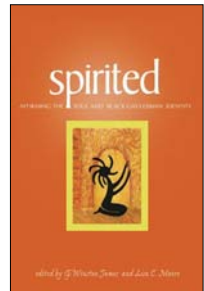

Bending Spirit

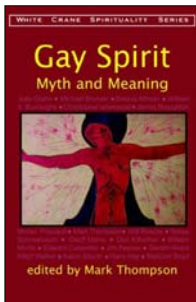
Over the past couple of years, there has been an increase in publications speaking to the spiritual lives of lesbians and gay men. Even a non-exhaustive survey of these titles shows the diversity of the LGBT communities and the breadth of their spiritual exploration.

Leading the pack is a superb collection edited by G.Winston James and Lisa Moore: **Spirited: Affirming the Soul and Black Gay/Lesbian Identity** (Reb Bone Press, 2006, 391pp, \$16.95). Given its power within African American culture, it is not surprising that the Black church is a strong undercurrent running throughout this collection. Against this backdrop—and often times reacting to or against it—Moore and James have drawn together a rich and varied collection of personal stories of coming to spirituality. In addition to Christianity, authors write of Buddhism, Shamanism, Vodun, heathenism, Wicca and returning to traditional African spirituality. This is an affirming and positive collection—an ideal read for anyone moving toward self-acceptance or looking to deepen their spiritual understanding.



For almost twenty-years now, *White Crane Journal* has been a forum for the discussion gay men's spirituality. Now White Crane Foundation has

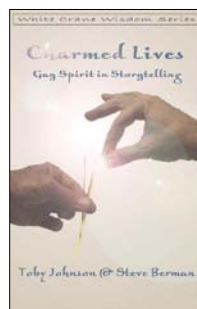
teamed with Lethe press to bring forth a series of classic and new books centering on gay spirituality and wisdom. The series debuted in 2005 with the reprint of two classics: **Two Flutes Playing: A Spiritual Journeybook for Gay Men**, Andrew Ramer (White Crane Spirituality Series/Lethe Press, 2005, 157pp, \$12.95) and **Gay Spirit: Myth and Meaning**, Mark Thompson, Editor



(White Crane Spirituality Series/Lethe Press, 2005, 311pp, \$19.95). Ramer began *Two Flutes Playing* in 1980 and the work spans the decade through to the early nineties. Part channeled work and part observational musing, the work is an evocative invocation. Ramer

weaves stories and heroes into a new mythology for the gay tribes. *Gay Spirit* is a collection that was groundbreaking in 1987 when it originally appeared. Mixing anthropology, history and sexual/identity politics, the collection remains a powerful read. A glance over the names listed in the table of contents might give one the impression that this collection is a dated slice of a different time—William Burroughs, Michel Foucault, Christopher Isherwood, Harry Hay. The very fact that, twenty years on, we recognize so many of these names, as much today as then, is a testament to the timelessness of Mark Thompson editorial selection.

White Crane and Lethe have also teamed to launch a new Wisdom Series. The first release is a new work edited by Toby Johnson (*Gay Perspective*) and Steve Berman (*Vintage*): **Charmed Lives: Gay Spirit in Storytelling** (Lethe Press, 2007, 306pp, \$16.95). *Charmed Lives* brings together stories of transformation—running the gamut from the whimsical, the romantic, to the tragic. Contributors include Perry Brass, Don Clark, Andrew Ramer, Mark Thompson, Malcolm



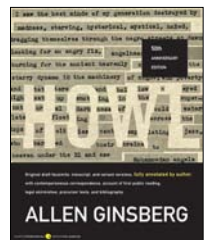
Boyd, among others. The book combines personal essays with creative fiction.

Also from Toby Johnson, this time joined by anthropologist Walter Williams, comes a new work of historical fiction: **Two Spirits: A Story of Life With the Navajo** (Lethe Press, 2006, 331pp, \$18.00). Set in the Civil War era of the 1860's, *Two Spirits* tells the story of a feckless Virginian who finds himself captivated by a Two-Spirit male. This is a fascinating book that combines tragedy and oppression with a tale of love, beauty and self-discovery.

Michael Thompson Ford offers a practical guide to pagan spirituality in **The Path of the Green Man: Gay Men, Wicca, and Living a Magical Life** (Citadel Press, 2005, 244pp, \$14.95). Ford is the founder of the Green Men, a group dedicated to establishing a new Pagan tradition for gay men. The author takes readers along on his own quest to merge Pagan spirituality into his life. The book is much more than a personal testimonial, however. It is a manual for practicing the Pagan path of Wicca designed specifically for gay men. Ford provides hands-on exercises and rituals for crafting a more meaningful life through developing a deeper connection to the natural world.

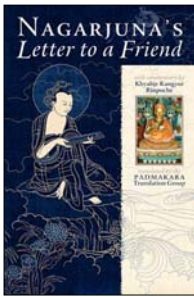


And last, but definitely not least, it was fifty years ago that Allen Ginsberg's prophetic epic poem "Howl" was first published by City Lights. To mark the anniversary Harper Perennial has reissued the original manuscript: **Howl: 50th Anniversary Edition** (HarperCollins, 2006, 194pp, 18.95). This annotated edition is the late poet's own re-creation of the work's composition—providing a unique insight into the creative process. This volume combines



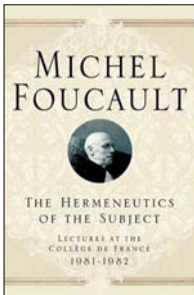
the original typed manuscript, including Ginsberg's handwritten editorial marks, with numerous anecdotes that shed light on both the writer's technique and the social, spiritual fabric of the time it was written.

New & Notable



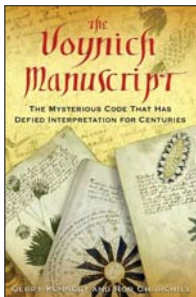
The Padmakara Translation Group has brought another of Tibet's textual treasures into English: **Nagarjuna's Letter to a Friend** (Snow Lion, 2005, 208pp, hardcover, \$22.95). Appearing 600 years after the Buddha, Nagarjuna is considered one of the greatest scholars of the Great Vehicle, or Mahayana tradition. Here is one of the great works of Indian Buddhist literature.

Originally written as a letter to an Indian king, the letter has become a classic work of the shastra tradition. Though short, the letter covers the breadth of the Mahayana path. Due to this the work has proved a great resource for scholars and students of the tradition. The volume includes commentary by Longchen Yeshe Dorje, Kangyur Rinpoche, the 20th century Tibetan scholar. His straightforward interpretation of Nagarjuna's text is very helpful in making Nagarjuna's, at time compacted, verse accessible.

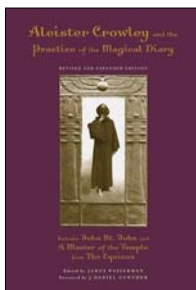


The Hermeneutics of the Subject (Palgrave, 2006, 566pp, hardcover, \$35.00) collects lectures Michel Foucault delivered at the Collège de France in 1981 and 1982. In this third volume in this series, the topics of the lectures focus on questions of the "self" and the "care of the self" was viewed and constructed in antiquity.

Foucault's talks center on the question of the ethical formation of the self and the question of subjectivity. These lectures help create a much deeper understanding of, and appreciation for, Foucault's later work. In this case, these talks have particular relevance to Foucault's final work in his *History of Sexuality*. Foucault was one of the great (and unique) minds of the 20th century. His analytical insight, sharp as a surgeon's scalpel, shows itself throughout the course of these lectures.

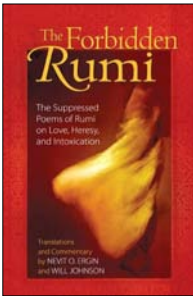


The enigmatic **Voynich Manuscript** was first discovered in an Italian monestary in 1912 and is in the collection of Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book Library. Since then, the strange volume, with its unknown language and strange illustrations, has baffled scholars and fascinated cryptologists. In their work of the same name, Gerry Kennedy and Rob Churchill (Inner Traditions, 2006, 292pp, \$18.95) explore the mystery surrounding the medieval manuscript, examining the various theories surrounds both its authorship and its contents. They trace the speculative history of the manuscript and suggest those who might be connected with it—a veritable who's who of the western mysteries: Roger Bacon, John Dee, Edward Kelley and, the current martyrs du jour, the Cathars.

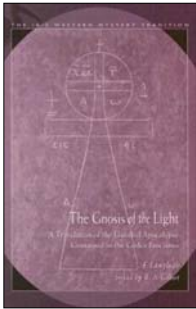


The magical journal is one of the most important, and oft' overlooked, tools in the magician's arsenal. **Aleister Crowley and the Practice of the Magical Diary** edited by James Wasserman (Weiser Books, 2006, 197pp, \$19.95) brings together Crowley's important works on the subject of keeping one's magical record. First published in the Equinox in 1909, Crowley's *John St. John* chronicles in great detail his 13-day magical retirement and was

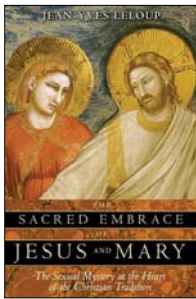
described by its author as “a perfect model of what a magical record should be.” Wasserman couples this with Frater Achad’s *A Master of the Temple*, first published in 1919. Achad’s example details his experience as an adept. Wasserman provides an insightful introduction. The inclusion of a “culinary glossary” for the various foods and drink mentioned in *John St. John* is a delightful treat.



Rumi is recognized as one of the world’s great spiritual poets. The thirteenth-century mystic released himself from many of the precepts of formal religion, espousing, instead, a complete personal dissolving into the rich energies of the godhead. With the support of the Turkish government, Nevit Ergin embarked on translating Rumi’s 23 volume Divan—numbering over 44,000 verses—into English. When it came to publishing the openly heretical material contained in the final volume, the Turkish government withdrew their support for the project. Now in **Forbidden Rumi** (Inner Traditions, 2006, 167pp, \$14.95), Nevit Ergin and Will Johnson present for the first time in English Rumi’s poems from this forbidden volume. Also included are introductions and commentary that provide both 13th-century context and modern interpretation. The collection is nicely grouped into three sections: songs to Sham and God, songs of heresy and songs of advice.



James Bruce first brought *The Codex Brucianus* to England in 1769. The volume contained several sixth century Gnostic works written in Coptic. It is likely that the works were based on earlier original Greek texts. Part of this collection, “The Untitled Apocalypse,” is translated here in **The Gnosis of the Light** translated by F. Lamplugh (Ibis Press, 2006, 77pp, \$12.95). Dated to the second century, the time of the great Gnostic Valentinus, the text lays out the early Gnostic teachings in esoteric symbolism designed to work upon the believer’s inner experience. The work’s imagery fosters contemplation intended to prepare a candidate for the Baptism of the Light in which union with the indwelling spark of the divine. To Lamplugh’s 1892 translation, this volume adds a preface by R. A. Gilbert examining the historical context and relevance of the work today.



In **The Sacred Embrace of Jesus and Mary** (Inner Traditions, 2006, 150pp, \$14.95), orthodox theologian Jean-Yves LeLoup tackles one of the great mysteries of Christianity: why did Saint Paul reject sexuality and the feminine. Drawing on canonical and apocryphal gospels, the Hebrew esoteric tradition and Gnosticism, LeLoup attempts to reveal the actual context of the words attributed to Jesus. Through his analysis, LeLoup argues that Jesus came not to redeem humanity from the flesh, but to honor it as a spiritual path. The author points out that when Paul rejected women, he did not support his contention by citing any words of Jesus. LeLoup suggests that this wholesale elimination of the divine feminine and debasing of sacred sexuality does not reflect, in fact, the true teachings of Jesus. LeLoup supports his own refutation of Paul through an in-depth analysis and

exploration of the relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. A slew of books on the Magdalene have followed on the international success of *The Davinci Code*. Known for his earlier works of esoteric Christianity, including *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* and *The Gospel of Thomas*, LeLoup is ideally suited to approach this subject.

Robert Anton Wilson

In Memoriam, 1932-2007

Robert Anton Wilson died on January 11 at his home in Capitola, California. Wilson was a novelist, philosopher, fnord* and conspiracy theorist. He is best known for his science fiction trilogy *Illuminatus!* and his non-fiction autobiographical classic *Cosmic Trigger* (originally published by Pocket Books, 1977). Wilson also penned a punk rock opera *Wilhelm Reich In Hell*.

With the publication of *Cosmic Trigger* and subsequent works such as *Coincidence* and *The New Inquisition*, Wilson drew a strong following among successive generations of anarchist spiritual seekers and independent philosophers. He authored 35 works in all, covering diverse topics running the gamut from extraterrestrials, through sex and drugs, to discordianism. Wilson was particularly adept at creatively applying quantum theories to the domain of personal spirituality and psychology. He strongly advocated the notion that one should not rule out any possibility—dogmatic worldviews being, to his thinking, detrimentally self-limiting.

In his final blog post, written from his sickbed on January 6, Wilson wrote:

* Fnord is the typographic representation of disinformation or irrelevant information intending to misdirect, with the implication of a conspiracy.

Various medical authorities swarm in and out of here predicting I have between two days and two months to live. I think they are guessing. I remain cheerful and unimpressed. I look forward without dogmatic optimism but without dread. I love you all and I deeply implore you to keep the lasagna flying.

“Please pardon my levity,” he continued. “I don’t see how to take death seriously. It seems absurd.”

The announcement of Wilson’s passing, posted to his blog on the eleventh, was actually the second time he “died.” In 1994, a spurious obituary circulated the internet. Attributed to the *LA Times*, the premature announcement of Wilson’s passing quickly spread among his internet-savvy friends and admirers. When contacted about the news, Wilson responded, “The reports of my death have been slightly exaggerated. I can still totter about a bit and even crack a weak joke occasionally.”

Over the past few years, Wilson experienced increasingly poor health, from a reoccurrence of polio. Despite this he continued to maintain active contact with the world at large through email and his blog.