



Magia Sexualis: Sex, Magic, and Liberation in Modern Western Esotericism

Hugh B. Urban

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Sexuality and the occult arts have long been associated in the western imagination, but it was not until the nineteenth century that a large and sophisticated body of literature on sexual magic—the use of sex as a source of magical power—emerged. This book, the first history of western sexual magic as a modern spiritual tradition, places these practices in the context of the larger discourse surrounding sexuality in American and European society over the last 150 years to discover how sexual magic was transformed from a terrifying medieval nightmare of heresy and social subversion into a modern ideal of personal empowerment and social liberation. Focusing on a series of key figures including American spiritualist Paschal Beverly Randolph, Aleister Crowley, Julius Evola, Gerald Gardner, and Anton LaVey, Hugh Urban traces the emergence of sexual magic out of older western esoteric traditions including Gnosticism and Kabbalah, which were progressively fused with recently-discovered eastern traditions such as Hindu and Buddhist Tantra. His study gives remarkable new insight into sexuality in the modern era, specifically on issues such as the politics of birth control, the classification of sexual “deviance,” debates over homosexuality and feminism, and the role of sexuality in our own new world of post-modern spirituality, consumer capitalism, and the Internet.

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