

# THE CARTOMANCER

TAROT  
HERSTORY:  
MY JOURNEY  
WITH FEMINIST  
TAROT

*by Christiana Gaudel*

STRETCH  
TAROT

*an interview with  
Joseph Stretch*

ETTEILLA

*by Sherryl E. Smith*

THE HANGED  
MAN

*by Cherry Gilchrist*

A QUARTERLY TAROT, LENORMAND & ORACLE JOURNAL



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## *The Cartomancer*

### **Mission Statement**

Our primary goal is to support an inclusive and mutually supportive community of Tarot, Lenormand and Oracle card readers worldwide through a quarterly journal that includes:

Well-written and informative articles by a wide range of experts for cartomancers of all levels, from novice to professional.

High quality divination inspired art from around the world and full color samples from some of the best recently published and classic decks for readers to explore.

A Marketplace for authors and artists to publicize and promote their books, decks and other Tarot, Lenormand and Oracle related products and upcoming events of interest to the community.

Reviews of new and classic decks from major publishing houses as well as independently published, limited editions by our in-house review staff.

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# IN THIS ISSUE

## **17 JUSTICE 8, STRENGTH 11 OR STRENGTH 8, JUSTICE 11: WHAT'S THE REAL SCORE? PART THREE**

*by Eric K. Lerner*

## **21 PSYCARDS: THE NOW CARD**

*by Catt Foy*

## **22 THE HANGED MAN, TRAITOR OR ACROBAT?**

*by Cherry Gilchrist*

## **25 ETTEILLA: THE GODFATHER OF MODERN TAROT READERS**

*by Sherryl E. Smith*

## **28 THE MOON IS FULL: REFLECTIONS ON THE EVOLUTION OF CARTOMANCY**

*by Monica Bodirsky*

## **31 HOW A VINTAGE EROTICA TAROT DECK CAME TO BE MADE (BECAUSE MEN NEVER THROW AWAY PORN)**

*by Claire-Marie le Normand*

## **33 THE SEANCE**

*by Cynthia Tedesco*

## **36 THE RIDER-WAITE-SMITH AND THE TAROT DE MARSEILLE - COMPARE, CONTRAST, COMBINE!**

*by Ste McCabe*

## **40 MARSEILLE TAROT: AN INTUITIONIST EXPERIMENT**

*by Marcelo Ribeiro dos Santos, Carlos Eduardo Albuquerque Miranda, and Danuzio Gil Bernardino da Silva*

## **46 TAROT HERSTORY: MY JOURNEY WITH FEMINIST TAROT**

*by Christiana Gaudet*

# ON THE COVER

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## Stretch Tarot

This issue's cover image is The Sun from *Stretch Tarot* by Joseph Stretch. Read the interview on page 6.

# REVIEWS

---

## 50 TAROT OF GOLD BY SALEIRE

Review by Sherryl E. Smith

## 52 LUCKY LENORMAND

Review by Bonnie Cehovet

## 53 TAROT APOKALYPSIS

Review by Bonnie Cehovet

## 56 THE LOST CODE OF TAROT

Review by Bonnie Cehovet

# ART

---

## 10 Lucky Lenormand

Monica Bodirsky

## 11 MINOAN TAROT

Laura Perry

## 12 Anino Lenormand

Lynrd-Jym Narciso

## 13 THE 90-QUESTION DECK

Andrew McGregor

## 14 LENORMAND FRANCAIS

Lynn Boyle

## 15 SAMADHI ORACLE

Jess Benjamin-Purmeswar and Sahil Purmeswar

# ASK THE WIZARD

---

## 16 ASK THE WIZARD COLUMN

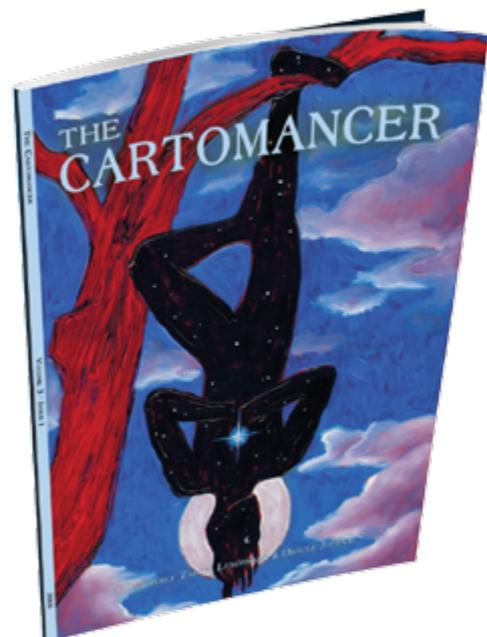
with The Wizard

*Send your questions online through  
[www.SteeleWizard.com](http://www.SteeleWizard.com) and get your answer here in  
the next issue of the Cartomancer!*

# NEXT ISSUE

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February is the next issue, featuring the Tarot de St. Croix by Lisa de St. Croix.



# EDITOR'S NOTE

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This issue of *The Cartomancer* wraps up year two. Thank you so much to everyone who has contributed and a huge thank you to YOU for being part of our readership.

I have to say that this issue was the most difficult one to put together, and I imagine that it will hold that distinction for a long time. In September my life kind of went down a rabbit hole — also known as moving both home and business — and it has been the most trying, exciting, freeing, and challenging two months. And I only moved ten miles. Is it just as much work to move ten miles as it is to move to a different state or country? I wonder.

My office is still a jumble of boxes with cats lounging on them, but I have my computer hooked up and internet access. I'm not even going to think about the rest of the house right now... So I finally locked myself in to finish this issue of *The Cartomancer*, I think it turned out pretty good!

As I like to point out common themes within each issue, this one leans toward a focus on the feminine in tarot. We have this lovely cover art of a beautiful lady as The Sun card in the *Stretch Tarot*, and articles either centered on or inspired by the feminine aspects: *Tarot Herstory* and *How A Vintage Erotica Tarot Deck Came To Be Made*.

The February issue is next up, so in the meantime have a wonderful holiday season and a Happy New Year! I hope you enjoy this magazine's offerings, maybe by a nice warm fire with a glass of wine or cider. That's what I'll be doing up here in the moderate winter of the Pacific Northwest.

Do remember that we are always seeking article submission for upcoming issues. If you have an idea, please get in touch through our website — we'd love to hear from you! We also are in need of decks and books to review, artwork to showcase, and we have ad space available. We welcome your comments which you can send via email to [jd@thecartomancer.com](mailto:jd@thecartomancer.com).

Blessings,  
Jadzia and Jay

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The Cartomancer

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*Many thanks to:*

December Lynd

Jaymi Elford

Arthur Graye

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# AN INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH STRETCH, ARTIST & CREATOR OF THE STRETCH TAROT

with Robert Scott

*H*ow did you first get involved in Tarot?

**JS:** When I was about 13 years old I was starting to get interested in spirituality, and read about many different esoteric subjects. Divination, and more specifically, tarot, called out to me right away.

The first deck I ever owned was a second-hand copy of the *Rider-Waite* which I believe is from the 1980s, and I fell completely in love with it. I knew hardly anything about tarot when I got the deck, but did my first reading for a friend the moment I opened the cards, relying on the little white book. Since that day, my intuition and interest in tarot has thrived.

**RS:** What is your tarot background or other training?

**JS:** I wouldn't call myself 'trained' at all; I hardly consider myself to be a reader! At the moment I don't offer readings and rarely do readings for myself in the traditional sense, though I do use the tarot in my everyday life for meditation and journaling. Given this, I would have to say that I am self-taught, and my understanding of tarot is based on my experience of it rather than any kind of training. I jumped in to the tarot right away, and never concerned myself with studying or research because I wanted to connect with the cards intuitively. Since then I have read most of A.E. Waite's *Pictorial Key to the Tarot*, and I find watching YouTube videos, etc., to be a fantastic resource. The ideas of others

are sometimes important in helping us to form our own.

**RS:** What decks, artists, writers influenced you, and in what ways?

**JS:** Other independent tarot decks and artists were the biggest influences for me, namely, *The Silent Tarot* and *The Antiquarian Lenormand*. I decided that if other people can do it, I can do it, and so I gave it a go!

**RS:** What is your education and career background, and how do you feel that was utilized in this project, if at all? What is your art background previous or prior to this project?

**JS:** I took Art at GCSE level which was my main creative outlet during my school years, though I never saw it as anything more than that. At A-level, I studied half of a Photography course to replace Art, though I dropped it in the end to allow me to focus on English which was

my main passion. I feel that my level of education has had no influence over my creativity. I believe that intellect and passion cannot be measured by grades and qualifications, and as such I haven't 'utilized' them in any of my personal endeavours. Having said that, I will be studying for an undergraduate degree in English Literature and Creative Writing starting this September for the reason that it will allow me to continue exploring a subject I



have always been in love with, and allow me to refine my writing skills.

**RS:** Why this deck? What led to creation of this deck?

**JS:** I like to think that the deck made itself! I started the project without any planning or intentions of how I wanted to set about doing things, made the first cards and went with the flow. With each new card I made the overall energy of the deck seemed to shift, and most of the time that felt completely out of my control. When it came to designing card backs and a box I had a really hard time, simply because I found the style of the deck really hard to define and therefore impossible to capture in one image. In the end, the deck started to feel like a hot mess, but I came to realise that its appeal as an art piece.

**RS:** How was the kickstarter experience for you ?

**JS:** I had planned to use Kickstarter from the very beginning of the project. It was a nerve-wracking endeavour because of Kickstarter's all-or-nothing nature, but that's what makes it fun. I didn't even look in to other crowdfunding platforms because Kickstarter introduced me to the concept, and so it felt right to give it a go on there.

My first attempt at funding fell through; I may have set the goal too high but more importantly I let the campaign fizzle out, not realising how much attention needs to go into a successful campaign. The second time around, I had gained a great deal of support and was funded right away. Once I put in the effort I realised it needed, the whole process became extremely rewarding and enjoyable. I have to thank my mother for helping me to manage it all so

*The original artwork was created on cards measuring 9"x6", cut from cereal boxes.*



smoothly. It went without a hitch and it is certainly something that I would like to do again.

**RS:** How would you describe the "voice" of this deck? Personality or personalities of it?

**JS:** When I first got my own copy of the deck I performed a deck interview spread. Cards that came up included the Fool. The Fool is the child; this a new deck ready to learn and grow and be our partner on our journey through the tarot. The deck carries with it no 'baggage' so to speak — it is a blank slate ready for each of us to make of it what we will and embed it with our own energies and personalities. The final card was the Tower. The Tower is a card many of us fear, so, it presents us with the perfect challenge. This deck urges us to confront our fears and face up to the unpredictability of life. The Tower pushes us into places and situations that we may not be comfortable with at first, to face issues which we may have avoided. It seems to remind us that we cannot predict the future with accuracy, but that we need to learn to embrace this fact and use it to our advantage.

**RS:** What music might be the soundtrack to it (if you feel this applies)?

**JS:** I couldn't name specific pieces of music, but I'd imagine something gothic and Victorian; a humming cello and a chiming music box.

**RS:** Can you describe the original paintings/art used for the cards? (original size, length of time to create, materials)

**JS:** The original artwork was created on cards measuring 9"x6", cut from cereal boxes. I made the artwork far larger than the printed deck would be to allow for a great level of detail when the cards were scaled down, which I think worked very well. The time it took to complete each piece varied, ranging probably from 1 hour to 4.

The images used in the creation of the artwork are all in the public domain and free from copyright restrictions. It is not without great gratitude that I use the work of others in

the creation of my own.

**RS:** What are the most unique materials used in creation?

**JS:** I used such a wide range of materials that I couldn't possibly name or remember them all! I would say that the most 'unique' would have to be the use of matchsticks to denote the suit of wands; the correlation with the element of fire worked beautifully and it is not something I have seen before.

**RS:** What did you learn during the creation of the deck?

**JS:** I have learned what not to do when making a tarot deck! I've learned a lot from the mistakes I made and look forward to making another deck with the knowledge I have now. It will be much less tedious and ultimately have a much better outcome! I am very proud of the result of *The Stretch Tarot* nevertheless.

More importantly, I have learned a lot about myself. I have proved that I am capable of completing a long term project as this project took me nearly two years. It has made me feel more comfortable about expressing and exploring my interest in tarot; I've only been met with positive reactions and have realized that it's actually quite a common interest. It's been a way for me to connect with people, whether it be online, in doing practice readings, or just as a conversation starter.

**RS:** Can you speak on the diversity I see and feel within the deck?

**JS:** The diversity of the deck is one of the things I am proudest of. It wasn't always this way; it was only after a piece of anonymous constructive criticism that I actively set about diversifying the deck. Finding vintage depictions of POC that were both free for me to use and carried the meaning of the cards was difficult, hence the low number of cards which lend to the diversity of the deck, which was a shame. I do believe in the importance of representation in the arts and media, especially considering that the tarot is supposed to be a reflection of human life.

**RS:** Can you tell us about other art you do?

**JS:** In the same way that I wouldn't class myself as a professional

tarot reader, I wouldn't call myself a proper artist either! I've always been a creative person but this manifests itself in many ways; I love photography, painting, filmmaking, and (above all) writing. The creation of *The Stretch Tarot* was the first and only personal art project I have ever undertaken, though I plan on making more art (and card decks) in the near future.

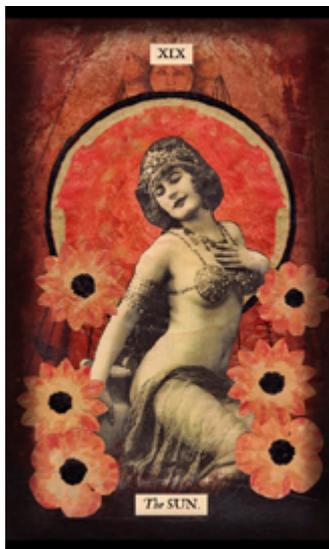
**RS:** Can you tell us about other projects you are planning or in the works?

**JS:** I have many ideas for where I would like to go with *The Stretch Tarot*, and I would like to make many more decks under this name. I would love to make oracle decks, a Lenormand, and eventually even more tarot decks. It would be very interesting to try and translate the style of the deck to other systems of divination.

At the moment, I am working on a guide book called *Art of the Arcana: A Guide to The Stretch Tarot* with Robert Scott of Arcana Advising. We aim for it to be a comprehensive look at not only details specific to my deck, but also the tarot as a whole.

**RS:** Where are all the places the deck can be purchased?

**JS:** The deck is for sale at [www.stretchtarot.com](http://www.stretchtarot.com).



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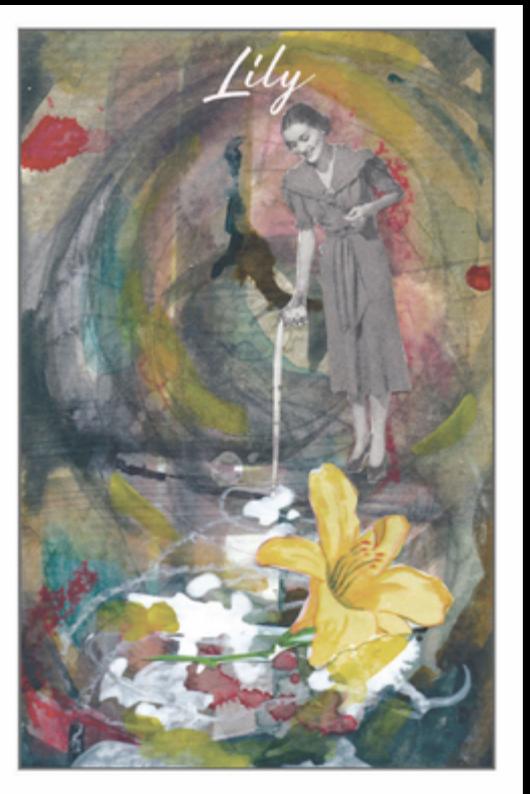
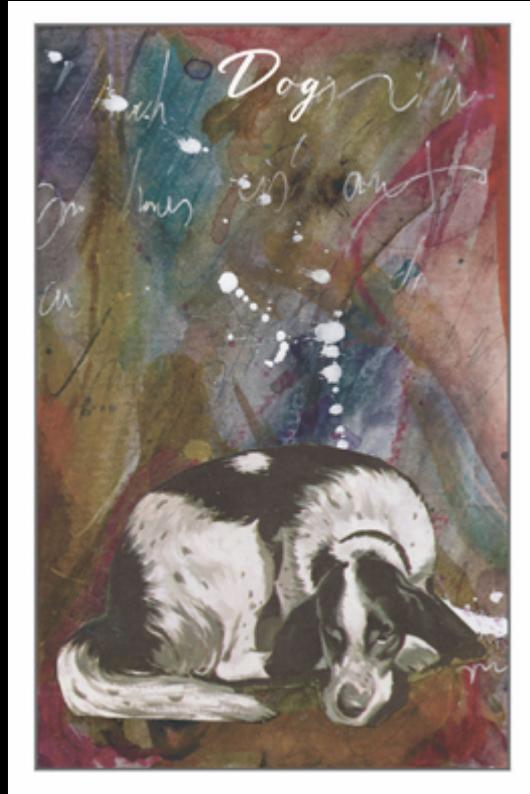
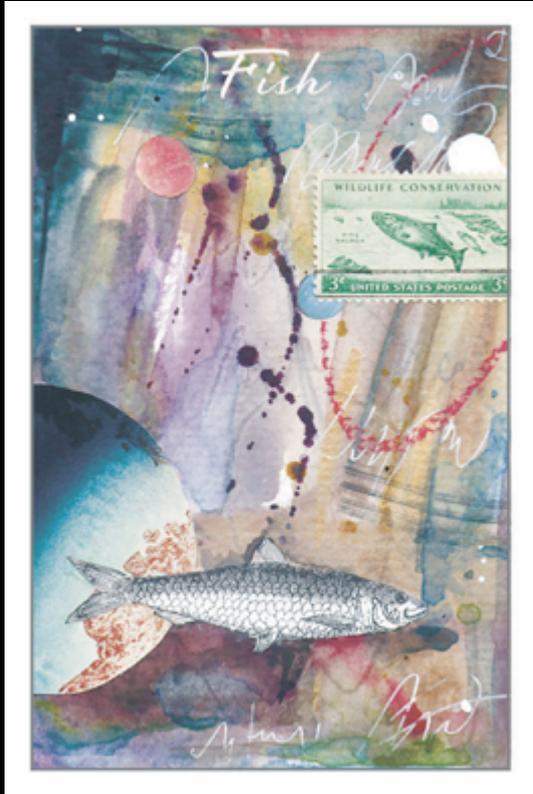


# Tarot Art



# LUCKY LENORMAND

MONICA BODIRSKY



Lucky Lenormand deck is a limited edition, 36-card oracle deck created by Toronto Artist, designer and cartomancer, Monica Bodirsky. The deck was created over an eight month period using watercolours, inks and copyright free vintage imagery with a contemporary twist. "I created the deck because I didn't see the artistic imagery I could relate to in Lenormand decks, I love symbolism and wanted to make an easy-to-read and direct deck. So far it seems to appeal to very creative people." said Bodirsky.

Released in July of 2016, the 100 decks are virtually sold out. The second edition will contain two bonus cards and the packaging will have a different colour palette to guarantee the collector edition value of the initial printing. A little white book containing a brief history of the cards, simple instructions and meanings is enclosed with each deck and an ebook is currently being edited for release.

*Pre-orders for the next edition of the Lucky Lenormand are currently available at*

[www.monocabodirsky.com](http://www.monocabodirsky.com)

# MINOAN TAROT

LAURA PERRY

Ancient Minoans meet modern Tarot in this unique, vibrant 86-card deck and guidebook that call on archetypes of Tarot through iconography of a civilization that flourished two millennia before the advent of Christianity. Using the Minoan palette from the ruins of the temple complexes and cities, the artwork was created entirely by hand, inspired by beautiful works of art from ancient Crete. Connect with the mysterious snake priestesses, labyrinthine temple complexes, and courageous bull-leapers. Explore gender-balanced face cards reflecting the egalitarian nature of Minoan society that makes this deck especially relevant for modern users: Priest and Priestess, Lord and Lady, Youth and Maid. Each card displays symbols from an ancient writing system and keywords reflecting literal image concepts or pointing to deeper meanings. This deck and comprehensive guidebook can also be used for meditation and personal growth. Experienced or new readers will find The Minoan Tarot a natural tool.

*Laura Perry is an author and artist whose primary focus is ancient religions. The Minoans of Bronze Age Crete have been a particular passion of hers since a fateful art history class introduced her to the frescoes of Knossos.*

*Available January 2017 online at: [www.schifferbooks.com](http://www.schifferbooks.com)*



7 THE CHARIOT



EIGHT OF LABRYSES



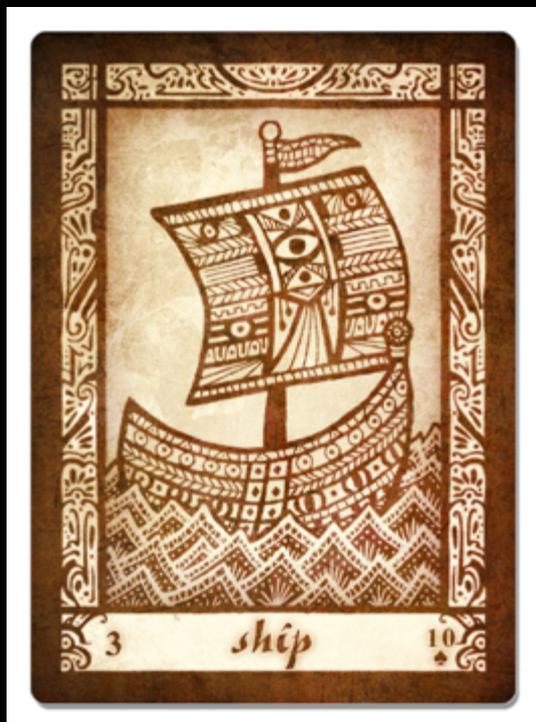
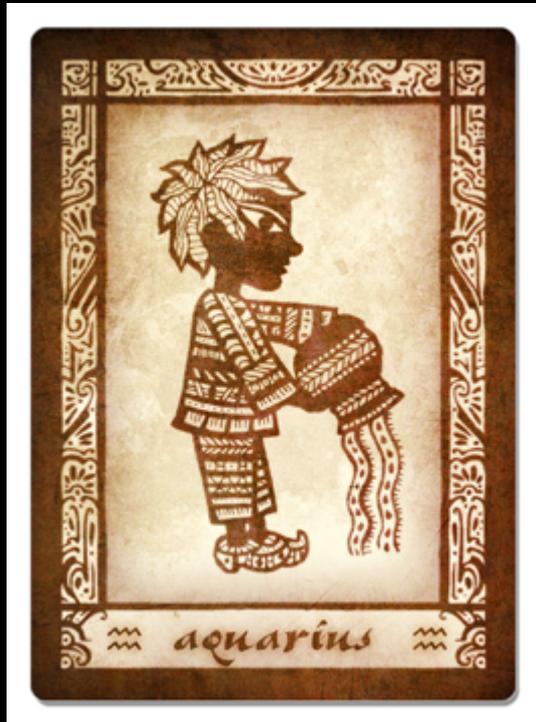
LORD OF RHYTONS



1 THE HIGH PRIEST

# ANINO LENORMAND

LYNYRD-JYM NARCISO



Anino Lenormand started out as a form of art therapy for the artist, using doodling to overcome an art block. It was drawn in coffee shops, while waiting in line, etc. — during times convenient for doodling. The striking art is inspired by shadow puppets, ethnic textile patterns, graffiti, doodles, etc. While the art looks exotic, it still closely follows the symbols of the Lenormand, and were created to still be visually identifiable at a glance, as is needed in a Grand Tableau spread. The deck's title, "Anino", means "shadow" in Filipino. The pack also contains 12 FREE zodiac cards which can be used in conjunction with the deck or as a separate oracle altogether. The deck currently has a running crowdfunding campaign in Indiegogo:

<https://www.indiegogo.com/projects/anino-lenormand-cards#/>

*Lynrd-Jym Narciso, the artist, has been creating tarot and card art for over 10 years; among them are the Vanessa Tarot, and the upcoming Tarot de Maria Celia, both published by US Games Systems, Inc.*

Good questions can often be the answer to many of life's challenges. Questions can help reveal us more clearly to ourselves and reveal our hidden thoughts, fears, desires, and biases.

This deck will help you at any step in the divination process. They can provide a profound place to start from or a way out of somewhere you got stuck along the way. The 90-Question Deck combines art with provocative questions to help unlock your wisdom in any situation.

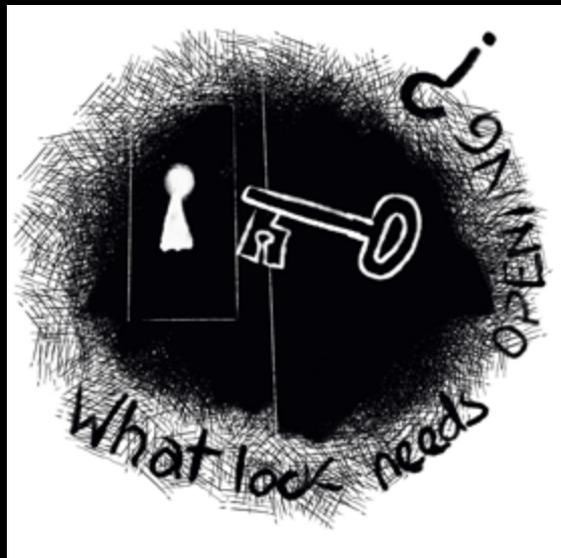
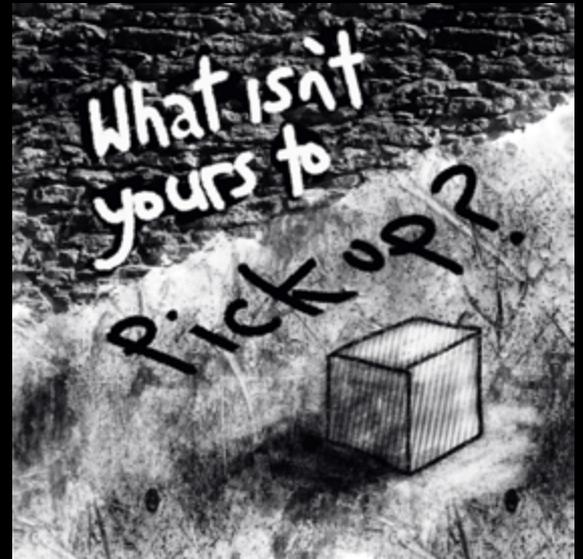
*Andrew McGregor is a servant of the mysteries of life. He spends his time helping others find their way to authentic and joyful lives. This deck was created accidentally, on purpose, by Andrews desire to draw daily when spirit stepped in to make this project come to life.*

*Available via Game Crafters and The Hermit's Lamp*

*(and coming to the Northwest Tarot Symposium too)*

# THE 90-QUESTION DECK

ANDREW MCGREGOR



# LENORMAND FRANCAIS

LYNN BOYLE



The Lenormand Francais (French Lenormand) is a 43 card deck with the normal 36 cards plus an extra FREE Man, Woman, Rider, Bouquet, Child & Mice card so the reader can customise their deck to suit their tastes or reading requirements. The extra Man & Woman cards can be used for readings on same sex relationships, business partnerships or friendships. The card titles are in both the English & French & the cards displays its associated playing card symbol. This is another Lenormand deck in my photographic & borderless series based on a themed location (the others are Byron Bay, Tasmania, Outback Australia & Ireland). The white border shown here is only for this display. Each deck comes plastic shrink-wrapped & includes a comprehensive & detailed 5 A4 page card meaning sheets all packaged an organza gift bag. This deck was released in time for Bastille Day on 14 July – with fun, colourful & slightly irreverent French images. Ongoing readers' support & exercises are posted in my Prophecy Corner study group on facebook.

*Lynn Boyle, RN, Reiki II channel & Australian Bush Flower Essence Practitioner lives in Sydney Australia.*

[www.facebook.com/Lenormand-Oracle-Cards-by-Lynn-Boyle-376106535856381/](http://www.facebook.com/Lenormand-Oracle-Cards-by-Lynn-Boyle-376106535856381/)

The Samadhi Oracle Deck is inspired by the ancient, beautiful and transcendental religion of India, Hinduism. The insights conveyed have been lovingly selected to further strengthen one's innate connection to the Divine, with the hope and prayer that the Universal wisdom, truths and love shared will not only help to serve as a life's compass whenever needed and to create an abundant flow of good things in one's life, but also to one day reach the ultimate goal of attaining the highest state of meditative consciousness, Samadhi.

The deck and accompanying guidebook are divided into 6 categories (Deities, Great Sages, Mythological Creatures, Elements of Life, Chakras and Symbols) each containing devotional poems, mantras and pearls of wisdom from the various deities, sages and ideologies.

Each Samadhi Oracle Deck contains:

- 44 fully illustrated tarot-sized cards
- a beautifully written companion book, and
- a custom tin to house the book and cards

# SAMADHI ORACLE

JESS BENJAMIN-PURMESWAR AND SAHIL PURMESWAR





Dear Naked,

To answer your question, the 5 of Wands offered its insights. In a nutshell, it's about establishing yourself in the situation. In this case the tarot reading profession. First of all, as the New Kid on the Block, the competition for clients will be fierce, but you're ready for it. What you need to decide is how you differ from all other readers. Not by comparing yourself to others but by figuring out "What best defines you?"

For example, are you more inclined to study the books and learn from the masters? Perhaps a tailored jacket and skirt would best represent your skills. You could adorn your table with attractive business cards and brochures showcasing your talent. You will need something as a table cover. Please avoid plastic table cloths with kitchen designs as they don't usually inspire confidence in others regarding your abilities.

Or did you learn from a mentor sitting comfortably at a kitchen table with a coffee cup in your grasp? If so, perhaps a clean pair of jeans and wearing a tee shirt with your contact information would be a start. You could grab your favorite kitchen table cover (not the one with the roosters or tea pots) for a reading cloth and hand letter your advertising signs. Perhaps fresh flowers from your garden and a touch of sweet grass or sage would add ambience to the décor.

Perhaps you're someone who gazes at the tarot images allowing them to speak to you on an intuitive level? In this case a more bohemian style of dress would suit your style. You could add lovely silk scarves and decorate your table with crystals. Candles are also a nice touch but keep in mind some venues frown on setting fires within the walls. If possible, showing up in a painted



wagon pulled by Gypsy Vanner Horses would make a fabulous statement.

It all comes down to allowing your presence, your space, and how you decorate (dress) yourself to make the first impression. Think of this event as your "coming out party." What colors, fabrics and ornaments make you feel confident and comfortable? Think of these as your armaments. You're making your debut. You need to 'Own' your Style.

Simply put, be yourself. Express the Authentic You. No one else is qualified to be you so you can't get it wrong. And please do not show up naked. You might catch a chill.

~The Wizard

Dear Wizard,

I've been reading tarot for several years. Recently a local fair asked me to participate as one of their official tarot readers. I have accepted and am really looking forward to it. However, it suddenly occurred to me I don't have a clue what to wear. I haven't met any of the others and have no idea how to contact them to ask. Plus, I'd feel a bit awkward calling a total stranger and asking them "What are you wearing." My question for you is, how do professional tarot readers dress?

~ Naked in New Jersey

# Articles & Stories

## JUSTICE 8, STRENGTH 11, OR STRENGTH 8, JUSTICE 11:

### WHAT'S THE REAL SCORE?, PART 3

by Eric K. Lerner

In my two preceding articles, I have analyzed the historical development of how the positions of Justice and Strength became juxtaposed. Originally, Justice most often occupied the eighth position and Strength the eleventh. That changed in 1909 when Arthur E. Waite changed them due to his interpretation of how Hebrew letters and their zodiacal associations apply to tarot. Tarot enthusiasts have debated the correctness of this move ever since.

How do the positions of Justice and Strength effect actual readings? The answer is that there are many specific spreads and reading techniques influenced. I will describe and examine four:

- Soul/Personality Card readings;
- Oswald Wirth's Interpretation of the Oracle;
- A reading's quintessence;
- The Fools Journey spread.

In "Tarot and Birth Cards," *The Cartomancer*, Volume 2, Issue 3, renowned tarot expert, Bonnie Cehovet introduced

readers to the importance of Soul and Personality cards. (Her book, *Tarot, Birth Cards and You: Keys to Empowering Yourself*, from Schiffer, is likely to become standard reference on the subject.) A Soul Card expresses the core of one's identity. It portrays the inner basis of the self. The Personality Card represents one's outward expression, how others perceive the individual.

Both are determined by adding and reducing the numbers of someone's birth date. I was taught to add the numbers of a birth date by isolating each single digit that expresses it. For December 13, 1984, I add  $1+2+1+3+1+9+8+4$  to equal 29. If I add  $2+9$  get a sum of 11. However, most contemporary readers add together whole numbers. In our example,  $12+13+1984=2009$  holds sway. Interestingly adding  $2+9$  still gives a sum of 11. In many other examples, you get the same reduced sum whichever technique is used. However there are dates for which this does not work. June 1, 1965 gives sums of 28 and 19. Out of deference for my contemporaries, I will use the later technique of addition. (I recommend choosing which works best for you. Simply test the results you get and examine if they make sense for you and your clients. You can test the other technique if you are not satisfied with your results.)

To identify Soul and Personality cards, your sum needs to be 21 or less. Both cards correspond to Major Arcana. The Fool is not appropriate for either a Soul or Personality card. If the sum exceeds 21, add the two digits together and reduce that sum. The Soul Card is represented by the ultimate reduction of the sum and the Personality Card by the higher number value. The same card may represent both.

The birth date of December 13, 1984 yields a sum of 11. To determine Soul and Personality cards, eleven is further reduced by adding  $1+1=2$ . Two represents the Soul Card, The High Priestess. The Personality Card is 11, either Strength or Justice. As a Soul Card The High Priestess indicates that

the subject is highly intuitive and may have the capacity to transcend mundane limitations. Interpretation of the Personality card is trickier because it can be either Strength or Justice. If Strength is chosen, tension may exist between Soul and Personality cards. Positively Strength as a Personality Card reflects an individual who has the capacity to balance her/his instincts. However, The High Priestess corresponds to Water and Strength to Fire. Water does not harmonize with Fire. Therefore, the individual may face challenges with impulse control or keeping his/her instincts in check. If one assigns eleven to Justice, the elemental opposition disappears because Justice corresponds to Air. The Personality Card here describes the person as well balanced, perceptive and able to make subtle adjustments. How one numbers Justice and Strength here changes how a client's outward expression is described.

Readings in which numerical values of cards are counted to realize outcomes can also be deeply effected. Oswald Wirth, whose work has been examined throughout this series, describes one as his "Interpretation of the Oracle" featured in Tarot of the Magicians. This is initially a four card Major Arcana reading used to analyze a specific question. The sum of the numbers of cards drawn reveal the overall synthesis of the answer in a fifth card. The cards are laid out in the shape of a cross, with the first card in the left, the second right, third top center, and fourth bottom center. The fifth card is determined by reducing the sum of the four cards and placed in the center. (Wirth assigns The Fool a value of twenty-two.)

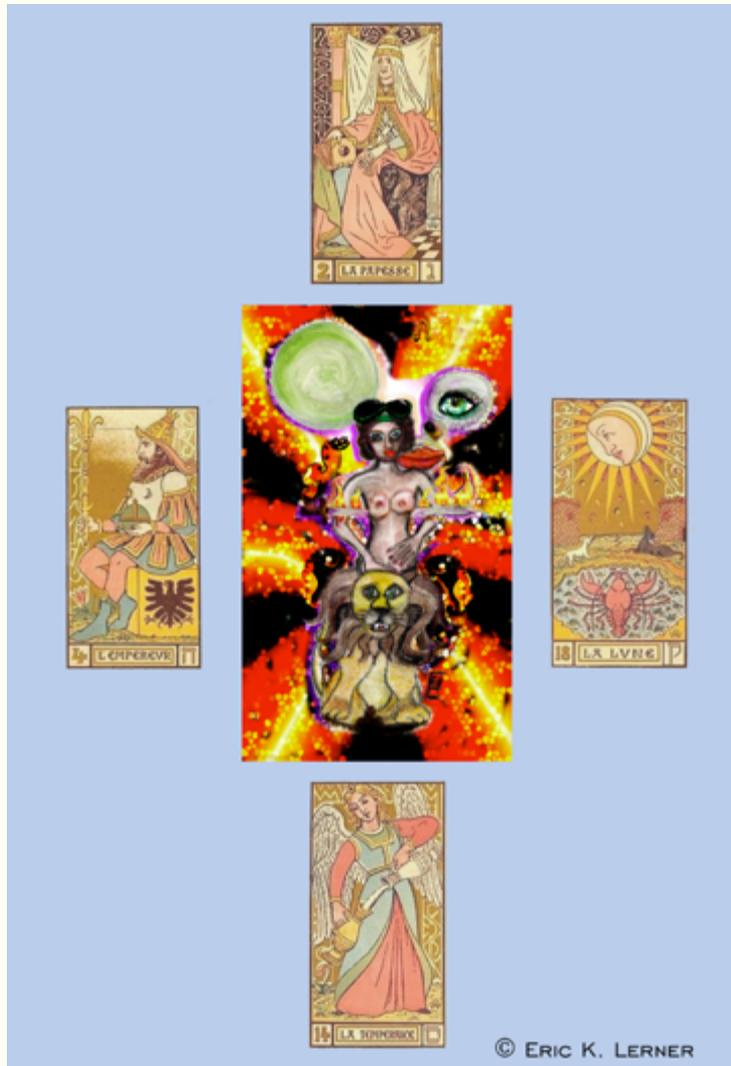
Meanings of the positions are:

1. States what favors of the question.
2. Argues what operates against the question.
3. Takes the role of a judge.
4. Determines what the verdict should be.
5. The final card is determined by the sum of the other four cards. (If the sum is 22 or less, the sum directly reveals the synthesis. If it is greater, the two digits of the sum are added and that number stands.)

In Tarot of the Magicians Wirth asks, "How should one advise a would be diviner?" The cards drawn are 1 The Emperor; 2 The Moon; 3 The Priestess; 14 Temperance. They add up to 38. That reduces to eleven, Strength, by adding 3+8. In the chapter "An Example of Interpretation" Wirth examines at length how all of the cards influence one another in this reading Think how different would Wirth's analysis be if he assigned Justice to eleven.

This reading technique is reminiscent of determining the quintessence of a reading by adding together the numbers of all the cards drawn in the spread to reveal its overall significance as a single Major Arcana. The Fool is most often counted as zero unless the reader wishes to keep him in play as the quintessence and count him twenty-two. Aces are given the value of one. Major and Minor Arcana reflect their numbers. Controversy exists as to how to enumerate court cards. Some assign them all the value of zero. Aleister Crowley assigned the Knight (King), Queen, and

Prince (Knight) each a value of four and the Princess (Page) a value of seven. The total is reduced to a value of twenty-one, twenty-two or less. Some choose to further reduce numbers between ten and twenty one to yield two Major Arcana that cross one another similar to the way the first two cards are read in a Celtic Cross spread. Again, the numbers assigned Justice and Strength can change the addition or the outcome.



*In Oswald Wirth's Interpretation of the Oracle, Strength synthesizes the other cards in the spread. How would this change if Wirth counted Justice as eleven?*

Finally, ordering of these two cards bears on the structure of tarot as a whole. This is clearly indicated by both the concept and reading spread called “The Fool’s Journey”. The sequence of Major Arcana in Tarot reveals a complete initiatory cycle of life. The Fool represents the querant. He begins his journey by encountering self-activation in the guise of the Magician and continues on his life quest to achieve ultimate realization in The World.

How do the positions of Justice and Strength influence our perception of this pilgrimage? Where they appear in the narrative arch is important. Another factor is how their elemental affinity and that of their companion cards are activated according to their essential dignity. (Many readers who favor the Thoth Tarot or sometimes Marseilles-style decks read cards according to dignity rather than employ reversed meanings.) The elemental affinity of a card determines dignity of the following card. Fire and Water oppose each other, as do Air and Earth. So if a card corresponds to Water, such as the High Priestess is followed by one of Fire, such as Strength, Strength is challenged and given a negative or “reversed” interpretation. A card’s positive meaning is enhanced if the preceding card is in the same element. Non-opposed elements do not dignify or ill-dignify cards that follow.

Assigning dignity influences the archetypal Fool’s Journey’s. In the original order of Tarot, the existential loneliness of the Hermit, whose element is Earth, is exacerbated by Justice’s Air. Justice itself is neutral because the Chariot corresponds to Water. The virtue of Strength is accentuated because The Wheel of Fortune also corresponds to Fire. However, the Hanged Man suffers more acutely because his element is Water.

In Waite’s rectified order, Strength itself is tested because of the impact of the Chariot’s fluidity. Justice is neutral because Fire (of the Wheel of Fortune) does not ill-dispose Air. The Hanged Man meditates without the tension he feels in the original sequence because Justice is Air.

The importance of the Major Arcana order is brought into sharp focus for the individual in The Fool’s Journey Spread. All twenty-two of the Major Arcana are typically laid out in either a straight line or two eleven card rows. Where the Fool appears in the spread represents where the client is in her/his life’s journey. The reader may read the spread from the beginning to examine what archetypal phenomena the client has already experienced, with the cards appearing after The Fool indicating what yet will be mastered. In addition to a card’s essential dignity is revealed by the card that precedes it, the position it holds in the spread when compared the

Major Arcana scheme is in play.

For instance, what happens if the Hanged Man appears in the eighth position in a Fool’s Journey spread? The Hanged Man’s element is water. In our spread, say the seventh card is the Hermit (Earth) and does not influence the Hanged Man’s dignity. Whether you assign Justice or Strength the eighth position does effect the Hanged Man’s signification. With Justice numbered eight, the Hanged Man is not flagged as representing an especially traumatic event in the client’s life. If you put Strength in that position it does. The Hanged Man’s meaning in the reading changes.

How Justice and Strength are placed has profound implications for how Tarot represents life’s celebrations and trials. I have examined only a few techniques and spreads to prove this. Other reading techniques, such as “Opening the Key,” also demonstrate the effects of how a reader and his/her deck place these cards. Being aware of why Justice and Strength are numbered as they are is a reader’s responsibility. It can seriously impact what you say to your clients and the overall value they find in your counsel.

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ERIC K. LERNER’S artwork has been featured in *Tarocchi Appropriati* (<http://www.arnellart.com/museodeitarocchi/msdk47.htm>) and his own *Radiant Spleen Tarot* ([www.radiantspleen.com](http://www.radiantspleen.com)). He has published many articles and essays on tarot. He has taught classes on reading the Thoth tarot for MSN’s Suite University and other groups. His e-mail is [eric\\_k\\_lerner@hotmail.com](mailto:eric_k_lerner@hotmail.com).

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# PSYCARDS

## THE NOW CARD

by Catt Foy

The Psycards deck of forty cards contains a unique feature—the four direction cards—consisting of “Yes,” “No,” “Now,” and “Never.” These cards act primarily as signals to the potential answer for yes/no questions. But their presence in a reading can carry shades of interpretation that will contribute to the overall tenor of the reading in which they appear.

In this issue’s column we will look at the potential meanings for the “Now” card.

The Now card, number 4 in the Psycards Deck, tell us that the moment is right, the time is ripe, now is the time to collect our reward. Your timing is perfect, move forward with your plans.

We see the farmer taking in his ripened wheat, the sun is shining on him as he reaps what he has sown. This is the bread of his life and he is happy to harvest it and wrap it into sheaves to last him through the winter.

The subtle message includes to take in what you have created, but remember to put aside something for a rainy day, plan for the coming winter, for there will always be times of shortage following times of abundance.

This card also implies the rhythms of the seasons, and that the farmer is wise enough to know when to harvest, when to plant and when to store.

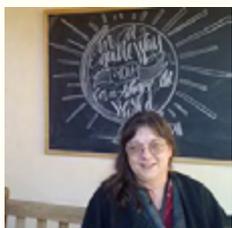
The farmer’s joy at the harvest also reminds us to be grateful for what we have gained, for the good weather, the right amount of rain and sun and the quality of the grain’s seeds. There is also a sense of pride, for the wheat takes work—planting, weeding, cultivation and attention. Be proud of your accomplishment as well as grateful.

Nick Hobson, the developer of the Psycards, reminds us that this card can also represent maturity and the culmination of a natural process. “There is a natural time for children to leave home...a long relationships matures into marriage. There is a right time to change careers, or move on, or start a new venture, because your whole experience has been building up for this to happen.” Hobson tells us to be prepared for coming opportunities.

Ignoring this card could be at the questioner’s peril. If you don’t do the work to take in the harvest now, it will rot in the field and you will have no one to blame but yourself. Take advantage of this perfect timing and you will reap the rewards.

Reversed, the Now card may tell us that our timing is off, or that we are attempting to move forward prematurely. Picked too soon, and you will not have properly ripened wheat. Picked too late and the wheat will have passed its prime. Usually when this card is reversed, it is an indicator to be patient a little longer and let the sun and the earth complete the work. Wait for the crop to ripen to perfection.

If it falls with the Never card nearby in a reading, the querent may be facing a “now or never” sort of choice. Take into account the surrounding cards—one may be required to act immediately or “forever hold his peace.”



CATT FOY introduced Psycards to the U.S. in 1988 and is the author of *Psycards—A New Alternative to Tarot*. She teaches classes, seminars, and makes appearances at mind/body/spirit events and bookstores in the western U.S. You can contact her at [psycardsusa@gmail.com](mailto:psycardsusa@gmail.com), or visit [www.psycardsusa.com](http://www.psycardsusa.com).

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# THE HANGED MAN, TRAITOR OR ACROBAT?

by Cherry Gilchrist

The Hanged Man in the traditional Marseilles pack is most often interpreted as a criminal, a traitor, or just someone who has come to a sticky end. But he may not be all that he seems at first glance. In this study of the Hanged Man, I'd like to show that his most abiding and appropriate interpretation is that of skillful acrobat.

Back in the early 1970s, when I was beginning Tarot practice and research, I spent time looking into the origins of the cards. I was armed with a pass to the British Museum Reading and Manuscripts Rooms, and also studied historic packs in the Guildhall Library, and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. At that time, precious little was available on Tarot history, and what there was tended to be either dull or very fanciful. The only other Tarot generally on sale, apart from the traditional Marseilles pack, was of course the famed Rider-Waite pack. And much as I admired and enjoyed the latter, it was the traditional cards that drew me. Their mysterious history intrigued me. As I handled the older packs, now preserved as precious objects in museums, I wondered whose hands held these centuries ago. How had they interpreted the cards, and whose fortunes had they told? The resonance of the Marseilles type of images spoke to my love of folk lore, and ancient wisdom traditions. It was a lineage that had been passed down from generation to generation. And so it awoke my curiosity as to exactly where and how these images were created.

Well, I didn't solve all the puzzles then, but I did find interesting leads which I have pursued over the years, and woven into my new book *Tarot Triumphs: Using the Marseilles Trumps for Divination and Inspiration*. And some of these findings have shaped the way in which I perceive the cards now.

It was a throwaway remark from the person who was teaching me Tarot at the time that led to a new interpretation of The Hanged Man. 'A woman I know who was out in France,' he said, 'told me that she saw someone hanging upside-down just like that. He tied himself up with a rope and did acrobatics at some country fair or other. Could be an old tradition.'

So I looked for evidence of this, and found some corroboration; then, in the last few years while preparing this book, I dug into source material again. And the evidence that I've come across certainly points this way, and leads me to share this interpretation with you now.

The Hanged Man is not suffering; he is neither malefactor nor a traitor. He is an acrobat, and performs feats of daring and skill. He is the man who is prepared to turn his world upside down and to revel in the new view that this affords him.

Let's look at the pictorial indications first within the Tarot packs. I have print-outs of approximately forty historical packs of Tarot cards, dating from the 15th to the 18th centuries. Most of these are Marseilles-style, or close cousins (space here does not allow me to define the historical Tarot 'families'). Of these forty, thirty-eight show a man who is hung by one foot, and who looks alive, alert, and not under any kind of duress or pain. Only two look doubtful in this respect, and I have seen one in a slightly later set of cards than those quoted here, who is literally hung by the neck and looks very green-faced and dead! But in the vast majority of Tarot

cards that I have surveyed, he seems poised, and is often in dancer-like pose, with one leg crooked. Curiously, four of the cards in my Tarot library of images show the Hanged Man printed the 'wrong' way up – or standing the 'right' way, depending on your perspective! This seems to have been a card designers' misunderstanding, but nevertheless he definitely looks alive and perky in these representations too. Finally,

*'Cherry Reading the Cards' by Robert Lee-Wade, RUA*



and very significantly, we have another two cards which show him actually holding weights as he is hanging. One of these is in the famous so-called Charles VI pack, lodged in the Bibliotheque Nationale in France. (It is now thought to be not a French pack from the time of Charles VI but a slightly later, 15c. Italian deck) This to me is one of the strongest indications that the Hanged Man is an acrobat; he can carry out his feats of balance, swinging and maybe somersaulting by using weights to give himself extra momentum.

There is an argument often cited that the Hanged Man represents a traitor, since hanging a man up by one foot was the Italian way of execution for treason. Perhaps he was sometimes intended to be viewed this way – after all, different lines of interpretation may have developed. But it was unlikely to be widespread, as it would not have been universally understood outside Italy, and, as we know, Tarot spread to various countries; France came to play the major part in perpetuating Tarot cards through the centuries. In any case, the argument still stands that the hanging man does not look distressed, and he is very much alive. I will also add in here a “rider“ to the Rider-Waite pack: although A.E. Waite does describe a ‘gallows’ in the image, he nevertheless perceives it as ‘a card of profound significance’, representing ‘the relation, in one of its aspects, between the Divine and the Universe’, rather than ‘a card of martyrdom’. Waite may have believed that sacrifice was involved, but he and artist Pamela Colman Smith see this ‘hanged man’ as enlightened, and resurrected; he is shown with a halo and, again, in perfect balance. So, it seems to me, that they also sought some meaning in the Hanged Man beyond the desolate sense of him as a dead or dying wrong-doer.

## THE ROPE-HANGING TRADITION

So what other evidence is there that this pole-hanging or rope-acrobatics was a sport, and a feat of skill? Joseph Strutt’s noted compendium, *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* gives various significant examples of rope-dancing as a sport fit to entertain kings. Often it was carried out high up in the air, with ropes or cables tied to the highest tower or house in the town. (We can reasonably equate the tight rope with a pole, as both were used for the same sort of feats; the pole may have been more practical for smaller-scale, lower-height stunts, and vice versa.) Strutt’s book was published in 1801, but he cites historic records from much earlier periods, and his examples include some from France, so this is a European rather than just a British phenomenon. But it’s this one, quoted below, that struck me most particularly –

and note that although the rope-dancing is in London, the acrobat is stated to be ‘a native of Arragon’, which was a kingdom of Northern Spain bordering France, so this takes us more into early Tarot territory, geographically speaking.

The display took place in February 1546, and was set up to entertain King Edward VI as his procession passed by St Paul’s Church in London. After a first set of acrobatic feats, the man ran to the king, kissed his foot, and started again:

‘He went upwards on the rope till he came over the midst of the churchyard; where he, having a rope about him, played certain mysteries on the rope, as tumbling, and casting one leg from another. Then he took the rope, and tied it to the cable, and tied himself by the right leg a little space beneath the wrist of the foot, and hung by one leg a certain space, and after recovered himself again with the said rope and unknit the knot and came down again.’

This is almost a perfect image of the Tarot Hanged Man showing the very peak of his skill.

I can add to this an image from the Czech author Comenius OrbisPictus, an encyclopaedia for children that he wrote in 1658. Picture CXXXI (no. 131) shows various ‘Sleights’, as he calls them, of acrobatics and tumbling. Among them is skill



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on the rope: ‘The Rope-dancer goeth and danceth upon a Rope, holdetha Poise...or hangeth himself by the hand or foot’ (original italics). So hanging from a rope was considered one of the feats of showmen and acrobats. And note that Comenius and Strutt’s account use the words ‘mysteries’ and ‘sleights’. Our Hanged Man is no ordinary gymnast, but one that can amaze and mystify the crowd. He may perform to royalty. He is a man of daring, perhaps working at great height – and he dares to confront the world upside down, to brave a complete reversal. Here we enter the realm of its interpretation in Tarot; here, in my view, is the real essence of the Hanged Man.

Before going on to my final example, it’s worth mentioning that medieval travelling players or jongleurs as they were often known in France, may have had a hand either in creating Tarot or providing striking images that the early Tarot makers used in the design of their packs. As I show in the book, The Fool, The Magician, The Wheel of Fortune, Strength (female lion-tamers were known at the time!) and the Hanged Man can all fall in this category. There is also further speculation, but which needs much more research, that the mystical traditions of Sufism and Kabbalah may have been transmitted through Spain and southern France by the troubadours and jongleurs, and the inheritors of their knowledge, and that this in turn may have been connected to the creation of the earliest Tarot packs. Who better than strolling players to be the bearers of an esoteric tradition? What better way to demonstrate it than through songs, performances, stories and ‘sleights’?

However, back to the specific question of the Hanged Man. Finally, I came across an unexpected survival of the tradition of cross-pole and rope acrobatics, known as ‘the Tarlà’. It’s a custom that persists in Girona, in Northern Spain, and which dates back to the 14th century. During this period, there were terrible outbreaks of plague, and the city had to be sealed off from the rest of the world. As this blog source says: “During the weeks or months that they were cut off from all their fellow citizens some of the residents decided to cheer up their neighbours with displays of acrobatics from poles erected between the narrow buildings.” This has been commemorated ever since in

the Festival of the Tarlà, when a life-size figure is suspended from a pole set across the street. Girona lies close to the French border, and a relatively short trip from Marseilles, later one of the centres of Tarot card production. So again, it’s a geographical fit.

The Hanged Man, I suggest, is an emblem of the clever acrobat, and symbolises skill and versatility. In a more archetypal sense, he may also come to mean the initiate, who has to be ‘turned upside down’ to enter a new world, just as Odin hung on the World Tree for nine days and nights in order to acquire divine knowledge. This is where we can, if we wish, join forces with the Rider-Waite interpretation of the Hanged Man. And, in any case, the history and tradition of rope and pole acrobatics allows us to restore a positive and potent meaning to the Hanged Man. He can be reprieved from any criminal charge.

Article images and text © Cherry Gilchrist

A. E. Waite, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot* (Rider & Son 1911)

Strutt’s book can be found online, eg at [https://openlibrary.org/books/OL7032017M/The\\_sports\\_and\\_pastimes\\_of\\_the\\_people\\_of\\_England](https://openlibrary.org/books/OL7032017M/The_sports_and_pastimes_of_the_people_of_England) or <http://sacred-texts.com/neu/eng/spe/index.htm>

<http://gironablog.blogspot.co.uk/2008/05/some-girona-legends-tarl.html>.



CHERRY GILCHRIST is known for her books on divination, alchemy and mythology. She first came across Tarot in 1968 and has now put a lifetime’s learning into her new book ‘Tarot Triumphs’, in which she introduces the ‘Fool’s Mirror’ divination system. Cherry lives in Devon, UK. [www.cherrygilchrist.co.uk](http://www.cherrygilchrist.co.uk)



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# ETTEILLA: THE GODFATHER OF MODERN TAROT READERS

by Sherryl E. Smith

Etteilla was a whirlwind of cartomantic activity in pre-Revolutionary Paris. He wrote books on card reading, ran a school, designed his own deck, and studied alchemy and hermeticism while maintaining a busy schedule of astrology and card readings for clients.

In 1770 he wrote the first book we know of on reading with playing cards. In 1783, he wrote the first book on how to read tarot cards, *La Manière de se récréer avec le jeu de cartes nomées tarot* (How to Amuse Yourself with a Deck of Cards Called Tarot). Although tarot was a serious spiritual path for Etteilla, he felt he had to keep the book title light and whimsical to get it past the government censors. His books have never been translated into English, which is just as well as his writing style is rather convoluted and difficult to understand.

In 1788 he organized the first Tarot society, *Société des Interpretes du Livre de Thoth*; and two years later he and his son opened a school of tarot, astrology, magic and related subjects. At this time he also designed his own deck to embody his belief that tarot was invented in ancient Egypt to transmit hermetic teachings in the form of a 78-page pictorial book.

a private collection. The following year he published a book of divinatory meanings for his cards, making it the first ever deck-book set.

## BIOGRAPHY

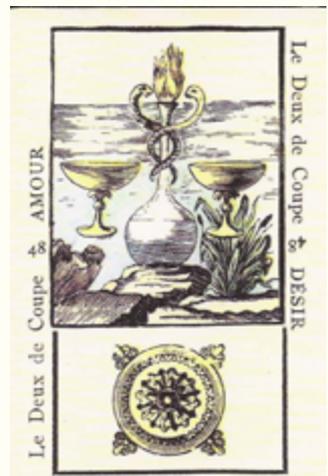
Etteilla was born in Paris in 1738 to a family of grocers and caterers. His given name was Jean-Baptiste Alliette, but he called himself Etteilla (his name spelled backward) once he began reading cards professionally. He had a very modest education and started his adult life as a seed merchant. Later he dealt in antique prints and imported tarot decks.

He learned card reading in the 1750s from some elderly Italians, and started his publishing career in the 1770s.



The 1780s were his most active period when he published numerous books and pamphlets on astrology, alchemy, and palmistry, while simultaneously operating a school and seeing clients. In 1785 he was one of the delegates to a convention of Masonic and hermetic lodges, along with Cagliostro, Mesmer and other important figures in the esoteric scene. He once said he didn't belong to any lodges and he believed that a lot of what went on in them was foolish. But his philosophy was very much in line with their teachings, and they respected him enough to invite him to speak at their conference.

A few months before he died in 1791 he published a book summarizing all of his ideas on card reading. The same year, one



A limited number of copies were engraved and distributed to Etteilla's students. All that remains today is a partial deck in

of his students published a book of divinatory meanings for his deck. After his death some of his most prominent students squabbled over the right to continue his school. Etteilla had designated a successor, but another student seized his private papers, started selling his remaining decks, and set himself up as the official successor.

### ETTEILLA'S LEGACY

Etteilla popularized the idea that tarot embodies wisdom transmitted from ancient Egypt. He embroidered on this story, which had been making the rounds of esoteric circles for decades, by saying tarot was designed by a committee of seventeen magi presided over by Hermes Trismegistus. The images were inscribed on leaves of gold and deposited in a temple in Memphis. His own deck was designed to purge tarot of later corruptions of the original Egyptian imagery. The ideas behind his deck engendered a lineage of Egyptian-themed decks.

About fifty percent of the divinatory meanings A.E. Waite assigned to the minor arcana of his deck were copied directly from Etteilla. Some examples that were illustrated by P. C. Smith: the Four of Swords as retreat, solitude, or a tomb; the Six of Cups as nostalgia for times gone by; the Three of Wands as starting an enterprise; and the Two of Cups as love, affection and attraction.

Etteilla's techniques are the basis of modern tarot reading: using reversals, laying out cards in spreads and reading an integrated story, and assigning different areas of life to the suits, such as misfortune to the swords.

### WHY ETTEILLA GETS SO LITTLE RESPECT

I blame Eliphas Levi for beginning the Etteilla-bashing tradition, which was continued by A. E. Waite and his contemporaries. Even though both Levi and Waite happily used Etteilla's philosophy and his divinatory meanings, they looked down their noses at him, calling him a hairdresser and

fortune teller. They pointed out the grammar and spelling mistakes in his books and concluded he was a lower class, minimally educated ignoramus. They were appalled by how Etteilla cavalierly changed the order of the major arcana cards. His deck and books refer to alchemy, astrology, and hermetic philosophy, but not the Hebrew alphabet and Kabbalah that were so important to most occultists. In their eyes, this made him seem more like a fringe lunatic than a serious student of esoteric subjects. Waite was offended because Etteilla made a nice living giving readings with the sacred tarot. Yet, somewhat hypocritically, Waite's book *The Pictorial Key to Tarot* contains nearly 150 pages of divinatory meanings and spreads.

Etteilla's brand of tarot did not outlive the small band of students that carried on with his teachings after his death. Perhaps his deck was too personal and individualistic to catch on. Occultism of the 18th and 19th century was steeped in Kaballah, pushing Etteilla's alchemical and hermetic teachings to the margins.

### HIS DECK TODAY

It's a testament to Etteilla's popularity that after his death his name was given to several decks which had very little to do with him. The deck that's closest to Etteilla's original design is published by Grimaud (see below). The Lismon deck is a redrawn Etteilla deck with his keywords in the margins. It was originally published by Simon-Francoise Blocquel in 1838, and versions were published throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century. New reproductions of the deck can be found from time to time.

Opportunities for learning to read with Etteilla's deck are rather limited. The booklet that comes with the Grimaud deck has divinatory meanings in French and English. It also gives several rather complex, supposedly ancient Egyptian spreads that were probably invented by Etteilla. A French book by E. San Emeterio published in 1977 gives detailed



meanings for each card that are distantly related to those in the Grimaud booklet. Etteilla's own book, *La manière de se recréer*... has almost nothing on divination; rather it's a rambling discourse on the true teachings handed down from Hermes Trismegistus. He discusses some individual cards, but not in a way that would help with actual cartomancy.

Etteilla was living proof of how tarot could be a respectable, multi-faceted profession. He showed that there is no dichotomy between reading the cards and seeing them as a book of wisdom. His practices are the foundation of modern card-reading techniques, and without his dedication, the tarot scene would be very different today.

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*Illustrations:*

*Grand Etteilla Egyptian Gypsies Tarot. Cartomancie Grimaud/France Cartes, 1977. Page of Swords, 6 of Coins, #13 Marriage.*  
*Z. Lismon Etteilla by Green Tree Tarot (Molly Khan), 2012. Two of Cups.*  
*Title Page from La Manière de se recréer avec le jeu de cartes nomées tarot, Paris, 1783.*  
*Engraved portrait of Etteilla at work. Frontispiece from Cours théorique et pratique du livre du Thot, 1790.*

*Reference:*

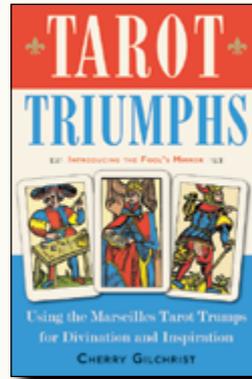
*A Wicked Pack of Cards: The Origins of the Occult Tarot. Ronald Decker, Thierry dePaulis and Michael Dummett. St. Martins Press, New York, 1996.*



SHERRYL E. SMITH writes about tarot history, reviews decks and books of historical interest, and offers readings at [www.tarot-heritage.com](http://www.tarot-heritage.com). Her website is a resource for exploring tarot's 550-year history, and for learning to read with the Tarot de Marseille and other historic decks.

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# THE MOON IS FULL

## REFLECTIONS ON THE EVOLUTION OF CARTOMANCY

by Monica Bodirsky

Slipping my herbal brew by the light of the full moon, I ponder a journey with oracle decks and reflect on the history of cartomancy. A timeline of mental images race through my mind. The persecution of those who clung to ancient spiritual beliefs, the formation of impenetrable secret societies, Victorian occultists, mind-expanding hippies and then, pop-culture receptivity to the supernatural. With television shows from the 60's and 70's such as the Addams Family, the Munsters, The Sixth Sense, and, Night Gallery, a new and approachable, even harmless, point of view of the paranormal began. Mass marketing mysticism as entertainment continued with 'Green Ghost' an entertaining glow-in-the-dark board game to, 'Kabala' – the all-knowing and seeing eye game, to the ubiquitous 'Ouija Board'. While many serious adepts may not have found this palatable, and felt that entertainment minimized the true spirituality of esoteric teachings, pop culture nevertheless, introduced a whole new generation to the paranormal and tools of divination that were previously unacceptable and inaccessible.

I recall a Rider-Waite deck gifted to me at eleven from a friend who didn't like it, as well as using reprints of the 1903 'Gypsy' Witch Fortune Telling Playing Cards in the 70's, the title of which still makes me cringe because I am part Romani. While the pop aspect of mysticism lead me to actually learn about esoteric teachings, I was also spending every waking moment making art. Art, earth-based spirituality and my love

of cards have grown and evolved side by side from passion to a profession and I continue to collect the most amazing art from oracle card artists.

In 2010, while my husband and I were on a trip to Cambridge, MA, we happened to walk into an old style tobacco shop in Harvard Square where we discovered re-prints of the original Blue Owl Lenormand deck printed by AG Müller. I scooped them up right away, along with an Art Deco Lenormand re-print, not having seen them for quite a while, and introduced these into my regular readings for clients.

As I turn over Lenormand cards during a reading, I often see a smile and nod from people when before a single word can escape my lips. At a glance, these familiar symbols are easy to interpret, and speaks to people in a way that words cannot.

One example of a fairly common icon used in many styles of decks is the moon. Though a drawing of a moon is a single, simple and easily recognized image, depending on the context, it contains many nuances and layers of meaning. In the Lenormand deck, it is often read as representing a person with a well-established reputation. A reputation so grand, that it continues to shine throughout the night like the full moon. If this is just too simple for you, you can also use the accompanying deck numbers. The Lenormand moon's number is 32, which reduces to five and can represent marriage, peace, harmony, and change. The corresponding playing card to this deck's moon is the 8 of hearts, which, in playing card divination, refers to a celebration or party invitation. Also, the

reference to moonlighting or holding two jobs comes to mind. Reading by proximity, if the moon card is close to the seeker card it signifies a solid reputation, if far away, the reputation of the seeker may be diminished. There are many layers often overlooked in Lenormand cards because of their immediacy.

While tarot imagery is more familiar to many people, the layered symbols and action within the scenery can make the art or meaning of the card seem comparatively obscure. When I've asked my tarot clients about their use of oracle



From left to right, the Moon cards from Buckland's Romani, The Tarot of Prague, the Blue Owl Lenormand with rhyme and the Nr. 1941 Mlle. Lenormand Cartomancy Deck.

cards compared to tarot, many say they sense that tarot cards are elite, too complex or are specialized information. With Lenormand symbolism, there is little doubt that the heart symbol speaks about compassion, or the key symbol about access.

When considering pop culture and its use of tarot marketed as a game, is important to acknowledge that tarot and Lenormand cards began as a pastime, not as tools for divination. European tarot, as we know it, started as hand painted cards known as Tarocchi, a game played by nobles similar to bridge or euchre, in 1400's Milan. Lenormand cards originated in the late 1700's as a working class 36-card game that involved rolling the die and moving markers the

– 36 cards) after Mademoiselle Anne Marie Lenormand, the infamous court seer to Napoleon and Josephine. Mlle. Lenormand supposedly used these cards along with the Astro-Mythological Grand Jeu du Destin (The Great Lenormand — 54 cards) and, most likely several other available decks at that time.

Throughout the 1800's and into the 1900's tarot continued to gain exposure and status amongst occultists and mystics, some of whom remained loyal to the theory that all of our collective arcane knowledge originated in or around Egypt, the Middle East and includes eastern philosophies in general. Lenormand cards kept a relatively low profile as a harmless parlour game of divination, in part due to its inclusion of the Christian cross as card number thirty-six.



*The Astro-Mythological cards known as Le Grand Jeu de Destin (1976 originally published in 1890 by Grimaud of Paris) and the Gypsy Witch Fortune Telling Cards a variant of the Lenormand cards (reprints from 1976 originally published 1904 by Home Game Co. currently by US Playing Card Co.)*

There is sometimes a criticism of the proliferation of decks or of the new art in Tarot, Lenormand and Oracle cards which is often called too themed, whimsical, blunt or lacking in any real depth. There is often a resistance to change when a dialogue of tradition occurs and there very well may be new generations of readers who know nothing about the early roots of tarot or any cards. All valid opinions, but whether we like this progression or not, cartomancy is a living, breathing creature with as many heads as the legendary Hydra. To try to cut off any of those heads that don't live up to the highbrow concept of complexity or exclusivity is pointless. Reading oracle cards is a booming business and collectors, students and teachers of divination, as well as psychotherapists consistently purchase specialty decks. Created in a comprehensive array of themes, shapes, sizes, styles and colours to suit everyone's needs and

corresponding number of spaces.

During the rise of Christianity the fear of heresy and devils was rampant, along with witch trials and persecution, many items deemed socially unacceptable remained hidden from view. Card games would have provided an excellent cover for those using them as tools for divination, something many organized, monotheistic religions did and continue not to tolerate. While tarot evolved within the occultist movement (1700's – 1900's), the Lenormand deck remained a lesser-known entity re-named from "Das Spiel der Hoffnung" (the Game of Hope) to le Petit Lenormand (Small Lenormand

tastes, all decks rely on visual symbolism as their means of communication, despite the little white book of instructions.

The range of artwork in cards is staggering in its variety of styles, themes or concepts, and as such has become highly personalized. Raymond Buckland's 'Buckland Romani Tarot deck' takes the standard tarot moon card complete with a river and crayfish but adds the vardo, or Romani wagon to it's imagery rendering it culturally specific. Pictured in the Tarot of Prague's moon card is an iconic statue from the city of the same name for those who are attracted to this location, and the Blue Owl Lenormand has an accompanying rhyme

to assist with it's moon card which reads; "The slumbering moon when it rises near, means great honors are bound to appear. When moon beams fade the omens grow ill, remorse will invade with an unpleasant chill." These variations will appeal to a wide audience and the wider the audience the more accessible and widely used cards have become. From oracle decks hidden from view to avoid persecution, to the exclusivity and elitism of occultist sects, to pop culture democracy, the people who use and create them along with cards, have made an impressive journey.

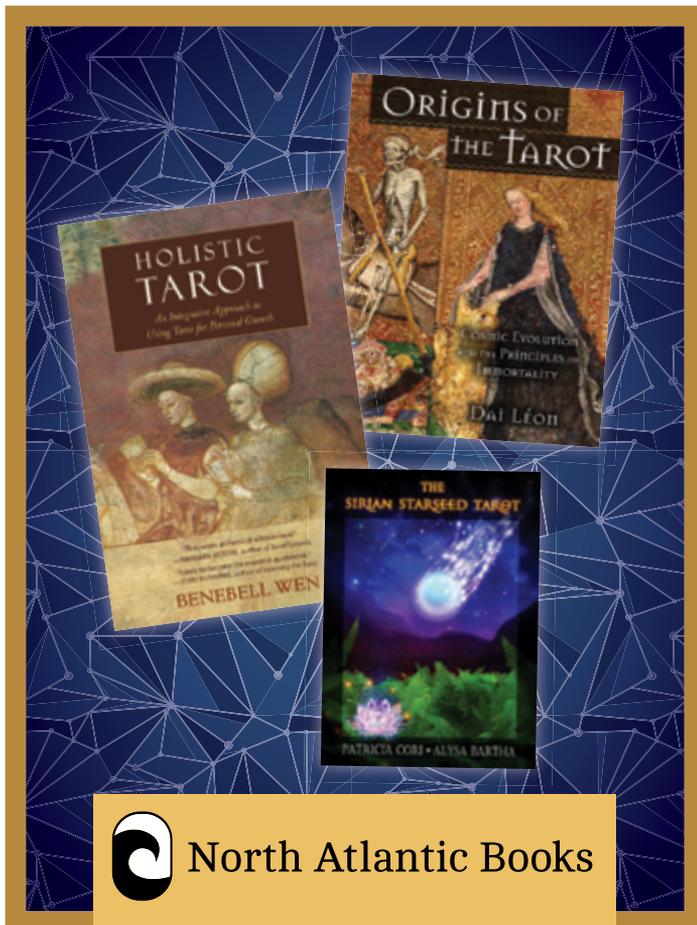
For me art, spirituality and cartomancy are inextricable. They are an integrated way of seeing and being. For some, art is appreciated but a separate component from their reading practice and they may choose instead to read with a single deck with which they have a very intimate relationship. For me, this would be akin to re-reading the same book over and over for forty years. Also, I see the artist of a deck and the reading client as active collaborators in the process. I place several decks on the table for a client to choose from to encourage an active and inclusive dialogue. To me this is also an acknowledgement that individuals may choose their own destiny.

In design, the purpose of art is to communicate to a wide audience of people who don't necessarily want to study art theory but appreciate the clarity and ease of reading symbolism. It can, and often does reach a client at a gut level through a deep sense of knowing that bypasses logic. Though not considered as prestigious as intellectual knowledge, few would argue that intuitive intelligence is equally important when seeking a balanced point of view.

The variety of designers and artists who have created oracle decks from the simplest line drawings to the most complex and beautiful oil paintings is staggering. Each new deck has a story it carries from the artist and when it comes to us we add to the dialogue through use.

Some purists will resist, others will welcome the influx and, regardless of your position, tarot cards continue to diversify, Lenormand has made a comeback, and oracle decks still flourish. Cartomancy is an ongoing and evolving conversation about divination, culture, psychology, spirituality, and art that is accessible to everyone, and represents the democratization of previously exclusive information.

© *Monica Bodirsky*



MONICA BODIRSKY is an award-winning Toronto artist who exhibits work nationally and internationally. She is an advisor, creativity consultant, community activist, and teaches at OCAD University in Toronto where she received her Bachelors Degree in design.

# HOW A VINTAGE EROTICA TAROT DECK CAME TO BE MADE

(BECAUSE MEN NEVER THROW AWAY PORN)

by Claire-Marie le Normand

Encourage anyone with an interest in art and magic to create their own tarot deck. You don't need to create one to sell, because printing is expensive and you are likely not to make your money back. However, the process of creating an image for each card will forever change your relationship to the tradition and your own practice.

I created *Le Tarot des Femmes Erotiques*. This vintage erotica tarot came to be after playing a version of "Go Fish." My housemates and I were using a deck of so-called "vintage nude playing cards" with images dating from the 1970s. Instead of asking "Do you have any 7s?" We would say "Do you have a naked lady wearing a scarf?" or "Do you have a naked lady laying in the water?" or "Do you have a naked lady looking like someone just called her name?" As we continued to play, I realized that our silly questions were inspired by obvious and not-so-obvious symbols we saw in the cards. I saw that and a profane deck could also also function as tarot.

I had long wanted to create my own tarot deck, and since I do not draw, I knew it would be photographic. After my epiphany with the vintage nudes, I decided to use erotic images, but not with porn from the 1970s, because I didn't like that kind of porn.

As soon as the internet happened, just like everyone else, I looked for porn that I liked, and I found that I liked the

photographs of nude women which were created before WWI, between around 1900 and 1915. The Last of the Victorians. The steampunk style quotes from this period. Photography was 50 years old, and by that time printing technology had evolved and images could be duplicated so cheaply that the world experienced a picture postcard explosion.

And this is why so many of these images that survive. There were millions of them. While the original "naughty French postcards" are relatively expensive now, their scanned reproductions can be purchased quite cheaply by the gigabyte.

I decided to make a 78-card tarot deck after finding a few cards I knew would work as tarot cards. (In the deck they include "The Chariot," "The Moon," "Queen of Wands.") But I had to find the rest. Which meant I looked at at least ten thousand images, an exercise that was both tedious and mildly arousing.

Given the unconventional images, what makes this a "tarot deck"? I deliberately kept the four suits and the trumps, and I kept most of the names, changing a few in keeping with the all-woman imagery. I chose images that reflect the Rider-

Waite deck because that is the one most people are familiar with. Discovering echos of familiarity is something that people find delightful.

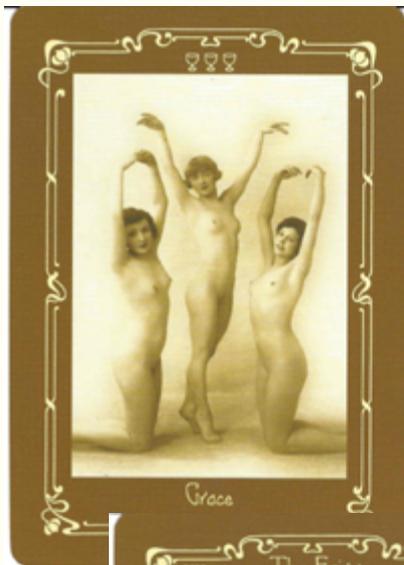
I have a background in publishing, and even though the technologies have changed in the last 30 years, the principles have not. I contacted both American and Chinese printers, and chose "Quality Playing Cards" in Florida because I needed to make sure that I had clear

communications. Don't use a printer you can't talk to on the phone; a cheaper price is just not worth it. This was one of the best decisions I made. The cards were printed in China, but the printer handled the problems. They also provided me a layout template so that they could create the box and print the cards. I did not want to pay for expensive layout software from Adobe, so I chose open source versions: Inkscape and GIMP. These applications were easy to learn, and had all the features I needed. I bought a used Mac Air for \$750 because my current computer couldn't manipulate the images. (Five years later, it is still my only computer. The Mac Air is the best computer I've had in 25 years.)



For each card I wrote a caption, because I thought that the deck might attract people unfamiliar with tarot, and would want to have path toward interpreting the card. The captions are the abbreviations I had come to after years of study. Early influences on my practice are *A Feminist Tarot*, by Sally Gearhart and Susan Rennie, *The Thoth Tarot*, by Lon Milo DuQuette, *The Secrets of the Tarot*, by Barbara Walker, and *The Little Black Book of Tarot* by Nanette Stone.

Since creating the deck in 2011, I have had many experiences where I have passed the cards around a circle of women who commented on them. For many straight women, they have not ever been in a room full of women and yet been mildly aroused, and the experience is exhilarating. Many women see the card as a mirror, comparing their own bodies to that of the woman in the card. Some women see the card as a window or a door, and want to put themselves in the image. This last response is common with tarot cards in general, and an approach for exploring the meaning of any tarot card. Many straight men who view the deck have often just shuffled through it and then handed it back to me slightly embarrassed. One man said “Why would I want to look at that? She must be dead,” which was a startling view into his interior life. Many people of both sexes respond to the images in the cards as



art appreciation; seeing the image as a tarot image, as an historical photograph, and as a composition.

Tarot artists have the good fortune of putting their work into the esoteric world, and continuing to learn how others adopt it in their divination. I have made wonderful relationships with pagan stores who carry the deck.

There is a group on Facebook called “Save Our Lady Beards” where I learned about the “Lady Beard Oracle” by Ania Marczyk. Using my deck, you ask a Yes/No question and turn over a card. If you cannot see a lady beard, the answer is “no.” If you can, the answer is “yes.” If you can see more than one, the answer is “emphatically yes.”

The Sacred Well is a pagan store in Oakland California that celebrates Aphrodite rites monthly, and the deck is part of the procession that opens the ritual. Each month a card from this deck is drawn as the oracle for that month’s observance and devotion to Aphrodite.

The real women depicted on the cards are unknown to us. Perhaps we can pretend to glimpse their individuality in these images, and imagine their unconventional lives. At this historical distance, they have become archetypes as is any tarot card, in the endless tradition of beauty, and history, and magic.



CLAIRE-MARIE LE NORMAND--a pseudonym--is a 50-something lesbian in Santa Cruz who has recently retired from her technical career and now spends her days making her own dreams come true. [www. BeautyHistoryMagic.com](http://www.BeautyHistoryMagic.com)

© Claire-Marie le Normand

# THE SEANCE

From PCS The Novel by Cynthia Tedesco

Would her ship go down? Ellen Terry, creator, leading diva and entrepreneurial marvel of The Lyceum Theatre, was to sail from New York City to England in less than a week and was having nightmares of falling into the ocean amidst ear shattering explosions. Then all was blackness.

She had belonged, at one time or another, to both The British and American Societies For Psychical Research. While skeptical of mediums as a 'performance,' she was convinced that Eusapina Pallidino of Italy and America's Leonora Piper could, from time to time, contact the spirit world. She was hoping that she might get in touch with one or both of them. She had cabled her dear friend and sometimes protégé, Pamela Colman Smith, in an effort to procure an objective tarot reading regarding the ship. Would the ship be blasted to pieces by one of Germany's new submarines said to be off the coasts of America and Britain? Worse, could 'friendly fire' attack the ship? Ellen did not doubt that anything was possible. Friends in both British and American Naval Intelligence had apprised her of new, terrifying developments in Naval warfare. All of Europe, indeed America as well, was in the process of testing this machine of destruction and death.

Pamela never received Ellen's cable for it was sent to her flat in London and she was now at Ellen's country estate,

Smallhythe Place near Kent, with Ellen's children, Edy and Craig. As a dear friend of the family, Pamela had begged for work and was hired as Nanny for the much younger Craig. Pamela was totally strapped for cash and this gave her a chance to earn a little while at the same time expanding on her Minor Arcana of the Tarot, as the area was rich in historical and religious imagery.

Ellen Terry had only days to cancel her ship and procure another. She attempted to contact Mrs. Piper through a devoted member of The British Psychical Research Society, Arthur Conan Doyle, famous throughout the English-speaking world for his detective stories. Dr. Doyle obliged her by requesting Eusapina Pallidino to hold a Séance for him as he could not get Mrs. Piper to 'sit' for him as the primary questioner would not be present. Eusapina was currently touring England so he took the liberty of engaging her instead. Palladino was both famous and infamous. He himself had faith in her Séance but his friend, Harry Houdini, felt mediums in general and Palladino in particular, to be a fraud.

Wealth has many advantages. Ellen, who was an extremely rich woman, purchased yet another ticket on a second ship, The New Yorker. It was sailing the day after her original booking of The Mauretania, the sister ship of The Lusitania and The Lusitania's competitor. She cabled Dr. Doyle with the names of her ships in the hope Eusapina would be able to report that both would sail without incident.

Dr. Doyle invited several people to his home for the Palladino Séance. Houdini declined. Doyle sent his car all the way to Smallhythe Place to have Edy and Pamela attend the Séance. Little Craig was left with the housekeeper.

Pamela was enthused to be at the Séance. Her mother had hosted many a Séance and Ouija board session in their Brooklyn home. Indeed, Pamela's family were members of The Church of Swedenborg, which was steeped in the beliefs of the afterlife and the visions of the spirit world.

Eusapina showed up several hours before the Séance was to take place. She, and her small entourage, wanted to prepare the room in which the Séance was to be held. Dr. Doyle, his family, guests and staff could not enter his study where the Séance was to occur, until told to do so. All complied. Finally Eusapina was ready to start.

The study was dark. Eusapina sat at a small, circular table lit by a single candle. Her translator stood to the side of the eager audience. Eusapina's face shone in its singular light. Suddenly her face became contorted and she began to ask, in Italian, for the names of the persons in question.



Dr. Doyle explained that it was not a person but a question of a journey from New York City to England. “Would the ships’ voyages go smoothly? Is there danger? Please tell us of the fates of The Mauretania and The New Yorker.”

As soon as Dr. Doyle uttered The Mauretania, Eusapina seemed to be strangling and struggling, her arms waving above her head, her face turning blue. As this was going on Pamela grinned inwardly as she had a brainstorm for her depiction of The Seven of Cups from her sense of what she was observing. The Sola Busca Tarot’s Ten of Cups came to mind. She had seen many mediums work in her mother’s parlor. In addition to The Golden Dawn’s Kabbalistic and Astrological associations, amongst many others, Pamela saw her Seven of Cups in relation to what was going on in front of her. The Séance provides hope for eternal life and possible answers to pressing life circumstances. It also had a reputation for fakery and fleecing grieving parents, children and lovers. Pamela had witnessed it all in her mother’s parlor many times.

Dr. Doyle heard Eusapina say, “—tania, —tania.” Then she slumped down to the floor. Smelling salts were given to her and her translator asked her what the spirits had told her. She just shook her head and refused to speak. But she was weeping and clutching at Dr. Doyle who had rushed to her side when she collapsed.

Arthur Doyle was convinced The Mauritania was in danger and Ellen should not board it. He paid Eusapina a handsome sum, grateful for the advanced warning. Arthur cabled Ellen, telling her to take The New Yorker.

Ellen boarded The New Yorker with enthusiasm... her fears had abated since Arthur Doyle’s cable. She had warned friends of possible impending doom for The Mauretania but was gently chided for being superstitious and foolish.

Her voyage was splendid as was the voyage for those aboard The Mauretania. It would be years before Ellen, Doyle and all others attending the Séance that day understood that it was



The Lusitania that Eusapina had seen through the spirits. The Lusitania would be sunk by a German submarine. Almost everyone aboard would perish. This Naval event would cause the United States to join a beleaguered England to fight in WWII.

The spirits had tried to communicate and help avoid the tragedy. Eusapina had done her best.

Pamela’s family frequented The Spiritualist Church in New York City after

moving to Brooklyn in the heyday of its trance mediums and dedication to progressive ideals. Abolition and women’s suffrage were amongst the causes the Church took up along with natural healing methods. Pamela had heard horror stories of American and British women facing incarceration in insane asylums because of their religious beliefs as well as their homeopathic threat to an organizing Medical profession that did not admit women, let alone women without the rigorous education and professional scrutiny that doctors were establishing.

Victorian America and England believed women were to be held to the same legal standing as children and slaves. In other words, women were powerless and Spiritualist women were hysterical ‘Mediumaniacs,’ a term liberally applied to the ‘Trance and Materialistic Medium Phenomenon’. Pamela was privy to Spiritualism’s historic dangers and while she herself was able to enter the trance state particularly in service to her art, she was careful to describe her work as, in part, attributable to her senses doing double duty as a synesthetic. Synesthesia did not carry the stigma of the terms ‘trance’ or ‘medium.’ She clung to her ideal of women’s suffrage and felt her life was in keeping with an independent woman’s rightful place in the world.

Once, with a friend from Pratt, Pamela tried ‘Spirit Writing’ using a planchette with a pencil inserted at the tip of a heart shaped wooden board on casters. The girls were, each in their turn, so successful they frightened themselves laughing and crying at the same time. The planchette had swerved out of Pamela’s hands and went flying to smash against the wall of the dining room. Mr. Smith came running when he heard the crash, “What in Heaven’s name are you girls doing? What was that noise?”

He saw the broken planchette on the floor and scooped it up. “I expect you to stop this nonsense immediately!”

Pamela was surprised at her father’s reaction, as he seemed very tolerant when her mother had held her parlor Séances

in times past.

“Won’t you try Father? It was working for a bit, maybe it will work for you? Do we have another planchette somewhere in the house?”

“Your mother was very taken with Mediumship for awhile, Pamela but without proper training and guidance it can be dangerous to health and mind. This is one adventure you girls would do well to avoid. Let me ask you, aside from intuition of this and that, can you honestly say ‘The Spirits’ have contacted you? Angels or departed friends and relatives?”

Jane, Pamela’s friend from school, shook her head vigorously in denial. Pamela just said nothing while staring at her father. Finally after an awkward stretch of silence Pamela said, “Let me walk you home, Jane. We’ll stop at the tea shop on the way.” The girls got their coats and hats leaving Mr. Smith with the broken planchette in his hands.

Pamela returned home after tea and confronted her father. “Why the anger Father? You know I have received messages while in a trance state from time to time.”

“Yes! However, Jane is not familiar with the Trance Mediums and their methodology nor is she familiar with it religiously. Her parents would be horrified as they are Episcopalians and in that religion, you know very well, conversing with the spirits is a sin! In fact in almost all religions necromancy is sinful. All Mediums are suspect to criminal and or insanity charges and it is cruel to hazard such for a friend like Jane. You do understand Pamela that we keep séance activity strictly in the family and with our closest friends from our own Church and those sympathetic to its causes? You took too big a chance today. I’m surprised as we have held séances mostly to entertain guests. We are not cultivating a Medium in this household by any means! Your experiences were spontaneous events not controlled nor tutored. I prefer your contact with the beyond to remain that way. Understood Pamela? One can risk health and sanity by concentrating on things not of this world. Being sensitive is hard enough.”

Arthur Doyle’s Séance by proxy for Ellen with Eusapina Palladino made Pamela recall her father’s words. It was the only time she could recall when he had spoken harshly to her. He had controlled himself, but she knew he was very angry. She also heard angry words spoken behind the closed doors of her parent’s bedroom. That time he was screaming and her mother was weeping. Pamela took her father’s cautionary words seriously not because she was afraid of contacting the spirit world but because her action had caused her parent’s pain and she avoided that aspect of occultism ever since. Eusapina Palladino had a reputation for excellence

as a Medium and was entertaining as well. Pamela had been afforded an opportunity to see one of the finest Mediums in the world, perhaps the very finest of all. It was with only a bit of sadness that she allowed herself to take the experience as presented to her and not sought by her.

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CYNTHIA TEDESCO M.A.

Tedesco worked for many years as an Audiologist and Speech/Language Pathologist for the Lexington School For The Deaf. She is certified as a Kaizen-Muse Creativity Coach using skills as a professional tarot reader to assist clients in their creative work.

Tedesco’s poems have appeared in Apex of The M; Avocet, Barrow Street (and former editor), Black River Review, Caliban, The Cape Rock, Coffee House Poets Quarterly, Columbia Poetry Review, Gargoyle, Italian Americana, Iodine, The Lucid Stone, Montserrat Review, No Roses Review, Outerbridge, The Panhandler, Space and Time, Talisman, Tamarind, Weirdbook and Yefief. Her short story, ‘Suitcases’ was published and is archived at [www.Archipelago.org](http://www.Archipelago.org) Tedesco has a book of poems, ‘Letters Found After,’ published by Sesquin Press. She is currently working on her second book, ‘Chthonic Luminosity’ as well as the novel.

Tedesco lives in N.Y.C. with her husband and two Havanese dogs. The Tedesco’s are serious collectors of vintage tarot decks. She can be reached at: [INTUITIVEARTSENTERTAINMENT@gmail.com](mailto:INTUITIVEARTSENTERTAINMENT@gmail.com)

# THE RIDER-WAITE-SMITH & THE TAROT DE MARSEILLE

## COMPARE, CONTRAST, COMBINE!

by Ste McCabe / The Tarot Cat

Something that irritates me in the tarot world is the occasional touch of snobbery that can be expressed by well-meaning, passionate tarot readers who sing the praises of their preferred approach to tarot. It's generally considered that there are three major traditions in tarot, and these approaches to reading can generally be attributed to three classic tarot decks — the Tarot de Marseille, the Rider-Waite-Smith (which I'll refer to as the RWS in this article) and the Thoth. Feeling a little torn between two tarot traditions that I love — The RWS and the Tarot de Marseille — and the styles of reading that they lend themselves to, I began blending the two traditions together into my readings a while back and found the results to be both fascinating and really insightful. This approach to reading can be used with many decks (both traditional and modern), so even if you don't own either deck, read on!

There are plenty of great books and blogs out there exploring the histories of both the RWS and Tarot de Marseille, so I won't delve into that too much here. As the Tarot de Marseille was a predecessor to the RWS by many centuries (in one form or another), Marseille readers can be known to scoff at the RWS for being (apparently) “dumbed down”, or full of esoteric suggestion that was apparently “never supposed to be there”. Arthur Waite — one of the RWS deck creators (along with Pamela Colman Smith) — changed many of the classic Marseille-style tarot designs for the RWS, claiming to “correct” aspects that he felt had gotten lost in the tarot's design over the years. Likewise, RWS enthusiasts often criticise the Marseille for being “too basic in design”, “difficult to read with”, or full of “anomalies” created through years of anonymous, collective, and in some incidences, perhaps even accidental design. For example, in some decks there's a missing leg on The Magician's table — is that deliberate or not? Criticisms of each design fly both ways, but then there are readers like myself, who think that

both decks are incredible, despite each deck lending itself to a particular style of reading more naturally than the other.

Tarot reading is an exciting and creative way of approaching human problems but, let's face it, it's also a pretty illogical way of gathering insight into ours and other people's lives. Isn't that why it's so interesting? Why try to profess one solid sensible approach to an art that isn't sensible at all? Whichever way that we're intuiting meaning from a set of images laid out at random before us seems irrelevant. Personally, I am fascinated by pretty much every approach to reading the tarot, and the more we mix things up and experiment, the better in my opinion.

### THE “PIPS” OR “MINOR ARCANA” DIFFERENCES

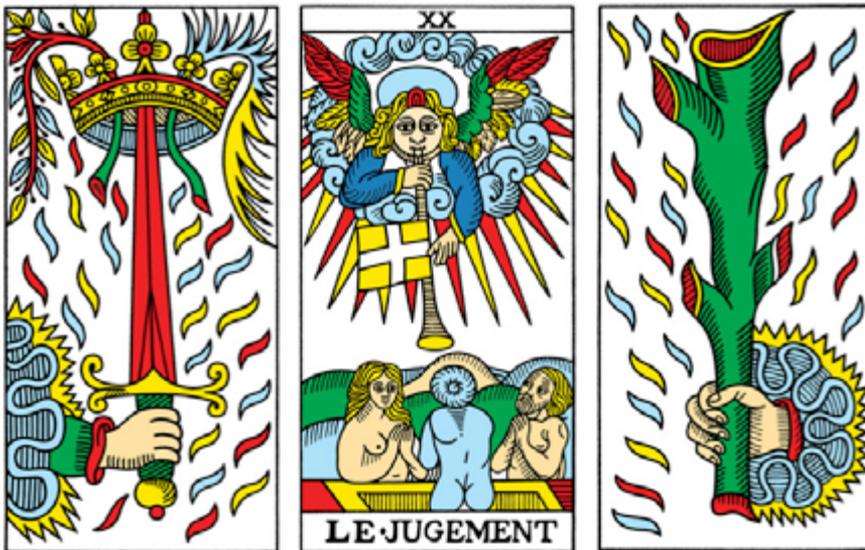
RWS-inspired decks have scenic Minor Arcana/pip cards — in other words, most of the Minor Arcana cards (perhaps besides the Aces) from Ace to Ten show scenes of what could be described as self-contained events, scenes, or images of people doing things. How you interpret these scenes are up to you. For example, are those guys in the Five of Wands fighting for real, or play fighting? Maybe they're performing a strange ritual in one reading, and then doing a contemporary dance in another! Contrary to popular belief, this was not the first tarot deck to have “scenic” Minor Arcana cards, however its' incredible storytelling-like abilities was the first to grab the attention of an enthusiastic new generation of tarot readers in such massive numbers.

In Marseille style decks, the “pip” cards (we mostly call them “pips” in the Marseille world — long story!) show simple symbols — for example, the Seven of Swords will show seven swords (perhaps with some flowers growing in strange shapes around them) and there are generally no people present, just basic symbols. You will often hear people say that the Marseille pips are “unillustrated”, but that simply isn't true. They're hardly empty, blank cards, are they? They are often beautifully illustrated; they're just not depicting scenes. In one reading, you might understand seven swords to be complicated roads that need to be travelled — does the querent have a long way to go before they achieve their goal? In another reading, the swords might feel like a prison surrounding one central sword — is the querent feeling trapped? It requires a very open, intuitive approach and a readiness to let the cards speak to you differently every single time you see them. Some people find the pips so wildly open to interpretation that they can't read with them, and that's fair enough. Personally, sometimes I feel limited by the RWS's suggestive scenes. At other times, I feel that the

wide-open symbolism in the Marseille pips might tempt me to make the images fit whatever message I've subconsciously pre-determined already. There are pluses and minuses from both angles and neither approach is any smarter, more poetic, nor more logical than the other. Got that? Great.

Most Marseille decks were designed with a limited palette of bold, basic colours and thick lines. As such, more attention might be paid to shapes your eye creates, body language and colour patterns than what appears to be actually happening. The cards that depict people and creatures (IE the Majors and the Court cards) often have little background detail compared to the RWS, but the central figures are often larger, sometimes filling the card. This has great advantages when reading Marseille-style, where you're looking at how the cards are interacting with each other, rather than looking at what they are depicting individually (as in the classic Past, Present, Future spread). When you line several of the cards up next to each other and read them together as one large image with no predetermined position, these bold colours and lines come into their own; you simply follow the patterns from one card to the next. Here's an example reading:

Barbara wants to explore her troubled relationship with a work colleague. You pull out three cards – Ace of Swords, Judgement, and Ace of Wands, and sit them next to each other.



*Credit to "CBD Tarot" - images used with permission)*

Now, forget everything you ever learned about tarot spreads and the generally accepted meanings of the cards. You might look at these cards and tell Barbara, "It seems like you're constantly putting up your sword for a fight with this person, but there appears to be three people watching all this, praying for you to turn that anger into something more positive. I feel like you're the instigator — what's going on

for you there? The three people feel really vulnerable by this dispute — look at their nakedness. If you put that anger into a constructive leadership role like the trumpet-blower in Judgement, you might find yourself being offered something more fun and also being more respected — a sword turning into a trumpet, then into a joyful looking baton.

Someone else might look at the same cards and say, "Wow, you're holding up your sword to the left, and your colleague is holding up a stick to the right — you both really do mean business here! The strength lies in your favour. You're likely to win this battle if you stick it out — a sword surely can beat a mere stick. Are you fighting over a position? You need to be aware of who else is in this picture. One blue figure stands out in the Judgement card as highlighted — the two pale people (representing you and your opponent, as we see reflected in the pale hands holding the sword and the baton in both Aces) are on the periphery of the angels' calling. Someone else may be keeping quiet and beating you to it by not being so aggressively vocal.

In readings where there are two Court Cards or Major Arcana's next to each other, pay attention when a face in one card is staring at another — what are they looking at, and what does it mean? Does a pale blue horse in Card One turn into Temperance's pale blue wings in Card Two, and then into the Fool's pale blue dog in the final card? What's the message there? Follow the simple colours, follow the lines. Forget the "meanings". Go with the visual flow.

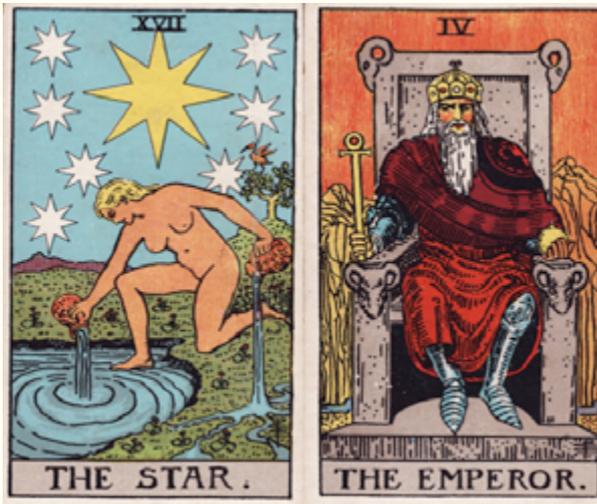
The Tarot de Marseille lends itself wonderfully to these kinds of open, intuitive readings. Historically, most books on reading with this approach were in French, but some excellent books have been released in English in recent years, including Yoav Ben-Dov's incredible book *Tarot — The Open Reading* and Camelia Elias's fabulous, feisty *Marseille Tarot : Towards the Art of Reading*.

Now take a look at these simple, two-card readings from both the Marseille and the RWS. We're still with Barbara here, who ignored

our advice the first time around and has found her problems have worsened with her colleague. Poor Barbara! In the first reading, we have an RWS-style reading. We have a positional two-card spread; we've pulled The Star as her challenge, and The Emperor as her advantage (note, we don't have the time to explore possible numerological or esoteric associations here, which can be rich in RWS-inspired decks, so humour

me!) :

You might say : The Star has a message of hope and inspiration. The woman in the image is pouring away what she doesn't need, she is exposing herself and letting herself be free in the night sky. It's often a hopeful card and shows that you have confidence, aspiration and honesty in this situation. You are being true to yourself and are battling honestly – interestingly this is your Challenge, so it seems to me that



*Credit to US Games Systems Inc.*

you're letting your principles overtake your sense of perspective. It might not be the time to be exposing your true self so openly right now. The Emperor is your Advantage — a figure of powerful authority, mighty and in control. He holds the true power here. I get the feeling that your superiors are on your side in this battle with your colleague. Play it cool and keep them on side, without exposing too much of yourself publicly. Of course, you will read in your own way, possibly intuiting entirely different things than I do here, but it's the style of reading that is important here, not the content. There are numerous amazing books and websites out there to help you learn reading the traditional RWS way — too many to even recommend! My bet is that most of you will be familiar with this style of reading already, hence me focusing on the Marseille approach more in this article.

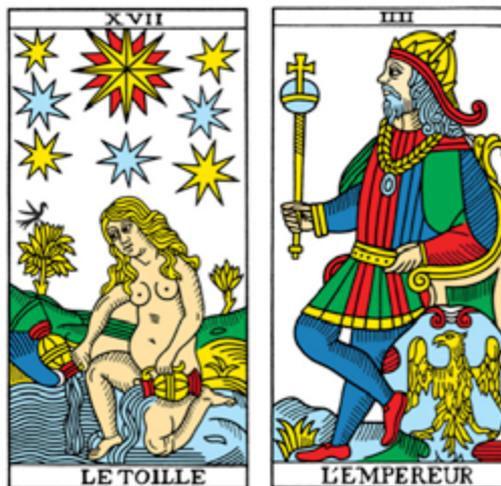
RWS artwork feels more nuanced than the Marseille, with more colour variations and shades. Attention might be paid to the theme of the card, and its hidden (often esoteric) symbols. These cards tell flexible little stories; we're looking to describe each separate card as an element of the querent's life, and we then pull all of the separate stories into one overall reading, rather than linking all of the images into one interactive image in the first instant.

Now, let's take a look at the same two cards from a Marseille angle, lined up next to each other with no set positions. Why is The Emperor in one card looking directly at the naked woman in The Star card, and holding up his stick? Why

doesn't she look at him, or notice him? Doesn't she look extremely vulnerable like that? Perhaps Barbara is letting herself be way too exposed with her opponent — the power imbalance between Barbara and this other person seems immense. There's a little black bird in The Star card flying free. The Emperor shoves his bird symbol under the chair. She may be playing her cards too openly, whilst her colleague may be playing a much smarter, sneakier game.

You might disregard the two figures as Barbara and her colleague/boss altogether, and watch shapes and colours from images in The Star card turn into different shapes and colours in The Emperor card. What could be the message in the visual changes? What happens when a bird becomes a shield?

There are many other differences (and similarities!) between the decks. The funny thing is that newcomers to the tarot often look at both decks and think, "what's the fuss? They're not that different at all!", but the devil is in the detail, as it were!



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Now it's time to go ahead and blend the two approaches into your readings. Try a six card spread, where you have set positions for the first three cards, working in the RWS style. A simple "Current Situation, Challenge and Advantage" spread is a great way to start with your first three cards. I find this useful for getting some detail for the separate elements at play in the situation. Then, instead of laying out one single card for an "advice", "future influences" or "moving forward" position, lay out an extra three cards and read them Marseille style. Don't pre-determine anything. Look at the cards and let them speak to each other. Get the best of both worlds.

Although these are the styles of reading that these decks (and decks inspired by them) lend themselves to, there are no rules with tarot. You can try out open Marseille style readings with RWS decks, and of course, standard positional spreads with Marseille style decks. You can use two different

decks for each part of the spread (as I often do), or the same deck for both parts — test your deck first and see if it works well. I recently, for example, discovered that the modern, cutesy surreal Nicoletta Ceccoli deck works great for open Marseille-style readings — who'd have thought?

Mix it up, and do whatever you like; a great tarot reading comes in all shapes and sizes. Many tarot readers own neither a Marseille or a Rider-Waite-Smith at all and I'm sure there are people out there doing great readings with their one and only deck, the Hello Kitty! As far as I'm concerned, good for them. Play around and try different things — you'll be surprised by the detail you expose. Happy experimenting!

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STE MCCABE / THE TAROT CAT is a tarot reader, tarot columnist and alternative musician living in Scotland. His unique blog explores tarot-music connections and he interviews cult musicians via the tarot. He also provides creative tarot readings worldwide through email.

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# MARSEILLE TAROT: AN INTUITIONIST EXPERIMENT

by Marcelo Ribeiro dos Santos, Carlos Eduardo Albuquerque Miranda, and Danuzio Gil Bernardino da Silva

This is the second of two works, in which we demonstrate and describe Marseille tarot's specific fractal consistency which leads to important historical and functional consequences, not noticed until now.

KEYWORDS: Tarot, Bergson, Fractal, Cabala, Hermetism.

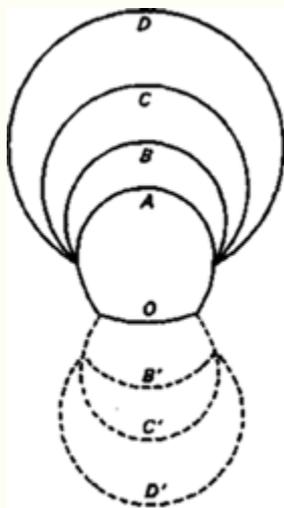
## INTRODUCTION

... you can't ever close off the possibility that something will be shown to be true. It may be very unlikely that it is, but there could always be evidence that would turn up. So you can't close it off.

This is the second part of *Marseille Tarot: a Philosophical Enquiry*, in which, based on the bergsonian concept of reflective perception, we shall do the application of Bergson's Accordion

(Fig.1) in the unfolding and deepening of perceived features of Camoin-Jodorowsky Marseille tarot in such a way as to perform convenient photographically documented actions on the configurations of the deck of cards. These actions will be motivated by the 'sketches' of the sensorial stimulus received from it, so closing the 'reflective perception' circuit. The form and images of the cards themselves provide us with these 'sketches' through their intrinsic performance in space, that is, the way by which our representation selects the facets of the observed object which are

Fig.1: Bergson's Accordion.



convenient for our choices of action over it, 'and set free all that they implicitly contain of spatial movement' (Bergson, 1991, 13-14).

We shall start with the more contracted and close to pure perception memory; that which recognizes an object as constant in time; to gradually expand the memory levels in Bergson's Accordion to more complex differentiations and correlations. As the levels of memory applied expand, through convenient resonant actions we unfold and photograph all macroscopically visible layers of reality virtually given in the deck so we can analyze and discuss them.

## PRODUCTION OF VERIFIABLE PROOF

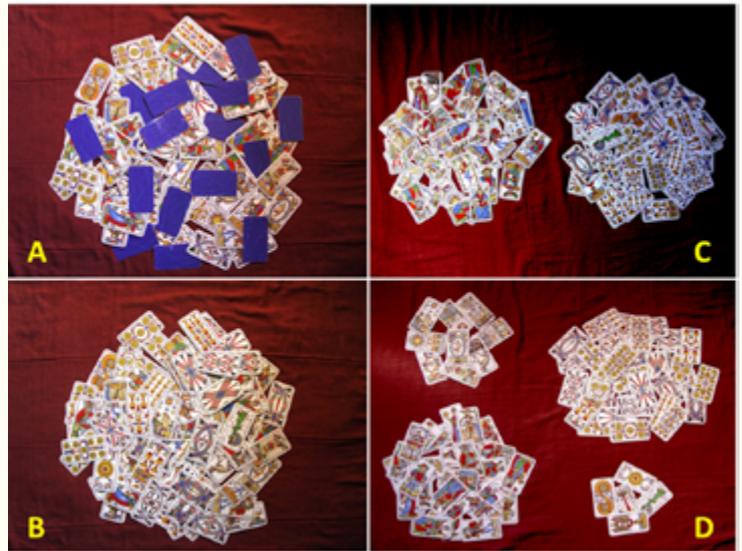


Fig.2A, B, C, D

First we recall our closest to 'pure perception' memory: that which recognizes the object as the same from one moment to the other, and we have this fragmented and loose group of angular pieces of thin matter spread on a table (the Camoin-Jodorowsky Marseille tarot deck).

Then we can expand a little our memory scope to recognize similarities and differences in the object of our interest and so we can see that the pieces of thin matter unfold their similarity since all have the same angular shape, all have the same size, but some of them have identical uniform colors while others have complex patches, drawings and coloring (Fig.2A).

This configuration incites our first action on the object. We hold and turn the pieces and verify that all have the uniform pattern in one side and the varied one in the other. This calls for our second action. It could be to turn all pieces with their uniform and identical side up. But then this does not suit us, since we would end up with a group of identically looking

pieces of angular thin matter.

We are looking for differentiation through similarity and difference.

Total identity ends our game.

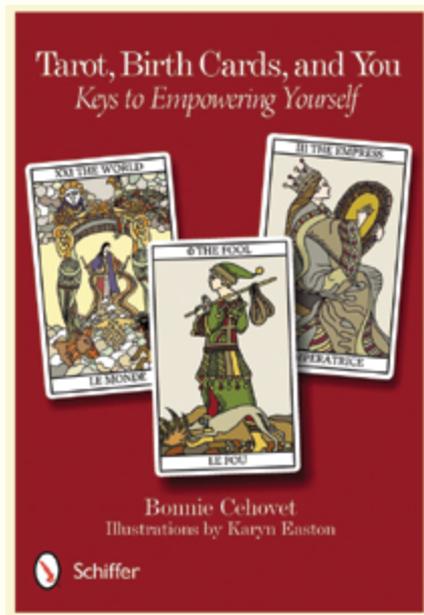
The coloring and drawings are better suited for our purpose, so we turn all pieces with the varied side up (Fig. 2B), and then we see a confusion of forms and colors that gradually grows into distinct populations of pieces. This is clear by simply looking at them to see similar images and coloring in each population, that differ from each other in general appearance, since this is what we let our memory recognize until now. Then we act again on the object and put apart from each other both perceived groups (Fig.2C).

As our attention span increases we see that we can do the same process again, since both distinct groups can be divided, differentiating through general appearance one more time. And we split these populations from their original groups, forming now four groups of pieces, which we see as distinct. But 'four' for the moment stands only for the convenience of explanation, since our memory is still not recognizing abstract numbers, although it also suits us because we can already recognize in this new configuration a pattern already mentioned in this work: in four parts, three are similar and one is different. In the three which are similar, two are more alike than the third (Fig.2D).

Fig.2: Separation of the cards in groups according to general appearance. In D we have Camoin-Jorowsky's law suggested in the four distinct groups.

We cannot go on anymore based only in the global impression the pieces give us and to split them one more time based on general appearance seems forced. Let's expand Bergson's Accordion to attain a larger scope of memory so we can recognize numbers and sequences. This enables us to recognize also geometrical forms, unfolding rectangles in our thin pieces of matter. We can see that the individual small rectangles fit perfectly to each other allowing us to form larger rectangles from the union of pieces. This is a good sketch to follow in our next action so we decide to group the populations of small rectangles in large rectangles, as suggested by the individual shape of the pieces, and using the numbers to place them in an ordinal series.

Recognition of the numbers is made easy since our object depicts a specific kind of number: at first sight they may be confounded with roman numbers, but if we check carefully the numbers four, nine, fourteen and nineteen we see they are not roman. They are a much more primitive kind of number,



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based on the fingers of the human hand, where five is the sketch of the angle formed between thumb and palm, and ten is the sketch of two crossed thumbs, representing two full hands. These numbers were used until recently by pastoral populations in the Alps, coincidentally close to Marseille, who registered their herd's count through woodcarving on sticks (Ibrah, 1989, 19). Other numbers in our object are represented by crescent quantities of similar figures in similarly colored and drawn rectangular pieces (the Suits), what is also a very primitive and easy way of counting.

Now we are ready to reassemble our object splitting the numeric groups and following the suggested rectangle sketch, still grouping similar images and coloring. As we do this, pieces in the former groups change places because some have numbers inscribed (Trumps) and some don't (Court). Others are recognized as numbers represented by quantities of similar images, which are obviously part of a sequence (Suits). So we form new groups making rectangles with them, based on similarity and number sequence.

We also check if the compositions may show Camoin-Jodorowsky's law, sketched in our first configuration. The result is astounding because we not only see the equation  $[(1+2)+3]+4$  in the larger scales of our new configuration (Fig. 3), but it also shines in all smaller scales of the figure, including individual pieces and small details inside the pieces (Figs. 4 and 5), with one important

exception: the total figure shows only three large groups of cards. In this new assemblage the object splits; in the largest scale; in its classical division of Trumps, Court and Suits .

Fig.3

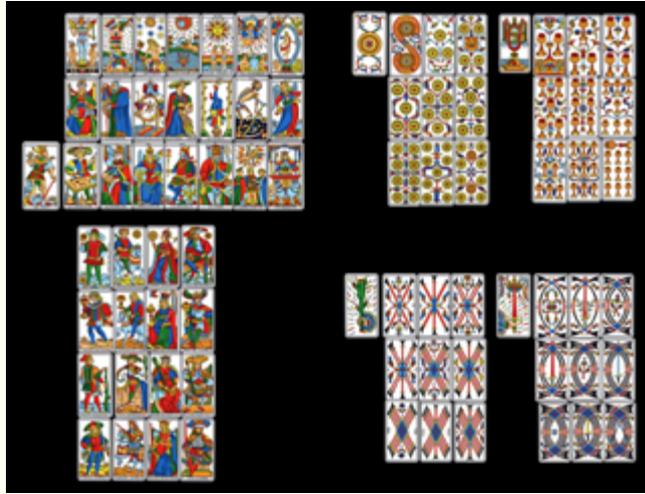


Fig.3: Separation of the cards in rectangles and numeric order. Camoin-Jodorowsky's law is seen in all scales, expressing a self-similar fractal diagram in the composition of the deck3.

Fig.4: Camoin-Jodorowsky's law in individual cards.

Fig.5: Camoin-Jodorowsky's law in small details.

This seems like a flaw in our first impression that the object expresses Camoin-Jodorowsky's law across all scales, but we feel this itch to fill the missing +4, since our actions are based

on the sketches suggested by the object, and the object expresses Camoin-Jodorowsky's law in all scales but the largest, inviting us to fill the gap. This way we connect to the object and consider ourselves as the +4, thus completing the suggested configuration. It compels us to think that the deck is meant to work in connection to a human being.

As we connect to the object as part of it we feel the necessity to look outside it and use our complex correlation memory, bringing to the mind other images that could show similarity to the final assemblage.



Fig. 4

We immediately recognize that it unfolded a configuration that reminds us strongly of a very special kind of image: fractals. We shall analyze further on what fractals are and their relationship with Marseille tarot, which determines consequences to the very understanding of what our chosen analysis subject is about.

To summarize our findings in relation to Bergson's Accordion:

- A) recognition memory O — object recognized as constant in time (Fig. 2A).
- B) differentiating memory B'— object splits into four 'populations' sketching Camoin-Jodorowsky's law (Fig.2D).
- C) numeric memory C'— object splits into rectangles expressing Camoin-Jodorowsky's law in all scales (Fig.3).
- D) correlation memory D'— we connect to the object and it unfolds a fractal consistency (Fig.3,4,5).



Fig. 5

Of course the proposed levels of memory are instrumental, since it's the totality of memory that is present at each level, but what must be clear is that we can contract our scope of correlations, or 'stretch' our memory, to a greater proximity or distance of the object, simulating what would be the ontology of perception in a child, who can discern and unify groups of analogous objects when he is from six to twelve months old, but is still unable to conceive abstract numbers or even counting his fingers (Ifrah, 1989, 19).

In the later stages of number cognition ontogeny, there is a limit of four objects which can be counted in a glance when grouped together, what is known in cognition essays as 'small set number recognition'. This feature of our number perception is shared by primates and seems to imply a natural neuronal wiring system (Carey, 2001, 44-45). Besides this, there is plenty historical data concerning the creation of numbers by civilizations such as Egyptian, Sumerian, Elamite, Babylonian, Phoenician, Greek, Mayan and Aztec in which simple units are used to represent numbers until the number four, after which some special form of notation is used from number five on (Ifrah, 1989, 23). This is truth also of the numbers used in Marseille tarot, which are derived from finger counting.

But if we accept that there is a determined neuronal wiring with specific pathways of growth and development, does this mean that we should adopt the constructivist view of 'a system represented in the mind/brain, ultimately in physical mechanisms that are now largely unknown' (Chomsky, 1997)? Not really. We would rather stay with Bergson's view of a neuronal wiring devoted to action and not representation. If this wiring evolved in ways that favor action, still it needs to be tuned with memory through learning. Perception is not representational but action oriented and the neuronal part of its ontology should be certainly subject to developmental pathways. These pathways will determine how memory will be 'contracted' in favor of action, but memory itself is integral and is not confined to the brain (Bergson, 1991).

Our object of analysis, Marseille tarot, surprisingly suggests a purposeful use of these natural and basic perception development pathways, dealt with through careful and skillful disposition of colors, images and numbers in the cards, forming a constant pattern within an equation of four terms. This disposition favors the 'stretching' and attunement of memory and thus converges to an observed fractal consistency of the whole pack.

But let's talk a little about fractals. They are images derived from a special geometry, which is especially adequate for

the study of natural shapes and systems, designated 'Fractal Geometry' and created by Benoit Mandelbrot, who defines these figures in the following terms:

Hence, the structure of every piece holds the key to the whole structure. An alternative term is 'self-similar', which has two meanings. One can understand 'similar' as a loose everyday synonym of 'analogous'. But there is also the strict textbook sense of 'contracting similarity'. It expresses that each part is a linear geometric reduction of the whole, with the same reduction rates in all directions... However, more recent development has extended, in particular, to include self-affine shapes in which the reductions are still linear but the reduction rates in different directions are different (Mandelbrot, 1989, 4).

We are not saying here that Marseille tarot is a fractal figure in itself, although it's very close to one, but it clearly shows a fractal consistency. It works as if the law spread across all scales formed a virtual fractal figure, creating self-similarity within the deck, more specifically of the second type described by Mandelbrot (asymmetrical self-affine shapes), which works as a diagram for the shaping and placement of the images in the design of Marseille tarot.

In fact it shapes all aspects of the deck, since the whole disposition and conception of the card's images and design in all visible scales seem subordinate to Camoin-Jodorowsky's law (Fig.3, Fig.4, Fig.5).

This is as sophisticated as it can get, since fractal mathematics started to be developed only in the 80's! But still we must not be stunned and start to think that the 'sorcerers incantations' are back, since we can find at least one related figure in medieval iconography. Although not closely as complex as Marseille tarot, we find a very interesting illustration in 'Kabala Denudata'

(Rosenroth, 1684) which depicts a Sephiroth, the basic kabala image, with small Sephiroth in its intersections, suggesting infinite fractal self-similarity. What is especially curious about this image is that besides the main larger Sephiroth we can see three smaller ones, with two more alike than the third (Fig.6).

Fig.6: Sephiroth depicting Camoin-Jodorowsky's law and Fractal self-similarity.

So we have here another depiction of Camoin-Jodorowsky's law which seemed to be disseminated in medieval hermetic circles in the XVII century.

It's also impossible to ignore the similarity of Marseille tarot's fractal consistency to the hermetist saying of a translated

medieval Arabian version of Hermes Trismegistos Tabula Smaragdina:

The structure of the small world (microcosm) corresponds to the structure of the large world (macrocosm) (Anonymous, 2005, 41).

Does this mean that Marseille tarot derives from kabala or hermetism?

Nothing can authorize us to think so, since both the book 'Kabala Denudata' and the oldest remaining Marseille tarot decks are from the same century, with the detail that Marseille tarot was an established regional school of card making and not

an isolated scholarly hermetic study. Nevertheless, we can assume that Rosenroth's self-similar Sephiroth portrait is a good analogy, contemporary to the oldest remaining decks, of the kind of abstract fractal figure that could be the diagram underlying the conception of Marseille tarot. We could also say that hermetism and Marseille tarot are related, but to infer from this the origin of the deck is going a little too far.

In any case, Marseille tarot is clearly a complete and well-knit unit meant to express in all scales; going down to the smallest details (Fig.5); the law: 'in four parts, three are similar and one is different. In the three which are similar, two are more alike than the third'. This is aimed at forming a self-affine shaped fractal diagram through which the card's figures are created asymmetrically by the very nature of the equation that conforms them. It's this asymmetry that confounded previous researchers who argued for the separate conception of the Trumps, but it's now clear that the Trumps are a coherent and necessary part of the whole pack, forming, in Marseille tarot, an inextricable unit with the Court and Suits.

One first important conclusion must be drawn from this fact: it would seem very strange that Marseille tarot should be derived from any similar deck, like the XV century Italian decks, since none depict the above mentioned complex and integrated consistency, of which the images are an irreducible part, but even then carry the same general

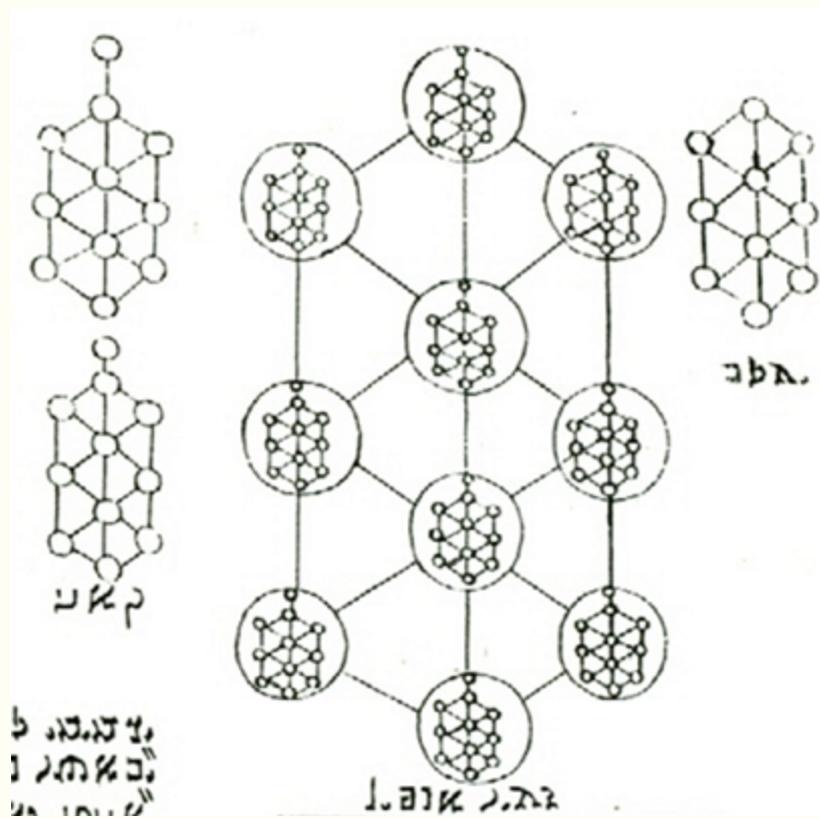


Fig. 6

figures and structure. It seems more likely that the Italian decks lost this important feature through inattentive copy and variation of an original model. If this is truth, then we should date back Marseille tarot's existence to the oldest known remains of cards depicting a similar pattern of images: the XII century Mamluk tarot.

One might argue that Mamluk tarot does not depict the Trumps and the Court's images, but we must remember that slave derived Mamluk Muslim caste has an European origin

(Turkish/Caucasian) and that in Islam image representation is strictly forbidden. It would not be a surprise if an European tradition brought with European slaves should lose all its imagistic representations when adapted to Islamism.

Another inevitable inference from Marseille tarot's fractal consistency is that the use of tarot for divination or recreation does not necessarily define its specific functional features. As Bergson says:

But there is also a close connection between a coat and the nail on which it hangs, for, if the nail is pulled out, the coat falls to the ground. Shall we say, then, that the shape of the nail gives us the shape of the coat, or in any way corresponds to it? (Bergson, 1991,12)

What function, then, should be ascribed to Marseille tarot? Certainly not gaming, since we know of no games that use the peculiar fractal feature of the deck in the entire extensive repertoire researched by Michael Dummet (Dummet, McLeod, 2009). If gaming was the main function of tarot then there must be a lost game, with rules we do not know any more, which take in consideration tarot's fractal consistency. If not, why would card-makers bother to preserve carefully for centuries such a useless feature? But this becomes pure speculation and we have no 'proof' of it.

Should the function be divination? Again nothing authorizes us to think so, since we explored all known divination methods and there are none that take in consideration the fractal consistency of Marseille decks. In fact, they are far from doing so. Then we would have to hypothesize the existence of a lost divination method and again we would fall into pure speculation. The only cue we have to Marseille tarot's function is that it seems to link perception and memory in a purposeful way. For now, we could say that memory should be central to the ascribed function. But then, this is another story.

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# TAROT HERSTORY: MY JOURNEY WITH FEMINIST TAROT

by Christiana Gaudet

We say that tarot tells the stories of our lives. The cards do this in many ways, through the archetypal Fool's journey, in the progression of the suits, and in divination.

Tarot has its own story, too. It began as art that commemorated a wedding. It was a card game that inspired a trend of spontaneous poetry not so different from early rap. Now tarot is a tool of divination, spiritual understanding, personal growth and creative inspiration. Over the 500 years of its history, tarot has grown and expanded, just as we use tarot to grow and expand ourselves.

As tarot has grown, many different traditions have sprung from the seed of that first *Visconti-Sforza* deck. We are familiar with the tradition of *Tarot de Marseille*, with its non-illustrated pips, the *Waite-Smith Tarot*, with its simple yet symbolic scenic illustrations, and the *Crowley Harris Thoth*, with its evocative Minor Arcana, complete with key words.

In the past forty years, new traditions of tarot beyond those three seem to be taking shape. I believe there has emerged a specific tarot tradition that can be called "Feminist Tarot". There may be some question as to which decks should truly be called feminist decks, but that such a tarot tradition exists cannot be questioned.

I have a specific connection to Feminist Tarot because of my own personal history with tarot, and as a crusty old feminist from the 1980s.

In fact, the very first conversation I can ever remember having about tarot in any context was about *Motherpeace Tarot*.

"I use the *Motherpeace Tarot*. It's a feminist deck. The cards are round, and read in a circle".

I remember that conversation as if it were yesterday, but it wasn't.

It was more than thirty years ago, in the early 1980s.

I would have known that the round nature of the cards and spread was innately woman-honoring, even if Suzanne's enthusiasm hadn't conveyed it.

I was talking with my boss at my job as a National Women's Political Caucus canvasser, in the final days of the ultimately-unsuccessful push to pass an Equal Rights Amendment to the US Constitution.

I was nineteen, and living in New Haven, Connecticut.

Working for the NWPC, which was housed in the famed New Haven Women's Center on Orange Street, was an immersion course in feminism that my years of subscribing to *Ms. Magazine* throughout high school hadn't given me.

I quickly learned not to refer to adult women as "girls". I stopped eating meat, hung out at women's bars, heard the phrase "politically correct" for the first time, and for the first time, began to ponder if my Methodist upbringing had provided me enough spiritual substance to understand and work with the things I was beginning to feel and believe.

Soon thereafter, I learned about Wicca, read *Starhawk*, and learned to throw I Ching. Not too many years later, I bought my first tarot deck, the standard Waite in the yellow box, and my second tarot deck, the *Motherpeace Round Tarot*, by Karen Vogel and Vicki Noble.

As the 1980s turned into the 1990s, I left my career as a political fundraiser and began selling flowers on the streets of New Haven, and eventually starting reading tarot professionally. I didn't give much thought to the fact that my initial exposure to tarot was through the feminist lens of *Motherpeace*. Now, in retrospect, I think that if I hadn't had that particular perspective, I might not be the tarotist I am today, or perhaps, not a tarotist at all!

It's undeniable that tarot, in its traditional structures, is inherently sexist, classist and racist. All the characters are white, male characters are more powerful than female characters, and family money offers protection and privilege.

There are three specific cards which, as I was learning Waite symbolism and interpretation, filled me with feminist indignation. One was the Nine of Pentacles, a card which, today, we often interpret as sense of security and confidence. The Nine of Pentacles is about a woman who is comfortably alone.

Historically, the woman's comfort didn't come from her self-esteem, as we often interpret it today. The woman depicted in the Nine of Pentacles was under her father's protection. It

was his status which caused her to remain unmolested, not her own strength.

The second card was the Queen of Swords. She is the Queen who is most likely to be single and childless, and often considered sharp-tongued and untrustworthy. As I studied elemental magick, and came to understand her as the Queen of Air, I recognized that her one crime was being a woman who spoke the truth.

The third was the Moon, Major Arcana 18. Why did older tarot books describe this as a card to be feared, while newer books often referred to feminine intuition and magick when interpreting the Moon? Of course, the patriarchy would fear the Moon, a symbol and source of feminine spiritual power!

Clearly, I was not the first burgeoning tarotist to find flaw with traditional tarot as reflective of the patriarchy who birthed it.

As I became a dedicated diviner over the course of the 1980s, *Daughter of the Moon Tarot*, *Barbara Walker Tarot*, and, of course, *Motherpeace Round Tarot*, were the go-to decks for those who wanted tarot that wasn't of the patriarchy.

The problem was, these decks didn't truly offer gender equality. In some ways, they offered a feminist doctrine that blew past equality and into misandry.

For example, the Hierophant in the Motherpeace Tarot shows a male religious authority wearing false breasts. He is a man trying to usurp the spiritual power of womanhood. Today, this rings to me as a bit transphobic, as well as misandrist. Thirty years ago, it felt like a powerful reclaiming of the old ways, by throwing off the oppressive patriarchal Church.

In the mid-to-late 1990s, other tarot artists tackled feminism in some really creative ways.

Although tarot is inarguably Christian in its original history and symbolism, the rise of modern Paganism has given birth to a plethora of Pagan-themed decks. Earth-based worshippers and polytheists have long felt a kinship with the art of divination, and, in these recent decades, have truly made tarot a tool of Pagan spirituality. That, in itself, has solidified the tradition of feminist tarot. Although not every Pagan or Pagan-friendly deck specifically feels feminist, many do specifically honor the sacred feminine.

For example, *Gendron Tarot*, published in 1997, was marketed as a feminist deck, and used Goddess imagery to express the tarot archetypes. In 1998, Kris Waldherr took Goddess archetypes a step further, when she published *The Goddess Tarot*.

In a radical move, Waldherr changed the order of her Courts to Prince, Princess, King, Queen, making the female characters the top of the hierarchy.

Though much gentler than the fake-breasted Hierophant, *Goddess Tarot* missed the energy of true balance by simply reversing the dominant gender. One could argue that, at the time, both socially and magically, there was a need to reverse the hold of the patriarchy by promoting the matriarchy, as was done with both *Motherpeace Tarot* and *Goddess Tarot*.

In 2007, Lynyrd Narciso published *Vanessa Tarot*. I am sure that some folks will cringe at my inclusion of this fun, sassy, glam deck, designed by a man, in a conversation about feminist tarot, but, please, hear me out.

To my knowledge, *Vanessa Tarot* was the first mass-market deck to depict every single character as female, even the Kings. Some of Vanessa's characters wear designer clothes, some keep house, some are corporate executives, and some are jungle explorers.

To me, one of the important purposes of feminism was to give folks of all genders choices about what they would do with their lives – choices that weren't at all based on gender. *Vanessa Tarot* earns my feminist seal of approval for doing exactly that.

Arguably, a trend that developed alongside feminist tarot, and contributed to it, is the trend that I call "archetypal assignment". *Mythic Tarot* and *Barbara Walker Tarot* were some of the first decks to describe the tarot archetypes by assigning them to characters within a particular theme.

As we moved into the new century, artists like Lisa Hunt, Julie Cuccia-Watts and Kay Steventon created archetypal assignment decks which used images of myths, faery-tales, Gods and Goddesses to tell the story of the Fool's Journey. Though few of those decks were marketed as "feminist", when compared to the standard Waite art and symbols, each seems to me to project a more balanced and inclusive energy.

To see where feminist tarot has evolved to today, one need only look to *Gaian Tarot* by Joanna Powell Colbert. To me, *Gaian Tarot* is the quintessential modern feminist deck, honoring true inclusion and equality, and using the tarot archetypes to discuss ecology, sustainability and community.

Other recent entries to the tarot corpus include the offerings of fantasy artists like Stephanie Law, Jennifer Galasso and Paulina Cassidy. While marketed neither as Pagan nor feminist, the art and feel of these decks reflect modern values of inclusion, and, to me, feel woman-honoring, and earth-honoring.

One problem I've noticed is that the accompanying texts with many feminist, Pagan and inclusive decks feel a bit preachy, and are often so descriptive of the action within each card that deciphering actual interpretations in real-life readings can feel a bit daunting. As with all tarot decks, each reader must figure out how the cards speak to them in divination, which may be very different than the card descriptions in the books.

It would be incomplete to discuss feminism in tarot without discussing some of the basic gender perceptions and truths that have always surrounded divination.

First, right along with the growth of feminist tarot has been the growth of gay tarot. That is, card images that reflect same-sex relationships and release the heteronormative assumptions of traditional tarot art. I think, in life and in tarot, the fight for gender inclusion and the fight for LGBTQ inclusion might always remain linked.

Further, there have always been, and continue to be, assumptions about gender in the world of divination.

If prostitution is considered the "first profession", I think diviners and midwives are in a dead heat for the claim of "second profession". It's interesting to note that, while modern women have had to fight for their place in the professional world, the earliest professions we think of were, and are, primarily the domain of women.

The archetype of the female fortune-teller is one that goes back for centuries. She may be young and sexy. She may be colorfully dressed, or she may be old and wizened. She may be Maiden, Mother or Crone, but she is always considered wise, and the information she reveals, valuable.

While it seems that, historically, men seldom listened to women, in this one context, at the divination table, women's wisdom was, and is, valued.

At the same time, the modern assumption that most diviners are female, and that most of our clients are female, rings to me of misandry, and seems unfair to the many talented male diviners, and our many loyal male clients.

We often speak of "women's intuition", that is, the idea that women are inherently more psychically gifted than men. The High Priestess, Major Arcana 2, depicts this archetype of feminine psychic power. In Wicca, there is certainly more focus on "women's mysteries" than of the mysteries of our male counterparts.

One of the challenges that Feminist Tarot will face over the next decade will be to find the balance between honoring women's

special connection to the divine, and understanding that tarot, intuition and divination belong to everyone.

A tarot deck can be a mirror. In the process of divination, the cards reflect the events and concerns of our lives. As a book of spiritual wisdom, the 78 cards can offer advice and understanding along life's path. As we study the development of tarot over history, we see within it our own cultural development.

That tarot can expand and grow to fit our modern world, and yet retain its basic archetypes and messages is a testament to its unique power in the world.

When we incorporate tarot into our lives, as individuals and communities, tarot becomes a tool with which we discover our own power. That may be the reason that a product of oppressive dark times was able to stretch and give birth to a tarot tradition that is a mirror of our struggle for gender inclusion, and a reclaiming of the power of women.

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# Reviews



Lucky Lenormand  
*Review by Bonnie  
Cehovet*

Tarot of Gold  
*Review by Sherryl E.  
Smith*



Tarot Apokalypsis  
*Review by Bonnie  
Cehovet*

The Lost Code of Tarot  
*Review by Bonnie  
Cehovet*



# TAROT OF GOLD BY SALEIRE

Review by Sherryl E. Smith

Recently we've been treated to quite a few creative updates of the Tarot de Marseille. But I don't believe the Visconti-Sforza deck has received this treatment until very recently, when the artist Saleire self-published her Tarot of Gold on Gamecrafter.



The Visconti-Sforza deck is historically significant as the oldest 78-card tarot deck in existence. The Duke of Milan commissioned this one-of-a-kind deck from his favorite artist in the 1450s. The cards were painted with lapis lazuli, malachite and other precious pigments used in illuminated manuscripts. The background of the trump and court cards is a sheet of embossed gold leaf, and there are gold and silver accents throughout. It's one of the most expensive decks ever created.

Saleire has captured the shimmering, glorious beauty of the original deck. Little discs of gold fractals sparkle and

glow in the borders and backgrounds of the trump and court cards. The court cards and most of the trumps in Saleire's deck stay close to the fifteenth-century originals. A few trump cards have been completely re-visioned:

- The Sun card has a sailboat under a huge sun with rays like flower petals. This card is entirely gold.
- The little knight on horseback at the top of the Visconti-Sforza Justice card is placed center stage silhouetted against large scales.
- The World is an angelic being in a purple frame.
- The Strength card is illustrated with two hands, a burst of light and a rising phoenix. It's probably a good thing she redesigned this card since the original shows the Duke clubbing a crouching lion to celebrate his victory over Venice.



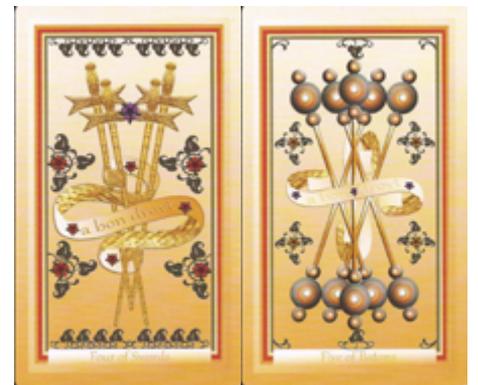
Since the Devil and Tower are missing from the original deck, they are re-

created each time the deck is published. Like most artists commissioned to design these cards, Saleire uses Tarot de Marseille imagery. I enjoyed noticing that the two figures chained to the Devil are the same couple on the Lovers card.



The suit symbols are especially attractive. The Coins' intense glow reminds us this suit is about the acquisition of money and the things it can buy. The textured gold Swords look very medieval. The cool blue Cups provide a nice balance to the gold of the other suits. The globes at each end the rather futuristic Batons are a bit puzzling and allow our imaginations to project anything we want onto them.

The cards are standard sized, smooth to the touch, very easy to shuffle and pleasant to handle. The box is covered with gold fractals. There is no booklet.



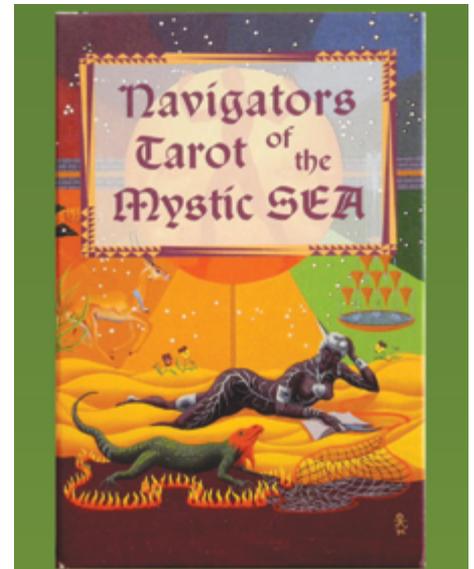
Saleire is a psychic, medium and healer who creates her art in a semi-trance with the cooperation of spirit guides. She has long felt an affinity with the Visconti-Sforza deck and feels she was

guided to re-create it. The artist has an impressive output of tarot and oracle decks, books on spirit communication and light-infused original art. All are featured on her website.

Get the deck at [www.TheGamecrafter.com](http://www.TheGamecrafter.com)

Artist's website is [www.Saleire.com](http://www.Saleire.com)

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# LUCKY LENORMAND

Review by Bonnie Cehovet

Author: Monica Bodirsky

Artist: Monica Bodirsky

Self-Published - 2016

ISBN #9780995237308

The *Lucky Lenormand* is a traditional 36 card Lenormand deck, accompanied by an eight page foldout set of instructions. This is a Limited Edition of 100 decks – 90 of which are for sale. The cards come in a beautiful, light green box with the image of the card backs on the back of the box, and the image of the Rider card on the front of the box.

Interesting to note: The name of the deck comes from the fact that it has brought so much luck into the creators life!

Bodirsky has been a cartomancer for over forty years. She believes that each person holds the power to change and shape their own destiny. Working with the cards helps build self-awareness and the ability to identify blockages in life.

This is a mixed media collage deck, done largely in a pastel color palette. The cards are small – 2 ¼” by 3 ½”. The card title is centered at the top of the card in white lettering. The associated card number is on the upper left

hand side of the card, with the associated playing card suit and number on the upper right hand side of the card.

Each background was painted and collaged separately, with a very surrealist feel to them. The card backs are inspired by antique divination cards, and are reversible. All the symbols in the deck remain the same as traditional symbols, with the exception of the rod/whip card, which was retitled “Brooms”.

The eight page instruction booklet includes background on the deck, how to become familiar with the cards, and how to begin reading them. Instructions are given for three card readings, and for Le Grand Tableau. Meanings are given for each of the cards.



Card number 1 is Rider, which is associated with the 9 of Hearts. Fast message or news, good news, a messenger. Close to the seeker card, the news has personal significance, while far away, news about an outsider, or situation

somewhat removed.



Card number 15 is Bear, which is associated with the 10 of Clubs. Strong woman, jealousy, envy, protection, strength. Near the fish an indicator of financial prosperity and with the fox it indicates mistrust, as well as envy.



Card number 4 is House, which is associated with the King of Hearts. Your home, male same sex partner, sometimes business and your privacy. If near the seeker, a good fortune, but under can be a warning about the neighborhood or property. The house also indicates success and health.

This is a lovely deck – the pastels truly drew me in, and made the deck very easy to work with. The mosaic style background is a perfect foil for the imagery. This is a Limited Edition – if you are interested in it, follow up soon!

© August 2016 Bonnie Cehovet

# TAROT APOKALYPSIS

Review by Bonnie Cehovet

Author: Kim Huggens

Artist: Erik C. Dunne

Lo Scarabeo - 2016

ISBN #978-8865274323

*T*arot *Apokalypsis* is a traditional 78 card deck (accompanied by a 457 page companion book) from Kim Huggens (author) and Erik C. Dunne (artist). It is meant to serve as a sister deck to their previous deck, the *Tarot Illuminati*. There is an additional card, entitled The All Gifted, that is an optional card. It can be used to represent the Seeker, or the many levels of Self. The deck and book come housed in a heavy cardboard box, with one side open. The companion book, and a box with an indentation to hold the cards, fits into the cardboard box, giving the look of a set of books. The box cover shows the image of the optional card (The All Gifted), as does the cover of the book. The back of the box gives information on the deck. There is an ornate gold border around the front and back of the box, which is continued within the book. Inside the book, each page has a gold border on all four sides.

The Major Arcana carry traditional titles, with the addition of an extra card,

the All Gifted (which shows an image of Pandora as the keeper of all gifts – she is shown holding “Pandora’s Box”). The Minor Arcana are divided into four suits – Wands, Swords, Chalices, and Pentacles. The suit of Wands features the ancient Egyptian civilization. The suit of Chalices features the Greek and Roman civilizations. The suit of Swords features the Scandinavian Viking civilization. The suit of Pentacles features the Khmer civilization. The Court cards are Princess, Prince, Queen, and King, and feature gods and goddesses from the cultures depicted in each suit.

The companion book begins with a forward by Donnaleigh de LaRose. In their introduction, Dunne and Huggens talk about what the Tarot is, and that the short meanings provided in the book are meant to be a starting point for a beginner, and a supplement for a more advanced reader. As a sister deck to the *Tarot Illuminati* (which was focused on illuminating wisdom), the *Tarot Apokalypsis* is focused on showing how the sacred is revealed.

There is a section on using the Tarot, including invoked meaning (which draws on traditional symbolism), and evoked meaning (which draws on an individual’s personal response to a symbol). In the section on how to read a spread, there are short discussions of the Major and Minor Arcana, numbers, gender, and color. Three spreads are

presented – a three card *Unveiling A Situation*, a four card *Revelations of the Four Suits*, a five card *Demeter’s Four Season’s Spread*, and a three card *Hekate Triformis* spread for choices and options.

The intro to the Major Arcana includes a chart listing the Astrological and Kabbalistic association for each card. The write-up for each of the Major Arcana cards includes a stunning, full page, full color image of the card. The card name, mythological association, the voice of the character in the card talking about the card, the Mystery of the card (the energy that it brings to a reading), Revelation (the keywords for the card in an upright/positively aspected position), and Negatively aspected (the keywords for the card in a reversed position).

The intro to the Minor Arcana includes the fact that each suit represents a different ancient civilization (Wands/Ancient Egypt; Cups/the Greek and Roman worlds of the classical to Late Antique period; Swords/the Norse of northern Europe; Pentacles/the Khmer empire of Cambodia). There is a chart that lists the associations between element/suit/area of life, and a chart that lists the associations for the numbers 1-10.

Each card presentation includes a one quarter page full color image, along with the card name, the voice of the character in the card talking about the card, the Mystery of the card (the energy that it brings to a reading), Revelation (the keywords for the card in an upright/positively aspected position), and Negatively aspected (the keywords for the card in a reversed position).

The Court Cards are presented after the Minor Arcana pips (numbered cards). The write-up for each of the Court Cards includes a stunning, full page, full color image of the card. The card name, associated God or Goddess,

the voice of the character in the card talking about the card, the Mystery of the card (the energy that it brings to a reading), Revelation (the keywords for the card in an upright/positively aspected position), and Negatively aspected (the keywords for the card in a reversed position).

At the end of the book there is a section on Continued Study, which includes tips on keeping a journal, doing a daily draw, and the *Three Symbol Reading* (interpreting the foreground, middle ground, and background symbols). There is a list of books for further reading, and bios of the author and artist, along with blank pages for making notes.

The cards measure 2 ¾” by 4 ¾”, and are of glossy card stock. The backs are reversible. The card faces are borderless on three sides, with a ½” black border on the card bottom. The card title is written in white across the black border. The coloring in this deck is intense, and quite beautiful. The fine details show well, with no blurring. The artwork, as we well know with Dunne, is original digital, with layered collaging. It has a lovely mythical, “other world” quality to it. The suit of Wands is done predominately in the red/orange color range; the suit of Chalices in light blues, golds and reds; suit of Swords in the gray/blue color range; the suit of



Pentacles in varying shades of green.

A sampling of cards from the deck follows:

The *All Gifted* is an additional, optional card with this deck. Sub-titled Pandora, this card was inspired (in part) by *The Man and The Woman in the Lenormand deck*. These are cards that represent the Seeker, but can also represent the Self on many levels. Positively aspected, this card can represent giving oneself to others, bestowing goodness and blessings, identifying ones strengths, and hope for the future. Negatively aspected, this card can represent fear of the self, fear of negatively affecting others and a situation, withholding ones gifts and oneself.



The *Fool* is subtitled *The Mevlevi Sufi sama ceremony*. At the beginning it is the end, at the end it is the beginning. Huggens pairs it with *The World*, which is also about endings and new beginnings. The “foolishness” manifests as divine foolishness. Positively aspected The Fool can represent the death of the ego, boundaries and self; removing that which holds one back; spiritual ecstasy and drunkenness, and unity. Negatively aspected, The Fool can represent foolish behavior, being unprepared to begin something new; naivety; reckless abandon and losing sight of the self and the goal.



The *Hermit* is subtitled *Inuit shamanism: the angakkoq*. In this card we see an angakkoq (Inuit shaman) drumming to call forth the spirit of the land and her helping spirits. The Hermit may withdraw herself from society or community to find a greater understanding of the Other. Positively aspected, The Hermit can represent guidance from a spiritual source: seeking spiritual insight or wisdom: or helping others with one’s knowledge. Negatively aspected, The Hermit can represent uncertainty caused by a great deal of change; being unable to find answers; or refusing guidance.



The *Ace of Wands* is seen as the force of vital spark and generative power that kickstarts all processes creation. It is energy in all of its forms. Positively aspected, the *Ace of Wands* can represent the initial spark of creation or desire;

energy in all its forms; a prima urge, yearning, or desire; or the self, ego, or personality. Negatively aspected, the Ace of Wands can represent uncontrollable, destructive energy; ambition that is stunted or directed negatively; or lack of passion.



The *Three of Swords* is all about grief and loss. Grief can be felt by a person, a community, a nation, or a culture. Positively aspected, the Three of Swords can represent existential crisis, pain, suffering, sorrow; realization of painful, difficult truths; feeling anguish at the suffering of others; or feeling frozen and incapable in the face of inevitability. Negatively aspected, the Three of Swords can represent being stuck in a vicious cycle; unable to move on from grief; lack of compassion; or missing the bigger picture.



The *King of Cups* is subtitled Apollo, God of Healing, Oracles, and the Arts. In the King of Cups we find the active, ambitious, and passionate aspects of our emotional and social selves. Positively aspected, the King of Cups can represent foundation, stability, firmness; production, productivity; bringing something into manifestation; supporting somebody, a project, or an idea; or the growth of new beginnings. Negatively aspected, the King of Cups can represent stunted growth in an area of one's life; difficulty bringing something to manifestation; or abuse of the body or environment.

The *Four of Pentacles* is a strong foundation card, with slow but sustainable increase. Positively aspected, the Four of Pentacles can represent fortifications and defense; laying strong foundations; wealth and luxury; a safe investment; or saving money. Negatively aspected, the Four of Pentacles can represent greed; grasping at wealth; refusal to move forwards out of fear of material loss; or being held back by material concerns.

The *Princess of Pentacles* is sub-titled Prthvi, Goddess of the Earth, Fertility, and nourishment. The Princess of Pentacles is Mother Earth. She sees that nothing is truly destroyed – that matter simply changes form. Positively aspected, the Princess of Pentacles can represent foundation, stability, firmness; production, productivity; bringing something into manifestation; the environment one moves in; or the growth of new beginnings. Negatively

aspected, the Princess of Pentacles can represent stunted growth in an area of one's life; lack of potential; or abuse of the body or environment.



The intent for both the deck and the book was followed through beautifully. The focus on different cultures in the suits was well done, as was theme of mystery religions in the Major Arcana. The artwork is intense, and beautifully detailed.

As we might expect, there was clearly a great deal of research put into the writing of the book. (It is annotated throughout the book where various references were taken from.)

Little issues from my POV include the fact that, with all the ornate gold bordering, I would have preferred to see the cards themselves edged in gold gilt.

Also, I found that the book binding was not holding together in places (not a huge problem, but still, an annoyance). And no – I do not put my books face down when they are open!

This is a beautiful set, and very pleasing to work with. However, it is not a beginners deck. While the artwork is stunning, it is not traditional, nor are the references to ancient cultures part of traditional Tarot. This is a niche deck – it will work for some, but not for others.

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# THE LOST CODE OF TAROT

Review by Bonnie Cehovet

Author: Andrea Aste

Artist: Andrea Aste

Lo Scarabeo - 2016

ISBN #978-0738749815

*T*he *Lost Code of Tarot* is in essence a parallel world designed and imagined by artist/philosopher Andrea Aste, whose foundation is the era of the master alchemists (and what a magical era that was!). Aste took his inspiration from the codes of Leonardo da Vinci and the Voynich manuscript, where he (Aste) merges science and magic into that lovely space between spaces, where only those who are open to using their imagination can go. This imaginal project is based upon the premise that one alchemist created the original deck that we call Tarot, and that he kept a *Book of Shadows* to show what his work was all about.

This is a multi-media project, including an 80 card deck (the two additional cards have yet to be defined), a 160 page *Book of Shadows*, a movie ... and more! As opportunities present themselves, Aste opens up this project – so you may find a version of it on YouTube (The Alchemist Channel), in an art exhibit, or presented in a group setting.

Or ... who knows where! It is new, it is imaginative, it is exciting ... and the most creative presentation I have seen since *Ciro Marchetti's* interactive deck *Tarot of Dreams*.

*Note: There is an issue with the publication of this deck/book that has some people upset. This project started out as a Kickstarter campaign, and was fully funded by it. In the meantime, it was picked up by a major publisher (Lo Scarabeo). Unfortunately, the deck was made available to the public before the people who helped fund the Kickstarter campaign received their decks. This was through no fault of Andrea Aste. If you would like to read more about this, please check the Kickstarter page (<https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/1769110239/the-book-of-shadows-the-lost-code-of-the-tarot/posts/1524733>).*

The deck and accompanying *Book of Shadows* come in a very sturdy box with a magnetic closure along the right hand side. (Bless these magnetic closures – no more big messes if the box gets knocked over!) The background on the box is a matte type black color, with a technique called spot varnish used to highlight certain images. Very sophisticated, and a real pleasure to look at! The cards are seated in a well within the box, with a red ribbon that makes them easy to take out.

The *Book of Shadows* is a work of art onto itself! It has glossy colored pages in a sepia finish that makes the reader

feel that they are back with that Ancient Alchemist as he creates the very first Tarot! This is a loving work of fiction that ... well, it could be real! Remember, this is a parallel world! Reference is made to imagined news and magazine articles (Time and Life!) and “mockumentaries”.

*The Book of Shadows* is divided into five chapters: (1) Astralia (observation of the cosmos), (2) Magnum Opus (alchemy), (3) Machinarium (mechanical inventions and strange contraptions), (4) Theatrum Historiae (historical section about a lost civilization), and (5) De Divinatione (Tarot cards and their use). Little snippets are offered, such as the background into the choice of black and red as the colors for the two inks used for both the cards and the manuscripts (red as a symbol of the power of man's intellect, black as mystery, the unknown, and evil seen as ignorance).

The section on divination offers several different spreads, all laid out in geometric shapes: The Dragon (the shape of the present situation), the Little Bear (focuses on the truth of the relationship between two people), Cassiopeia (all about love, passions, and important relationships), Orion (dealing with the present as it is, and how it must change so that prey can be captured), The Ship (for those moving forward into adventures, and how to overcome the obstacles in their path), Eternal Truths (connecting the mundane to the spiritual to help you master your soul's path), The Guiding Angel (protecting your dreams, bringing hope and good luck), The Chartreux (guidance), The Mystical Ladder (help in moving towards a goal), The Maze (journey through the maze to the realization of your goal). I loved it that these spreads come from Tarotists and Tarot organizations around the world!

The cards themselves are 2 5/8” by 4

3/4", and of a fairly sturdy card stock. The card backs are done in tones of gray and black, and feature detailed line work portraying the imaginary walled city of Sapientia, which is built around a magic pool. (Aste has a video up that explains this much more fully than I ever could - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N86FyWDg4zs> .) There is a fine border 1/4" in from the edges of the card. The backs are reversible.

(A bit of back story on the card backs: In creating the card backs, Aste was looking for something special, something that represented the concept of the deck, as well as showing the Alchemist's inventiveness in the style of the Renaissance Steampunk World that this project was built around. In his research, Aste came across beautiful renaissance book from the Islamic world. In this book, he saw an interesting rendition of the Holy city of Mecca. He made an immediate decision to form the main plaza of his imaginary city of Sapientia in the same style.

Remember — Sapientia has a deep connection with the Alchemist. It is a city governed by philosopher's and men of knowledge. In this parallel world, in this city of science, strange devices and inventions are created.

The back of the cards shows the main piazza, which Aste calls the Sea of Dreams. In the center is a rectangular pool filled with mystical, magical water, where stars, moons, and planets are slowly floating. It shows everything that was, that is, and that will be.

Two statues of Cyndre Mapa, the cosmic Elephant carrying the World, guard the pool. They are the symbol of the

city, and of the Alchemist himself. Magnificent palaces rise around the pool, with their gilded domes, turrets, and spikes, hanging porticoes and shady colonnades, with luxurious gardens on the top of the buildings.

I want to thank Andrea for sharing this information with me, so that we could better understand the importance of something as simple, yet complicated, as the card backs. IMHO, the card backs act as a gateway into the magical, imaginal world of *The Lost Code of the Tarot.*)

The card faces are sepia colored, with a fine border 1/4" in from the edge of the card. The Major Arcana follows traditional order (Strength VIII, Justice XI), with the titles in the lower left hand side of the card, in Aste's imaginal code. The images are geometrical, done in black line work with red highlight, against a sepia colored background. The Minor Arcana is comprised of four suits (Wands, Cups, Swords, and Ouborior/Pentacles), with the Court Cards entitled King, Queen, Knight, and Page. The cards are done Marseilles style, non-illustrated with suit icons only. (It should be noted here that Aste studied the Marseilles and the Visconti-Sforza Tarot decks in creating *The Lost Code of the Tarot.*)

The Fool is quite interesting — done

in a geometric, line type format, facing the right hand side of the card, with his dog between his legs, almost tripping him.

The Wheel of Fortune very much follows the traditional wheel, with objects around the edge.

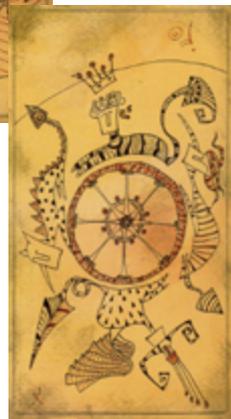
The Two of Cups shows two upright cups, with two butterflies flying around them.

The Four of Ouborioris (Pentacles/Coins) shows a snake with its tail in its mouth as an icon. I find this to be a fascinating take on Pentacles/Coins.

The Queen of Ouborioris (Pentacles/Coins) shows a female figure, standing, with a staff in her left hand. The detailing on her dress is in red.

The Knight of Swords is seated on his horse, facing the left hand side of the card. As with the Major Arcana, he is done in geometric style.

*The Lost Code of Tarot* is a parallel, imaginal world. It is not meant to be used as a learning deck, even though it follows a traditional structure. It is meant to take the reader on a journey within themselves — or perhaps outside of themselves. This imaginal world can truly exist in either place! It exists on paper (through the cards and the print copy of the *Book of Shadows*) as well as in a video version, through the extensive, elaborate videos on Aste's You Tube Channel (The Alchemists Channel — <https://youtu.be/HjgRh60Wa8c>). Hint: You will find experts from the world of Tarot as we know it (as well as experts in the worlds of art, philosophy and magic) speaking through these videos. Aste is assisted in these videos by



the invincible Yorick! What more can we ask for!

Andrea has gifted us with some very personal insight on this project. This is his “American dream”. The project started out as just an exhibition. Then, as is the way of his Alchemist, he began having ideas in the form of visions, and decided to write short stories, then to create the mockumentary. Then the mockumentary grew, and he started looking for collaborators.

Then came a problem - it was hard to find someone in Italy that believes in dreams anymore. People in Italy are



scared of the future, so no one invests. Andrea was left with two roads: give up, or do everything alone. He chose to keep going, and to do everything alone. In his own words, it was “monstrously” difficult.

There were many firsts - first animation, first movie, first project that was so complex and articulated - all in a language that was not his own! (Remember, Andrea has presented all of this in English, which is a second language to him.)

He worked alone, day and night, taking care of all of the details. As a result, he was secluded in his studio for far too long, and became exhausted. But he followed his dream, to convey emotions and meaning, to create a fictional world that appears real (the lovely par-

allel world of the Alchemist, his Book of Shadows, and his magic!). He did this to encourage us to open up to a new understanding of our own world, while having a bit of fun at the same time.

To read more about what Andrea has to say, and to take a video journey through his parallel world, check out my interview <https://wordpress.com/post/bonniecehovet.wordpress.com/3533>.

This is a magical mystery tour – and I invite you to step through time and join in! A true Renaissance Steampunk world extraordinaire!

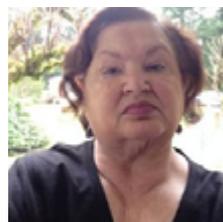
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BONNIE CEHOVET is a professional Tarot reader with over twenty years experience, is a CTGM (Certified Tarot Grand Master), and a Reiki Master/Teacher. She is a published author, including *Tarot, Birth Cards, and You* (Schiffer Publishing, 2011). *Tarot, Ritual, and You* (Schiffer Publishing, 2013), and *Surviving the Holidays* (through Amazon.com). She is co-author, along with Brad Tesh, of *Seek Joy ... Toss Confetti* (through Amazon.com).

Her reviews and interviews can be found on her site ([www.bonniecehovet.com](http://www.bonniecehovet.com)), and on the AeclecticTarot website ([www.aeclectic.net/tarot](http://www.aeclectic.net/tarot)). Her writer's blog can be found here — <http://www.bonniecehovet.blogspot.com/>.

## ***Tarot Conferences & Symposiums***

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### **Bay Area Tarot Symposium (BATS)**

Date: TBA

San Jose, California

[www.dodivination.com](http://www.dodivination.com)

### **London Tarot Festival**

May 20th, 2017

London UK

<http://tarotconference.co.uk/tarot-festival/>

### **North Star Tarot Conference**

January 27 - 29, 2017

Eagan, Minnesota

[www.tctarotcollective.com](http://www.tctarotcollective.com)

### **Northwest Tarot Symposium**

March 3 - 5, 2017

Portland, Oregon

[www.nwtarotsymposium.com](http://www.nwtarotsymposium.com)

### **Readers Studio / Tarot & Psychology Conference**

April 27 - 30, 2017

Queens, New York

[www.tarotschool.com](http://www.tarotschool.com)

### **Tarot Festival in the Castle**

June 3rd, 2017

Zurich Switzerland

[www.tarotconference.co.uk](http://www.tarotconference.co.uk)

### **TABI Tarot Conference**

TBA

The British Isles

[www.tabiconference.com](http://www.tabiconference.com)

### **Tarosophy Tarot Conventions**

September 15 - 17, 2017

Palm Beach Gardens, Florida

[www.tarotassociation.net](http://www.tarotassociation.net)

### **Tarot Guild of Australia International Conference**

Date: TBA

Melbourne, Australia

[www.tarotguild.org.au](http://www.tarotguild.org.au)

### **UK Tarot Conference**

October 13 - 14, 2017

London UK

[www.tarotconference.co.uk](http://www.tarotconference.co.uk)

## ***Tarot Associations***

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### **American Tarot Association**

[ata-tarot.com](http://ata-tarot.com)

### **Tarot Association of the British Isles**

[www.tabi.org.uk](http://www.tabi.org.uk)

### **Tarot Professionals**

[www.tarotassociation.net](http://www.tarotassociation.net)

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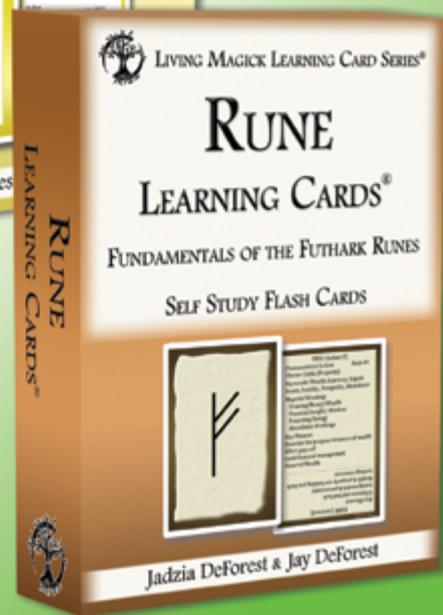
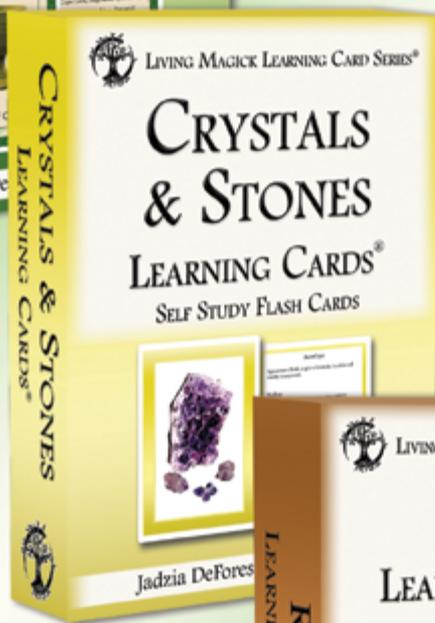
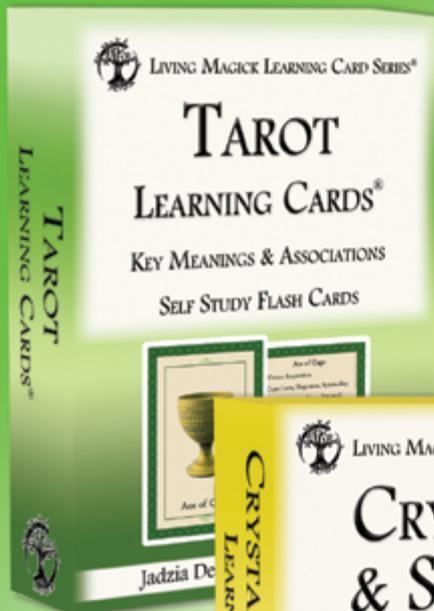


Placing the cards in the turbulent period of Henry VIII to the Restoration provides the perfect setting for this richly imagined deck. The contributors, artist Rex Van Ryn, colorist Steve Dooley, and writer Andy Letcher provide a dynamic graphic style and plenty of twists and turns, riddles and more. This deck will delight experienced tarot users and novices alike!



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