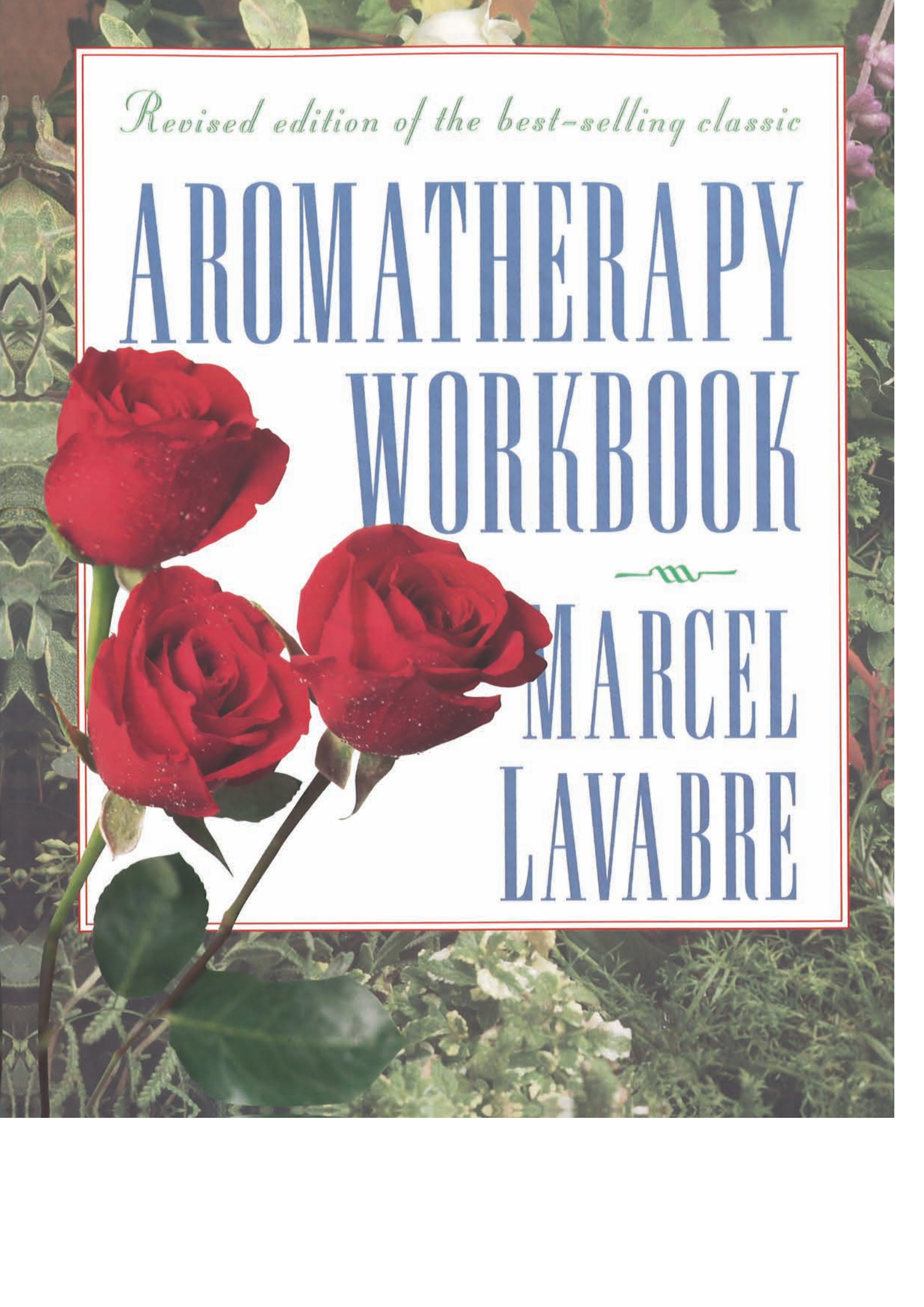


*Revised edition of the best-selling classic*

# AROMATHERAPY WORKBOOK



MARCEL  
LAVABRE



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# AROMATHERAPY WORKBOOK



MARCEL LAVABRE



Healings Arts Press  
Rochester, Vermont

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**Note to the reader:** This book is intended as an informational guide. The remedies, approaches, and techniques described herein are meant to supplement, and not to be a substitute for, professional medical care or treatment. They should not be used to treat a serious ailment without prior consultation with a qualified healthcare professional.

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*To my daughter, Melissa*

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I thank the following people:

Jean Valnet, one of the main pioneers of aromatherapy who, with his book *The Practice of Aromatherapy*, contributed greatly to the revival of this art.

Robert Tisserand who first spread the word in the English-speaking world.

Especially Henry Viaud, a French distiller from Provence, who was the first to stress the importance of long, low-pressure distillation and the use of pure and natural essential oils from specified botanical origin and chemotypes and who has not always been credited for his contribution to aromatherapy. Viaud tried to distill practically everything that could be distilled. He was the first to produce a few oils that have recently been introduced on the market (such as St. John's wort and meadowsweet). He also revived the therapeutic use of floral waters. I learned a great deal from this wonderful "honête homme," with his amazing and refreshing curiosity and eagerness for new experiments.

All humble producers who provide me with their oils.

Daniel Penoel for his pioneering work in medical aromatherapy.

All those involved in the bettering and beautifying of our planetary village.

All my students throughout the world.

All the practitioners of the aromatic art.

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# Introduction

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Aromatherapy has known tremendous growth since this book was first published in 1990. It has now become a buzzword, used and abused by marketers and manufacturers of all types and credentials. The availability of essential oils and aromatherapy products has increased dramatically through all types of sources and distribution channels, from health food stores to spa and beauty salons or even department stores and pharmacies. Products with aromatherapy claims (but not much more) can be found in the mass market.

Educational material on the subject is also quite widespread, with new books being published almost every month. A wide selection of classes is available, from one-day beginners' classes to two-year graduation programs. With ever increasing media coverage and celebrities swearing by it, aromatherapy is more fashionable than ever.

But aromatherapy is not just a new trend, a new thing to do, as those who

are involved in it can testify. In Europe, where it began more than sixty years ago, aromatherapy is practiced by medical doctors, nurses, and other health professionals. It is taught to medical students in France and is used by some English nurses in their hospitals. Extensive clinical research of aromatherapy is under way, mainly in these countries.

When people first hear about aromatherapy they think about fragrance and perfumes, an alluring world of imagination, magic, and fantasy. But aromatherapy consists simply of using essential oils for healing.

Essential oils are volatile oily substances; they are highly concentrated vegetal extracts that contain hormones, vitamins, antibiotics, and antiseptics. In a way, essential oils represent the spirit or soul of the plant. They are the most concentrated form of herbal energy. Many plants produce essential oils, which are contained in tiny droplets between cells and play an important role in the biochemistry of the

plants. They are also responsible for the fragrance of the plants.

Essential oils are used in cosmetics and pharmacy as well as in perfumery. Their field of activity is quite wide: from deep therapeutic action to the extreme subtlety of genuine perfumes. In aromatherapy, the essential oils can be taken internally in their pure form, diluted in alcohol, mixed with honey, or in medical preparations. They are used externally in frictions (localized massage), massage, and inhalations. Finally, they are ingredients of numerous cosmetics and perfumes.

Essential oils can have strictly allopathic effects (meaning that they act like regular medicines); more subtle effects, like those of Bach flower remedies of homeopathic preparations; and psychological and spiritual effects, which constitute their most traditional use. They are also powerful antiseptics and antibiotics that are not dangerous for the body. Aromatherapy is thus, in many cases, an excellent alternative to more aggressive therapies.

Essential oils are the “quintessences” of the alchemists. In this sense, they condense the spiritual and vital forces of the

plants in a material form; this power acts on the biological level to strengthen the natural defenses of the body and is the medium of a direct human–plant communication on the energetic and spiritual plane.

Aromatherapy can be used on many different levels. Essential oils are extremely versatile materials: they are both medicine and fragrance; they can cure the most severe physical condition and can reach to the depth of our souls.

Before you start reading this book, though, I warn you: once you step into the world of essences, you will be exposed to one of the most delightful and harmless forms of addiction. Chances are that you will want to know more and more about this amazing healing art. If you allow yourself to be touched by the power of these wonderful substances, you will discover a new world that is actually very old—the almost-forgotten world of nature’s fragrances. This is a world without words, a world of images, that you explore from the tip of your nose to the center of your brain—a world of subtle surprise and silent ecstasy.

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ONE



# Aromatics and Perfumes in History

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Since the earliest ages of humanity, aromatic fumigations have been used in daily rituals and during religious ceremonies as an expression and a reminder of an all-pervasive sacredness. Fragrance has been seen as a manifestation of divinity on the earth, a connection between human beings and the gods, medium and mediator, emanation of matter and manifestation of spirit.

In a sense, the origins of aromatherapy can be traced back to the origins of humanity. Some anthropologists believe that the appearance of some form of rituals is the defining moment in the emergence of human culture. Since their origins, rituals have always involved fumigations and the burning of aromatic herbs and woods. Rituals were used mostly in healing ceremonies. What a great intuition! By burning aromatic substances, fumigations diffuse essential oils, which have an antiseptic effect, into the air, bringing about physical healing. At the same time, the

fragrance acts on a subtle level for psychic and spiritual healing.

## AROMATIC MEDICINE IN EGYPT

The origin of aromatherapy is usually attributed to Ancient Egypt and India. I would date it back to the fabulous and mysterious Kingdom of Sheba, located in the part of the world now called Ethiopia. Ethiopia is considered the cradle of humanity, where the most ancient remains of our distant ancestors have been found.

The Kingdom of Sheba, the “land of milk and honey,” was a very prosperous country of the high antiquity. In particular, it controlled the production of the very precious frankincense and myrrh and the trade in spices coming by caravan from India and then by boat through the Red Sea. Sheba is the land from where the three magi came to greet the infant

Christ with gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, the three most precious substances of the time.

There is also the fabulous story of the Queen of Sheba. While the Kingdom of Sheba controlled the trade in frankincense and myrrh, the Queen of Sheba was doing a very hefty business with a tiny kingdom called Israel. Located at the outskirts of the known world, Israel was ruled by a king by the name of Solomon, whose fame had reached all the way to Sheba. The Queen was known to be immensely rich and Solomon had promised his God Yahweh to build a temple the like of which had never been seen on the face of the earth. But the tiny kingdom was broke. Solomon sent emissaries to the Queen, trying to borrow some gold from her. The Queen was intrigued. She decided to undertake the perilous journey across the unforgiving desert to meet her client and potential debtor.

The Queen was young and courageous, and her beauty was stunning. Solomon fell desperately in love with her at first sight. Under the spell of the Queen's magnificent beauty, he neglected his wives and concubines, and even the governing of his kingdom. The Queen eventually decided to return to her kingdom, bearing Solomon's child. Solomon never recovered from his lost love and tried to lose himself in debauchery. He also composed the very famous "Song of Songs," one of the most beautiful love poems and erotic poems in human literature.

There is evidence that the Egyptians borrowed some of their religious and political system from the land of Sheba. In

Egypt, medicine was inseparable from religion, and healing always took place in both body and mind. The use of perfumes and aromatics was originally a privilege of the Pharaohs and the high priests. The priests developed a very sophisticated pharmacy, using large quantities of aromatics, which were also used for the preparation and preservation of mummies. The Egyptians made extensive use of substances such as myrrh and frankincense, as well as rose and jasmine. These products were so precious that they were traded as currency.

The Egyptians are considered the inventors of western medicine, pharmacy, and cosmetology. Parallel with the development of medicine and pharmacy, they also developed very refined techniques for skin care, creating beauty recipes that have endured to the present day. Aromatics were the major active ingredients in their skin care preparations. Cleopatra, of course, is legendary for her use of cosmetic preparations and perfumes to enhance her beauty and her powers of seduction. When she sailed to greet the Roman Emperor Marc Anthony, the sails of her ship were soaked in jasmine, one of the most aphrodisiac fragrances. Marc Anthony fell so deeply in love with Cleopatra that he gave up his empire to follow her.

Aromatic medicine emerged from the shade of smoky temples in Egypt—the birthplace of medicine, perfumery, and pharmacy—more than six thousand years ago. The precious substances came from all parts of the world, carried by caravan or by boat: cedar from Lebanon; roses from Syria; spikenard, myrrh, frankin-

cense, labdanum, and cinnamon from Babylon, Ethiopia, Somalia, and even Persia and India.

The priest supervised the preparations in the temples, reading the formulas and chanting incantations, while the students mixed the ingredients. Pulverization, maceration, and other operations could continue for months until the right subtle fragrance was obtained for ceremonial use.

But spiritual matters were not the only concern of the Egyptians. They attached the greatest importance to health and hygiene and were thoroughly familiar with the effect of perfumes and aromatic substances on the body and the psyche. Many preparations were used for both their fragrant quality and their healing power. Kephi, for example, a perfume of universal fame, was an antiseptic, a balsamic, and a tranquilizer that could be taken internally.

The Egyptians also practiced the art of massage and were famous specialists in skin care and cosmetology. Their products were renowned all over the civilized world. The Phoenician merchants exported Egyptian unguents, scented oils, creams, and aromatic wines all over the Mediterranean world and the Arabic peninsula and thereby enhanced the fame and wealth of Egypt.

Embalming was one of the main uses of aromatics. Bodies were filled with perfumes, resins, and fragrant preparations after removal of the internal organs. So strong is the antiseptic power of essential oils that the tissues are still well preserved thousands of years later. In the seventeenth century, mummies were sold in Europe, and

doctors distilled them and used them as ingredients in numerous medicines. The use of aromatics spread from Egypt to Israel, Greece, Rome, and the whole Mediterranean world. Every culture and civilization, from the most primitive to the most sophisticated, developed its own practice of perfumery and cosmetics.

India is probably the only place in the world where this tradition was never lost. With over ten thousand years of continuous practice, Ayurvedic medicine is the oldest continuous form of medical practice. The *Vedas*, the most sacred book of India and one of the oldest known books, mentions over seven hundred different products, such as cinnamon, spikenard, coriander, ginger, myrrh, and sandalwood. The *Vedas* codifies the uses of perfumes and aromatics for liturgical and therapeutic purpose.

## **DISTILLATION AND ALCHEMY**

In Europe, the advent of Christianity and the fall of the Roman Empire marked the beginning of a long period of barbarism and a general decline of all knowledge. Revival came from the Arabic countries with the birth of Islam. Intellectual and cultural activity flourished, as did the arts. Arabic civilization attained an unequalled degree of refinement. The philosophers devoted themselves to the old hermetic art of alchemy, whose origin was attributed to the Egyptian god Tehuti. They renewed the use of aromatics in medicine and perfumery and perfected the techniques. The great philosopher Avicenna

invented the refrigerated coil, a real breakthrough in the art of distillation.

Alchemy, which was probably introduced to Europe by the crusaders on their way back from the Holy Land, was primarily a spiritual quest, and the different operations performed by the adept were symbolic of the processes taking place within the alchemist. Distillation was the symbol of purification and the concentration of spiritual forces.

In the alchemist's vision, everything, from sand and stones to plants and people, was made up of a physical body, a soul, and a spirit. In accordance with the basic principle *solve* and *coagula* (dissolve and coagulate), the art of *spagyrie* consisted of dissolving the physical body and condensing the soul and spirit, which had all the curative power, into the quintessences. The material was distilled over and over to remove all impurities, and the final products were highly potent medicines.

With the expansion of this mysterious art, more and more substances were treated for the extraction of essences. These quintessences were the basis of most medicines, and for centuries essential oils remained the only remedies for epidemic diseases.

## THE RENAISSANCE, DECLINE, AND REBIRTH

During the Renaissance, the use of essential oils expanded into perfumery and cosmetics. With further progress in the arts of chemistry and distillation, the production of elixirs, balms, scented waters,

fragrant oils, and unguents for medicine and skin care flourished. Nicholas Lemery, the personal physician of Louis XIV, described many such preparations in the *Dictionnaire des drogues simples*. Some have survived until now: Melissa water, Arquebuse water, and the famous Cologne water, for instance, are still produced.

The arrival of modern science in the nineteenth century marked the decline of all forms of herbal therapy. The early scientists had a simplistic and somewhat naive vision of the world. When the first alkaloids were discovered, scientists thought it better to keep only the main active principals of the plants and then reproduce them in laboratories. Thus they discovered and reproduced penicillin (from a natural mold growing on bread), aspirin (naturally present in birch, wintergreen, and meadowsweet), antibiotics, and so on.

Without denying the obvious value of many scientific discoveries, we must acknowledge that the narrow vision of the allopathic medical profession has led to some abuses. Microorganisms adapt to antibiotics much faster than does the human body, making antibiotics inefficient as well as dangerous to the body. Corticosteroids have dreadful side effects; hypnotics, antidepressants, and amphetamines are highly addictive; and so on.

## THE BIRTH OF MODERN AROMATHERAPY: AROMATHERAPY IN FRANCE

Aromatherapy per se was formally developed in France in the late 1920s and



grew into a mainstream movement in Europe. The term itself was coined by a French chemist by the name of René-Maurice Gattefosse. As the story goes, Mr. Gattefosse, who was a chemist working for the perfume industry, burned his hand in an explosion in his laboratory. A vat full of lavender oil was nearby, and he plunged his hand into it. The pain disappeared instantly, and he recovered so fast that he decided to investigate further the healing power of essential oils. Thus was born modern aromatherapy.

I personally experienced the quasi-miraculous effect of lavender oil on burns on several occasions. A few years ago, while cooking asparagus in a pressure cooker, I spilled more than half a gallon of boiling water on my feet and legs. I removed my socks promptly and applied lavender neat on the whole area and continued applying it every ten to fifteen minutes for a few hours. Not only did the pain disappear, but I never blistered or lost skin! Likewise, when my daughter was twelve years old, she fell asleep on the beach on a very hot summer day, with no prior tan to protect her. She had forgotten to use any sunscreen and the Southern California sun was implacable. She came home redder than a lobster. I instantly applied to her face and body an oil that contains lavender, marjoram, and neroli in a base of sweet almond, hazelnut, and vitamin E. I continued applying it every hour for the first evening and then twice a day for a few days. Again, my daughter didn't blister or peel.

Back to the 1920s, the curative power of essential oils was well known at that

time, and many essential oils belonged to the European pharmacopoeia (and still do), which means that they are classified as active medical ingredients.

The French emphasized the medical uses of aromatherapy and conducted extensive research on the antiseptic and antibiotic use of essential oils. Aromatherapy is taught in medical schools and is practiced by medical doctors and naturopaths. Dr. Jean Valnet widely contributed to the popularity of aromatherapy in the sixties and seventies. The major figures today are the conservative Drs. Lappraz, Belaiche, and Duraffour on the one hand, who are the defenders of medical orthodoxy, and Pierre Franchomme, a creative but controversial pioneer, who recently struck gold when he was hired by Estée Lauder to create the "Origins" line. A former Franchomme associate, Dr. Daniel Penoel, recently started working on his own to develop his special techniques on the basis of "live embalming," a massage of the body with pure essential oils.

The French have developed the skin care uses of aromatherapy in only the last ten to fifteen years. French estheticians have grown increasingly attracted to aromatherapy, thanks mostly to lines like Decleor. The French in general, even in the skin care area, tend to use much higher dosages and concentrations than do other European practitioners. Preparations with 10 percent essential oils are not unheard of for professional products, resulting in products that must be used with extreme caution by highly trained professionals. Essential oils and aromatherapy products

can be found in all health food stores and many pharmacies and have a stable following. Still, aromatherapy in France has never made headlines the way it has in the United States or the United Kingdom.

The European aromatherapy market evolved in various countries along quite different lines, with each country developing one specific area of application. Only now do we see some overlapping of the various approaches.

British aromatherapy began in the 1950s with Marguerite Maury, a French cosmetologist who lived in London and emphasized uses in skin care and massage, with esoteric undertones. She gave British aromatherapy the spiritualist undertones that it still retains.

Today the major figures in the United Kingdom are Robert Tisserand, Patricia Davis, Shirley Price, and Valerie Worwood. Aromatherapy has become extremely popular in the United Kingdom since the late eighties, when it was known that its adepts included Ms. Thatcher and the royal family, from Princess Diana and Fergie to Prince Charles. Aromatherapy is now a well-developed movement in the United Kingdom, expanding in the health fields through nurses; a group of dedicated nurses gives aromatherapy massage to patients in British hospitals.

Aromatherapy is also gaining scientific credentials, especially in the field of psycho-aromatherapy. Warwick University in particular has been investigating the psychological effects of fragrances for quite some time now.

If the French can be somewhat reckless, the British tend to be overly cautious.

Dosages rarely exceed a few drops per ounce. Their list of contra-indications seems to be growing by the day, with no scientific or anecdotal evidence to sustain it. As pointed out by a frustrated aromatherapist in a recent debate on the subject, there is still not one single reported accident involving essential oils in the United Kingdom.

Curiously, the Europeans have yet to really discover the effect of essential oils as fragrances. Americans, on the other hand, tend to see aromatherapy as the use of fragrances for their mood-enhancing effects, which after all is the most obvious effect of essential oils.

## AROMATHERAPY IN THE UNITED STATES

Aromatherapy did not exist in any significant way in the United States until the early 1980s. In fact, when I first moved here in 1981, aromatherapy was still virtually unknown. Aroma Véra, Inc., the company that I founded and still head, has been instrumental in popularizing the concept in the United States and is considered the leader as well as the largest genuine aromatherapy company.

The aromatherapy movement in the United States can be separated into two very different approaches: a genuine approach and a mass-market approach. Genuine aromatherapy is education driven and aims at achieving a synthesis of the various approaches of aromatherapy, which have flourished primarily in Europe. This approach is based on the

study of essential oils as chemical substances as well as fragrances. It integrates the various effects of essential oils as healing and curative agents for the body with their properties on the energy and mental levels. Genuine aromatherapy aims to develop practical techniques that integrate the various effects of the oils in a synergistic way. It encompasses body care, skin care, and massage and touches every aspect of daily life. It is part of a natural way of life, an *art de vivre*, that integrates body, mind, and spirit and is geared more toward maintaining health more than curing diseases.

Interest in genuine aromatherapy has been growing steadily over the last fifteen years and is now booming exponentially. The spa, massage, and skin care markets, as well as the health food market, are the most receptive to the concept.

Mass marketers are always looking for the next new trend and, with aromatherapy, they are convinced that they

have found the buzzword of the nineties. This has given birth to a rather reduced and oversimplified version of aromatherapy, focusing on the uses of fragrances (and not necessarily natural essential oils) for their mood-enhancing properties.

Americans are without a doubt mass-marketing geniuses, but the contribution of Coca Cola and McDonald's to the fine art of cuisine is questionable, to say the least. While aromatherapy is now under the spotlight of the mass media, receiving intense coverage, there is a danger that it might very well be emptied of its substance in the process. However, the media and the public in general are much more sophisticated today than they ever were. We can hope that genuine aromatherapy will take advantage of the momentum created by mass media to promote the real thing. Aroma Véra is trying to do just that: use the mass-market momentum to advance the genuine art and science of the use of essential oils.



# Aromatherapy: A Multilevel Therapy

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## SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND MODERN AROMATHERAPY

Modern aromatherapy was born at the turn of the century with the works of the French chemist R. M. Gattefosse and has since attracted interest in France, Germany, Switzerland, and Italy. Many studies have been conducted by laboratory scientists and by practicing therapists. Most of this research, somewhat constrained by the dominant scientific ideology, almost exclusively concerns the antiseptic and antibiotic powers of essential oils and their allopathic properties.

Since the early 1980s, however, with the work of Dr. Schwartz at Yale University, and of professors Dodd and Van Toller at Warwick University in England, a better understanding of the Mechanisms of olfaction has opened new, exciting avenues for research and experimentation in aromatherapy.

## The Antiseptic Power of Essential Oils

After Pasteur, belief in external agents (microbes, spores, viruses) as the cause of diseases became the basic assumption of official medicine. It was natural, in this context, that the first studies of essential oils should concern their antiseptic properties. Koch himself studied the action of turpentine on *Bacillus anthracis* in 1881; in 1887 Chamberland studied the action of the essential oils of oregano, cinnamon, and clove buds. Other studies by Rideal and Walker and Kellner and Kober proposed different methods of measuring the antiseptic power of essential oils in direct contact or in their vaporized states.

## The Aromatogram

With the aromatogram, Dr. Maurice Girault went one step further and provided a useful tool for prescription and

diagnosis. Girault, a French gynecologist and obstetrician, has studied the effects of essential oils and tinctures (in association with other natural therapies—homeopathy, minerals, etc.) in gynecology for twenty years. The results of his work were published in *Traité de Phytothérapie et d'Aromathérapie*, Volume 3, *Gynecologie* (Belaiche and Girault, 1979).

In the aromatoqram, vaginal secretions on a swab are tested against several essential oils to determine which oil is the most efficient against the specific microorganism. This method has been extended to all infectious disease by French aromatherapy doctors Pradal, Belaiche, Andou, and Durrafour. It has the advantage of dealing with real germs coming from real sites in real patients, rather than from laboratories.

### **VIRTUALLY NO RESISTANCE PHENOMENA**

For all their imperfections and limitations, the various methods of analyzing the germicidal power of essential oils have given scientific validation to aromatherapy. The action of essence on microorganisms is now better understood: essences inhibit certain metabolic functions of microorganisms, such as growth and multiplication, eventually destroying them if the inhibition continues.

Even though there is general agreement on the antiseptic power of essential oils, different authors classify them differently by their antigenetic properties. Since es-

sential oils are products of life, their chemical composition depends on so many factors that it is impossible to obtain exactly the same essence twice. Therefore, different analyses will give different results. According to Jean Valnet, microorganisms show no resistance to essential oils. Recent research on the subject suggests that resistance occurs, but to a far lesser degree than to synthetic antibiotics. This makes sense, as essential oils have a more complex structure and moreover are produced by the defense mechanisms of the plant.

### **The Power of Living Substances**

The real interest of essential oils in medicine lies in their action on the site. Even if they could easily and advantageously be replaced by synthetic products for their antiseptic uses, these synthetics would always be awkward in their interaction with the body as a whole, even though synthetics are chemical reconstructions of components naturally occurring in essential oils.

Essential oils have hundreds of chemical components, most of them in very small amounts. We know that certain trace elements are fundamental for life. In the same way, the power of living products lies in the combination of their elements, and their trace components are at least as important as their main components. No synthetic reconstruction can fully replicate a natural product. It is thus very important to always use natural essential oils.

## A HOLISTIC PERSPECTIVE

The human body is a whole, and the interactions taking place between the whole, its parts, and the environment are regulated according to a principle of equilibrium called homeostasis. Homeostasis is an autoregulation process that is ensured by substances such as hormones and the secretions of endocrine glands controlled by the corticohypothalamo-hypophyseal complex. Any external or internal aggression brings a compensatory regulation (hyper- or hypofunctioning) and an imbalance that provokes a defense reaction; the ingestion of chemicals often creates such an imbalance. In disease, chemotherapy consists of answering one aggression with another, creating a state of war highly prejudicial to the battleground—the human body!

We depend on plants in every domain—food, energy, and oxygen—and there is between plants and humans a complementary relationship. We are part of the same whole, which is life itself. This is why plants are not aggressive to the body. (Only abuse of plants can be aggressive.)

Hippocrates, the father of occidental medicine, founded his practice on two basic principles: the principles of similarities (treat the same with the same, the poison with the poison) and the principle of oppositions (find antidotes). The latter, quite straightforward in its application, is the basis of modern medicine (allopathy). The former requires intuition and subtlety; it inspired the theory of similarities as formulated by the great alchemist and

philosopher Paracelsus in the Middle Ages. It is also the basic principle of homeopathy and anthroposophic medicine.

From observing the morphology of plants and their different characteristics (their taste, their scent, the environment and soil in which they grow, and their overall vibration), Paracelsus could predict their therapeutic indications. Rudolph Steiner and the anthroposophists adopted the same methods. Their findings have been amazingly accurate and have been largely confirmed by scientific research.

Theories of information and genetics, dealing with the issues of order and chaos, give further justification to such an approach. According to these theories, adaptability and mobility in the use of information are among the chief characteristics of life. A living system (a cell, an organism, a colony of insects, a social group) starts with a certain range of potentials that become actual in a feedback process with the environment. Thus, the embryo and the human being develop from a single primordial cell by differentiation. Life, on the other hand, apparently uses universal structures (such as chromosomic or enzymatic structures). Living systems seem able to “borrow” information from other living systems; to some extent, they are able to incorporate alien information.

If the clue to recovery lies within oneself, it should be very beneficial to give the right kind of information to the body. Therefore, close investigation of the role of essential oils in plants will help one to understand their curative power, while

the observation of specific plants will tell us about the healing properties of each individual oil.

Essential oils evidently play a key role in the biochemistry of the plants; they are like the hormones contained in small "bags" located between the cells, and they act as regulators and messengers. They catalyze biochemical reactions, protect the plant from parasites and diseases, and play an important role in fertilization. (Orchids, the most fascinating family of plants, have developed this process to a high degree, attracting the most suitable insects to carry precious pollen to their remote sexual partners.)

Essential oils carry information between the cells and are related to the hormonal response of the plant to stressful situations. They are agents of the plant's adaptation to its environment. It is not surprising, then, that they contain hormones. Sage, traditionally known to regulate and promote menstruation, contains estrogen. Ginseng, a well-known tonic and aphrodisiac, contains substances similar to estrone. Estrogens can also be found in parsley, hops, and licorice. Rosemary increases the secretion of bile and facilitates its excretion.

Essential oils control the multiplication and renewal of cells. They have cytophilactic and healing effects on the human body (especially lavender, geranium, garlic, hyssop, and sage). According to Jean Valnet, they have anticarcinogenic properties. They are often present in the outer part of leaves, in the skin of citrus fruits, and in the bark of certain trees. Cosmetic applications are among their oldest uses.

Most aromatic plants grow in dry areas, and the essential oils in them are produced by solar activity. In the anthroposophic vision, essential oils are the manifestation of the cosmic fire forces. They are produced by the plant's cosmic self. In them, matter dissolves into warmth. Therefore, they are indicated for diseases originating in the astral body.

## AROMATICS AND THE SOUL

Aromatherapy acts at different levels. There is first an allopathic action due to the chemical composition of the essential oils and their antiseptic, stimulant, calming, antineuralgic, or other properties. There is a more subtle action at the level of information, similar to the action of homeopathic or anthroposophic remedies. Last but not least, essential oils act on the mind. In fact, they are most traditionally used as basic ingredients of perfumes. Generally speaking, pleasant odors have obvious uplifting effects. According to Marguerie Maury in *The Secret of Life and Youth*:

Of the greatest interest is the effect of fragrances on the psychic and mental state of the individual. Power of perception becomes clearer and more acute, and there is a feeling of having, to a certain extent, outstripped events. . . . It might even be said that the emotional trouble which in general obscures our perception is practically suppressed.

## Anatomy of Olfaction

Recent research conducted in Europe, the United States, and the former Soviet Union reveals that the effects of odors on the psyche may be more important than scientists have suspected. The University of Warwick, England, has been conducting fascinating research on this subject (see Theimer, *Fragrance Chemistry: The Science of the Sense of Smell*). Figure 1 illustrates the anatomy of olfaction.

The sense of smell acts mostly on a subconscious level; the olfactory nerves are directly connected to the most primi-

tive part of the brain, the limbic system—our connection with our remote saurian ancestors, our distant reptile cousins. In a sense, the olfactory nerve is an extension of the brain itself, which can then be reached directly through the nose. This is the only such open gate to the brain.

The limbic system, originally known as the rhinecephalon (“smell brain”), is the part of the brain that regulates the sensorimotor activity and deals with the primitive drives of sex, hunger, and thirst. Stimulation of the olfactory bulb sends electrical signals to the area of the limbic system concerned with visceral and

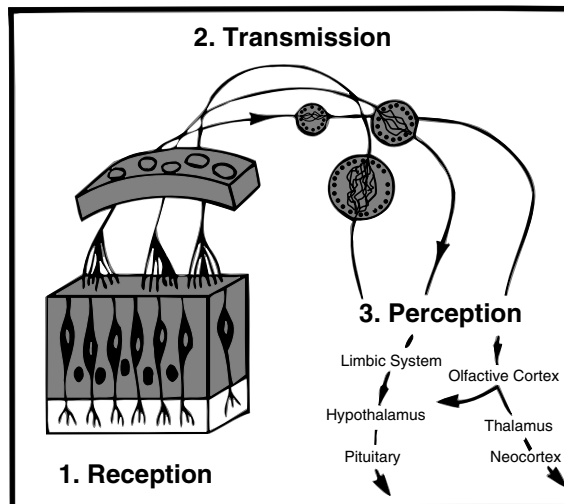
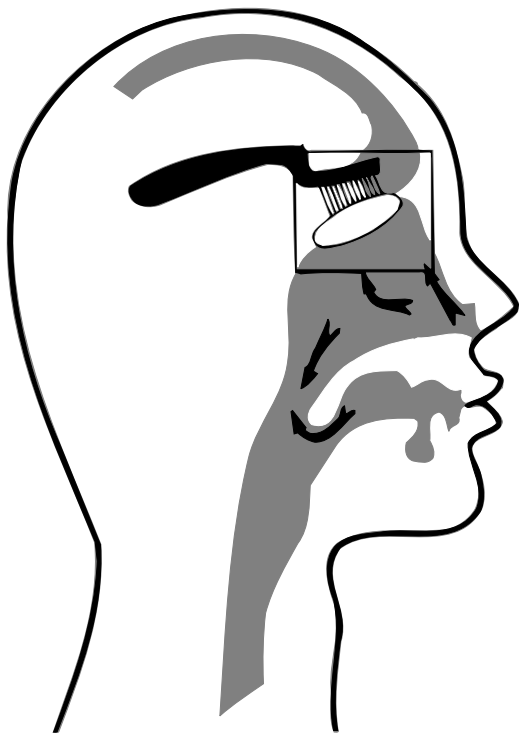


Fig. 1. The Anatomy of Olfaction



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