

Celebrating the Male Mysteries

Revised and Extended edition



R. J. Stewart

CELEBRATING THE MALE MYSTERIES

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PREFACE TO THE 2022 REVISED AND EXPANDED EDITION

This is an esoteric book, firmly founded within the Western Esoteric Tradition. It is about sacramental skills and arts, not therapy. The book was originally commissioned by a small British press, long since passed away. I am pleased to offer it afresh, revised, to a new readership; some of the sacramental concepts described in my original book, such as the male transformational cycle of Warrior, Poet, Priest, and Prophet appeared in later publications by other authors. The Male Mysteries are, of course, innate stages of male development and potential; they will stand through many explorations and expositions.

This 2022 edition has been substantially revised and expanded. It offers insights and techniques for the transformation of consciousness and associated energies, of vital forces. Certain Mystery traditions and teachings are included that had not been published before the first edition. As our culture changes with such speed, some of the purportedly secret methods of spiritual or sacramental initiation have become obsolete, redundant. Yet others, long known but seldom taught, have come to the fore; a range of these are found in the practical exercises and forms in Part III. As I wrote in the original preface, on “How to use this book” (a sentence much loved by publishers back in the day), this is a book primarily for men, but I hope that women will also read it and try

the practical exercises. The ongoing discussion on polarity and gender has been expanded for this edition. The way ahead is a shared way; let us all share it together.

Celebrating the Male Mysteries was written in 1989, and first published in 1991. To say that the world has changed in the three decades that have swept us into the 21st century would be a stunning understatement. The upsurge and ever-increasing domination and indoctrination of social media alone has created a different world to that in which the book was written.

As I write these words in 2021, the globally networked connected world is deeply divided and partisan over the endless comparison of fact and delusion. Whereas truth seemed just possible to grasp at the end of the 20th century, the 21st presents us with chimeras such as international hacking of government technology (often by other governments), “alternative facts,” Q-Anon, and many far-ranging obsessive worldwide conspiracy theories. Such conspiracy theories would not be possible without the internet that miraculously and simultaneously provides us with both freedom of communication and creativity, and constriction of imagination and reason.*

*Lustig, Robert H. *The Hacking of the American Mind: The Science Behind The Corporate Takeover Of Our Bodies And Brains*, ISBN9781101982945

Men upon the couch

For our leisure, we are inundated with a plethora of technologically based fantasy entertainments with high energy impact; laser and strobe visuals and ponderous sound effects that were barely imagined in the 1990s and prior decades. There are, of course, many superb, thoughtful, beautiful, and educational productions that do not rely on superheroes and explosions.

Boys become men; men become boys. Old tribal ways toward male maturity have greatly diminished in the modern era, and hi-tech entertainment may simulate such ways, but cannot fully serve to replace them. We have yet to discover what will serve, but the methods offered in the later chapters of this book may go some way toward changing consciousness; as with all exercises, they will not work if we do not try them.

Nothing will be as it once was

Major concerns are growing due to the inevitability of rapid planetary heating and climate change; we will all be living within such changes for decades and then centuries yet to come. Planet Earth is a self-balancing homeostatic entity, and we are living in a time of increasing planetary adjustment. The time for serious work on human consciousness is now ... without changes of consciousness we will not be able to embrace changes in planetary balance. The urgent message of the 21st century is this: *nothing will be as it once was*, and humanity can no longer hide from planetary responsibility. We are the planet; the planet and humanity are within one another, both physically and spiritually.

A global refugee crisis, the worst since the Second World War, is destabilizing nations and cultures, driven by conflict, staggering exploitation and hardship, disease and famine. As I write, the entire human population of Planet Earth is in the midst of the greatest pandemic for over a hundred years, perhaps the greatest ever. Suddenly many of the “normal” benefits of the modern world, such as the atmosphere-polluting wonder of international air travel, are, in effect, proscribed. Simple human joys such as eating in a restaurant with friends or family may risk potential infection and possible death; meanwhile, millions of humans can barely find food to eat. Thus the world of the 21st century is harsher, more at risk, and substantially more unstable than that of the late 20th.

Revising the Male Mysteries

Welcoming the opportunity to rewrite and present afresh the ideas in this book on the Male Mysteries, I found the task to be more than a simple reprint. I did not want to merely tweak a few edits, but to update many parts of the original book, cut some, and add new content. Most challenging was how to address the grim thought that compassionate spiritual progress seems to have ground to a halt under the immense pressures of our era; yet is this conclusion true?

The upsurge of the #MeToo movement and the revelations of ongoing concealed sexual abuse in the workplace, entertainment, church, and sports, has revealed to us all how entrenched and corrupt male stereotypes can be. Conspiracies are repeatedly exposed, crimes of sexual and authoritarian exploitation by certain men, of women, children, and

younger fellow men. Perhaps the saddest truth is that we have not been surprised by the revelations, the cruel self-indulgence, and the moral bankruptcy of men in authority. This wave of revelations should make us all the more determined to bring male consciousness into a state of balance, beauty, and compassion.

The mystery of gender

Another significant issue for the 21st century is gender fluidity. Though it has existed for millennia, it is regarded with suspicion, even hatred, by many who adhere to the Book Religions or live in the judgmental shadow of their influence. Gender fluidity and the wider range of LGBTQ awareness, was minimally addressed in the first edition, and I have attempted in this revision to explore some aspects of our currently contentious gender phenomena, from the perspective of the Male Mysteries and esoteric traditions. Yet gender fluidity, and bisexuality, were better known in the ancient world (the ancient Greeks, for example, acknowledged three gendered conditions, not merely two), and has always been known in the esoteric traditions. Magical practitioners have often led the way toward liberation from gender stereotypes, though the intense emotional and social dynamics and prejudices relating to male and female homosexuality, bisexuality, fluidity, and transition, are likely to be evolving for years yet to come.

Technology

The technology that is so all-consuming and potentially deleterious and addictive has been used fully and enthusiastically in creating this new edition. No more clunking groaning fan-roaring metal boxes vibrating at 16 megahertz (often under the desk thus unhealthily close to sensitive male genitals), no more behemoth radiation-blasting monitors (on the desktop thus unhealthily close to the face and brain); my computer is slim, silent, and portable. To begin the process of recreation, the first edition text of *Celebrating the Male Mysteries* was scanned into this sylph-like computer, a device that would have seemed astounding in the 1980s. Editing was achieved with sophisticated software, quite different from the old physical cut and paste process of wielding scissors, of spreading pages out on a table, cutting and rearranging them. Revision was assisted by the ability to instantly look up references on the internet, even while writing. No more traveling to reference

libraries ... journeys that I miss, as it happens; writers will do anything to have a pleasant day out and avoid writing.

Revisions, a kindly voice, and entering the Male Mysteries

The early chapters, 1–4 especially, have been revised in many places. Overall I felt that my voice of the 1990s should be modified to be more kindly, more supportive, less critical. Yet some would say we need an even more critical approach when relating to the tidal wave of illusion and the widespread flood of fake news through internet channels and social media. So pervasive is our tech culture that my writing software repeatedly replaced “modern” with “modem” during revisions. We do indeed live in *modem* times as much as *modern*.

The main chapters of the book describe in detail a series of methods, techniques, and hands-on practical work for changing consciousness, primarily male consciousness. As consciousness is ... well, consciousness, there is no exclusion of the feminine, only an emphasis on the masculine for the Male Mysteries. The techniques and their forms offer a contemporary way for men to initiate deep inner changes, using means that have stood for centuries within the esoteric traditions.

Sometimes the esoteric traditions have been so suppressed that they have gone underground, almost invisible, while in other centuries, such as our 20th and 21st, they have become increasingly visible and audible, in books, media, and a surge of both public and academic interest. Thus there was relatively little to revise (other than some tidying of language) in the later chapters, which, as we might expect, are the most significant part of the book. These chapters consist of visionary, meditative, and simple ritual *forms*, a term sometimes used for cohesive sets of training exercises in martial arts.

There are no matters of faith, belief, or superstition in the practical program offered here; try it, see if it works. Many people have found it to be effective over the last 30 years, and their experiences, as much as my own, have helped the evolution of the original book into this new edition.

I recommend that you read through the book first, as if it is a novel, before working seriously with the various exercises or forms.

The first edition was written in Bath, England, in 1989. This new edition was revised and expanded in Bath, West Virginia, 2021.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION, 1990 (REVISED)

Authors note to the reader

This is a book on the Male Mysteries; I hope that both women and men will read it; however, the practical developments and exercises are specifically for men. It restates primal male magic through techniques for transforming consciousness and energy such as are found in humanity's perennial wisdom traditions.

In the chapters that follow there is a special emphasis upon our vast inheritance of such knowledge and techniques from Western sources, including those of ancient Greece, the Celts, Western magic and mysticism, and the wide range of primal sacromagical techniques found all over the broadly Western world. This is not a historical book but a practical one, and Part Three offers an original and unique working program of visualization for men, which has not been previously published.

I would not wish to be superficially accused of proposing any kind of return to outmoded male-dominated customs of social, political, religious, or sexual hierarchy: much of this book is intent on demolishing such hierarchies, and showing how deeply they damage us all, men and women alike. The exercises and illustrations are however, specifically designed for and about men, involving male energies and male

responses to images in visualization. Thus, there may be an intentional absence of feminine aspects in some of the universal symbols used in the illustrations, such as the Wheel of Life or the Tree of Life, in which emphasis has been given to the male aspects.

Anyone who has read my books will know that they place a strong emphasis upon the feminine forces of the psyche (be they in a male or a female person) and upon the need for a continuing powerful ongoing revival of awareness of the Goddess. This awareness should be of nature, in humanity, of the universe itself, and without it we cannot reach balance, either individually or collectively. This book is a manual (no pun intended) for men who seek inner transformation, offering techniques that can lead to rapid and permanent results. There is however, both a specific and a running discussion of the relationship between modern men and the Goddess, and one of the deep levels of visualization in the work program involves powerful goddess images.

How to use this book

While writing this book, I have been aware of the difficulty that modern men may have in working with inner/spiritual matters, with the arts and disciplines of consciousness and energy. Not that we are incapable of doing so, but that many of us are unable to find what we think are the right personal or social circumstances to do so, and, of course, that simple information is often lacking. While there is a huge range of books and classes on both spiritual and psychological matters, there is less designed specifically for the man who seeks by inner means to transform and emerge into the future. Much of that specific knowledge has been denied to us by history and religion. This situation is explored more fully in the Introduction and following chapters of Part One, so I will take it no further here.

I offer a way of development by which the individual or a small group can work without feeling obliged to enter into existing movements, schools, societies, study groups, or any of the alternative mystical magical or psycho-therapeutic systems. What we must join are the inner Mysteries, not outer organizations. Both of my spiritual and sacramental mentors in the 1970s emphasized that humanity is slowly outgrowing religious/spiritual/magical organizations; we need organisms of shared consciousness, developing relating and mutually evolving, to enable and accelerate that growth.

As the reader will soon discover, I feel that the way ahead for the Male Mysteries must come from a restatement and redevelopment of some of the primal male magic that has been hidden, suppressed, or perverted by vested interests over the centuries. Men have a habit of becoming over-zealous when they join movements or religions; the warrior urge and the religious urge are not that far apart from one another in men, no matter how much we might intellectualize or wish otherwise. Joining something—anything—often amplifies our weaknesses, giving us attractive and seductive excuses not to truly examine our motives and our deepest inner needs.

The practical work in this book, therefore, is designed either for the man working alone, or for a small group, possibly beginning from little or no experience of meditation and visualization. Having said this much, the exercises in Part Three are not simple tuition in such matters; with practice they emerge as powerful transformative tools, with many levels of possible effect. There are, of course, a vast number of handbooks on concentration and meditation, and some of these are listed in the Bibliography.

The key to development in the Male Mysteries is simple: calm regular work not upon but within one's self. The model of the Five Branches used in this book gives five categories of male energy and primal expression (Warrior, Poet, Priest, Prophet, King). These categories are well expressed in many publications as mythic or legendary themes, but the following chapters set out specific methods for working with them through a pattern of mutual interaction.

All Five Branches are inherent in each of us and have a further broad correlation to the human anatomy, subtle energies, and psyche. Arts exploring and expounding such correlation were a core aspect of the Mysteries, and later of Renaissance Hermeticism and Alchemy. While modern science regards these subtle yet intensely practical arts as outmoded, they still have much to offer if we are willing to work with them in an unprejudiced manner.

Empowerment and unity are found and developed within ourselves; we are the Primal Man, the Worker, the ruddy Adam in the Garden. As this simple fivefold model of male-being has resonances in us all, it is possible to develop exercises and visualizations which will be effective on progressively more powerful and transformative levels. In other words, the inner exercises and visualizations do not progress from beginner to advanced; this is the type of concept and potential delusion

that men need to rid themselves of, as it so often implies meritocracy or divisive hierarchy.

A true hierarchy should also be a holism, in which all parts are integral to the whole and any part may be, paradoxically perhaps, the whole. The Five Branches model works in this manner and can be used by the man with no experience of inner arts and disciplines just as effectively as by one with years of training in visualization and meditation. The reader who is already familiar with some basic modern psychology will notice that the Five Branches used in our various forms are not the familiar mythic or family orientated archetypes, or life-phases so frequently found in modern publication and therapy. In this book you will not find extensive discussion of the roles of Father, Lover, Son, such as are often given in men's studies or groups, in psychology, and in revivals of esoteric or spiritual and magical arts today.

To a certain extent this non-emphasis upon such life-roles is organizational and intentional in the context of this book, simply to avoid confusion of methods and terminology. But upon a deeper level, the pattern of Five Branches used here, the male images and powers of Warrior, Poet, Prophet, Priest, and Primal Man or King, already have within each of them the archetypes or roles of Father, Lover, Son, and of course, the unifying role of Brother. Thus, the images or Branches may act and react as Companions or Brothers (a role which we concentrate upon in this method), Fathers, Sons or Lovers, just as any man may experience during his lifecycle.

Encounters

The deeper visualizations of the Mysteries involve encounters with Goddesses, who may act as Mothers, Lovers, and Sisters, yet often behave in other surprising ways. In this type of work, drawn from ancient traditions of empowerment, it seems to be the Companion, Sister, or Brother images (or gods and goddesses) that are required for modern work, prior to our real encounters with the universal Mother and Father images and energies. I would propose that this is a reflection of our current social and spiritual condition, in which there is a considerable imbalance between our male and female energies and modes of consciousness, and in which the collective and individual images of the Father and Mother are, as any psychologist will tell us, frequently corrupted and confused. In the mythology, religions and initiatory arts

of the ancient world, however, we still find this role of the brother and sister deities specifically emphasized, and we see them acting to assist, enable, and transform humanity. In a purely male context, it is frequently the sister-goddesses who teach warrior and poet skills, inspire prophecy and priesthood, and both curse and bless certain heroes who epitomize humanity seeking to develop, transform, and become truly (rather than mechanistically or digitally) civilized.

Whatever is embodied in mythology may be activated through the imagination and will resonate in each and every one of us, male or female, if we do so. To restate and reopen the Male Mysteries, we need at certain stages to explore and experience the mythic patterns and powers described briefly above. For more detailed work with such patterns and powers, I will leave you to explore the visualizations and experiences offered in our later chapters.

There is an old Oriental saying that “when two masters meet, they smile”. This has hidden depths. Initially it means that when two men well versed in their own spiritual traditions meet one another, there is joy and no antagonism between them. It can also mean recognition: the smile of recognition that comes when two men from traditions that may be culturally separated realize that they share the same experience, even though they have come to it by quite different routes. If you work well with the methods given in this book, you will eventually become liberated from any one tradition, religion, or set of beliefs, and will come to recognize spiritual presence and power when you meet it. Such power can often be in subtle guises, for good or ill.

The culmination of the exercises in Part Three of this book involves sequences of vision meditation and ceremony aligned to the Four Directions: East, South, West, and North. Through the Mysteries, a man unifies the world within himself, and brings together all directions harmoniously. Before he can do this, however, he must encounter the Goddess, the female forces of life consciousness and the universe, both within himself and in whatever outer expressions She may take in his life. Without this essential realization of the Goddess within, no man can find direction or begin to unify the Directions, and no society can be at peace, either with itself or with others upon the planet.

The first and last words of the Male Mysteries are those of the ancient encouragement, or some might say warning, written over entrance to the Temple: “Man, know thyself”.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this book is to present some insights and practical methods towards reinstating the Male Mysteries for the twenty-first century. The material presented is drawn mainly from perennial esoteric or magical traditions, utilizing practical methods which enable the individual to attune afresh to ancient and specific mythic and transformative potencies. We shall be examining some of these potencies, in the forms of energies, images, experiences, and thresholds of inner transformation in our later chapters. Many of the concepts and techniques are radically re-examined in a modern context, and some new methods, proven by long practice, are included.

The traditions upon which these new appraisals and techniques are based, however, are the enduring wisdom traditions, particularly those of Western magical and transformative schools of development. The nature and purpose of these schools or streams of tuition and initiation will be discussed in several places in this book, for there are many interconnected illusions and delusions, particularly in the realm of male spiritual development, that should and can be avoided.

What are the Mysteries?

Throughout this book the word Mysteries is used repeatedly. It is worth briefly defining how the word is used in our text, for there are several different meanings found in modern literature, and a quite distinct historical and cultural meaning for the Mysteries of classical and early civilizations.¹

In a historical sense, the Mysteries of the ancient world were organizations that claimed to initiate members to levels of spiritual realization beyond those of regular temple or folk religion, or popular magical arts. They combined ceremony, imagery, fasting, meditation, instruction, and revelation. They were superseded and proscribed by the growing religion of Christianity, and eventually vanished as formal organizations.

Yet a number of underground movements and traditions have persisted right into the present century, albeit in attenuated forms. These manifested in each century in different ways and are often identified with certain "heretical" religious movements, magical or initiatory orders and societies, and the perennial collective teachings found within primal or folk traditions in every land. While we cannot say that any one of these many examples is a true Mystery in the classical sense, they are all representative of The Mysteries in a timeless sense, for they all combine many aspects of consciousness-changing techniques into certain loose formal groupings and traditions.

In this book the term Mysteries is used in the broadest possible context; it means any initiatory and instructional model of consciousness with sacramental methods, as distinct from contemporary therapeutic approaches. Such streams of consciousness may have outer membership and meetings, or they may be accessed solely upon inner levels through meditation and visualization. They all begin where materialism, psychology, formal religion and common superstition falter and diminish.

The methods, potencies, traditions, images, and archetypes, employed in the Male Mysteries are shared by human consciousness worldwide, but manifest in varying forms according to culture, environment, genetics, and, of course, physical and metaphysical gender or sexual polarity. The entire subject of gender and consciousness has attracted increasing attention in recent years; much of this has been entirely divorced from the perennial traditions or wisdom teachings which, in their own remarkable way, deal extensively and profoundly with such matters.

Throughout this book we shall be discussing many topics relating to gender, and its physical and inner or metaphysical reflections, polarities, and potentials. There is a popular delusion that physical gender is unimportant in spiritual matters, or that we should 'rise above' sexuality in or through meditation and other spiritual disciplines. This delusion is one of the most enervating and poisonous traps for the individual, male or female, seeking liberation or enlightenment. Without an understanding of polarity, which is, of course, sexuality, our inner development or true balance simply cannot be achieved.

The very word "enlightenment" is dependent upon polarity, for we may not raise our consciousness at the expense of any "lower" part of ourselves or of others. Darkness is as essential to true psychic and spiritual realization as Light.

So many stereotypes regarding males as light-bringers and women as dark waiting wombs are found in spiritual literature and tuition, that it is sometimes difficult to grasp that such concepts play very little part in the inner spiritual teachings of our world. Such stereotypical roles derive from suppressive political religion, and though the originals from which they are corrupted are true and valid in themselves, the roles are only one fragment of a cycle of polarity: a fragment which can be dangerous if taken out of its deeper context. Fortunately, the spiritual and magical traditions worldwide have always shown how such cycles of polarity and balance arise, turn and return to their mysterious Source. This cycle, or more accurately spiral of cycles, is reflected in the Mysteries of every man and woman.

The influence of the Theosophical Society

During the middle part of the twentieth century, a powerful revival of the Women's Mysteries began, manifesting initially as a political movement. The feminist political movement, paradoxically perhaps, has some of its roots firmly in the convoluted esoteric and spiritual impetus of the Theosophical Society, whose great reformer Annie Besant worked unceasingly for women's rights in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Enthusiasm for this Victorian and Edwardian politico-spiritual movement should be carefully tempered with a clear awareness of its powerful elitist and potentially suppressive hidden concepts. As it set the scene for the current revival of interest in spiritual matters outside orthodox religion, including the popular New Age movement

we should briefly examine its role further. The Theosophical Society of today is a much-reduced organization that has abandoned many of its earlier precepts and clarified its core spiritual teachings.

The Theosophical Society, despite its many admirable achievements in the causes of women's rights, racial equality, anti-vivisection, and the liberation of India from British rule, had a surprisingly wide range of elitist undertones, and for some years a neo-Messianic agenda. The much-revised Theosophical Society of today has abandoned this agenda. Many of these undertones were also prevalent in other esoteric teachings and magical orders of the period, and some have persisted unbroken to the present day, often re-manifesting in the New Age movement. We shall touch upon such difficult and potentially suppressive streams of consciousness throughout this book, but for the moment state briefly the primary concerns that affect the spiritual growth of men.

The Theosophical Society, and related but far less politically influential magical Orders such as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, placed a strong emphasis upon Masters. These were an elite of supposedly superhuman males, living in secret isolation and dictating the progress of the human race. To a certain extent this concept derives from a perennial teaching concerning inner world or spiritual masters, who are said to exist in, and act or communicate from, other dimensions, and to relate to humanity in many varying but generally beneficial ways.²

The suggestion that such teachers are almost exclusively male, and that they are, in fact, super-physical beings moving secretly among humanity and steering our evolution, is a subtle but powerful twist to an age-old original teaching and has many negative ramifications.

Such concepts are anathema to spiritual development, to equality and harmony of the sexes, and to individual emotional and mental maturity. At the most juvenile level they can lead weak misguided men to assume that they are, or soon will be, such Masters but this is only the most obvious and trivial result. More subtly the concept of the Masters presupposes that humanity is little more than a series of manipulated races or, at best, a collective entity being steered by higher forces and specific (über-male) intelligences. The worst extremes of this type of occult teaching merge imperceptibly with racism and fascism, in which superior male immortals cultivate a racial elite at the expense of other "non-Aryan" or supposedly lesser races.

The hidden Masters today

Much of this negative dross has permeated through into certain modern or New Age cults and societies, that frequently claim wisdom and tuition from channelled sources, hidden Masters, and the advent of an elect or elite within the present or next century. This range of suppressive conceptual structures derives in turn from the political programming of historical or exoteric religion, carefully devised to generate belief in an Elect Few abandoning or even hostile to 'the damned', and firmly based upon male superiority. Chosen white men go to Heaven; women may follow obediently; the rest are insignificant and rejected.

Nor should we assume that movements based upon Eastern (or more usually, pseudo-Eastern) religions operating in the West are free of this long-term pernicious suppressive program; very often the veneer of Eastern spirituality and the glamorous use of exotic words and half-understood practices, masks what is at root an essentially Judaeo-Christian or Book Religion outlook. The much abused and misunderstood concept of karma is a typical example of this; another is the widespread loose use of terms like "higher consciousness" and "evolution" within esoteric, spiritual, and New Age teachings. When such terms are used, they frequently imply divisive dualism, leaving the material world of nature behind. We shall return to these subjects in our later pages, for both karma and evolution are central to the Male Mysteries, though not necessarily in the popularized manner in which they are often presented today.

None of this suppressive monosexual elitism is adequate or desirable for the twenty-first century, and the man or woman seeking inner growth should be very cautious indeed of working with any movement or set of teachings that derives from such sources or suggests such ideas. The most dangerous concepts are often subtly hidden or cunningly disguised with several layers of camouflage and are often only fully perceived through meditation and contemplation, rather than in an outer form, though such outer forms abound in the current expansive climate of alternative approaches to consciousness.

In our present context of the Male Mysteries, men need to be particularly aware that many lines or streams of concepts, of imagery, involving hidden Masters and so-called spiritual evolution, are in fact linked to the negative suppressive shadow of enlightenment, a word widely used to loosely mean spiritual liberation. For many centuries

this shadow has resonated and manifested through male-elitism and male domination (of both primary sexes); such urging to dominate and suppress damages men as much as it does women. This is one of the major problems that men must address if they are to recover a proper Mystery or process of true enlightenment for the coming century.

Light darkness and shadow

Light is defined and enabled by darkness, and this mutual state of polarized existence holds good throughout all worlds, states, conditions, and cycles of existence. A shadow, however, is cast by all entities or shapes present within the light. Although we may not realize it, a shadow is defined and created only by objects present in light. Darkness absorbs all without distinction. There are no shadows in darkness: this is why the ancient Mysteries of Isis revealed the spiritual light of the Sun at Midnight, darkest of the dark, yet brilliant. This paradox is essential to the Male Mysteries.

At this introductory stage, however, we can consider briefly the existence of the converse or suppressive shadow of enlightenment, for it is not, and never has been, connected to antagonistic dualism between apparent good and opposing evil. The inner traditions—regardless of gender, race or creed—all teach that evil is a projection, confusion, or agglutination, of misaligned universal energy. It is not, as is so often propagandized within orthodox religions, an insoluble entity in conflict with spiritual qualities of goodness, to be combatted by formal religion.

The shadow of male domination is a resonance, a feed-back pattern of collective energies on many levels, ranging from physical through to psychic to metaphysical. If we are able to untangle and realign these corrupted self-perpetuating energies, we can make them available as sources of power which enable wholeness. The wholeness referred to is not only a psychological or therapeutic integration, but takes form within the pleroma or holism of the universe, mirrored through octaves or images such as the planet, the land, the harmony of races, and the individual human being, male or female.

The Gordian Knot

The late Robert Graves suggested that the legend of Alexander the Great (epitome of the powerful male stereotype), cutting the Gordian

Knot (emblem of the convolutions and weavings of the Mother Goddess) marked an important cultural and spiritual transition. Although Graves' writings have been used by modern pagans and followers of the Goddess in a manner which amused the poet himself, as his multifaceted book *The White Goddess* contains many complex philosophical jests and poetic satires, we can pursue this particular image further. Only now are we discovering that the classical Greek world, the supposed model for Western culture, was not as we have been taught in class.³

The story of the Gordian Knot is one of the great classical allegorical legends and did not originate with Graves or any single writer scholar or poet. Like a number of mythic or legendary themes, the story of Alexander is full of emblems and images out of time; it is beyond yet rooted into history. Indeed, the cutting of the Gordian Knot is but one of many mythic themes that were gradually incorporated into the legends of Alexander. To amplify upon Graves' interpretation, we might consider that this event epitomized one of the symbolic thresholds, in mythic terms, between the older cycle of collective humanity worshipping the Goddess in her many presentations, and an increasingly male-dominated individualistic humanity. According to Graves and many other subsequent authors, male forces sought to control, through drastic divisive antagonist means, that which should in truth have remained whole.

Cutting a convoluted knot, which Alexander is said to have done to fulfill the prophecy that whoever loosed the Gordian knot would rule the then-known world, does not untangle it. The two parts remain as halves of an unsolved problem, now further divided by the sword, and thus doubly complex.

In a recent and still expanding revolution of awareness we have found that modern technology, one obvious example of divisive antagonist consciousness and energy manifesting into our world, has revealed to us its devastating planetary effect. Through science turning against itself at last, maturity begins to slowly dawn. We are collectively more aware of the terrible threshold upon which we stand: nothing less than the potential ruin of our planet as we know it. Even if we chop the knot or knots into the tiniest pieces, hacking away stereotypically and manfully and vigorously, we have still failed to untangle it. And besides, cutting a knot at the manifest level only disposes of that level, for its innermost subtle convolutions remain intact.

Modern Mysteries, male and female

The advent of open, or at least theoretically open, access to and practice of paganism in the post-war period has led to a large revival of Goddess awareness and worship in Western society. This shift of consciousness and revival of an ancient, but by no means extinct form of worship or holistic worldview, has been enthusiastically taken up by both men and women.

Men, however, have not had much open opportunity to reassess the inner or spiritual transformative dimensions of male potential. These were originally represented by what may be broadly termed the Male Mysteries in ancient cultures, and no counterpart of such systems or organizations exists today. Psychology frequently lays claim to techniques of maturation and integration which seem, quite plausibly and often with adequate proof and examples from case histories, to provide a path of development suitable for men. The twentieth century outburst of radical feminine awareness and Goddess consciousness is indicative of the failure of psychological techniques to meet the true need and power of the female psyche, either individually or collectively. The same failure is discovered in the context of male initiation, or inner development towards balance and full potential.

There is a considerable difference between a psychotherapeutic or psychological approach to male initiation and transformation, and that of the spiritual or magical traditions. Although psychology can find parallels between its own models and those of the esoteric traditions, such parallels only reach to a limited horizon. Beyond that horizon, the esoteric traditions extend, while psychology and psychotherapy must, due to their inherently materialist and limited nature, go no further.

In the 1960s there was a deep undercurrent of political and collective transformation of consciousness for women, much of which continues to ferment through Western society today. In the 1990s and 2000s this undercurrent touches men, initially from a psychotherapeutic standpoint, but ultimately as a re-evaluation and restatement of the inner magical and spiritual potentials of male entity. Beyond that, we must bring this potential out into the world at large, the world from which we can no longer artificially separate ourselves.

This book, however, does not take a psychological or anthropological approach. This is partly because these are amply represented in other publications and practical work, but mainly because the perennial traditions of spiritual and magical transformation, available equally and

without distinction to both women and men, have a wealth of material concerning male inner transformation, most of which has never been published or reassessed for modern use.

Towards a new generation

During the 1970s and 1980s, a new generation of spiritual teachers for women began to arise. Such women have often come through political feminism, but have attuned to spiritual traditions, bringing new possibilities of transformation for women in general. In many cases these new possibilities are restatements of native traditions, rooted in a deep collective stream of awareness that regenerates itself in every century.⁴ Can there be a new generation of teachers for men?

Before we can begin a proper answer to such an important question, we should dispose of some sentimental sweetness and light. Magnetic men with golden auras who exude loving brotherhood may, temporarily, give us inspiration during dark phases, but they themselves are often locked in a backwater from which they cannot or choose not to emerge. Traditionally the Male Mysteries, regardless of the culture in which they manifest or the form which they take, are just not that easy. Teachers in native or chthonic traditions, however, can be notoriously strict, devious, remorseless, or unkind.

We should carefully distinguish between this significant tradition of teaching in a non-sentimental manner—using perennial methods which aim to cut through all trivia and bring a true transformation within the pupil—and mere crudity or cruelty. The crude and cruel methods, perpetuated among men in barbaric ways even today, are founded upon ignorance. The ignorance within the male-superiority ethic; the necessary rigidity of the military mind; and, slightly more subtle but no less damaging, the delusion of meritocracy. The hard methods of spiritual and magical teaching, by comparison, are based upon deeper levels of understanding and wisdom, and have quite different goals, goals which might be incomprehensible to the man locked into seeking aggressive superiority. Only when a man is able to realize that such aggressive meritocratic aims are delusions, can he begin to truly mature.

For most of us this realization is present as an inner unrest, sometimes vague and too easily suppressed, but sometimes of such a demanding nature that it cannot be ignored. Suppressing and ignoring this realization of delusion leads to mental imbalance, to a reinforcement of the very traits that are the cause of our dissatisfaction. The vicious aggressive

male ultimately destroys himself but can wreak terrible havoc upon others before he does so. Consider, in this context the dictators of the 20th and 21st centuries.

The transformations and realizations of the Mysteries are enabled by, and embedded within, techniques that have endured for millenniums, and have acquired a considerable collective energy and effect. We shall return to this concept.

We have all heard the suggestion and excuse that cruelty by teachers or parents is practiced “for his (or their) own good”. Insecure bullying men have used this excuse for generations to allow themselves the thrill of imposing their will and physical strength upon younger men. This type of cruelty in training plays no part in the inner traditions. A wise teacher may often seem to treat a pupil in a harsh and uncompromising manner, in order to bring the pupil to a threshold of inner transformation. This does not, at any time, involve imposition of will and no one—male or female—can be forced into spiritual growth by another individual. The teacher may, and often does, create difficult situations or tasks which bring out the latent potential in the pupil. That is quite different to bullying. If we are to develop a new generation of men: men who will be able to pass spiritual perception and balance on to others, men who will forego egocentric inflation for the sake of a future society of harmony, we need to challenge many of the preconceptions of male dominated pseudo-spirituality.

The problem of the wise elder

The wise elder is a typical example of the problem of pseudo-spirituality. While many young men challenge and despise the false teachers of their childhood, rejecting those who imposed upon and indoctrinated them at school, very few of us challenge the root concept of the wise elder in its own right. We tend to accept that there must be (somewhere) older wiser men able and willing to teach young ones. Indeed, we tend to long for this type of teacher or leader, for not only is the delusion conditioned into us by our culture, but it plays heavily upon our weaknesses, our childish willingness to absolve ourselves of responsibility, and to pass all serious matters onto the shoulders of another. Not for nothing have the world’s most vicious dictators been hailed by their people as saviors, fathers, holy men.

The true situation regarding teaching or mentorship is somewhat different. We all, men and women equally, learn most from interaction. In ordinary life this is, hopefully, acquired through experience, and we may have to undergo many bitter personal experiences before such interaction truly changes us. Through inner work in meditation, visualization, and other spiritual disciplines, we may slowly and thoughtfully dissolve the illusion of the stereotypical wise elder, and come to accept each teacher, inner or outer, simply for the quality and intensity of interaction, exchange, and hopefully, transformation, that he or she might have to offer. Some of the typical polarities and scenarios are well represented in the Mysteries, in mythology, in legend, and in esoteric training. Some are amply defined by modern psychology, though there is a tendency to limit the material to preconditioned and predefined interpretations.

Psychology and spiritual traditions

During the 1989 Merlin Conference, held in London, an open debate was engaged, based upon a motion that psychology has, effectively, stolen a fragment from the spiritual traditions known worldwide. Much of this debate is developed by a group of contributors in *Psychology and Spiritual Traditions* (Element Books, 1991), but as psychology is still a male dominated and male orientated field, it is worth some attention here, in the context of the Male Mysteries.

Psychology, regardless of any particular school or movement, is merely a model or concatenation of models of the human psyche. It may have little validity other than as a model, and the different schools of psychological theory and practice can and do disagree with one another. One of the problems of psychology is that it was developed almost exclusively by Western males without reference to alternative world traditions which contain other, often comprehensive, models of the human psyche.

Psychology has become an alternative to religion, an alternative to inner discipline and spiritual development. It has a difficult inheritance from the nineteenth century, when male intellectual giants were attempting to reach beyond religion and superstition; yet they were doing so in a society which was utterly conditioned by male-dominated religious conventions, behavior, beliefs, and attitudes of life. It was certainly a

great achievement or a failure of the bootstrap theory, depending on your point of view.

Students and authors frequently cite C. G. Jung⁵ as being a bridge between spiritual traditions and materialist psychology, but his role is really that of an Autolykus, a clever snapper-up of unconsidered trifles. Fragments of eastern and western tradition have been loosely incorporated into Jungian, and then into post-Jungian psychology, often out of their proper life-context or cultural traditions, merely because they are found to be effective in some respects and can fit into the framework of the psychological system concerned. Those aspects of the same traditions that do not fit, however, are conveniently ignored. Modern psychological techniques now abound, many of them claiming to be heralds of a New Age, to be transpersonal, to restate spiritual truths for the modern man and woman.

If we look closely at such alternative therapies, they are often based upon a small number of very simple and effective techniques which originally formed a part, and only a part, of broader traditions of spiritual and magical transformation. Frequently the result of taking such fragments out of their deeper original context is that they can become sources of imbalance, addiction to transient adjustment, or even a cult-like pseudo-religious obsession.

Typical examples, selected at random, might be as follows: primal screaming, rebirthing, encounter groups, psychosynthesis. These and other therapies all work; no one would deny their effect, yet they are fragments of techniques, either rediscovered in a vacuum, or deliberately borrowed from older traditions of transformation. Rebirthing, for example, is a commercially orientated reworking of the extremely ancient birth and incubation techniques known to the classical and Celtic cultures. Apart from this important but conveniently ignored connection to a fragment of the ancient temple techniques of past civilizations, rebirthing techniques are still practiced today among primal peoples for spiritual and magical initiation. Note that they are used for tribal or family initiation, and not for commercial therapy.

Many of the highly praised or advertised effects of alternative therapies, or of mainstream psychotherapy, are regarded within the magical and spiritual traditions as relatively minor results. In a modern therapeutic context, the catharsis of rebirth or of sudden realization is held to be an aim in itself; in the perennial traditions such events were merely part of a series of thresholds leading to inner transformation.

They were never ends in themselves, merely side-effects or transitional stages through which the individual passed on way to further change.

Labelling the problem

In more customary and conservative fields of materialist psychology, we still find the typical Victorian concern for labeling, from the years when psychology struggled to be recognized as a science. If something can be labeled, it can be ratified, but need not be understood. A label also distances us from the subject matter; we need not be involved in it too deeply, we can stand aside and consider it dispassionately; when we find something that we do not understand, something that instills fear, doubt or uncertainty, we try to fit it to our set of labels. Thus archetypes, gods and goddesses, mythic patterns, and the flow of energy in the human psyche and body, can all be reduced to a set of labels within a conceptual framework. We have a comfortable feeling, thereafter, of knowing what we are talking about, writing about, experiencing, or, perhaps, avoiding experiencing. Victorian psychology and occultism share this entrenched attitude.

The same concern with naming names is true of a Westernized approach to genuine ancient and contemporary magical and spiritual traditions; interpretations of the Mysteries (in any form worldwide) are replete with systems, labels, connective structures and so forth. But in practice they do not regard the system, the label, as being of any value in itself; there is no reductionism in the Mysteries unless the individual chooses, in a typical modern sense, to reach no further than the labels themselves.

This apparent similarity between mythic retellings, and obsessive textual listings is brought into proper focus when we realize that mythic epics and magical correspondences were not originally written down, but were vehicles of living oral tradition. The use of images and verses from memory rather than from the printed page is an essential aid to transformation of consciousness: this is why magical traditions insist on learning by heart what seems, to the modern intellect, to be a mass of superficially indigestible lore.

Much of our response to ancient mythic patterns and magical or religious systems is heavily conditioned by that same Victorian labeling as materialist psychology; it is most unlikely that the lists of correspondences used in the esoteric traditions were ever regarded as 'scientific' or 'authoritative' in the nineteenth century sense that still dominates

much of modern thought and practice. They were more in the nature of incantations, dream flows, protean collections that were used to attune the consciousness to holistic models, rather than to reduce perception to an orderly checklist of items.

The Male Mysteries, like any branch of esoteric tradition, are essentially practical. The male-dominated elitist secret societies and occult orders of the 19th century, tended towards the intellectual, the hierarchical, and of course towards extreme obscurity. But there are older traditions, sometimes hidden within intellectual occultism and sometimes quite separate from it. It is the hidden traditions that we should restore and develop for the present day, and it is in those traditions that we find the direct teachings, myths and legends described herein as the Five Branches, with their empowering gods and goddess forms. And yes, there are some old-style lists of attributes in our practical exercises in Part Three. They are there so that after use, they can be reduced to healthy compost, rather than stand as sole definitions.

Part One explores the concepts of the gods within and without, and how men may relate to the overall concept and powerful presence of the goddess. The dynamic of teacher/pupil is examined, and perhaps the most essential for the Male Mysteries of our era: Polarity and Sexuality.

In Part Two we will examine the Five Branches of Warrior, Poet, Prophet, Priest, and King, and their effect upon the Worker or Primal Man who is both the beginning and end of the Mystery.

In Part Three we will use exercises in meditation and imagination that put us into direct contact with the god and goddess forms that empower each Branch, and we will develop a set of simple but powerful methods of working with such images for individual and group transformation and empowerment.

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*Caitlin Matthews, author of *The Psychic Protection Handbook* and *Sophia, Goddess of Wisdom**

R.J. Stewart was born in Edinburgh, Scotland. His father came from a Gaelic speaking family originally from the Western Highlands. His mother was Welsh, from a Welsh speaking family from the Gower Peninsula in South Wales, with a tradition of singing and playing the Welsh triple-harp. He is known today as a composer, author, and teacher, with 40 books in publication, translated into many languages worldwide. He is widely experienced in theatre, film, and television, and is a skilled performer and presenter.

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