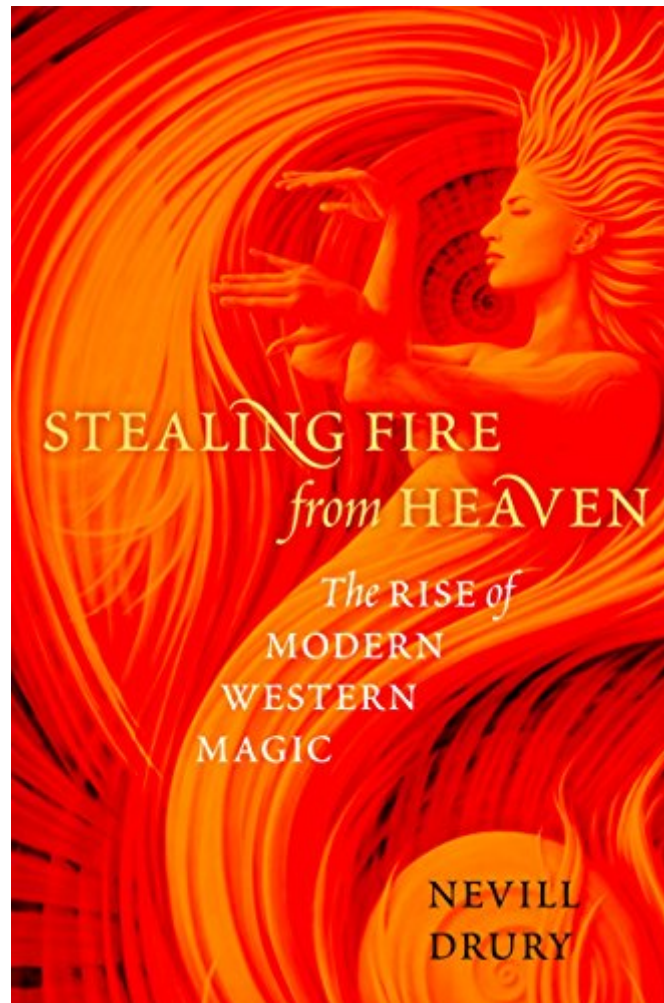




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Stealing Fire From Heaven: The Rise Of Modern Western Magic



Synopsis

The Western magical traditions are currently undergoing an international resurgence. In *Stealing Fire from Heaven*, Nevill Drury offers an overview of the modern occult revival and seeks to explain this growing interest in ancient magical belief systems. Gnosticism and the Hermetica, the medieval Kabbalah, Tarot and Alchemy, and more recently, Rosicrucianism and Freemasonry, collectively laid the basis for the modern magical revival, which first began to gather momentum in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century. Western magic has since become increasingly eclectic, drawing on such diverse sources as classical Greco-Roman mythology, Celtic cosmology, Kundalini yoga and Tantra, shamanism, chaos theory, and the various spiritual traditions associated in many different cultures with the Universal Goddess. Drury traces the rise of various forms of magical belief and practice, from the influential Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn to the emergence of Wicca and Goddess worship as expressions of contemporary feminine spirituality. He also explores Chaos Magick and the occult practices of the so-called Left-Hand Path, as well as twenty-first-century magical forays into cyberspace. He believes that the rise of modern Western magic stems essentially from the quest for personal spiritual transformation and direct experience of the sacred--a quest which the trance occultist and visionary artist Austin Osman Spare once referred to as "stealing fire from heaven." Considered in this light, Drury argues, modern Western magic can be regarded as a form of alternative spirituality in which the practitioners seek direct engagement with the mythic realm.

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Customer Reviews

Nevill Drury's *Stealing Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Modern Western Magic* represents a type of book, increasingly favored by academics, which attempts to read Magic and the Occult as a cultural phenomenon rather than a marginalized space for eccentrics and neurotics. To the extent that Mr. Drury pursues this goal the book is enjoyable and informative. On occasion, however, the author becomes overly sympathetic and 'appears' to lose their objectivity. This damages the credibility of the history. Taking the good with the bad, *Stealing Fire From Heaven* was a middle of the road history of, mostly, ritual magic traditions and groups: a notable group would be the Gardnerian Wiccans [followers of Gerald Gardner]. In the end, this is a book for believers and those leaning toward belief rather than those interested in modern magic as a cultural phenomenon. Recommended for the faithful and not the curious. Rating: 3 out of 5 Stars.

Nevill Drury, who passed away in late 2013, was one of the more knowledgeable and yet unheralded scholars of the Western esoteric tradition. This work, one of his last, is an excellent summation of what is probably the most misunderstood area of the Western mysteries, that of magic and associated lines of study. The book is well organized, thoroughly researched, copiously footnoted, and sweeping in its scope. Drury had a knack for writing in such a fashion that was both informed and interesting, providing a good balance between rigorous research into history and theory, while also including entertaining studies of many of the colorful characters who have populated Western arcana throughout history and up to present times.

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