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**Fire on the Mountain:
An Intimate Guide to Male Genital Massage**

Text Documents

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**Touch me.
Touch the palm of your hand
to my body as I pass.
Be not afraid of my body.**

Walt Whitman

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Introduction to Erotic Massage

by Joseph Kramer, Ph.D.

I am a masseur and a teacher of massage. Although I have given hundreds of wonderful massages to women, my specialty is touching men. In fact, in the last twenty years I have massaged more than 10,000 men. I am honored to say that laying hands on men is the "great work" of my life. I would like to share with you some of the wisdom that has come to me giving, receiving, and teaching massage.

In 1979, as I was completing my master's degree at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, I realized that for too long I had been studying literature, psychology, mathematics, and philosophy, but that I had had no formal education in the subject that intrigued me most—pleasuring a man. My traditional quest for knowledge had taken me deep into the realm of words and ideas. Yet, I had forgotten the wisdom available to me within my own body and within the bodies of those around me. I trusted a voice within me that said, "Look for a teacher." Two weeks later I was enrolled in the Berkeley School of Massage in their professional certification program. I found it humorous that many of my class-conscious friends were horrified that I was training to become a manual laborer. But that hundred-hour massage training has had more impact on my life than all the thousands of class hours I endured during my undergraduate and graduate education.

I did have one full-body massage just as I began graduate school. John Coleman, S.J., my academic advisor in Berkeley, announced to a group of students that he had just completed a course in Esalen Massage and he was looking for bodies to practice on. I volunteered. Although I knew this massage would not be erotic, I feared I might get an erection since I was to be naked. Before he began the massage, John explained the goal of Esalen massage was to awaken consciousness throughout my body. "The long, slow strokes from your head to your feet and back again are to give you a sense of wholeness and well-being." It was interesting that this massage was not about tense muscles. I was surprised that I had nothing to do but breathe and enjoy and surrender.

There were parts of me that woke up during that massage that had been asleep for years. My whole body screamed yes to this touch experience. Yes! Yes! Yes! This massage was, without a doubt, the most significant two hours of my first twenty-five years. An older and wiser man had initiated me into a new way of feeling and being a body. That massage helped me discover my vocation, my life path.

All men need to be touched. There is no place in America that suffers more from the legacy of rugged individualism than the male body. As boys enter their teen years, they are overtly and covertly initiated into the loneliness and isolation of being a man. The mantra of my childhood, chanted nonstop by teachers and parents, was "Keep your hands to yourself." I am sad to say I heeded the adults' warnings. As a teenager, I was consumed by skin hunger that I felt only as generalized rage. I totally identified with Paul Simon's lyrics, "I touch no one and no one touches me. I am a rock. I am an island." In my early twenties, I was Tommy, the boy who plaintively

reached out his arms, singing, "See me. Feel me. Touch me. Heal me." I still hear those words thirty years later in the men I touch on a daily basis.

A San Francisco masseur once wrote that after giving a thousand massages the masseur becomes enlightened. I am not sure what "enlightened" means, but I do know that I have become extremely sensitive to my clients. I have educated my empathic skills so that, if I choose to, I can feel in my body what the man I am massaging is feeling. This helps me focus on tensions and places where he might be feeling pain.

Many times, after I had finished what I thought was an excellent session, I would feel a deep dissatisfaction in the man I had just massaged. Although I had been sensuous and intimate with most of his body, I had chosen not to touch his genitals. This is the norm in massage therapy today. But, instead of the man feeling his body being massaged into wholeness, he feels a split between the parts that I touched and the parts I didn't touch. This dilemma has always been with bodyworkers and other touch therapists.

In 1983 I transgressed professional boundaries and became an erotic masseur. As AIDS began to spread among men who had sex with other men, I recognized a need for a new, no-risk erotic way of connecting and playing. And so I developed and taught Taoist Erotic Massage. This astonishing combination of conscious breathing and genital stimulation activates highly pleasurable states within a man's body without having ejaculation as the goal. Erotic massage is a wonderful intimacy for one man to offer another.

In 1984, I founded the Body Electric School of Massage in Oakland, California, after reading the research of the brilliant developmental neuropsychologist James Prescott. According to Prescott's studies "deprivation of physical affection in human relationships...constitutes the single greatest source of physical violence in human societies." Prescott's studies of dozens of cultures convinced me that massage was an important antidote to violence. In other words, to know how to pleasure a man's body is to know how to stop violence in today's world. This essential truth of men's liberation was missed by the leaders of the so-called "men's movement." In fact, Iron John not only never gives or receives a massage; for all we know, he doesn't have a penis.

Massage separates the acts of giving and receiving. Many men discover that they are very good at giving massage but terrible when it comes to receiving. They can't let go of being in control. They don't trust themselves or the masseur enough just to receive. I have learned to let go into the pleasure of receiving touch by focusing on the effortless exhaling of each breath. And I have helped many men who were having trouble with receiving pleasure by guiding them in conscious breathing where all of their effort is on the inhale and the exhale leaves their lungs like a gentle breeze.

I have massaged hundreds of men who have had life-threatening illnesses. When I touch men who are close to death, I try to let go of my own sense of time. This moment is all there is. I emphasize energy work like acupressure on those men who are sick or close to death, because often men who are dying do not want to be grounded in the body they are preparing to leave.

After giving thousands of massages, I realize that I continue to touch men because of the mystery I feel in the act of touching. In other words, touching men is my spiritual path and my meditation practice. Touching men is where I contact the sacredness of life.

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“Introduction to Erotic Massage” by Joseph Kramer is reprinted from *Male Erotic Massage: A Guide to Sex and Spirit* by Kenneth Ray Stubbs, Ph.D. This beautiful book with over 200 photographs will instruct you in how to give a full-body, erotic massage to a man. Available in the Erotic Massage section of <http://www.eroticmassage.com>.  
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A Taoist Erotic Massage Session

by Joseph Kramer, Ph.D.

What constitutes a Taoist Erotic Massage of a man? The Taoist approach to men's sexuality focuses on energy circulation and semen retention for strength and healthy living. Therefore, the word "Taoist" was chosen to indicate that the intent of the activity is not merely to stimulate erotic energy, but also to circulate it throughout the body without ejaculation. This form of massage involves a fast, rhythmic breath simultaneous to the genital stimulation. Participants in a Taoist Erotic Massage often experience ecstatic states and transformational moments.

Thousands of folks worldwide have been introduced to this erotic choreography in a one-on-one experience with a lover, a friend, or a professional masseur. Thousands of others first experienced this massage in the context of a class or from the video *Fire on the Mountain*.

My individual massage sessions always began with a verbal contract between my client and me about what was going to happen during the session and what was not going to happen. Even with clients whom I massaged dozens of times, I still requested their input each session: "Tell me about your body today. What do you want to happen during the next ninety minutes?" I then spoke my intentions and strategies for that particular session.

To a man I was touching for the first time, I explained the dynamics of a Taoist Erotic Massage. I introduced him to the breathing rhythms we would be using. I made sure that he breathed with all the effort on the inhale and then relaxed on the exhale. I then had my client practice the Big Draw, a twenty-second clenching of the musculature of his entire body while he held his breath. I told him that toward the end of the session I would guide him in doing this draw and then wrap him in sheets for about ten minutes while he focused on the sensations within his body. I counseled the client that the period leading up to the Big Draw was an excellent time to reflect on changes he might wish to make in his life. I asked him if he had any words or intentions he wished me to remind him of at that time. The majority of first time clients requested no words. Many of my regular clients wished me to speak to them of issues that were significant in their lives. I ended the information-giving segment of the preparation by telling the new client that the goal of his massage was not ejaculation but a "full-body orgasm." At that time, I explained the term "full-body orgasm" in Taoist terms as intense sexual energy circulating within and around the body. Now I explain it as a feeling state involving both interest-excitement and enjoyment-joy. Furthermore, I explained that the session was not about connecting with me; the goal of the session was for him to go deep within himself, and to savor that experience.

After this "educational" preparation for the massage, I invited my client to do a few minutes of stretching with me. The more relaxed the man was before he got on the massage table, the deeper his experience would be. Most of the stretches I chose helped relax the muscles of the neck and shoulders where men carry a lot of tension. After the man undressed, he lay face down on my massage table. For the next forty-five minutes, I gave him a deep, nonsexual oil massage on the entire back of his body.

Then, after he turned over, I guided him in rhythmic breathing during the whole massage on front of the body. At all times, at least one of my hands was stroking and caressing this man's genitals. The other hand massaged the front of the body, manipulating muscles with an emphasis on the middle of the chest, the heart center. I massaged the heart as the symbolic location of the man's affective connections. My goal during this part of the massage was to generate enormous amounts of sexual excitement in the genitals. This sexual excitement was then circulated throughout the man's body both by my massage and by his fast breathing. Taoists consider the genitals to be "generators" of "erotic energy," or *ching chi*.

During the next half hour, I used over thirty different genital massage strokes to keep the man's attention in present time. If the man had instructed me in what he wished to be reminded of as the erotic charge built in his body, I spoke his sentiments to him as I massaged him. I then guided him through the Big Draw. I allowed him sufficient time to savor the deep states of bliss and joy that followed the clenching. The session ended with the client and me speaking about our experiences.

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"A Taoist Erotic Massage Session" is an excerpt from Joseph Kramer, Ph.D.'s doctoral dissertation, *A Social History of the First Ten Years of Taoist Erotic Massage, 1982-1992*. In addition to telling the history of Taoist Erotic Massage, this thesis, using the theories of Silvan Tomkins and Donald Moshier, explains why a Taoist Erotic Massage is such a powerful and transformative technology. The study also includes commentaries from recipients of the massage as well as transcriptions of Taoist Erotic Massage classes. The dissertation is available in its entirety at [www.eroticmassage.com](http://www.eroticmassage.com).  
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Massage Recipients Speak: Comments Written to Joseph Kramer after Receiving a Taoist Erotic Massage

A Devout Mormon

I can't even write it down. I need to remember this for the rest of my life. For the first time in my life, I felt like my body and my spirit came together. I felt love for every single person in the world. I felt like a child skipping over a fantastic airy beach. I felt a need to give, a need to share everything I was learning. I felt God's love. I felt him carry me through all this. Even right now, my earth life is squeezing out all these truths and saying it didn't happen. God was there; he was loving me. He was loving me, every part of me. Mother was there. Even Mom massaged my genitals with pure love. All the people who are currently challenging me to think, love, expand both spiritually and intellectually were there. I was telling them about what I was feeling and experiencing. In the final draw, my arms wouldn't come down. I opened them to receive everything there was to receive. This massage was not about erections and ejaculations but being a whole human being. I've always been taught that the body is a temple of God. Today was the first time I've ever felt it at all about others and so deeply about mine. I couldn't even talk about it earlier today and even when I do I get this feeling that maybe I shouldn't talk about it so much or make it common.

An Abuse Survivor

My life is filled with fear, anxiety and panic attacks. I have many abreaction attacks. These go back to incest/trauma in my childhood. ... My feelings are starting to change. I'm feeling more opened, a deep need to continue with erotic massage.

A Man With Soft Penis

I had a realization about the penis that just makes me laugh whenever I think it or say it. You don't need an erection to have erotic feelings. You don't have to get it up! What an idea. I thought I would have an erection all the time. I didn't and I felt embarrassed about it... It was such a GREAT RELIEF to know that one can have erotic pleasure without an erection and that erections ebb and flow just like the tides.

More Soft Penis Wisdom

There is pleasure in softness.

The Erotic Generator

I was always intellectually aware of my penis as a generator. However, today I got in touch with the physicality of that energy and how to channel it. This has always been a desire of mine, but without the necessary tools to accomplish this, I have always been drained and frustrated and unsatisfied with sex. I also realized the tremendous potential the penis has to open other areas of my life, including physical, psychological and psychic.

I Sing the Body Delicious

I have done a lot of healing in my body image the last couple of years. During the [massage], the healing and the growth took quantum leaps. I experienced myself and my body as incredibly beautiful and delicious. My body is strong, powerful, sensitive, gentle, flexible, pliable. (I am crying.) I'm still feeling so wonderful, the words are just falling out of the pen.

Liberation

This is the first experience that I have had in my life that allowed me to step completely outside my own sexual distress and experience eroticism as God gave it to me. It had nothing to do with compulsion, obsession, incest, any of the things that kept me stuck. All of my sex life has been a replay of these. This [massage] gave me the awareness of being in my inherent human nature and experiencing eroticism in all its beauty.

The Ejection of Consciousness

After I pulled the Big Draw, all my limbs shook uncontrollably as the energy flooded my physical body. My whole spine and torso lurched up and off the table, and I felt as if my soul "wanted out" of my physical body.

Peace

During the breathing before the Big Draw, I started to cry and got pissed off that I wasn't breathing "right." So I just told myself that whatever happened is okay, then did the Big Draw. I still haven't figured out exactly what happened, except I felt at peace for the first time at that level.

There has Got to be More!

I have felt for many years that there has got to be more. And now I think I realize that physicality without spirituality is unfulfilling, and that spirituality which denies the importance of the physical is death of the spirit.

Chatting with God

I felt ecstasy in a spiritual way – I felt as if I were conversing with God in an extremely intimate way. As a result, the feelings I was experiencing were that much more intense and real: feelings of abandonment, aloneness, unconditional love, joy, oneness and separateness all at the same time.

Come Together, Right Now

Just over six months ago, I was invited to participate in an erotic massage workshop. ... Neither my spiritual life nor my erotic life has been quite the same since then. I have discovered, with a great deal of help and assistance from others, that there is no contradiction between spirituality and eroticism; there is no real conflict between body and spirit; there is no “real” reason to exalt one over the other.

Waves of Orgasm

Something wonderful has been happening to me. I suppose it is a development (or gradual unfolding) of a sensual awareness. Walking down the street in San Francisco last weekend, I was suddenly swept off my feet by the color of a rose – red-purple and velvet. An orgasm started and went on and on and on. Another time, the smell of coffee – fresh brewed, wafting out the door of Spinelli’s Coffee Bar – did it to me all over again. ... What I think has been going on is that I have grown much, much more aware of myself – of the wind on my skin, of my entire sensual self. There is a gradual unfolding of the mystery of sensuality. I feel as if I am drinking from a stream – and satisfying myself at every turn. The need to masturbate seems to have disappeared – or at least, it plays a very secondary role. And yet, I am carried away on waves of orgasm – brought about by the sensual provocations around me. It is wonderful.

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The above comments are excerpted from Joseph Kramer, Ph.D.’s doctoral dissertation, *A Social History of the First Ten Years of Taoist Erotic Massage, 1982-1992*. . In addition to telling the history of Taoist Erotic Massage, this thesis, using the theories of Silvan Tomkins and Donald Mosher, explains why a Taoist Erotic Massage is such a powerful and transformative technology. The study also includes commentaries from recipients of the massage as well as transcriptions of Taoist Erotic Massage classes. It is available in its entirety at [www.eroticmassage.com](http://www.eroticmassage.com).  
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Sexual Healing: Joe Kramer Sings the Body Electric by Don Shewey

"Most Western sex is necrophilia -- one dead body having sex with another dead body," Joseph Kramer told the UC Berkeley crowd. In contrast to the Chinese concept of sex as energy -- ching-chi, a life force that through continual charging can take you to high erotic states and keep you there for hours at a time -- he said, most Western men's erotic experience is "balloon sex: you tense your legs, squeeze your chest, and blow up the middle 'til it pops."

Then someone in the audience called out, "This is a great lecture. When's the lab period?"

A sex lab period! He'd never thought about it. But Kramer, a professional masseur who'd divided his adult years between training with the Jesuits and investigating "high erotic states" among Manhattan's sex piers at the height of the post-Stonewall gay subculture, was up for it. He quickly invited any interested men to come to his house the following night for a session that would involve nude oil massage. Twelve showed up. "I was really nervous. What to do?" Kramer recalls. "Then I thought, 'Oh, Joe, you had five hours of sex a day for four years in New York City -- what do you mean, what are you going to do?'"

"We had just three hours," Kramer continues. "It was tribal. We had a fire going. Everything was structured -- breathing, genital touching. Sometimes six people stood in a circle and the other six knelt before them touching their heart and genitals, and then the men in the middle would move to the next man. Nobody came the whole evening. But at the end four of the men said this was the highest erotic experience of their lives.

"This, surprisingly, did not make me feel good," he adds. "It made me feel sad because I started to realize how paltry sex was in most people's lives. All that happened was they got out of their rut, and it was, like, 'Wow!' I started to understand how easy it is just to set up environments that can pull people out of wherever they are and let them play in another realm. I said, 'This is what I want to do.'"

Inspired by that first sex lab period, Kramer created the Body Electric School for massage in 1984, and began his life as a sexual healer.

What is "sexual healing," anyway, besides being the name of Marvin Gaye's last great record? Partly it has to do with healing the wounds to the spirit and the flesh caused by sexual abuse, addiction, and AIDS. But it also has a lot to do with acknowledging that the fun and the pleasure, the vitality and the divine mystery of sex have nourishing properties in and of themselves -- a message that can easily get overwhelmed in a culture where "sex appeal" is routinely exploited to sell products but sexuality (read: actual fucking) is usually discussed only in the context of abuse, addiction, or AIDS transmission. The sex negativity of the culture creates its own damage and alienation. For some people, their sexuality -- their juiciness, their comfort with their bodies, their talent for intimacy -- is a gift they're not asked to share often enough; when they act on it, they run the risk of being viewed as pathologically compulsive, promiscuous, or somehow

perverted. How often do we encounter public discourse that treats sex as something other than a sin or a joke?

Kramer's on a mission to change all that, with, among other things, his two-day, all-nude, hands-on workshop called Celebrating the Body Erotic for (as Kramer puts it) "pioneering gay, bisexual and non-gay men." (Kramer hopes eventually to do workshops with both men and women, possibly with his friend Annie Sprinkle -- "the only woman I've had sex with in 15 years.") "You will relearn sex as sacred, playful, non-addictive, non-compulsive, and non-stop," he promises participants. In 1988, Kramer taught the course himself 15 times, mostly in Los Angeles and Oakland. Last year he and a faculty of five gave almost 40 workshops in 17 cities across the country and abroad (including Amsterdam and Berlin).

I've noticed that many people recoil from the merest description of Kramer's workshop. It brings up all kinds of body shame, religious guilt, intimidation. "I don't like even my doctor looking at me naked," wrote a young reporter who interviewed Kramer last year for *Au Courant*, Philadelphia's gay weekly. "I couldn't imagine getting naked in a well-lit room in front of a group of equally naked men...It wouldn't be worth the stress." Others snigger and dismiss the workshop as some kind of two-day circle jerk.

Personally, I was *hoping* it would be a two-day circle jerk. I somehow managed to get through eight years in the Boy Scouts without ever encountering that boyhood ritual. And when I showed up for Celebrating the Body Erotic, I couldn't wait to get naked. After all, I've spent more than a decade working out at the gym. But then I'm a card-carrying member of not only the YMCA but also the New York Jacks, the genial gentlemen's club where erotic exhibitionists and J/O enthusiasts have been meeting for 12 years.

To my surprise, Kramer's workshop turned out to be less of an erotic experience than a spiritual awakening. (For the purposes of this discussion, let's separate spirituality from organized religion.) By introducing tantric, Taoist, and Native American ritual practices -- including conscious breathing, shamanic drumming, continuous eye contact, simultaneous heart-and-genital connection, and building ecstatic sexual energy without ejaculation -- Kramer places within a spiritual tradition the discussion of exchanging body fluids usually confined to safer-sex manuals.

Not that he would characterize his work as AIDS-prevention education per se. That makes it sound too much like those bland, sexually squeamish but eminently fundable seminars in "negotiating social skills" that organizations like GMHC offer and Kramer dismisses as "scurvy for the soul." Nonetheless, if AIDS brought a shift in consciousness about sex, pleasure, life, death, and the spirit within all these things, Kramer's workshop permanently altered the way I have sex -- motivated not by fear of AIDS but by desire for change. It made me realize that not just my aging body but my soul wants more from sex than just getting it up and getting it off as quickly as possible.

On the other hand, Kramer doesn't let his unabashed spiritual approach to eroticism settle into cant or New Age mumbo-jumbo. At the end of the first day of the workshop, he introduced an exercise that he said was inspired by listening to one of Marianne Williamson's lectures on A

Course in Miracles while driving. "I wasn't paying too much attention until suddenly she said, 'God is but love.' Only this is the way my mind works: I heard her say 'God is Butt Love.' And I thought, 'Yes!'" And he proceeded to give instructions for the most popular ritual of the day: two men covered with oil stand with their backs to a third man and massage him all over with their rear ends. God's Butt Love, We Deliver.

Much of Kramer's work emphasizes massage as a way of restoring a healthy attitude toward sex and intimacy among gay men threatened by or afflicted with HIV disease. It's no accident that he named his school after Walt Whitman. A major part of Whitman's legacy comes from the years he spent during the Civil War nursing the wounded and dying -- an all-too-common experience in San Francisco over the last decade. Kramer formed the first AIDS hospice massage team in the United States, and both his teaching and his private practice revolved around touching people with life-threatening illness. "From very early in the epidemic, the major thing I saw was men terrorized," he says. "Not just in fear, not just in depression -- those were states that all kinds of human beings had. I never saw so many people in terror in all my life. Terror just shuts down everything. Psychotherapy takes a long time to deal with terror. But breath work and massage and touching and caressing is like spring thawing out the ice."

Besides fear of AIDS, though, Kramer's classes also focus on healing the unsatisfactory socialization of American gay men in general. While a few major cities have gay community centers that offer a wide range of social activities, many gay men still meet friends and partners in bars and bathhouses, environments that require great physical attractiveness, superior social skills, and/or extraordinary tolerance for alcohol and rejection to achieve sexual success or self-esteem. For nude gay men to interact in broad daylight, making eye contact and concentrating on the connection between their hearts and their genitals, is practically revolutionary.

Whatever you might imagine a sexual revolutionary would look like, Joe Kramer is not it. Tall, bespectacled, big-bellied and pink-cheeked, with reddish brown hair and mustache trimmed in a very proper Chamber of Commerce style, he looks like nothing more than an elementary school principal. Which, considering his background, isn't that far from the truth.

Born and raised in St. Louis, Kramer grew up in a devoutly Catholic family. His parents went to Mass every day -- "probably still do," he says -- and Joseph himself, the oldest of six children, went to Catholic schools from first grade through university. Still, he was a sexual radical from early on. "I loved to masturbate," Kramer says in an interview during one of his trips to New York. "I think the Catholic church helped me there, because it was a mortal sin to masturbate. I didn't want to go to confession and tell the priest I masturbated six times yesterday or 25 times last week. I figured after coming I would just keep going, so it would only be one mortal sin. That's how I learned multiple orgasms.

"The other thing that the repressiveness of Catholicism did was it brought God and sex together in my mind. God cared every time I had sex. It made sex not just some paltry thing, but God of heaven and earth was concerned about me touching my little penis from the time I was five on. Later, once I got rid of the guilt, I realized that the God space, the religious space in me was intimately tied up with sex."

Kramer attended an all-boys Jesuit high school where he says he learned about male bonding. "There wasn't a hint of homosexuality, but there was tremendous male intimacy. The Jesuits taught me to love myself and to love boys. Part of it was making the homophobia very low, so touching was okay. I really felt weird with my body and my orientation until I was 14. That homoerotic high school experience made me want to be a Jesuit. This was 1965, four years before Stonewall. The only other option I knew about homosexuals was there were homosexuals in prison. If I could just get into prison! But I was too good a boy to do anything bad. So I joined the Jesuits and trained toward being a priest for 11 years."

For seven years he studied mathematics, philosophy, and theology while maintaining his celibacy. Then in 1972, while taking classes at Berkeley's Graduate Theological Union, he found himself sitting for hours a day in Sproul Plaza, the headquarters for the free speech movement in the '60s, watching the students, the street singers, the preachers, the politicians, the Hare Krishnas and the Moonies. "In New York I think there's toleration of diversity, but in Berkeley there was celebration of diversity. And I realized I was diverse, I was a gay man, and I was not celebrating my diversity." He continued his theological studies for a few years until it became clear that he didn't want to be a Jesuit. "Vatican II had just happened, and Pope John XXIII's whole thing was 'Open the windows of the Catholic church.' There was a lot of emphasis on love and following your heart. So that's what I did."

His heart took him to New York in 1976, a time when gay liberation had met the sexual revolution head-on. "I moved from a monastic tradition in seminary life to a sex monastery," Kramer recalls fondly. "Everybody was having sex everywhere. And when I went into sex, I wanted to drink life to the lees. Later, when I studied Reich, I realized I was doing Reichian therapy. It wasn't compulsive, addictive acting out. I was vibrating out all the dead spots in myself. And everybody else was, too. This is where I learned tantra. Because it wasn't about coming, it was about being in the erotic vibration and staying there."

Of course, tantra don't pay the rent. Kramer took his most marketable skills -- his Jesuit training -- and got a job teaching at the Convent of the Sacred Heart, an elite Catholic girls' school on the Upper East Side. "By day I was teaching girls Roman Catholic theology, and by night I'd be in the basement of the Anvil or the Mineshaft. Actually, for me it was Man's Country and the piers and 12 West."

Although he joined the board of directors of Dignity (an organization of gay Catholics) and gave talks in support of the New York City gay rights bill, the school didn't know about his homosexuality -- until he took his lover to a party and word got back to Cardinal Cooke, who conveyed his displeasure to the school's headmistress. "They fired me. I wanted to fight it. There was no gay rights bill. Even when the gay rights bill was passed, Catholic schools were exempt." Kramer went back to Berkeley to complete his degree, changing the focus to sex and spirituality.

Besides studying acupuncture and conscious breathing (also known as rebirthing, or holotropic breathing) to raise energy in the body, Kramer's scholarly interest brought him to the teaching of Wilhelm Reich. One of Freud's star pupils, Reich became a true revolutionary through his insistence, in works like *The Function of the Orgasm* (published in 1926!), that "those who are psychically ill need but one thing -- complete and repeated genital gratification." Even more

threatening than his championing of sex as therapy was Reich's political perspective: that authoritarian societies intentionally suppress the natural sexuality of children to paralyze rebellion and to inhibit critical thinking. The American government considered him a dangerous quack and arrested him for shipping an "orgone box" across state lines. Reich claimed the device (really no more than a lined wooden box big enough to sit in) could, among other things, cure cancer by containing and concentrating healing energy. His books were pulled from libraries and burned, and Reich was sentenced to two years in jail, where he died in 1957.

Not overlooking the political parable in Reich's story, Kramer saw that Reich was one of the first Westerners to share the Eastern view of health as energy. Steeped in these teachings, Kramer began to explore a massage practice, then a school, that would specifically connect conscious breathing with eroticism.

"Celebrating the Body Erotic" packages the various talents Kramer has accumulated over the years: spiritual counselor, ritual priest, educator, gay historian, Fire Island disco bunny, marathon masturbator. Probably the most important skill that comes into play is his ability to handle terror. Coaxing 20 or 30 or 40 strangers out of their clothes and into giving up established patterns of sexual behavior -- not to mention paying \$250 for the privilege -- requires a certain amount of finesse.

I've been through the workshop several times (both as a paying customer and as a paid assistant, supporting Kramer as temple dancer and sacred DJ), and I know that the class attracts many veterans of the New York Jacks, the Radical Faeries, S&M clubs, and other explorations into what one Kramer graduate calls "the post-monogamy lack-of-scarcity approach to group sex." But on the whole each workshop winds up with such a wild mix of characters that it looks like one of those World War II submarine movies.

The first time I take it, the class includes a physician's assistant who works as an HIV counselor for drug addicts at Harlem Hospital and a man with AIDS who's just been through a scary bout of toxoplasmosis; a Canadian conceptual artist and an Off Broadway stage manager; a half-Filipino, half-Mexican restaurateur and a daily newspaper journalist (my lover of 13 years). No matter how young, how old, or how brazen, though, when we form a circle that first morning -- still in our street clothes -- we all feel those junior-high-dance emotions: shyness, anticipation, sweaty palms. We've all come in off 14th Street through the grim lobby, climbed the stairs to this funky second-floor dance studio, and shed our coats and shoes. Now we stand uneasily looking around the room, rehearsing our mantras of body imperfection (I'm too fat, I'm too sweaty, my dick isn't big enough) and counting the cuties and the trolls (I hope I get to be with him, I don't want him anywhere near me).

This is where Kramer starts to work his magic. He immediately gets people breathing together, for relaxation and bonding. He casts a spell with language, clearly stating intentions, naming fears, and drawing guidelines: don't worry if you have an erection or not, the goal for the class is to build erotic energy without ejaculation, buttplay is off-limits for hygienic reasons. Working with facing concentric circles, changing partners frequently and randomly, he gets participants to breathe, stretch, warm up, make eye contact, place hands on hearts, learn each other's names, and practice saying out loud "That feels good" and "Please stop."

Looking in other people's eyes, windows of the soul -- does anyone ever get to do that to their heart's content? I was taught it was rude to look at people directly. Reich always began his therapy working on people's eyes and wouldn't go any further until he could get them to release the blocks held there. After a morning of swimming in one pair of eyeballs after another, trust has been established, and the rest of the rituals -- the undressing, the oiling, the touching, Butt Love -- are a breeze.

The climax of the workshop comes on the second day with Taoist erotic massage instruction, where participants take turns massaging and then being massaged by seven different men, one at a time. This ritual gives concrete practice in extending orgasmic sexual pleasure (using 20 or so strokes other than the basic up-and-down-the-shaft-til-he-squirts). For an alternative to ejaculation that would satisfy the Western urge for climax, he borrows from contemporary Taoist master Mantak Chia an exercise called The Big Draw. After an extended period of breathing and continuous cock massage, you take a deep breath, clench all your muscles from head to toe, hold the breath as long as possible, and then release it. The combined flooding of breath and erotic energies can trigger a full-body orgasm with profound effects. Some people hallucinate, weep, or have physical contractions that look for all the world like grand mal seizures. Some just feel a pleasant tingling in their hands.

The vigorous breathwork frequently brings up a deluge of emotions. For some this means total joy. For me, it was quite the opposite. The Big Draw produced no big physical effects but only made me realize how in-my-head I'd been for the whole thing: remembering the sequence of strokes, listening to the instructions, judging each masseur on his technique, my critical nature compounding my good-Catholic-boy follow-the-rules upbringing, thinking, "No, you're doing it wrong, hands off the body when you breathe on me, slower circles, not that leg the other one," etc. Then I felt sad and depressed and angry because I'd screwed myself out of the experience. As my final masseur wrapped my sheet around me and some seraphic music began to play, I felt like I was experiencing my own death and began to cry, grieving over my lack of generosity to myself. That inevitably connected with a seemingly bottomless pool of grief over friends who've died of AIDS, and I found myself sobbing. I discovered, quite unexpectedly, that by trying to cultivate only positive emotions I had created a logjam of grief that blocked me from feeling almost anything, including sexual arousal. And once I let it out, suddenly the spectrum of emotions spread out like a peacock's tail, and I felt cleansed, exorcised, light enough to levitate.

The Taoist erotic massage ritual also serves another, more down-to-earth purpose that goes to the heart of Kramer's work on erotic spirituality. It breaks down the tyranny of types (men, especially the gay tribe, are just as susceptible as women to The Beauty Myth) by allowing you to look, as if in a mirror, at the range of answers to the question, What is a man?

During the ritual, the varieties of manhood are laid out before you like specimens on the table. Each one is different, and you learn each particularity: the hair pattern, the size and shape of the balls, the belly button, which dicks are spotted or red or thick or stiffen fast or not at all. And you observe how they work, how they receive sensation in the form of pleasure, pain, or pressure (sometimes hard to distinguish). This one loves to have fingernails scrape his nipples; for others, nipples are a waste of time. One man asks to have his balls fondled, rubbed, tugged away from

his body; another prefers you never touch them at all. Brisk? Slow? Concentrate on the "magic wand" and all else follows? Open the chest and emotion flows? You see each man's history in his body -- the layers of fat, the hours at the gym, the surgical scars, the intentional piercings and curious, dainty tattoos. What makes them laugh, moan, shout with pleasure, sob like a baby.

By the end of the day, you look around the closing circle and see not cuties and trolls -- and certainly not necrophiliacs. This landscape of bodies can't help reflecting your own divine possibilities, calling to mind Whitman's refrain: "I am large, I contain multitudes."

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Reprinted with permission of the author. A version of this essay was originally published in the *Village Voice*, April 21, 1992. This article is available online at <http://www.donshewey.com/sex.htm>. We recommend all of Don Shewey's writings on men and sex, especially "Erotic Massage," "Sex Work as Health Care," and "Sex Work as Spiritual Practice."  
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Erotic Resurrection by Darrell Yates Rist

I no longer remember how it was that I heard about Joe Kramer and his tantric erotic workshops -- maybe a mailing. But in the spring of 1989, somehow, I ended up at a Kramer weekend, titillated and full of reservations. It began with an evening lecture, where Joe laid forth his view of sex as a brotherhood-sisterhood, every body pleasuring another body with massage to generate spiritual energy. The point, I learned, was not to come, but to nurture the ecstatic spirit, causing it to circulate again and again, allowing it connect with the spiritual web that binds all men and women.

The second day began with intimate exercises -- looking deeply into a partner's eyes, massaging his heart, making uninhibited animal faces at him, grunting. Ritual breath was our vehicle. Each man breathing at his own rhythmic pace, we circulated about the room, dissolving into one another until we all knew the whole -- old and young, heavy or slender, soft or built, handsome or not. Barriers to intense feeling -- our prejudices -- fell. We became sublimely ridiculous, learning the human touch.

The third day began on Easter morning. Our band of men withdrew into a dark loft space -- a cavernous, tomb-like place -- to resurrect the body from the dead. We made a circle, primal congregation, on the floor. Our breathing rose in moist silence, cacophonous hush, water and air, the elements in the beginning. "*Wfoo-huh. Wfoo-huh. Wfoo-huh.*" We drew quick breaths to the heart, inspiring love, standing to face each other, giving birth to a brother, creating the wheel within the wheel, a spinning marriage of eyes, bright gateways to the soul. It was a wordless time -- *wfoo-huh, wfoo-huh, wfoo-huh* -- which stripped deceit away. Pride and our garments fell at a partner's touch. Tenderly we touched each other's bodies. Artists' hands restored the quiet flesh to its first delight, undressed fear, disrobed naked terror, set the skin's sensation free, calling forth the spirit from its hiding place and wedding it to the earth.

In time, on tables like altars, each pair -- wizards or Christs -- anointed the waking body of a third. Beneath hot oils, this third man stirred, as the couple -- priest-like -- took his erect power in their hands, held its length, its circumference, worshipped its transforming shapes, exercising life: penis, cock, wand, limb, the father branch. We called its magic forth -- squeezing this satin sheath, stroking this soft majesty with awe -- and cradled the testicles. Balls, perfect eggs, twin suns, sources of light guarded in the darkness of an ark, luxurious bristling sack. Caressed, the fine orbs moved on their own, like sacred throbs of life inside a mother. At the same time, we shaman masseurs massaged the heart of this man who was our sacrifice, holding its hot beat in our palms, lavishing our fingers in the rich rhythms pounding in his chest.

"This man you're touching is a god," Joe, the teacher, in the midst of his disciples taught us. "Worship his body, touch his heart and magic wand. Sacred brothers, *breathe!*" he cried. "Feel the energy rise from the cock to meet the power of the heart, the centers of love. Feel your flesh come alive. You are every man and woman you have ever loved. Call them to life. You are your father and your mother, your grandfather, grandmother, you are every ancestor who has gone before you. You are all your lovers. Honor every mouth, every vagina, every ass that's held your

cock," the teacher proclaimed. "Love them now. Heal all your relationships. You are all your relations. Breathe, brothers! Breathe life!"

"*Wfoo-huh. Wfoo-huh. Wfoo-huh.*" This was the hiss of oracles escaping from the earth, steaming clay. At a tape deck, Joe made the music soar. There were ascending melodies and the sound of drums, like heartbeats in magnificent chaos, the patter of wings, butterflies and eagles. "*Wfoo-huh. Wfoo-huh. Wfoo-huh.*" There were hollow chants and echoing songs, voices from ancient temples. The hands of priests, instruments of ecstasy and terror, turned around the cocks and balls of gods and pulled at the flesh around the heart.

Tremulous moans, screams, laughter rose. There were sobs. Bodies shuddered and were transformed. Our eyes mirrored other souls. Men -- priests and gods -- writhed and cried, spoke in tongues, spirit inflamed by the flesh.

"Breathe, sacred brothers, breathe!" cried Joe. His eyes were bright, enchanted. He breathed -- "*Wfoo-huh. Wfoo-huh*" and waved his arms. "You are breathing for all the universe, for every person who has ever lived, every creature, every plant. In you now, every cell vibrates with life. *Create!* You are gods! Let the energy of your heart and your cock become one. This is your resurrection. Come back from the dead, bring back everyone you love who is gone. See visions. Dream dreams. Create new worlds. Brothers! Honor yourselves. The moment of life has come!" His ecstasy resurrected ours.

Suddenly the music changed. A song, a mournful Kyrie, reached deep into the void, swelled, astounding the air, drew up peace and light -- brilliant harmonies flooding through the entrance of a catacomb. In this moment, our bodily breathing stopped -- we held our breath and gripped, bowing to the purest inspiration of the spirit. And when this breathless moment had swept through time, men who'd richly been anointed by shamans' hands released their breathing to utter unearthly sounds, while we priests stood silent, hands suspended above the flesh as over a living Eucharist. All the joy of paradise and anger of earth became one, for now, all gratitude and pain, all ecstasy and hatred. Some men said they saw their lovers who had died, mourned them with the grief that tears the souls, and, thus cleansed, forever let them go. Some men were beckoned by the faces of the living and pitied them as they never could before. And all of us, in this madness of laughter and tears, believed we had seen angels, embraced a prophet or the resurrected Lord, visions of life or truth beyond reason, defying our minds.

Such was the Easter morning passion achieved by what some men call sex.

For every man and woman, tolerance is shallow, our taboos die hard. Take away the risk of pregnancy or the threat of AIDS, the body and its sensations are still among our greatest terrors. Most of us are shamed by our own nakedness, let alone by the nude touch of others. To feel our own flesh or a partner's, we turn off the lights and disembodied ourselves -- we drug ourselves or get drunk -- then fall asleep when it's all over. In the 1980s and '90s, we are suffering a new plague of shame and disease, while the social imperative demands, in the name of community, that we ever more passionately repress sexual desire. This harsh ethic polishes up old terms and tries to make them sound ageless with virtue: sexual responsibility, virginity, celibacy, monogamy. But even in the midst of this erotic reign of terror, new revolutionaries have risen to

preach that sexual touch is the core of our social exercise and that the rituals of tribal sexuality are the foundation, in fact, of spiritual fulfillment and community.

We must envision a new age of the spirit and the flesh, even a spiritual defense of promiscuity.

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This essay was first presented in the spring of 1989 at a forum of the Center for American Culture Studies, Columbia University, where Darrell Yates Rist was a writer-in-residence. The evening featured performance artist Annie Sprinkle, anthropologist Tobias Schneebaum, and erotic massage teacher Joseph Kramer in a presentation entitled "A Spiritual Defense of Promiscuity."  
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An Excerpt from a Story

Tantric Sex by Dominic Santi

His hands started massaging me, and I didn't have the strength to talk anymore. Jack turned my whole body into warm, sweet butter. He massaged my eyebrows and my cheekbones, kneaded the oil deep into my scalp until my skin felt like it was reaching towards him. The music had changed to something that sounded like the ocean ebbing and flowing on a quiet night. I love the sound of the water. Pretty soon, it was hard to keep my eyes open. I quit trying and let them close.

"Breathe with me," he said. I did, following his directions -- using my strength for the inhale and then letting the air flow back out of me on its own -- until I felt like I was floating. After that, Jack didn't say anything for a long time. He worked his way down my torso. His hands talked to me, telling me how much he enjoyed my body. It felt so good that at first I didn't realize I'd gone completely soft.

Until Jack said, "This next part will work best if you don't let yourself get all the way hard. Lie back and enjoy."

I looked down, and sure enough, my "seven inches when it's stiff" dick was cuddled up against my balls like a fat caterpillar taking a nap. Jack lifted it between his thumb and forefinger, pressing it firmly between them.

"This will wake you up," he said.

It sure did. The blood rushed into my dick. Then he started massaging my shaft like it was the hand on a clock. Midnight. He pointed me upwards and stroked the underside of my shaft. Long, full brushes all up the length of his palm. Damn, it felt good. Two. Three. He turned my dick towards the side and stroked the surface facing his hand. I was getting hard again, fast. By six, I was moaning, bent downwards, harder than was "optimal," my slit pointing towards my toes. When he was done massaging the top of my shaft, he wrapped his hand around me and milked me like a cow's teat.

I groaned. I was almost too hard to bend that way. But Jack didn't stop. And he didn't do any stroke long enough to make me come. Pretty soon I shivered just at the sound of the oil bottle squeezing. The air would fill with a puff of coconut smell, then I'd feel the warm oil sliding off his newly slicked hands as he changed strokes.

When he pulled my skin taut, holding it at the base of my shaft, then jacking me lightly with his other hand, I almost came on the spot. I gasped, arching up as I felt my nuts starting to churn. "Not yet," Jack said firmly, squeezing hard, right at the base of my cock.

I groaned again, my body protesting loudly as it crawled back from the edge. I opened my eyes to see Jack laughing softly at me.

"We're no where near three hours." He leaned over and licked the inside of my thigh. "This is just a taste."

The sound I made, somewhere between a moan and a cry, just made him laugh. Then his hands were all over my thighs, and my belly, and my chest. When I got my breathing back under control, he reached between my legs again. One o'clock. Six. Eleven. He rubbed the palm of his hand across the cap of my glans, smearing the precome leaking from my piss slit into the coconut oil he was kneading into my skin. He played my nipples and nuts, tickling and teasing and pinching, until my dick jumped and oozed precome at the lightest feather touch of his fingertips. He woke up parts of my genitals I didn't know I had. And believe me, I thought I'd explored every possible inch of that area. I was wrong.

My muscles were quivering like Jell-O when Jack rolled me over onto my side. He lifted my top leg up, bending it over until my knee rested on the bed. I groaned so loudly I would have been really embarrassed if I hadn't been so completely relaxed. Except for my cock, which was rebelliously ignoring Jack's "don't get too hard" directions. I moaned even louder as the side of his hand slid down the crack of my ass.

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