

The Call of Isis

By: Olivia Robertson

CHAPTER 11 **THE MAGIC OF RITUAL DRAMA**

Up to now I had worked with either one person in trance, or with a group practising meditation. The only physical work I had undertaken was that of contact healing, using the force of 'Vril' for cure and to induce trance. Now, however, I became aware of the need for creative beauty that links our earth life with other spheres. Through painting, music and sculpture I realized that a human being linked himself with inspiration from spiritual source.

In the past, inspiration was accepted as being necessary for artistic creativity. The Muses were invoked to inspire their appropriate medium. Later, when people lost their faith in outside inspiration, this degenerated into a mere poetic tradition. But when true communion still obtained between Gods and humans, there was the cult of the God Apollo, and that of the Goddesses.

Minerva bestowed divine inspiration for philosophy, which would then be transmuted into words from the writer's mind. So the artist, as well as the priest, was regarded as a medium. Later, during the humanist revival of the Renaissance, came the cult of the incarnated demi-god called 'The Genius.' The word itself came from the concept of incorporeal beings, the Djinns of Arabia, elemental spirits.

Artists, when held to be divinely inspired by the Gods, had the virtue of humility. Like the present-day mediums, they declared themselves to be channels for the aflatus of Spirits. But those incarnated demi-gods, the Geniuses, knew no such modesty! Their stock-in-trade was their aggressive originality. The cult of the Genius particularly flourished when I was a young girl. Not in those days did the young hope to be saints, and day-dream of performing miracles, to the amazement and edification of their relatives. Rather did the young hope that they might be a genius like James Joyce or Hemingway. I remember laughing within myself at so many university students confiding in me that 'someone says I am a Genius!' There were so many of them. The only disadvantage to being a genius like Beethoven or Michelangelo was that one's family and teachers expected some great work to appear! After all, when saints were popular, they were expected to perform miracles.

Hence the prospective genius would retire into his bed-sitting-room, remote from his bourgeois family, later to emerge with a work of art, safely incomprehensible. He was not of today, but of the future, and would only be appreciated then. Meanwhile he could be as weird as he chose! I say 'he' because I did not come across female 'genii'. Glamour was more our aim: we inspired the geniuses, who made peculiar paintings of us, or wrote us lengthy involved poems.

Now, studying the occult, I took another look at the question of 'inspiration' and 'geniuses'. What was it all about? I had read of Pyrrhian Fire and Afflatus: of Newton hearing voices: of William Blake conversing with sundry spirits at night. Perhaps he had!

I always like to prove things to myself from actual experience, And in this matter I had the most unexpected instructor. It began with an actual psychic vision. I saw, eyes open and in waking

consciousness, the head of a young man lying prone. He had curled hair that had been gilded. His face was Greek in shape, save for slightly high cheek-bones. His eyes were closed. Otherwise lips and chin were so like those of a Greek statue, that I thought for a moment that the face was made of marble. But it was of flesh of a deathly hue: A flesh that had been painted. Not made up with our blended creamy colouring: but actually painted delicately like a picture, with carmine on cheeks and lips. The shoulders were very broad, and draped across with a cream-coloured wool material.

What struck me about the face was its expression. He looked like a very petulant and sulky 'Pop-star'.

Later, cross-reference with an occult friend identified this young man. He was, she said, Antinous, favourite of the Emperor Hadrian. He had appeared to another of our friends during a Mithraic ritual. Then he had worn his hair long, but still had the, same fed-up expression. He was strikingly handsome.

Finally we got through his story, which we found extremely interesting. Not that is, about his earth life, but about his posthumous career as a god! It was in that deified form I had seen him. For after his alleged suicide in the Nile, his corpse had been taken out, embalmed, painted, and his surviving spirit decreed a god of manly sports and exercises, under the aegis of Apollo. He had, he told us, been given work to do, for that was expected of gods, like the hardworked royal personages of our days. His office or welfare department was his temple, his medium, a priest. How did he appear to us? He tried to come through directly, using my friend as a medium: but then declared that this was not the intention of our group. He found it more difficult to project his appearance and voice to a sensitive, but learnt to do so.

What we gathered was that defunct Pharaohs and other notables who were 'deified' after death acted as spirit guides, healers and helpers. If provided with the necessary power, they could work 'miracles': that is, produce manifestations. Offerings were helpful, in that they provided psychic counterpart, used by the god concerned. This could take the form of 'ectoplasm' or lifetrans - psychic atoms. Prayers, incantations and singing could also give the god or goddess necessary power.

This gave me insight into ritual observances in churches. I had often heard sceptics wonder why God liked so much bad hymn singing! The vibrations of sound, and the effort put into such singing through concentrated thought and feeling could be used for the intention of the group by the deity concerned.

As regards the particular reason for Antinous contacting us, he wished to explain what his present work was. He had incarnated since Roman days, and was now primarily concerned with working for world peace. In fact, in character he reminded me of members of the Society of Friends. He had, we gathered, always liked music, and the simple life of woods and fields. He commented that he liked the simplicity of our way of meditating.

Why, I wanted to know, had he appeared looking so miserable at a revival of a Mithraic rite? He gave the answer that though the true religion of Zoroaster, that of Mithra, was pure and solar, concerning itself with the right use of power, to defend the weak, it had in the latter days of Rome become too much entangled with blood cult. In fact his expression was understandable: as apparently during his initiation he had been deluged with the blood of a bull!

I could imagine how disgusting this would be, as Valentine had endured a similar initiation when a little girl of five. Her father, an M.F.H., had, she said, advanced on her after a kill with the bleeding pad of a fox. While she screamed, he had smeared the bloody tornoff pad down her cheek. She had continued to scream all the way home. Her usually kind nannie would not wash

off that blood mark in her bath. It had by tradition to remain until next day. And the memory remained, as it was intended to do. The effect had been the same with Antinous. His subsequent drowning had produced the disagreeable psychological effect I had seen on the face of the newly created god. I understood his partiality for a world freed from violence.

It appeared to me, therefore, that ritual, whether pleasant or unpleasant, affected the subconscious mind of the participant, not only in this life but in the next. When one moves from the passive to the active role in para-psychology, one is changing from trance experience, to the induction of power from one sphere to another. I noticed, when I began making friends with occultists, that they used a different, revealing phraseology as compared with mediums. When faced with a problem, they would say: 'I am going to do something about this!' Having little faith in most people's 'expertise' in magic, I would beg them not to do me any good! I would rather be left alone.

When people have taken a course in magic, they usually want to try out their new skill. They look around for areas where their help is needed. And then they start 'manipulating the web.' And even a beginner can do this, with possibly unpleasant effects on himself and others. A reckless youth in a drunken state in charge of a high-powered motor-car is less of a public menace than some amateur occultist! Such an enthusiast, having read a few books, experimented with drugs, and joined some questionable 'order' then proceeds to use the force of ritual magic. It is not enough that our planet is being threatened by misuse of physical science and that we face extermination through possible nuclear war and industrial pollution. Some ignorant occult practitioners try to affect the etheric web as well; so threatening the patterns of thought and feeling of those around them.

However, the scope of occult misuse is at the moment small. We have lost so much in the non-material field that our quickest way to affect physical matter is still to use physical means. Maybe one can bend a fork if one concentrates enough. But one could better employ the energy in creating a beautiful piece of jewellery. Beauty exerts a more powerful impression on the mind of those who see it than any mere show of 'force'. For humanity responds finally to the great realities of love and beauty and truth. Anything else, however showy, ends by boring us. The first time one is shown a scientific wonder or occult demonstration of power over physical matter, one is impressed. The second or third time, one loses interest. I noticed that the great exploit of man landing on the moon only attracted surface attention. Emotionally we were unmoved. 'Pop' stars who appealed to the feelings still adorned the walls of the young: I never see a 'pin-up' of an astronaut.

In my study of the use of occult force, I realized that we humans are not fundamentally interested in force for force's sake. We have an inner longing for a world of drama and beauty; for wonder and surprise. This may be brought about by first acquiring money and worldly importance: but few regard these as ends in themselves. Examine people's day-dreams: they express the need for affection and beauty. There are few who see divinity expressed in terms of scientific formulae, though such rare people do exist. Most of us, however, are stage-struck. We wish to act in the theatre of life in an emotionally satisfying way; to identify ourselves with what we admire: to receive the plaudits of the multitude.

And the Western school of the Mysteries caters for this. We of the West tend to be actors. We like working and playing with other people. We are gregarious. We like splendour and pageantry and glory. And to get any good out of it, we must be presented with an exciting, moving part to play in the drama of life.

I roughly classify 'the West' in this way, although there are natural quietists in the West, and exhibitionists in the East. As Hari once said: 'The Quakers are the Brahmins of the West.' Maybe.

but there are not many Quakers. One realizes, studying our newspapers, novels, films and television, that we feed on sensationalism.

And why not? Admittedly the higher path is to withdraw from 'the dream of life'; to enter a Trappist monastery or enclosed convent, and live a life of prayer. But most of us want to join the processions, the revolutions, the happenings. Whether at funerals or weddings, crowd scenes appeal to us. Need we be ashamed of this? The great Christian Mystery is essentially dramatic. And after all, although in the crowd, we need not shout 'crucify him,' but rather be among those who shouted Hozanna, and strewed palms in the way.

In my work with those in trance, I noticed what exciting adventures people had! I enjoyed them myself. The adventurer would have a release of pent-up emotion in fighting in his joust, in facing a dragon, in rescuing a princess. But nonetheless, the body still remained totally inactive. I found it hard to persuade some such psychic pilgrims to meditate on their own - to do something useful in everyday life. Could there be any half-way zone between trance adventure and daily work? Otherwise I was only giving a substitute for drugs and dreams.

I tried the experience of attending church service with these students. I myself could participate. But they found the part there was too inactive. As one girl said: one knelt, sat, got up, and sang, and that was all. The priest had the more interesting role; but only the priest. The 'audience' as she called it, sat barred off from the chancel, the stage. She was bored and would not go again. I found the same reaction with others. They resented being at the receiving end of a ritual. Nothing was happening. Life outside at least promised them activity. They could not be passive.

It came to me that a new age was bringing about a move from passive to active role among our planet's millions. Up to now, in church, one knelt meekly on one's knees facing the place of transcendental Deity. Only a select and trained band of priests or Brahmins could be channels for Deity and stand in the Holy Place. But now the neophyte, whether man or woman, expected to be a priest: to stand in the appropriate position, and act as channel for the Deific Presence.

We were moving, as had been prophesied, into the era of God the Holy Spirit: of Pantheism. Innate Divinity could be realised by those willing to express this divine power, that is latent within all existences.

And the interlinking area between the spheres of Divinity and the earth sphere, was that of the Temple, of Ritual. For the law of Octaves of sound prevailed throughout the universe in the law of correspondences. Strike a note on one level, and you produce a corresponding response in the sphere you wish to contact. Make a symbolic gesture on this plane with deliberate intention, and you affect the area on which you are concentrating.

Each of the five senses, then, had an affinity with supernatural senses. And one could only understand sacred scriptures, the Bible, Bhagavad-Gita, the Sutras, if one read them with heightened faculties, understanding this law of affinities. So 'sight'. 'hearing', 'touch', and so-forth each had an inner meaning to the initiate - that is, one who had been awakening to this level of awareness.

So one could recognise the mysteries performed in daily life: the ancient Greek dramas producing their archetypal effect through living men and women. Such playwrights as Ibsen, Strindberg and Yeats were consciously aware of this, and drew it to the attention of the audience. Through art, a human-being could identify with Ulysses, Oedipus, Elektra, or indeed the Chorus.

The only difference then, between great drama presented to an audience, and the Mysteries, was that the Mysteries were not for an audience, but brought each performer into meaningful participation with the enacted drama. The neophyte identified with the questing Psyche in her

search for Eros; with Orpheus seeking Eurydice in the netherworld. According to his own development, he underwent each deepening layer of consciousness: Stage One, Stage Two, Stage Three. Each stage brought its peculiar ordeal. And, according to his capacity, he succeeded or failed. Success meant permission to advance further. Failure was no disgrace. It merely meant that the candidate was not yet ready to undergo further trials, at any rate during that life-time. He would try again and one life-time he would succeed!

And yet even these Mysteries were not fully realized, lacking embodiment on earth. The greatest, because the most inclusive, of these divine dramas had to happen in every-day life: have a human face; a physical environment. I realized that, however well one might cope with lunar initiation through trance experience, it really was easier than having to face actual physical happenings. It was, for many of us, easier to be 'dead', in the psychic sphere, than to live well on earth. Thus Solar Initiation, inspired living, was the next stage to be faced. And, looking around at the world, one could see that we were nowhere near achieving it. Some of us had good ideals, fine dreams. But could we bring them through successfully into earthly actuality? That was what we had to learn: to achieve the union of heaven and earth.