

CAITLÍN AND JOHN MATTHEWS

# THE WESTERN WAY

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO THE WESTERN MYSTERY TRADITION



# *The Western Way Omnibus*

---

VOLUME 1: THE NATIVE TRADITION

VOLUME 2: THE HERMETIC TRADITION

---

*Caitlín and John Matthews*

ARKANA  
PENGUIN BOOKS

ARKANA

Published by the Penguin Group

Penguin Books Ltd, 27 Wrights Lane, London W8 5TZ, England

Penguin Books USA Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, New York 10014, USA

Penguin Books Australia Ltd, Ringwood, Victoria, Australia

Penguin Books Canada Ltd, 10 Alcorn Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4V 3B2

Penguin Books (NZ) Ltd, 182-190 Wairau Road, Auckland 10, New Zealand

Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England

Volume 1: *The Native Tradition* first published 1985

Volume 2: *The Hermetic Tradition* first published 1986

This omnibus edition first published 1994

3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4

Copyright © Caitlin Matthews and John K. B. Matthews, 1985, 1986

All rights reserved

The moral right of the authors of the preface has been asserted

Printed in England by Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

Except in the United States of America, this book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser



## THE WESTERN WAY OMNIBUS

Caitlín Matthews is the author of twenty-eight books, including *In Search of Women's Passionate Soul* and *Celtic Devotional*. She teaches on many aspects of Celtic traditions, leading experiential courses on shamanism, ritual and spirituality. She has a shamanic practice in Oxford.

John Matthews has written and edited forty-five books, including *Sources of the Grail* and *The Celtic Shaman*. He is best known for his authorship and teaching in the field of Arthurian and Grail studies. He lectures worldwide on the Celtic and Arthurian traditions.

Together the Matthews have collaborated on many other books, including *The Arthurian Tarot* and *The Encyclopedia of Celtic Wisdom*. They are past presiders of the Order of Bards, Ovates and Druids, and are active in promoting a wider appreciation of the ancestral wisdom of North West Europe.

# *Authors' Preface to the New Edition of The Western Way*

---

This book was written as an overview of the Western Mystery Traditions at a time when the full spectrum of the indwelling spirit had begun to refract its ancient glory. That light has not dimmed but rather spread its rays abroad to rekindle personal spiritual practice, illuminating the places which nurture our roots and helping all to find effective ways to manifest their revelation in the world.

After the first publication of both volumes, the original series editor of this book, Eileen Campbell, asked us to write a third volume to complete the story of the Western Way's development. We agreed to do so, but only if delivery was acceptable in three incarnations' time, since there were still so many spiritual movements that had not reached their full flowering.

Since this book was written there have been subtle changes in the way we view the world. There is greater awareness of our environmental responsibility, of the necessity for appropriate spiritual nourishment. But, wherever we turn, a collective soul-loss threatens our world. A sense of disorientation is abroad, deriving from a rejection of the creative, mystical and spiritual dimensions which have always sustained humankind. A literal-mindedness which ignores the mystical dimensions of life pervades our culture, fostering a narrow and fearful spirit that turns to fundamentalist 'certainties' for support. In this corridor of creative repression and growing fundamentalism, it seems even more essential to reaffirm our spiritual belonging and practice, to find the connections between our own story and that of this planet. This is how traditions are upgraded by each subsequent generation: by a consideration of how ancient wisdom can be applied most effectively for our time.

It is so that the Mysteries enter a phase of chaotic readjustment

which challenges all we have held as fixed and immovable. At such times the necessity for spiritual re-education and supportive community becomes more urgent. Many idealists envision the skilful weaving together of generations, social structures and ancient wisdom, yet this cannot come about until outworn patterns of racism, consumerism, poverty and war are overcome. We are still far from universal social justice because the spiritual principles which underlie the Mysteries are not being applied by governments. Nevertheless each individual who maintains his or her spiritual practice with impartial compassion widens the way to this possibility.

The two traditions which we have written about in these pages are complementary. Their wisdom is now receiving widespread recognition in quite unexpected ways. The enduring power of the native traditions, the ancient earth wisdom of indigenous peoples, is at last being acknowledged as an essential guide to living wisely upon the planet. Similarly the alchemical map of the hermetic traditions is being traced in theories of chaos physics and the newer science of complexity, showing us that the antique formulas of spiritual progress do indeed reflect the subtle and creative connections of the universe. The wisdom of the Western Traditions is being restated and borne forward by many energetic vehicles. Any container of the tradition *becomes* the tradition, in due course; only time will tell which vehicles are most effective.

In the meantime the seeker must be vigilant to steer a course around spiritual materialism, to avoid poorly trained teachers promising immediate results for cash, and be wary of the rootless trend of 'mystical tourism' which pervades training courses. The Western Way cannot be walked in the course of an afternoon's workshop. The Mysteries call initiates of many kinds to their service in every age and the dues are always paid in the coin of total commitment. To be worthy of our hire, we must work with integrity.\*

To keep our practice supple and effective, we need simple rituals which link the Inner and Outer life in respect and honour, as well as training programmes which encourage a better integration of esoteric principles in practical ways and a lively imagination, while maintaining regular meditative and contemplative periods and a compassionate heart for all living beings.

\*An updated list of groups and organizations offering responsible training in the interrelated branches of the Western Mysteries can be found on pp. xi-xii.

The Mysteries cannot die, be diminished or be way while there are people keeping the sacred path open. The Western Way has been walked by the ancestors, as well as by those now living; it will be trodden by children yet to come – whose ancestors *we* will be. Our task is still to keep the pathway clear by walking it with honour and enable the mystical rose to bloom once more upon the tree of tradition.

*Caitlín and John Matthews*  
Oxford, July 1993

# Contact Addresses

---

The following groups and organizations offer training courses. For more details, please write sending a large, self-addressed, stamped envelope (if within country of addressee) or two international reply-paid coupons (for those overseas).

## NATIVE TRADITIONS

*Foundation for Shamanic Studies*, Box 673, Belden Station, Norwalk, CT 06852, USA. Founded by Michael Harner. Training in core (non-cultural) shamanic techniques worldwide.

*Green Circle*, BCM-SCL Quest, London WC1N 3XX, England. Founded by Marian Green. Networking association, with local groups in Britain, for those seeking companionship and training in natural magic and pagan traditions.

*Order of Bards, Ovates & Druids*, PO Box 1333, Lewes, E. Sussex BN7 3ZG, England. Founded by Philip Carr-Gomm. Druidic order rooted in the Celtic Mysteries, offering experiential training and correspondence course in druidry.

*Scandinavian Centre for Shamanic Studies*, Artillerivej 63/140, DK-2300 Copenhagen S, Denmark. Courses in Europe led by Jonathan Horwitz and Annette Horst in core (non-cultural) and Scandinavian shamanic techniques.

*Sulis Music*, BCM 3721, London WC1N 3XX, England. Training courses and tapes by leading British practitioners, including R. J. Stewart, Gareth Knight, Caitlín and John Matthews, etc.

*Walkers between the Worlds*, BCM Hallowquest, London WC1N 3XX, England. Experiential courses in Celtic and British Shamanism led by Caitlín and John Matthews.



## HERMETIC, GNOSTIC AND MYSTICAL TRADITIONS

*Builders of the Adytum*, 5010-05 No. Figueroa St, Los Angeles, CA 90042, USA. Offers correspondence courses on qabalah, alchemy, tarot, etc.

*Creation Spirituality*, Holy Names College, 3500 Mountain Boulevard, Oakland, CA 94619, USA. Offers courses and certification programmes in Creation Spirituality, based in mystical Christianity and ancient wisdom traditions. British contact: *Creation Spirituality*, St James's Church, 197 Piccadilly, London W1V 9LF, England. Other individual CS groups meet worldwide; ask for local details.

*Fellowship of Isis*, Clonegal Castle, Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, Ireland. International non-sectarian association for all who venerate the Goddess. Training courses and ordination in mysteries of the Goddess are offered by groups worldwide.

*Servants of the Light*, PO Box 215, St Helier, Jersey, Channel Islands, UK. Mystery school, offering correspondence course and training events based on Qabalah and Western Mysteries.

*Society of the Inner Light*, 38 Steele's Rd, London NW3 4RG, England. Mystery school founded by Dion Fortune, offering correspondence course on Qabalah.

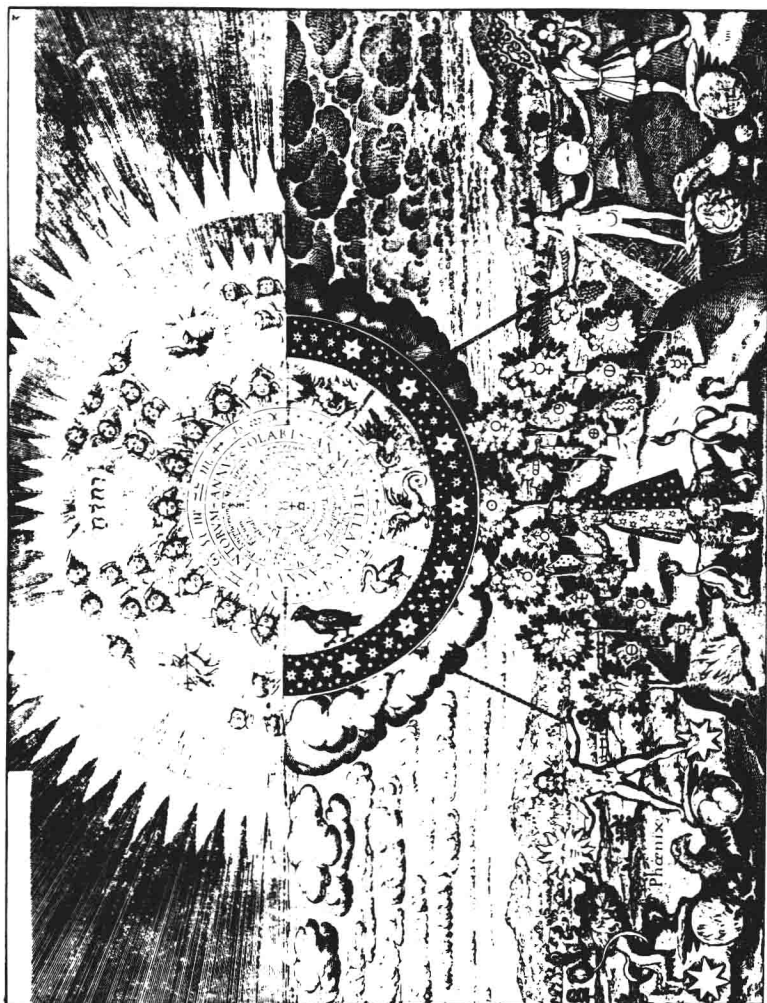
*Way of Kabbalah*, Flat 2, 31/33 Priory Park Rd, London NW6 7UP, England. Courses and training by Z'ev Ben Shimon Halevi (Warren Kenton) in practical kabbalah.

Caitlín and John Matthews issue a quarterly newsletter giving information about their upcoming courses, tapes and books. For details, send an SAE, within Britain, or two international reply-paid coupons to BCM Hallowquest, London WC1N 3XX, England.

# VOLUME 1

---

## *The Native Tradition*



TO DOLORES ASHCROFT-NOWICKI

And to all who believe in the possibility of  
bringing things back from Faery-Land

The mythic truth is the whole truth.

*P.L. Travers in a radio broadcast*

# *Acknowledgments*

---

We would like to thank all those who helped make this a better book . . . though of course any mistakes are our own responsibility. Special thanks go to Basil and Roma Wilby, Bob Stewart, Marian Green, Naomi Humphrey, Jerry Ozaniec, Vivienne Jones, Dick Swettenham, Tony Willis, and all the rest of the Company of Hawkwood; also to Geoffrey Ashe, Delenath and all at Chanctonbury, and all those who helped test-drive the practical exercises.

# Foreword

---

Here is a book that answers a great need of our times. And it answers it very well.

That need is for a rational and informed description of how to apprehend the forces that form the structure of the 'inner worlds': those hidden forces that underpin and mould the outer world that we know through our physical senses. For a realization of the need to come to terms with these other dimensions of reality is fast coming upon Western man.

Those who have not yet understood this need are at times dismayed by what they see as a 'flight from reason'. However, this 'flight' ought to be realized for what it is. It is not a mindless rout of the irresponsible but the winging pinions of an informed intuition no longer content with intellectual preoccupation with surface appearances.

Others decry what they choose to call 'dabbling in the occult', which they consider either idly foolish or perversely misguided. Whilst we too would not wish to encourage the occult dilettante, those of us who have spent more years in this research than we care to remember feel, with all due humility, that we have gained in wisdom and human fulfilment rather than lost.

There is no shortage among us of able, responsible citizens – even if those less well informed may sometimes gasp incredulously when confronted with our view of truth. We who know, know it to be no facile escapism, but a hard and testing, though infinitely rewarding struggle towards truth: truth about what we ourselves are; our place in the universe; and our duties before God and the rest of the creation.

Stock political, scientific and religious answers to these questions leave many people unsatisfied today. Seeking within for the deeper issues may be one way out of a nuclear or ecological crisis – although ultimately it is more profound even than that! Crises pass – or come to pass. Man's relationship to eternity lasts for ever.

John and Caitlín Matthews bring to the subject not only erudition,

balance and commonsense, but also a wide practical experience. In some areas of that experience I have shared and so I confidently recommend anyone to put themselves in the guiding hands of the writers of this book. They will not be led astray.

Furthermore, the authors have a breadth of knowledge and wisdom that puts many more strident occult pundits to shame. They are as much at home in the angelic heights of Christian mysticism as with the 'lordly ones' in the depths of the hollow hills. And this is a living experience, not mere book knowledge. Although as readers will soon gather, their literary resources are profound.

This is an instruction book for the present and the future. The old time occult groups with their body of doctrine and rigid esoteric structure are fast becoming a thing of the past. Their good has been done. Their weighty volumes of doctrine remain as monuments and milestones along the way.

They may still help us now. But the esoteric students of the present and the future will be ones who take what they can find, in eclectic freedom, for the immediate purpose in hand. Their training will be no less rigorous for being more open and unstructured, their working groups no less powerful despite their relatively transitory, even *ad hoc*, nature.

To use a familiar, if somewhat over-used phrase, this is the approach to occult training in the New or the Aquarian Age.

John and Caitlín's *Western Way* will provide an Ariadne's thread to help a new generation of seekers find their way through the labyrinth. And go some way to enlighten less adventurous souls as to what the maze we call this world is all about.

Gareth Knight



# Contents

---

AUTHORS' PREFACE TO THE NEW EDITION OF *THE WESTERN WAY* ix

CONTACT ADDRESSES xi

## VOLUME 1: *THE NATIVE TRADITION*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS xvii

FOREWORD xix

### INTRODUCTION THE INWARD SPIRAL i

Threading the maze i

Western folk-weave 4

The ritual stance 10

*Notes on the exercises in this book* 16

### I THE OLD RELIGION 22

Rite and Foretime 22

Walkers-between-the-worlds 29

Mysteries and initiation 36

*Exercise 1 Finding your clan totem* 42

*Exercise 2 Analeptic memory* 44

*Exercise 3 The festivals as hidden doorways* 47

### 2 THE MAGIC EARTH 49

Sacred space 49

The paths of the Dragon 55

The wisdom of the earth 61

*Magic earth exercise notes* 67

*Exercise 4 The shimmering way* 68

*Exercise 5 The terrestrial Zodiac* 70