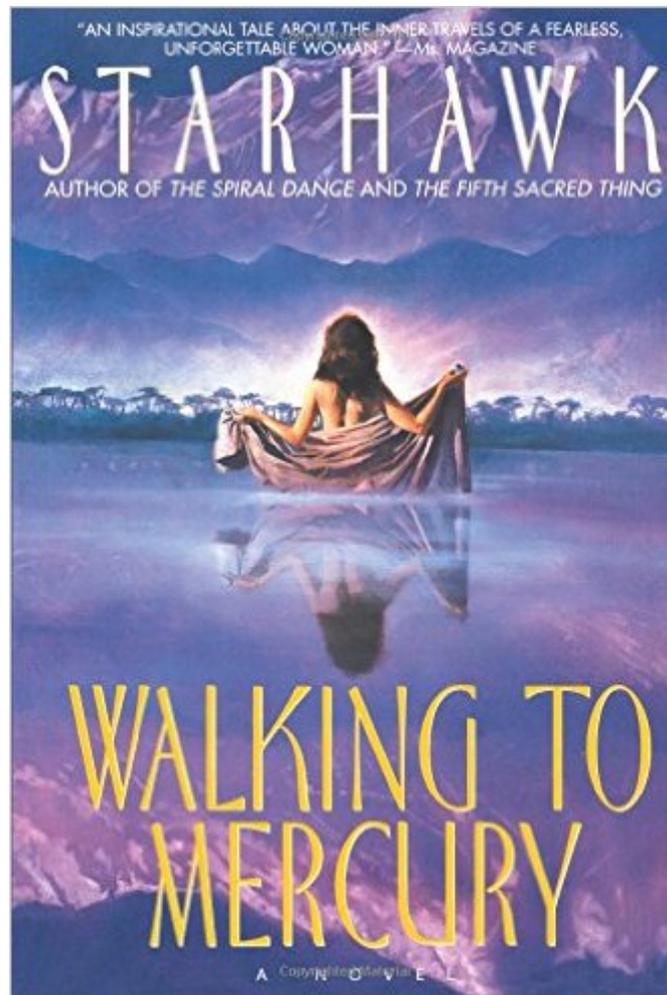


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Walking To Mercury



Synopsis

In *The Fifth Sacred Thing*, readers fell in love with Maya Greenwood, the 98-year-old writer who led Northern California's successful 21st century rebellion against a racist, totalitarian regime of the South. *Walking to Mercury* takes readers back to the 20th century and powerfully dramatizes the forces that shaped this extraordinary woman. The book opens and closes with the middle-aged Maya struggling with a profound personal and spiritual crisis. The culminating factor has been her mother's death, and now Maya embarks on a trek in the Himalayas, intending to sprinkle her mother's ashes at the base of Mt. Everest and finally lay to rest her tumultuous past. At rest stops in tiny Tibetan villages, she reads diary pages her lover Johanna has tucked into her bag—the diary Johanna kept throughout their shared youth during the Vietnam era. In vivid flashbacks to those radical days, we accompany the young Maya as she awakens to the summer of love, joins the anti-war movement, and enters into a relationship with the abusive, alcoholic Rio. She finally gathers the strength to break free and seek her own true path, which takes her from the streets of Manhattan to the mountains of Mexico. Eventually she emerges, stronger and wiser, infused with the wisdom of the earth and the spirit of the goddess. Traveling through the landscape of memories helps Maya reclaim her past and foreshadows the miraculous events readers of *The Fifth Sacred Thing* know her to be capable of in the future.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The *Spiral Dance* has to be one of the inspirational books of the last century, and *Dreaming the Dark* continued with the same evocative quality. Then I read *The Fifth Sacred Thing* and decided

that, interesting though it was, it didn't delineate Starhawk as a gifted novelist. How wrong could I be! *Walking to Mercury* is one of the most lyrical yet gripping books I've ever read. I found it impossible to put down. Every sentence is carefully crafted, every word a jewel strung together with a luminous spirituality. The way Starhawk contrasts and yet draws parallels between the hippy, drug oriented anti war climate of sixties and seventies America and the soaring purity of eighties Nepal, the Goddess pagan culture and Tibetan Buddhism is nothing short of brilliant. There is not a weak section or mundane sentence in the whole book. I shall now go back and read and enjoy *The Fifth Sacred Thing* with fresh insight. Elen Hawke author of *In The Circle*, *The Sacred Round* and *Praise to the Moon*

I have been an admirer of Starhawk's work since I read *The Spiral Dance* in 1987. Although largely ignored by mainstream progressives, her work does a great deal to extend the revolutionary ideals of the '60's and '70's into spirituality, psychology and culture. I have great respect for her as an author and leader. However, I feel her greatest talent for communicating her message lies in non-fiction rather than fiction. The poetry and lyricism of her ideas and insights come through much more clearly. To be blunt, although the magic comes through in bits and pieces, the book is also a more or less stereotyped visit to '60's activism. I also felt there was a lack of depth to the character development. Sure, there's a lot of "action," plot, but a real sense of knowing, or perhaps caring, about these people was missing for me. Also, given that Starhawk is also a '60's activist who has become a leader and visionary of the Goddess revival, it's hard not to see Maya as a thinly veiled version of herself. Evidently Starhawk doesn't want this, but if she didn't want Maya to be taken as a stand-in for her, she would have been better off creating a character with a different history. It was harder to take Maya as a character with a life of her own, when I couldn't help but feel this was all too strongly filtered through Starhawk's own life. I do tend to agree with the "Gen X" reviewer who was exasperated with the characters' self-centeredness. For one thing, I didn't like the vision of relationships with no fidelity or commitment. Johanna's statement "I'm not a one-woman dog" just seemed cold and selfish to me. Where's the love? Well, I realize this all sounds negative, especially next to those glowing reviews. My advice is still to read Starhawk's earlier, non-fiction work. You'll have a much more powerful sense of what the novels are trying, often with less success, to say.

I'm sure I'm in the minority when I say this, but I liked this better than *The Fifth Sacred Thing*. That book was about a future utopia/dystopia, which was entertaining, but this book was about the here and now, which made it so much more relevant. This book is all about personal transformation,

evolving spirituality, dealing with disappointment, overcoming hardship, and the realities of families and friends. I loved the juxtaposition of time, and her descriptions of Nepal were so beautiful and vivid that I felt as if I'd actually visited the place by the time I was finished reading. Brava!

In reality I would need two different ratings to give this book its proper review. I read it after reading "The Fifth Sacred Thing", which I liked, though with some reservations. I personally did not care for "Walking to Mercury", however I can see that someone who grew up in the same generation as Maya probably would. As our major character she is very caught up in the times and the culture of the '60's, and anyone who was familiar with the '60's and sympathetic to that variety of idealism would probably find it very good reading. Unfortunately for my enjoyment I come from another generation down the line (born in 1969). The baby-busters. Known briefly as Generation X, until the advertisers realized there weren't enough of us to bother with, and started using the term to refer to the baby-boomlet that occurred right afterwards (hence proving the point the name was coined to highlight). For me, Maya Greenwood the crone in "The Fifth Sacred Thing" was an enjoyable character. Unfortunately the same person in her 20's and 30's just made me want to shake her because she was being so blasted stupid. The sheer pointlessness of Maya's entire "spiritual journey" up until 3/4's of the way through the book made me want to scream. I was simply struck by the self-aggrandizement, selfishness, and ultimate pointlessness of most of the behavior of most of the characters in the book. It's very hard to like even a well written book, when you don't like most of the people in it. The book does redeem itself somewhat towards the end. You get inklings of how Maya begins to deepen into the far more interesting person she is by "The Fifth Sacred Thing", and her relationships begin to metamorphose into something more worthwhile - just about the time the book ends. So not entirely awful, but mostly for those who lived the 1960's.

I'd never read any of Starhawk's work before. So to read this, with no preconceived ideas about the characters, served me well. It was inspirational, reading of Maya, and of her journey (both personal and spiritual). This book changed my life, and has called me to travel to Nepal, simply to experience the places that were described so vividly in this book. It's the amazing journey of one woman.

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