physical cues once the working is over that perpetuate the symbolic power of the universe the dominant has commanded during the operation itself. The more cryptic and concealed these instructions

are the more likely they will be efficacious in communicating your will on the daemonic levels of *maya* that allow magical will to become flesh.

During the height of sexual arousal and altered state of consciousness the dominant can pierce the submissive, leaving a semi-permanent anchor in the physical universe of the dominant's command, rooted in an intense moment of fleshly pain and subservience. It can also be effective to have the submissive tattooed or branded with a symbolic representation of the dominant's will, so that the submissive returns to normative consciousness hearing a coded signal of the adept's desire.

Responsibilities Of The Dominant

Despite the sometimes overpowering sexual and emotional passions unleashed by such workings, it cannot be overemphasized that the dominant is always the architect of the magical operation, and is therefore obliged to maintain total mental control during the entire procedure. The submissive can surrender utterly to ecstatic trance but the dominant bears the responsibility for the submissive's safety throughout the entire working. One of the lessons provided by the god-like power which submissives freely grant to their masters is that power always comes with responsibility. Dominants who abuse that responsibility by losing control of their emotions or passions during a working cannot be said to have the necessary discipline demanded for the left-hand path.

Likewise, submissives must always be wary of falling into the hands of a dominant who does not demonstrate this kind of discipline in other areas of their life. In short, a magician who shows no concern for their own life, or exhibits self-destructive tendencies, is not to be trusted with the complete control over your body and soul that lust/pain workings are often based on.

Before assuming the role of the dominant in magical workings the magician must come to terms not only with his or her inner disposition but the facts of one's actual existence. All too many dominants —whether in a simply sexual or magical context — choose to assume this persona merely because they have no actual power or authority in their everyday lives. The image of the meek and put-upon "low man (or woman) on the totem pole" who takes out his or her frustrated lack of power on a submissive is so well known as to have become a well-worn cliché. Perhaps there is some

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therapeutic value in such play-acting for the average human being but such self-delusive games are of no practical use to the magician. Left-hand path magic is not a psychodrama.

Dominant sex magic must never be allowed to become a substitute for a real life that you actually find intolerable, a simple form of escapist entertainment distracting consciousness from the reality of one's personal existence. In fact, this will backfire; the powerless weakling who wields a whip to shore up sagging self-esteem and a perceived lack of respect will gain nothing but a temporary evasion from reality through these means. No genuine initiatory transformation of the self or of one's conditions will be achieved, because all of the practitioner's energy will be eaten up by his or her psychological needs, leaving nothing for the performance of magic. However, very few individuals have the necessary self awareness to view themselves objectively

enough to know if they fall into this category. Therefore, it's ultimately dependent on the submissive to make a careful judgment as to who would be a suitable dominant for their needs.

It may not seem fair to some but if a magician's sorcerous and initiatory work is not built on a solid worldly foundation of *some* measure of power in one's social environment, it is unlikely in the extreme that any magical act will provide it for you. This is true of all forms of magic but the potentially addictive and always intense nature of workings centered on

lust/pain are particularly subject to abuse in this regard.

The Sorcery Of Submission

Since the dominant magician wields the majority of the *observable* power in the algolagniac working, it would at first seem that assuming the submissive role would be of little value for the left-hand path magician, who is motivated by an attainment *of* greater and greater levels of power over the world and the self. How does the sexually submissive magician of the sinister current reconcile this apparent contradiction?

Free will is one of the decisive factors. If the exchange between dominant and submissive is entirely one-sided, consisting of the master forcing the slave to succumb to practices he or she had not consciously assented to, the submissive would indeed have forfeited all power. Such a working would be little more than a rape, assuaging the desires of the dominant while providing little expression for sorcery and initiation on the submissive's part; at best, an act of sexual vampirism. Alternately, we have known of dominants who were magically drained of energy by the demands of their vampiric submissive.

In fact, there is a much more subtle *exchange* of power taking place between the consensual submissive and the dominant than meets the eye.

The submissive magician, as we pointed out earlier, can play an

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equally god-like role in erotic magic as the dominant. By deliberately and consciously relinquishing all manifest freedoms and everyday responsibilities during the time of the working, the submissive is actually potentially transforming into a being beyond the normative human experience, opening the consciousness to powerful levels of self-transformation. If we examine the flow of sexual energy in such a working carefully, we will see that the dominant is actually contributing a great deal of exertion and energy to the submissive just as much as the submissive is actively pleasing the dominant. Ironically, by allowing another magician to take complete control of one's body during a working, the submissive is liberating aspects of the psyche to operate in a way that is normally impossible.

One of the most powerful means of shaping the submissive's psychosexual core at the dominant's disposal is taking control of the actual times during which the submissive is permitted to experience orgasm or any kind of sexual activity. The exercises we provided in Chapter Nine recommended that all left-hand path sex magicians occasionally undergo enforced periods of complete sexual abstinence. If you recall the psychic and physical discomfort you may have felt attempting to restrain your own erotic energy, imagine the plight of the submissive sex magician who is obliged to follow his or her dominant's orders to refrain from any sexual experience save as it pleases the dominant.

The submissive, for example, may not even be allowed to masturbate without the express permission of the dominant. Very effective controlled release of sexual energy during workings can be realized in magical operations making use of the frustrated sexual desires of a submissive working under such restraints. It is often the case that the hedonic ecstasy felt by the submissive magician who is only permitted infrequent orgasm at his or her dominant's behest is of an almost unbearable intensity in comparison to simply climaxing according to his or her own lust. Disciplined experimentation with this technique can hone such carefully controlled orgasmic power release to an increasingly fine art.

The act of magically controlled sexual submission is in fact a means to access an altered state of consciousness, through which the submissive's deepest core of being can be awakened. When the correct measure of pain is applied to the submissive's body by an adroit dominant, this altered state of consciousness is enhanced dramatically, creating extreme physiological changes that a skilled submissive magician can direct towards any number of

magical goals.

From this point of view, the dominant magician serves as a technician, creating a trance state of measureless strength in the flesh and psyche of his or her submissive. The slave may be bound and gagged, forced to suffer every carefully designed cruelty that the master or mistress can dream up. But in a manner that belies all outward appearances, the

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subservient magician is in fact experiencing a profound state of freedom. This process of total liberation through bondage is the confounding secret of submissive magic.

The intense psychic and carnal turbulence engendered in algolagniac workings can, for instance, allow the submissive magician the freedom to turn off the avowedly rational aspects of mental activity for a controlled period so that more mysterious depths of the mind can be explored. The discipline required by strict obedience of the dominant, combined with the simultaneous effect of pain on the nervous system, permits the submissive magician to rend the veils of distraction and extraneous thought that customarily obscure the deeper strata of being. The harsh physical constraints to which the submissive consents serves to sharply focus the mind on the magician's inner work.

Understood from this viewpoint, it can be seen that the algolagniac rite is particularly well-suited to the individual-oriented direction of left-hand path sex magic. The dominant and submissive independently undergo very distinct magical experiences that preserve the sanctity of each individual consciousness. At the same time, these separate but equal magical shifts of consciousness are intensified and strengthened by the interplay of the erotic energy flowing between the magicians. When we comprehend what's actually transpiring in each magician's mind – rather than concentrating on the more immediately apparent visible inequality of power the two roles would indicate – it becomes evident that *both* the dominant and the submissive are reaping what they need from the working.

Strictly pleasurable erotic action based on the charged connection between the differing qualities of male and female provides a useful jolt of conflict that can be directed to magical purpose. The polarities inherent in the magical work between dominant and submissive magicians works on much the same principle, drawing force from the coming together of opposite polarities. Just as it would be impossible to determine whether it's the male or female sex magician who derives more power from his or her erotic intermingling, so is it equally impossible to make such a judgment in the case of the dominant or submissive.

Although the submissive willingly allows the dominant to shape the initiatory ordeal he or she has committed to during the working, the essential element of self-control is *never* surrendered, even in the throes of algolagniac ecstasy. This is one of the most important determining factors that separates the submissive of the sinister current from the average masochist.

The traditional sexual masochist very often wishes to obliterate the independent self

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altogether, motivated by complicated emotions of shame, guilt and selfloathing that can even verge on the suicidal. Submissive magicians of the left-hand path may allow themselves to be just as cruelly debased as the ordinary masochist but such debasement is entered into in fully conscious awareness of the magical benefits that such submission can give rise to.

Even in chains, suffering the torments of the damned visited upon the body by the dominant magician, the submissive magician continues to exalt the supremacy of his or her will, strengthening it as a semi-divine independent agent in the universe. Indeed, the philosophical contradiction of

submitting to another's discipline while maintaining one's own absolute autonomy as a spiritual being is a challenge the left-hand magician welcomes as an instrument of initiation. Such paradoxical experiments with the extreme dynamics of opposition are fuel to the fire of the creation of the divine self that is the ultimate goal of the sinister way.

Like any mystery of any enduring value, the enigmatic power of the submissive can only be apprehended by actually undergoing the experience. Words in a hook can only dimly approximate the utterly personal selftransformative process known to the awakened submissive.

The Dominatrix As Shakti

Algolagniac magic occurring between a strong female dominant and a submissive of either sex often underscores the primary importance of the Feminine Daemonic and the manifestation of the Dark Goddess to the lefthand path. A magician who joyously suffers at the hands of a truly inspired dominatrix can come to know the savage beauty and power of the Feminine Daemonic in far more vital a manner than the operant of the traditional lefthanded rite may accomplish. A domina who has developed a sufficiently strong shadow, projecting a divine erotic image that transcends the merely human personality, can serve as an unparalleled initiatrix.

It is the rare female dominant magician who truly excels at this most difficult transformation, as few women are able to fully shed the societal conditioning demanding that women be nurturing and selfless. Of course, many dominatnxes are able to temporarily cultivate a passably formidable image by wearing the symbolically appropriate clothing of S&M fantasy, acquiring the necessary technical training for administering pain and affecting a one-dimensional demeanor of arrogance. The female adept who truly taps into the Feminine Daemonic goes far beyond such common posturing; through an act akin to shape-shifting she can incarnate the eternal form of Shakti from *within*, a spiritual function which has nothing to do with conforming to the popular iconography of the man-eating bitch common to the media.

The female dominant magician who has the strength to serve as a

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living vessel for the Feminine Daemonic is at once Priestess and Goddess in the same body. The cruelties she metes out to her slaves take the form of religious sacraments, and submitting to her is an initiatory ordeal that tries the spirit as well as the flesh. The art of becoming such a magical dominant cannot be taught, for it is something deeply connected to one's being. Occasionally the woman who frees herself from the cultural programming of mandatory female gentleness and kindness will discover that the Feminine Daemonic has been lurking in her soul all along. More often than not it is a state of being only sporadically attained, in the most intense moments of erotic magic.

The female submissive who shivers with delight at the erotic suffering inflicted by her ale dominant can certainly experience just as much of a religious epiphany – an encounter with the brutal and pitiless male aspect of divinity – but the power differential is quite different. The male sexual dominant is in fact an exaggerated form of the masculine power that dominates the world in general, as observed in the non-erotic power structures of society.

The female dominant in touch with her Feminine Daemonic is a somewhat more radical manifestation of erotic power, since she breaks with the normative image of female as the submissive element of the male-female erotic equation, presenting a challenging living manifestation of female erotic energy that subverts the expected social roles.

It can be profoundly frightening for the submissive to witness the wrath of this divine atavism take form in a human dominant, especially when the submissive is in a helpless and utterly vulnerable position. However, this

fear can generate great initiatory force. A working of algolagnia that is not fueled by at least some measure of terror for the submissive will be distinctly lacking in transformative potential. The left-hand path traditionally confronts and learns from the fierce and violent side of deity, and it is this savage aspect of the divine personality that can best be experienced by the submissive at the mercy of a dominant magician.

The Awakening Of Fear

Fear can be the great awakening agent but it is actually quite easy for magicians accustomed to experimenting with submissive/dominant workings to become numb to the ferocious pleasures of this type of magic. One learns fairly quickly that the human personality can become accustomed to any sensation or experience if it is repeated often enough. Once a magical act has become familiar and comfortable it is immediately reduced to empty ceremony, and its power to break through the ordinary sleep of consciousness is lost. This can happen in dominant/submissive operations as easily as with any working.

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The wise dominant will exercise caution that his or her submissives never know exactly what fate will befall them during a working. Preserving an unpredictable atmosphere of fear during the rite will maintain the needed alertness of the submissive, keeping him or her on guard for any eventuality. While the disciplined application of physical pain on the submissive's body produces significant brain chemistry changes facilitating consciousness change, these strictly physical sensations are even more effective if augmented by the creation of an uneasy and disturbing environment. The lefthand path magician ceaselessly seeks the grail of the unknown, and nothing creates a sense of the unknown like the orchestrated awareness of fear in an initiate's mind.

The confrontation and conquering of fear can often be the central initiatory aim of a sex magical working; there is no more demonstrable evidence of how a magician's power can be limited by self-imposed fears.

Deprogramming and deconditioning the fears of the submissive during a ritual can free unexpected reserves of strength that allow the initiate to eventually change subtler elements of the inner and outer world. By effecting physical ecstasy and joy in the submissive on one hand, while simultaneously inspiring a high level of psychological fear and anxiety, the dominant creates one of those perplexing continuums of opposing polarities that are so useful to sinister initiation.

To accomplish the sustained mood of fear effectively requires the dominant to know the submissive's apprehensions intimately and to be able to play on these deep-rooted terrors skillfully. For this reason, such rites usually work best when performed by magicians who know each other well. For instance, the submissive who suffers from a fear of surgery might be wheeled blindfolded into a clinically appointed white room, strapped to a gurney. The dominant could wear white medical garb, and administer painful procedures in a detached, "surgical" manner. The physically invasive actions that are common in any medical visit can be expanded to include enemas, sterile hypodermic needles, and other painful or humiliating implements of penetration. The submissive might be shaved in a certain area as if in preparation for surgery, or photographs may be taken to coldly document the procedure. The silent presence of a white garbed assistant can add immeasurably to the desired ambiance of menace.

At this point, some of our readers may object that such a rite no longer resembles anything like the traditional magical working they maybe accustomed to or any other S&M activity that they've engaged in, for that matter. Indeed, a working playing on the phobias of a submissive can take *any* form that seems appropriate or likely to generate the needed state of dread. The most alarming initiatory rites of terror are those that are most

closely rooted in reality. Far less elaborate rites than the above example may
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be just as powerful. For the submissive with an overwhelming phobia of spiders, merely securing the magician in bondage in a darkened room in which a dimly illuminated glass container is filled with arachnids can be sufficient to awaken a useful magical atmosphere.

Very often such an experience – if handled with care by the dominant – can free the submissive of his or her phobia altogether whilst also allowing for the kind of breakthrough of psychological tension that is suitable for the casting of sorcery. Facing fears while in such a vulnerable position provides the submissive with a clear picture of the limits they have accepted in themselves, and opens up a hidden door to changing and redefining those limits. If a fear can be altered into a pleasure, or mastered altogether, what other inner qualities in the magician can be transformed? If a life-long phobia can be challenged and subdued, what other external hindrances in the world can be beaten? However, it must be reiterated that this type of working should be carried out between two people who have established a sufficient measure of trust and know each other's limits well.

Such rites of deprogramming have very often allowed submissive magicians to leave the working with a renewed sense of power over their psyche, which can in turn inspire them to radically transform hindrances in their everyday lives that they have accepted out of habit. We cannot stress often enough that the victories won in the symbolic, controlled environment of the working are fairly meaningless if they are not extended into the magician's daily existence. It may seem ironic that the magician who deliberately agrees to be subjected to his or her worst horrors while being sexually enslaved often exits the ritual space with more strength than he or she had. when the rite began.

And yet the left-hand sex magician must understand that the goal here should not simply be a therapeutic one impacting the submissive's external personality – that aspect of the work only clears the ground for much deeper levels of deprogramming, eventually reaching into the divine levels of being.

Magicians of the left-hand path are always in search of experiences that will cause them to Awaken. The numinous quality of fear should not be neglected by the sex magician who wishes to maximize the full spectrum of human experience for sorcerous and initiatory objectives. A state of wakefulness attainable through the expert construction of fear in an erotic setting is one of the most ancient and reliable means of disrupting ordinary consciousness available to the magician.

Experiments With Sleep Disruption

Wakefulness need not be simply a figurative metaphor in algolagniac rites; a sharp disruption of actual sleep can also be applied to the submissive's consciousness in a manner conducive to self-transformation. A very effective
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initiatory technique is to literally awaken a submissive magician from a sound sleep of many hours, deliberately interrupting the REM cycle that regulates the sleeping brain. The submissive can be awakened with any *sharp* pain (the pouring of very hot candle wax on the erogenous zones, the rapid switching of a riding crop on the unsuspecting flesh, etc.) and forcibly dragged into a room equipped for bondage and discipline, where he or she is soundly chastised by the dominant(s).

Such workings can be even sharper in intensity if the submissive subject is forced to endure a twenty-four hour period of reduced stimulation before the rite. A sensation of unreality and twilight consciousness can easily be attained by confining the submissive magician to a completely dark chamber. Alteration of diet during this imprisonment can create a preliminary altered state of consciousness before the working commences. An enforced fast will make the submissive weaker and more sensitive to

painful/pleasurable overstimulus when the period of understimulation is broken, while the deliberate feeding of rich, carbohydrate-heavy foods will increase drowsiness and create a rise in the serotonin levels in the brain, making for a dreamier slumber.

Ideally, the half-asleep submissive will experience the working as a dream (or nightmare), lending a surreal tone to the proceedings. The painengendered creation of high levels of adrenaline and endorphins in the submissive's brain while still in a half-conscious state can foster a unique trance favorable to magical work. Very often, after the intensity of the working, the submissive is sufficiently exhausted to serve a divinatory or visionary function. The submissive's dreams after the rite can sometimes augment the magical goal of the operation in an unexpected way.

Alternatively, one can choose a specified time frame (i.e., one week) during which the submissive sleeps in the domain of the dominant and the same procedure can be carried out at random times. A different type of tension builds when the submissive doesn't know on exactly which night the working will take place. This random element is useful for an enthusiastic or especially nervous submissive who can't fall asleep during the preparatory period of reduced stimulation.

The Freedom Of The Slave

Closely allied to the deliberate confrontation of fear that can be so efficiently engineered during dominant/submissive sexual magic is the important lefthand path practice of the conscious breaking of taboo. There is relatively little magical or initiatory value in breaking the rules of society, especially in a society in such an advanced state of disintegration and breakdown as our own. Nothing could be easier than disturbing a status quo instituted by others; the real work of the sinister current is to break the rules we rigidly establish

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for *ourselves*.

Crossing the threshold of our own fixed behavior patterns and selfconditioning is a method of left-hand path magic that can liberate the magician in every sphere of his or her activity. In the context of dominant/submissive workings, the submissive is often ordered to breach his or her own sexual habits and preferences while in ritual space and state of mind. Since left-hand path sex magicians often tend to be erotically adventurous to begin with, it can sometimes be a challenge to discover a taboo of any great power in the submissive's psychosexual constitution.

However, one can usually be discovered.

One of the most common self-created sexual taboos broken by submissives during workings include forcing strictly heterosexual magicians into same-sex erotic activity or compelling homosexual magicians to perform with the opposite sex. Commanding a submissive devoted exclusively to one dominant to defer to the sexual demands of another dominant for whom they feel no bond is also quite common and can be a powerful method of demonstrating the unconditional state of slavery that the submissive has freely accepted.

Along similar lines, the submissive may be forced to endure sexual relations with an individual they actively dislike or are repulsed by, as a proof of devotion to the dominant. Perhaps the submissive could be subjected to the administration of pain by an individual for whom he or she feels an active antagonism.

The submissive who has learned to willingly accept the degradation and humiliation he or she suffers under the yoke of the master/mistress in private, may be absolutely mortified by having to abide the same cruelties in public or among friends previously unaware of the submissive's proclivities. There are any number of sexual practices that a specific submissive may find abhorrent that can be efficiently applied to taboo-breaking magic. What may be completely acceptable to one magician may be beyond the pale for

another; again, the better the dominant knows the submissive the more precisely aimed this kind of work will be.

Of course, all of the above examples are frequently part of many nonmagical dominant/submissive relationships. The primary difference in a magical context is that the energy unleashed by the breaking of the selfimposed sexual taboo is directed toward sorcerous or initiatory change rather than simply erotic arousal alone. The submissive, having survived whatever ordeal has been stipulated by the dominant, will realize that the forbidden is an entirely subjective phenomenon. If one's core sexual disposition can be so easily altered, it becomes apparent to the magician that other social restrictions and habits of conditioning are also subject to total transmutation. Active embrace of the left-hand path teaches that the self and the

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world is infinitely more fluid and changeable than our conditioning would have us believe, placing the magician in control of his or her construction of reality. Experimenting with one's seemingly permanent sexual boundaries under the stern guidance of the dominant provides a controlled license to break these erotic limits. While there is nothing stopping any sex magician from deliberately breaking his or her erotic taboos outside of the constraints of the dominant/submissive bond, the unique characteristics of this power exchange can sometimes be a much stronger impetus to such initiatory breakthroughs than one's individual efforts may achieve. However, once the habit of breaking one's own taboos as a deprogramming method is acquired through algolagniac work, the magician should be able to continue this practice without the encouragement of a dominant partner.

Again, outward appearances are deceiving. Although the external observer witnessing such rites would understandably imagine that the submissive is being cruelly coerced into loathsome activities by the dominant, the submissive has freely consented to follow the discipline of the dominant. Despite the appearance of restraint, the dominant is serving as the initiator or initiatrix, freeing the slave to confront hidden aspects of the self that actually enlarge the submissive's scope of power in the world.

Just as the submissive can sometimes represent the dominant's higher self, in these cases the dominant *serves* as an external representation of the submissive's higher self, compelling the submissive to perform physical rites of self-transformation with the submissive's tacit assent. This hidden symbiotic aspect of the dominant/submissive bond – which can only be experienced from *within* the bond itself – is one of the secret sources of power that inform such workings.

it must be said that when results are attained in taboo-breaking sexual magic, there inevitably comes a point when most magicians will simply have exhausted the number of untested erotic taboos that constrict them. It would be fairly pointless to continually repeat the breaking of taboos once their power of the forbidden has been deflated through familiarity. Many a submissive discovers that after breaking a certain taboo, it becomes enjoyable to willfully return to the experience of breaking the former taboo for strictly pleasurable purposes alone. That, of course, is the prerogative of the magician, however, for the purposes of taboo breaking, this would no longer qualify. At this point, the originally taboo sexual method can be adopted into the initiate's sex-magical repertoire or not, according to taste.

Once the lesson of the extreme fluidity of the erotic identity is learned through such exercises, the magician should apply this expanded sense of self to pushing forward in untested waters in *every* area of existence, not only the sexual sphere. The intense emotive force that can be evoked through breaking a sexual taboo in the context of a dominant/submissive

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working should ideally mark only the beginning of the magician's work of radical self-change. There is no more potent method than the disruption of

personal erotic taboo for awakening the magician to the fact that the full spectrum of conditioned and programmed habits of thought can be broken at will. Once having reached this state of wakefulness, the magician can consciously discard those aspects of the self that hinder mastery in the world, acquiring more useful habits in accordance with the greatly expanded awareness of self-control.

Indeed, the magical breaking of sexual taboo will only be of very limited value if it merely succeeds in widening your erotic capabilities. After all, there are many individuals who have freed themselves on a sexual level far beyond the imagination of most humans but who have never taken the allimportant step of attaining that same degree of freedom in the other levels of their self-created reality. In every other way, they might be chained to the same compulsions to conform that typify the majority of *pashu* beings.

Although crossing sexual boundaries very often encourages the seizing of greater autonomy in all areas of life, this is not guaranteed. It is comparatively easy to free one's self of self-forged sexual shackles, particularly under the tutelage of a master or mistress. However, once one exits the erotic arena, the magician might be just as bound by societal programming as any non-initiate. Making this quantum leap of self-liberation is something that can only be realized through individual hard work; no dominant guide can be expected to crack the whip over every facet of initiation.

Here we are faced with one of the most bewildering enigmas of dominant/submissive sex magic: the same submissive who willingly obeys every command and whim of his or her dominant during a specific working, is also adamantly refusing to obey the dictates of

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conventional society. This form of left-hand path initiation frees the initiate from the constraints of the larger social matrix of the macrocosm by placing him or her in bondage to another magician, which would seem to be a contradiction in terms. It is remarkable that submitting of one's own will to the sexual control of another magician can in fact serve to free the initiate from being held in thrall by the hypnotic and individual-eradicating function of society at large. Even submissives of the non-magical variety frequently report that they have never felt so free as when they are serving their masters; this paradoxical liberation has been seen to intensify greatly in dominant/submissive erotic magic.

It is perhaps just as odd that the non-initiated human who gladly

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submits to the self-obliterating and relentless dominance of society, family, employer, religion, politics, and mass media on a twenty-four hour basis is likely to condemn the individual who occasionally submits to sexual dominance. The significant difference between the two states of bondage, of course, is that the domesticated human's slavery to society is largely due to the unconscious and unthinking instinct of the *pashu* pack animal, while the submissive magician *willingly* submits to sexual dominance as a heroic tool of initiation. The freedom of the slave is a living *koan* of left-hand path sex magic.

Controlling Chaos

Another of the mysteries of dominant/submissive magic is how perfectly such work vitally embodies one of the underlying principles of magic itself.

No matter what form of sorcery or self-transformative undertaking the magician engages in, he or she is essentially organizing the raw chaotic data of *maya* into a cohesive pattern in accordance with one's will. The magician may be forcefully aware of a desire to change some facet of reality, and he or she may be able to articulate exactly how that desire can most efficiently be brought into being. However, this understanding must be firmly wedded to an act of organizing the necessary data into a form that serves to

communicate the magician's desire directly and unambiguously. The magician, like an artist, is constantly shaping chaos into order. This necessitates disciplining the unruly and unstable stuff of *maya* into a temporarily workable medium that can be altered.

To provide a rather uncomplicated example: let us say that you seek to magically effect some external force in the world. Perhaps it is another person, perhaps it is an aspect of your own behavior. You already possess a great deal of information on the subject in question but these details have not been organized; they are floating around with no particular direction. Assemble a clearly marked file on the targeted topic in which all relevant data is gathered and you have begun the task of bringing it under your control. In fact, even opening the file becomes a magnetic act, attracting new and useful information that will serve your task.

With no central focusing point, the information would simply dissipate into the general entropy of distracted and diffuse universal consciousness. Brought together in one axial and tightly controlled space, hidden links that would otherwise go unobserved begin to make themselves evident, which in turn subtly effects your own consciousness. When the time is right, a factor that only the sorcerer can ascertain, you will take the required magical action. Often, no obvious action is needed; merely creating a locus in which relevant information is assembled is sometimes enough to realize your goal.

The intrinsic discipline and stylized pattern of control achievable in
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dominant/ submissive magic ideally lends itself to the arrangement of order out of chaos that the magician always seeks to realize. The dominant who disciplines the submissive orders the chaos of a living psychic energy into an obedient magical force. Alternately, a submissive's specific magical goals can be effectively fulfilled through the discipline of an empathetic dominant. The magician who understands and applies this essential principle to algolagniac rites makes full use of the power to construct a magical model of reality that dominant/submissive workings so forcefully allow

Similarly the magician who experiments with the application of erotic pain *lacking a* firm grasp of this principle will never go any further than the psychodramatic role-playing game that constitutes most profane S&M activity. Certainly, you may find such practices aphrodisiacal (a worthy end in itself) but you will no longer be performing magic. Because of the intensity of pleasure/pain that can be induced in such workings, it is very easy to lose track of the magical goal that motivates the rite in the first place.

The Dungeon As Temple

For left-hand path *magi*, the traditional ritual chamber of Western ceremonial magic is superfluous – his or her own body is the only temple needed. But just as some magicians prefer to reserve some special area of their living space in which to activate the sinister current, the adept of algolagniac magic may wish to construct a special room for the performance of the rites of dominance and submission. This may be a fully equipped dungeon abundant with all the necessary implements of pain, arrayed in an atmosphere of appropriate foreboding. Magicians who are just embarking on an exploration of pain/lust have found that keeping such a torture chamber at the ready greatly enhances the mood of their workings. Entering one's dungeon, radiating an atmosphere charged with previous evocations of pleasurable illtreatment, may immediately allow the dominant and submissive to shift into their respective magical roles. Keeping such a room locked at all times, except when it is to be used for a working, can greatly sharpen the intensity of the ambiance.

There is a practical consideration recommending the construction of such a chamber as well. Nothing kills the electric intensity of an algolagniac working so quickly as unnecessary preliminary fumbling with ropes, chains,

eyehooks, and other tools of the art. A well-designed chamber that can allow the dominant to quickly secure the submissive in the required position in a matter of seconds – while also allowing for easy access to the implements of erotic torture – can be preferable to improvising such arrangements under less ideal circumstances.

The experienced left-hand path adept eventually learns to reach the needed level of magically conducive consciousness anywhere and at any time

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it is needed. Once this stage of development is arrived at, the magician can dispense with the focusing device of a specifically appointed ritual chamber.

Similarly, experienced dominants and submissives will gradually come to realize that they can perform their workings under *any* circumstances and with great spontaneity, with the bare minimum of exterior props. Until then, the carefully planned and aesthetically conceived dungeon can sometimes provide a very useful training ground, allowing for deeper concentration on the magical goals at hand.

Body Modification

We have already made passing reference to the modification of the submissive's body during algolagniac ritual. The actual transformation of the flesh during a working can sometimes mirror the transformation of the submissive's consciousness, permanently anchoring a specific moment of initiation – freeze-framing a moment of consciousness-change – in the living temple of the initiate's organism. Body modification is particularly useful to mark rites of passage. Very frequently, when a submissive first consents to the dominance of another magician, a ritualized adjustment of the slave's carnal vehicle can be appropriate, in the form of nipple rings, genital piercing, branding, scarification, or tattoo. The attainment of a new state of being may be marked by an appropriate alteration of the flesh.

Such adjustments of the physical vessel certainly have their symbolic purpose for the magician but there is a more magically potent reason to include body modification in the rites of dominance and submission. The piercing of the flesh, especially in the body's erogenous zones, can produce intense altered states of consciousness if done properly and with sufficient expertise. This can allow the submissive to experience deep trance states, pushing the overwhelmed body to visionary peaks. Those who have endured such ordeals have reported such *siddhis* as communication with divine intelligences, revelations of a profound self-transformative nature, as well as clairvoyant and clairaudient phenomena.

Piercing performed upon submissives already accustomed to altered states of consciousness has even been known to activate all of the classic manifestations associated with the classical *kundalini* experience: sensations of an icy/burning flash coursing up the spine, the distinct feeling of internal bodily "blockages" being freed up, and the bliss/horror of awakening traditionally designated as the "opening of the third eye".

Another common result of traumatic body piercing and modification has been the consciousness-expanding event known in traditional occult circles as the "out of body experience" or "astral projection". We prefer not to resort to this language but the value of the experience cannot be denied, regardless of what terminology is used to describe it. Particularly, magicians

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who have suspended themselves through nipple piercings, or willingly subjected themselves to other extreme alterations of the body, have related that they have watched their own suffering and lacerated physical shells as if from a disembodied and detached perspective.

The experience of sensing that one's essential being and deepest level of consciousness – the potentially immortal causal body – is something *separate* from the mortal physical body is of great advantage to the adept.

Once the magician has seen his or her body though this disembodied

perspective, an entirely different vantage point on the nature of human existence has been attained. Since there is no way to conclusively prove whether this seemingly disembodied state is a subjective phantasm or an objective fact, attempts to make any categorical conclusion on this phenomenon must be understood as purely speculative.

The initiate of the sinister way, however, welcomes any opportunity to view reality through unfamiliar or disturbing prisms that call the accepted conditions of human existence into question. If extreme pain and body modification can access such changes in consciousness, their usefulness becomes clear. A model of existence that allows for the possibility that consciousness can be deliberately detached from the body opens the way for the magician to directly confront the mysteries of death and immortality. No dogmatic teaching can be offered on such intensely subjective subjects; the magician must determine where he or she stands on such metaphysical matters through direct inquiry of the self through physical experiment.

The conventional Western magician, who often tends to overemphasize the importance of cerebral understanding to initiation, will shrink from the very idea that physical body modification and the pain attendant to it can open one's eyes to such fundamental questions. Those of the left-hand path, by contrast, will welcome *any* technique that can ground such fundamental existential concerns in the body, rather than in the misty and imprecise cloud of strictly philosophical speculation.

Interestingly, many sexual adventurers with no spiritual awareness or interest have unintentionally initiated themselves into a magical worldview through experimentation with severe body modification. This is more than can be said for the many would-be metaphysicians who refuse to even consider the body's lessons of pleasure and pain as worthy of serious consideration. Here we are faced again with the familiar battle between the flesh and the spirit, an illusory conflict that the sex magician reconciles by approaching the greatest mysteries of the psyche through the delights and torments of the body itself.

Such practices as we have described harken back to the methods applied by some shamans and fire-walking *fakirs* to heighten ordinary awareness to visionary levels. Perhaps the best known example of this

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tradition is the Sioux Indian religious rite proscribing that the young men of the tribe were to undergo the tribulation of being pierced and hung through the chest area and suspended for a prolonged period until they attained a visionary state of consciousness. This was the Sioux initiation into manhood, and the women of the tribe were forbidden to observe this masculine mystery – such segregation of the sexes is not in keeping with the left-hand path. But the consciousness-altering validity of this practice can be accessed by any magician; faith in Native American doctrine is hardly required.

The fact that many modern fetishists with no awareness of such religious customs have felt compelled to pierce and suspend themselves in exactly the same manner suggests that such a rite is deeply rooted in the atavistic psychic content of the human consciousness. The mythologies of the world are replete with accounts of magical man-gods who achieve visionary apotheosis by the method of being painfully pierced and suspended. Odin, the Northern lord of war, poetry, magic and holy rage was said to have received the runes during a agonizing rite of self-sacrifice in which he was painfully hung and suspended on the world tree for nine days and nights. The Mesoamerican shamanic deity and hero Quetzalcoatl acquired visionary knowledge through a similar rite of painful suspension.

The ecstatic sufferings of the magician Jesus, repeatedly pierced, lanced, and ultimately crucified, are clearly part of the same pattern we see

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with Odin and Quetzalcoatl. The lovingly crafted depictions of Christ's

sufferings on the cross, and the obsessive focus of his adherents on his excruciating humiliations, makes it abundantly clear that exoteric Christianity is actually based on an esoteric cult of pain/lust with subterranean roots in magical initiation. Such frequently observed similarities between ancient initiatory ordeals of pain and the desires that motivate the contemporary sexual fetishist indicate that the sex-magical impulse runs deep beneath the superficial expression of mundane eroticism that defines the more common strata of human sexual experience.

Indeed, many a novice, recreational S&M practitioner has been shocked into seeking more than simple sexual diversion by accidentally turning on the internal switch of the sinister current while pursuing his or her mundane fetish. Often times a superficial or fleeting curiosity in "alternative" sexual practices such as S&M or body modification paves the way to authentic spiritual epiphany. The great awakening of *Bodhana* came to Siddartha while sitting under the Bodhi tree; it has come to others while being suspended and pierced by his or her dominant.

Recoiling From The Herd

The fact that piercing and body modification for strictly decorative and aesthetic purposes has become a commonly accepted trend demands comment. From the perspective of the left-hand path magician, any time a formerly esoteric or little-known practice is adopted enthusiastically by the *pashu* herd, a certain amount of skepticism about that practice must naturally arise. Every piercing, tattoo and body modification cannot be considered automatically to possess a magical character; indeed, as these phenomena manifest in mass society generally they are quite distinctly *unmagical*. Very often, body modification in its most common application does not even fulfill an inner sexual fetish, it can simply be a superficial fashion statement.

After all, in most urban environments in the industrialized Western world, the outer symbols of sexual rebellion enjoy a previously unthinkable high profile. The style of once forbidden sexual practices such as S&M or various forms of fetishism have become intrinsically interwoven with fashion. Highly organized and commercialized "scenes" devoted to bondage and discipline, vinyl and leather, and a host of other increasingly acceptable – but once "deviant" – sexual pursuits are hardly noticed anymore in hundreds of cities.

Genital piercing, tattoo, scarification, and other body modifications previously consigned to a small and secretive underground of fetishists, have become firmly established staples of youth culture economy. Like hundreds of other taboos borrowed over the decades from once marginal elements of society for the entertainment of the bored middle class, these erotic

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adornments have advanced from the hidden status of perversion to become ubiquitous rites of passage for adolescents eager to simultaneously shock their parents and celebrate their nascent sexuality.

In a certain sense, the left-hand path sex magician can only welcome the banishing of any erotic taboo. The increasing freedom afforded to the full expression of human sexuality in all of its diverse manifestations has also allowed the left-hand path to be more openly discussed and studied, as well as widening the frontier for all sexual exploration. However, the tendency for an increasingly homogenized market-driven hypercapitalist culture to transform what was once psychosexually potent, transgressive and thus magically liberating into bland, one-size-fits-all commodities at a stupefying clip also has its obvious drawbacks.

While an interest in such momentarily *au courant* erotic hobbies may provide a *frisson* and an instant identity, the initiate understands that the socially defined role of "rebel" or "eccentric" is as much of a stereotype uniform as any other, and magicians should be able to operate efficiently in *any* guise that a specific situation demands. The costumes of anti-social

outlaw and pillar of society are both understood to be limitations by the initiate of the sinister current, whose rejection of all limitations on personal identity consistently confounds the hide-bound conformists associated with any camp.

Sadomasochism, genital piercing, and fetishism – known by whatever nomenclature – have all proven to be excellent tools of selfinitiation since the earliest accounts of human sexual spirituality in antiquity

Employed consciously and in an individual manner by the skilled sexual magician, these activities can provide specific altered states of consciousness unavailable through other means. Unfortunately one side-effect of the transformation of these long-established weapons of erotic initiation into fashionable diversions for the curiosity seeker is to dull their blow on the psyche during magical operations. This does not lessen the value of such techniques but only sharpens the already pre-existing need for the adept to utilize these methods with precision and appropriateness.

During the era in which this book was written, there is a tendency to deem every other phallic tattoo, nipple piercing or neo-tribal scarification as "spiritual", in a vague, New-Ageish manner. The subcultural cues provided by the so-called Modern Primitive mentality allows anyone to slam a nail through their dick and pronounce themselves a visionary.

Certainly such actions have been engaged in for left-hand path initiatory purposes but to do so requires a precision and purity of intent, grounded firmly in *personal* motivation. If transitory peer approval and/or immersion in the collective values of a sub-culture (even an avowedly lefthand path sub-culture) inspire you to such magico-erotic ornamentation,

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some rigorous rethinking is required. In a culture where piercing and body modification have often been reduced to empty faddism, acquiring the dead

weight of any
obligatory sign of
social status, it
may well be that
the left-hand path
magician will
deliberately *avoid*
such practices as
an act of
resistance to mass
mentality.

Sexual
misfits and rebels
of any kind have
traditionally had a
tendency to band
together into semitribal
units. There
are several
obvious pragmatic
reasons for this:
safety in numbers
when engaging in
sexual practices
frowned upon – or
criminalized – by
mainstream
society; ability to
meet others who
share one's sexual

predilections; and perhaps most commonly, the natural human desire to *belong*, even if only to a club of other self-exiled social outcasts. Unfortunately, even these unconventional social needs decrease the essential aloneness that the true left-hand path magician actively cultivates as a deliberate aspect of his or her separation from psyche-tranquilizing social comfort. Being an outsider of any kind is a positive advantage for the initiate of the sinister current. Giving into the temptation of joining the crowd – *any* crowd – is to lessen the radical development of the self required for mastery

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of the sinister current.

Therefore the magician with a penchant for algolagniac pleasures or bondage and discipline, to zero in on only one minority sexual taste, should strive to apply these erotic energies to magical development *outside of* the cozy and unchallenging limitations of the organized S&M sub-culture. For the left-hand path erotic sorcerer, who must work overtime to avoid sinking into collectivism of all kinds, it should be fairly obvious that the environment *of* the S&M scene, with its buzzwords and jargon, accepted rules and regulations, and. *de rigueur* uniforms of master and slave, is merely a mirror of the carefully controlled larger world of offices, corporations, and politics. The initiatory value of erotic pain most certainly has a place in the methods of the sex magician. However, one must develop one's own personal application of these powerful initiatory tools, not merely adopt the stale symbolism and rhetoric chartered by what can only be characterized as the S&M "establishment".

Personae Of Power

Although the boundaries determining such roles as dominant and submissive are bound to blur somewhat during any effective algolagniac working, these basic differentials of master/mistress and slave in a magical context can be applied to any number of circumstances and needs. Each role provides the initiate with a useful perspective on the human equation and its relation to the objective and subjective multiverse not always immediately apparent to the superficial observer. The majority of sex magicians are instinctively drawn to exclusively assume either the dominant or submissive role when experimenting with this type of erotic energy. There's nothing wrong with that, so long as these roles are adopted through exercise of free will and not simply according to an unthinking acting out of conditioned societal expectations.

Despite this natural tendency to favor the persona of master or slave according to one's personality type or psychological disposition, there is something to be said for occasionally trading places. The dominant magician can invariably become a more accomplished master or mistress if he or she intermittently chooses to undergo the abasement of the slave, and the submissive can also understand both sides of the power continuum more clearly by taking on the task of master every once in a while. In the traditional and rigidly defined S&M world such role reversal is relatively less common but the left-hand path magician, as always, can afford to break the self-appointed rules that constrict other social contracts.

We have noticed that many sex magicians who have never considered the use of erotic pain as a tool of initiation may well have avoided it because of an understandable aversion to the standard cartoonish

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iconography of the S&M subculture or typical S&M pornography, with its tiresome formulaic imagery. When viewed from *outside* these limited lenses, algolagniac techniques can be understood as simply an effective means of altering the magician's consciousness under controlled ritual circumstances.

Although the mechanism used by each are different, both the master and the slave aim to reach exactly the same objective though magical lust/pain; the goal of all left-hand path operations – liberation in this lifetime

as a self-created semi-divine consciousness, engineered through the wakeful orchestration of extreme erotic energy. For the left-hand path dominant and submissive, the power play of such operations can be a decisive step in the quest for that elusive state of being Georges Bataille termed "sovereignty", akin to the heroic *vira* stage of traditional Tantric initiation, in which all fetters to one's former existence as a herd-animal are severed.

For the submissive magician, the irony is that these hindering psychic chains are broken by willingly accepting the consensual bondage of ritual enslavement. The controlled tribulation exercised upon the dominant's flesh and mind by a skilled dominant is an intensification of the initiatory process itself, translated to the bodily realm. The cruel shocks to the somatic system endured and eventually welcomed by the sexually submissive magician can serve as a *maya*-mirror of one aspect of sinister current self-transformation. Every exquisite torment endured and overcome during a working of lust/pain echoes the manner in which the left-hand path initiate must joyfully confront the disturbing trauma of a fully awakened awareness of reality itself in this

Kali Yuga age.

In this subservient state, no manifestation of *maya* can be rejected or denied; every blow to the body is embraced, until the consciousness rises to a level where pain and pleasure, terror and exultation, orgasm and agony, are as indistinguishable as all other dualities. By subjecting the mortal meat which temporarily houses the psyche to systematic degradation, the false layers of personality developed through external conditioning can be destroyed.

Illusory masks of social status crumble, allowing the initiate to reprogram internal identity at will. In yielding to the dominant's severity, the initiated submissive learns his or her own limits, and goes beyond them. Writhing in the crucible of this act of alchemical readjustment, the dross of the slave can re-manifest as gold, emerging from the ordeal as master of his or her own soul.

For the dominant magician, the advantage of such workings are more obviously apparent; the master or mistress is granted a semblance of divine power during ritual space/time. But even considering the harsh lessons concerning Self that the slave may be compelled to cope with, it is actually the master who faces the greatest challenge.

Assuming full responsibility for another physical being who has consented to obey without question, the dominant's worthiness to be a god is put to the test. For the duration of the rite, within the liminal boundaries of the

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master-slave connection, the dominant is the creator and ruler of a temporary universe for two. This allows the master/mistress a rare opportunity to study the subtle conditions of cause and effect that every magician must learn, as demonstrated in the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of his or her complete control of the slave.

If discipline is lost, the dominant forfeits all right to godhood, just as the adept who cannot execute his or her will in terms that create appropriate change in *maya* has failed. The master who seeks to wield absolute authority over the submissive must exercise a balance between firm dominion and the playful touch of *lila*, a delicate equilibrium needed in all magical operations attempting to control the unruly chaos of raw existence. Within the conditions of the rite, the submissive can be equated with a work of art in progress, while the dominant is the artist, sculpting a living creation in the medium of pain and pleasure inflicted upon human flesh.

For magicians whose erotic responses are already geared toward the pleasurable administration or endurance of pain, the addition of magical purpose to these cruel joys has proven to substantially boost the potency of magical operations. Many magicians who originally felt absolutely no affinity for the introduction of pain/lust into their work have benefited from at least a few limited experiments with these methods. As the most psychologically and physically dangerous of all sex magical techniques, the rites of dominant and

submissive sorcery also promise some of the greatest breakthroughs in selftransformation.

Pain/lust can provide any sex magician of the sinister current with hidden keys to the mysteries of the flesh, allowing the awakened psyche to probe the shadow-side of erotic ecstasy in this darkest of Aeons.

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About the Cover

Surrealist artist Max Ernst was a ardent connoisseur of desire and feminine beauty in his private life. His *The Robing Of The Bride*, painted in 1939/1940, reveals a life-long fascination with the erotic symbolism of alchemy and Rosicrucianism. In the language of alchemical procedure, the symbol of the bride represents the philosopher's stone, perceived by alchemists as a feminine being, much like that other unattainable object of mystery, the Grail. The bride was first chemically "stripped" and then "robed" before being "perfected" in the final stage of the operation. This robing of the bride preceded the alchemical wedding, the mingling of opposing sexual energies into an androgynous whole, referred to obliquely in that famous Rosicrucian document, *The Chymical Marriage Of Christian Rosencreutz*.

Other alchemical symbols in Ernst's image include the grotesque hermaphroditic *homunculus* depicted in the lower right side of the painting, and the miniature head of gold emerging above the bride's breasts. The phallic spear being directed at the bride's genitals has been interpreted as everything from the probe once used to identify the Devil's mark on the bodies of witches, to a simple sign of the potency of the stork/heron that wields the spear. In *The Robing Of The Bride*, Max Ernst created a glyph capturing a genuine sense of sex magic's mystery, demonstrating that the artist's lunar vision has more to tell the magician than many a stale text of traditional occultism.

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Nikolas Schreck is the author of *The Satanic Screen* in the Creation Cinema Collection and *Flowers From Hell: A Satanic Reader*, also published by Creation Books. He is the director of the documentary film *Charles Manson Superstar*. Zeena Schreck is an artist/photographer and has been a leading authority on the Black Arts for over 20 years. She is currently the High Priestess of The Storm, an international initiatory religion. The Schrecks have previously collaborated on the musical project Radio Werewolf. To inquire about seminars, lectures, and private instruction on initiatory practices of the left-hand path offered by the authors, write to: Postfach 120452, 10594 Berlin, Germany.

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