

The Keys to the Temple

Unlocking Dion Fortune's Mystical Qabalah
Through Her Occult Novels

Penny Billington
and Ian Rees

PRAISE FOR *THE KEYS TO THE TEMPLE*

“At the height of her powers as an occult teacher, Dion Fortune began to use fiction as a means of instruction...Penny Billington and Ian Rees now take things a step further with a detailed analysis of the novels and their characters as a means of helping the reader to cross the bridge to personal experience. Highly recommended.”

Gareth Knight, author of *The Occult Fiction of Dion Fortune, Dion Fortune and the Inner Light, Dion Fortune’s Magical Battle of Britain and Dion Fortune’s Rites of Isis and Pan.*

“We shall be recommending *The Keys to the Temple* to students in the Servants of the Light School. This important book clearly demonstrates how Dion Fortune’s fiction was part of her strategy to practically teach principles and initiatory magical techniques that are theoretically presented in her *Mystical Qabalah*. It is very exciting to see these teachings being so clearly available by Penny Billington and Ian Rees. This book is a must-read for anyone with an interest in Dion Fortune’s work or for those working practically in the esoteric and magical tradition she shaped.”

Steven Critchley, Director of Studies, Servants of the Light.

THE KEYS TO THE TEMPLE

Other books by Penny Billington

Nine Ways to Charm a Dryad
(Llewellyn, March 2022)

How to Stop the Rain: Conversational Magic with the Cosmos
(Ashwell Springs Press, 2019)

The Wisdom of Birch, Oak, and Yew
(Llewellyn, 2015)

The Path of Druidry
(Llewellyn, 2011)

Other books by Ian Rees

The Tree of Life and Death: Transforming the Qliphoth
(Aeon, September 2022)

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Her Occult Novels

Penny Billington
Ian Rees

AEON

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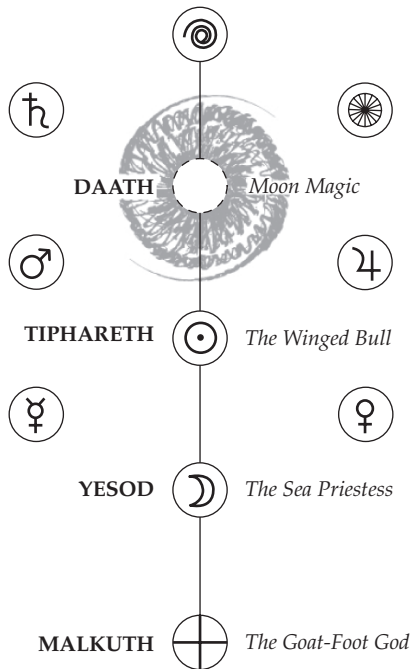


To Aly and Arthur, who also hold the keys

We live in the midst of invisible forces whose effects alone we perceive.

We move among invisible forms whose actions we very often do not perceive at all, though we may be profoundly affected by them.

—*Dion Fortune, Psychic Self-Defense*



Dion Fortune's Books on the Tree of Life

The authors and publishers wish to thank the Society of the Inner Light for permission to reproduce copyrighted material from the following books by Dion Fortune:

Esoteric Orders and Their Work & The Training and Work of an Initiate

Moon Magic

Psychic Self-Defense

The Goat-Foot God

The Sea Priestess

The Winged Bull

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CONTENTS

<i>LIST OF FIGURES</i>	<i>xiii</i>
<i>ABOUT THE AUTHORS</i>	<i>xv</i>
<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	<i>xvii</i>
<i>BOOK SYNOPSES</i>	<i>xxi</i>
<i>UNLOCKING THE MYSTICAL QABALAH</i>	<i>xxvii</i>

SECTION 1: LEAVING HOME

1. <i>The Goat-Foot God: power of nature</i>	3
2. <i>Entering Malkuth and The Goat-Foot God</i>	13
3. <i>The Sea Priestess: currents and rhythms</i>	23
4. <i>Yesod and The Sea Priestess: making a foundation</i>	33
5. <i>The Winged Bull and the dance of relationship</i>	43
6. <i>Tiphareth and The Winged Bull</i>	55
7. <i>Moon Magic: the depths and the heights</i>	63
8. <i>Daath and Moon Magic</i>	73

SECTION 2: FOLLOWING

9. The work of change	85
10. First steps on the path	95
11. The emotional connection	105
12. Thresholds, guardians, and obstacles	119
13. Magical space	129
14. The mentor and the threefold way	139

SECTION 3: CROSSING THE BRIDGE

15. Magical work: guidelines and boundaries	151
16. The Qabalah applied	159
17. Working with Malkuth and <i>The Goat-Foot God</i>	167
18. Working with Yesod and <i>The Sea Priestess</i>	177
19. Working with Tiphareth and <i>The Winged Bull</i>	187
20. Working with Daath and <i>Moon Magic</i>	197

<i>CONCLUSION</i>	209
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<i>BIBLIOGRAPHY</i>	213
---------------------	-----

<i>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</i>	215
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<i>TO WRITE TO THE AUTHORS</i>	217
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<i>INDEX</i>	219
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LIST OF FIGURES

1. The path from Malkuth to Yesod	xxx
2. The spinning wheel of Yesod, Hod, and Netzach	xxxI
3. The underworld and alchemical paths from Malkuth to Tiphareth	xxxii
4. The wheel of stillness	xxxiii
5. The three paths up to Daath	xxxiv
6. The supernal triangle	xxxiv
7. The completed Tree of Life	xxxv

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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INTRODUCTION

Writers will put things into a novel that they daren't put in sober prose, where you have to dot the I's and cross the T's. (Fortune, 1936, p. 33)

Dion Fortune (1890–1946) was one of the most significant occultists of the twentieth century and is still considered to be a major influence on the current Western Mystery Tradition. She was one of a small band of people who brought the ancient mysteries out of obscurity and arcane ritual and made them relevant to the modern day and the issues we now face. She did this by combining an understanding of psychology with the mystical practices of the Qabalah and suggesting practices and methods that can be applied to give direct experience of inner realities.

The Qabalah is a spiritual system that has been practised secretly in Europe since at least the twelfth century, though it draws on deep roots within Judaeo-Christian tradition. In particular, it draws on the myth of Genesis, the story of Adam and Eve and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden through having eaten the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Qabalah is based around the image of the other tree in that myth, the Tree of Life. This Tree is an image and diagram that enables us to explore the inner aspects of our own nature

and of the world and in that process to come into communion with a fuller, deeper life.

Dion Fortune's way of making this tradition more available to people outside her private occult group was unusual: she wrote one of the first modern accounts of the Tree of Life and the system of the Qabalah that makes ancient mythology and the mysteries behind them come to life here and now. She also wrote a series of novels that on one level can be read as slightly unusual romance novels but on a deeper level contain key images and patterns from those mysteries that speak to our subconscious and, if consciously related to, bring us into a deeper experience of our life and being.

In the beginning of the 1998 edition of her book *The Sea Priestess* (1938), Fortune says this about the novels and the Qabalah:

It is because my novels are packed with such things as these [symbolism directed to the subconscious] that I want my students to take them seriously. The "Mystical Qabalah" gives the theory, but the novels give the practice. Those who read the novels without having studied the "Qabalah" will get hints and a stimulus to their subconscious. Those who study the Qabalah without reading the novels will get an interesting intellectual jig-saw puzzle to play with; but those who study the "Mystical Qabalah" with the help of the novels get the keys of the Temple put into their hands. As Our Lord said: "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?"

This is a bold claim, and those who try to follow her formula in the search for the keys have a number of obstacles to address. They need to find a way to create relationship between

- A book of mystical theory that, while well and clearly written, can at times feel dry
- A series of stories that are concerned with twentieth-century relationships between men and women, and
- Evocative and potent ancient images.

Additionally there is that cryptic hint about the involvement of the body and the descent of the Holy Ghost into the body.

This book is designed to overcome these obstacles, to explain and make clear the system of the Qabalah, to show how the stories and images fit into it, and to provide a practical workbook of exercises that will work with the body and senses so that the inner realities are directly experienced.

The key novels for this study are *The Goat-Foot God*, *The Sea Priestess*, *The Winged Bull*, and *Moon Magic*. They are Qabalistic novels: not only is Fortune using images from the ancient mysteries, but the story and images of each book are aligned with an aspect of the Tree of Life, which in turn points to a pivotal process in inner development.

A particular sequence of inner development is outlined in every novel, beginning with the first step on the path of initiation: the movement from being externally directed and lost in desires and fears of past and future to gaining a direct sense of being present in the body in the world just now. This is called entering the kingdom, or entering *Mal-kuth*, and the first book in the sequence, *The Goat-Foot God*, is concerned with this step.

The second step arises from this anchored and present sense of being connected to both world and body; it involves exploring the pool of subjectivity and inner life that then opens up. This asks us to explore our vitality and images of self and world by mastering the art of the embodied imagination. This is called making a foundation, or *Yesod*, and the book that addresses this issue is *The Sea Priestess*.

The third step is the movement through the pool of subjective life, past a barrier, called the *veil*, *Paroketh*, that is formed by the subliminal inner dialogue between thought, emotion, and memory. This constant dialogue acts as a spinning wheel that causes us to interpret all current experience in terms of the past and seeks to stop us from penetrating more deeply into inner life. As we pass this veil, we enter into a state of balance, feel centred, and start to be able to mediate between inner and outer worlds. This sense of heart and centre is called *Tiphareth* by the Qabalists, and the book addressing this is *The Winged Bull*.

The fourth major step that is considered in this schema is the movement from the sense of balance and centre into alignment with the deeper aspects of our nature. This opens us to capacities of clarity and love that arise from the root of our being—a dynamic stillness that is both receptive and creative. This movement into mystery is called by the Qabalists *Daath*, the knowing of unknowing, and is the place where

all the opposites of self and life find rest and renewal. The book that addresses this process is *Moon Magic*.

The Tree of Life, the organising principle behind the novels, is said to be both a glyph of the soul and the inner structure of the universe: in the same way, the characters in the novels teach us both about aspects of our own nature and about the world around us.

Each novel is concerned with the relationship between a man and a woman who are guided by a mentor to find their way from experiences of deprivation and frustration into a union that is fruitful and alive, though not necessarily conventional.

They all begin with the situation of a man who simultaneously represents cultural attitudes to maleness and the rational and outer aspect of our personality, who meets a woman who is both archetypal womanhood and the feminine, or anima, aspect of the soul. These two then enter a mystery drama that enables the four steps of the Tree of Life to be taken, to arrive at a consummation that resolves the situation described at the beginning of the novel.

This book is organised in such a way as to enable you to directly discover and apply the keys of the temple to your life and circumstances. Section 1 describes the essentials of the formula, and then each of the four books is analysed in detail and aligned with the Tree of Life. Section 2 identifies the major themes running through the book, and finally Section 3 gives a series of practices and exercises that bring the keys of the temple into operation.

Unlocking Dion Fortune's Mystical Qabalah

Dion Fortune's esoteric novels were written as guides to magic and inner development to be used along with her great nonfiction work *The Mystical Qabalah*. This book shows how to work with her most popular fiction, exploring how the stories and characters can help you integrate the secrets of the Tree of Life and discover what Fortune called "the keys to the temple."

Authors Penny Billington and Ian Rees show how to use Fortune's brilliant insights to gain a direct sense of being present in your body, master the art of the embodied imagination, discover your vitality, and open yourself to the clarity and love that arise from the root of your being.

"'The Mystical Qabalah gives the theory', Dion Fortune wrote, 'but my novels give the practice.' In *The Keys to the Temple* Penny Billington and Ian Rees take her at her word and unpack the rich treasury of practical Cabalistic magic to be found in Fortune's occult novels. It's a bravura performance, not to be missed by anyone interested in the Western Mystery tradition."

John Michael Greer, author of *The Celtic Golden Dawn*

"This wonderful evocation of Dion Fortune's esoteric novels offers initiatory and practical pathways to the neophyte and reader!"

Caitlin & John Matthews, authors of *The Lost Book of the Grail*

"Not only is *The Keys to the Temple* excellent for fans of Dion Fortune's work, but it is also a necessary work for all who have an interest in uncovering the deeper aspects of the Western Mystery Tradition and its roots in Qabalah."

Will Parfitt, author of *The Complete Guide to the Kabbalah, Kabbalah for Life*.

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