

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot



Lesson 1 : The orientation of this course

Tarot is an amazing phenomenon, a delightful expression of the human imagination, that is, sadly and inexplicably, almost totally unappreciated by scholars and the art world. The original tarot images were created in the mid 15th century and so engaged the Western mind, which delights in such imagery, that it survived the centuries. Today there are probably at least two thousand tarot designs in existence. I, myself, have been able to collect over a thousand tarot decks, and I am aware of the many gaps in my collection. Tarot seems to have grown out of the European emblem tradition, and its set of enigmatic images so enraptured the European mind that its compact emblem forms have been maintained intact for over 550 years. Although different designers and artists have reworked these images in their own individual style and within their own culture, the symbolism of the twenty two trumps, the court cards and the pips, coheres and remains intact over these five centuries.

This study course will explore the marvels of modern tarot designs. We will not be limited by a purely historical survey (though the history can be interesting), but instead go on a journey of exploration, looking at modern tarot in all sorts of ways and different perspectives. Amongst other things, we will see how some creators of tarot brought influences and cultural colour from their own backgrounds into their designs, how some sought to expand the parameters of tarot with original ideas, how other tarots were designed for specific purposes, while others produced truly remarkable images that stand in their own right as artworks.

For about the first four centuries of its existence, tarot remained relatively static. This game of cards was expressed in a number of different but closely related designs. In the late 18th century a rather imaginative French writer presented tarot as a secret book of instruction of ancient Egyptian origin. This so engaged and excited the imagination of some 19th century writers, that they extended this thesis and they invented connections with Jewish kabbalah, through associating the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet with the 22 trumps, which from then on became labeled as 'arcana', that is images bearing a hidden meaning. All this was mere fiction and invention, but it did give a spur to a re-engagement with the tarot, and there arose out of this ferment of esotericism in the mid and late 19th century, fresh designs that are the basis of many tarot decks today. For example the Wegener-Falconnier Egyptian tarot of 1896, the Wirth designs of 1889 and the hidden tarot of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (which the members had to recreate as part of their inner work in this influential magical order). These and other tarot designs then set the background for the emergence of new

revitalized tarot imagery in the 20th century. We will, in time, take a detailed look at this in some of the later lessons in this course, but it will be best at the outset merely to get a general sense of the way in which tarot evolved in the modern era.

In the early twentieth century the amazingly influential Rider-Waite tarot deck appeared and shaped the way in which tarot was to develop. A number of decks were designed during the first half of the 20th century and we will look at these in on some detail, but we had only a handful of new designs in this fifty year period, until in the 1960's a vital new creative spirit seemed to flow into tarot. As soon as a few of these early modern designs appeared, people seemed to be so taken with this emerging new form that they turned to working with tarot imagery themselves and we can see an explosion of tarot designs in the 1970's and 80's which still continues unabated today. Dozens of new tarots are now published every year.

Tarot became multicultural and open to different and mutually inconsistent interpretations, so that the imagery of one deck would not necessarily cohere with and often contradicted that on another. The amazing strength of tarot seems to lie in the relatively tight structure of its twenty two arcana. Though these emblematic images could be interpreted by tarot designers and artists in different ways, the symbolic components had a strength of form which imposed a structure on anyone designing a tarot, and this very restriction somehow kept the tarot tradition coherent, so that one could read the emblematic forms of the Fool, Magician, Priestess etc., clearly out of the different tarot designs. Later in the twentieth century, the so-called 'oracle decks' appeared. In these more freely structured designs, the authors threw off the restrictions of the tarot structure and devised their own structure along with their imagery. In this course, we will not (except for a few exceptions) be dealing with the oracle decks, but entirely focus on designs with a clear tarot structure.

The tarot structure emerged early in its history. This is not the place to argue the different views or discuss which design came first or established the pattern, but it is clear that a pattern emerged and this is still with us today in the two thousand or so tarot designs in existence. We have the twenty two trumps, and in the full pack, four court cards and ten pip cards in four suits, making $14 \times 4 = 54$ in the minor arcana, and thus seventy eight cards in all. Many of our contemporary tarot designers have focused solely on the twenty two trumps and there are many tarots which only depict these. The decks intended more for cartomancy or tarot readings, will have a full set of seventy eight cards. Usually, but not always, the designer works some special imagery into the design of the court and ace cards, but in the case of the 'pip' or number cards these are often simple arrays of swords, wands, cups or pentacles (or whatever the designer chooses to represent these four suits) like to the pips on conventional playing cards. Other designers go much further and provide a rich and complex imagery for each of the pip cards. We will be examining all these things in detail in some of the lessons that follow.

So this course will focus entirely on tarot designs which respect the conventional tarot structure, even though (as many creative artists tend to do) they may push against these boundaries and try and extend them. We have been using the term 'design' rather than tarot 'pack' or 'deck' as not all published tarots were produced as actual cards. There are many interesting tarots which were published as illustrations in books, rather than being issued in the form of actual printed cards. In the last few years there are also a growing number of tarots

which have been published only as images on web sites. It is important to include some of these in our survey. There are also an unknown number of tarot designs which exist merely in the form of the original artwork, which have never been published. Some of these unique items appear in Stuart Kaplan's volumes of his *Encyclopedia of Tarot* (1978 -2005). For this course we will focus more on tarots which were published as decks, printed books, and web images, and thus could enter into the public domain where they could influence and affect other tarot designers.

So our course on tarot will be primarily experiential, and will desist from too much focus on history. It will also not deal with the complexities of the esoteric interpretation of symbolism. There are so many competing esoteric groups wanting to impose and stamp their individual views on tarot imagery, so it seems pointless entering into this sea of confusion. Rather we will try to let an individual tarot design speak for itself and perhaps provide some context within which we can view it. At times it may seem as if we have gone on a rather confusing and disjointed journey, jumping from one tarot to another, but as the course proceeds you should find that you are beginning to develop an appreciation for the ways in which individual tarots express themselves. The course is not a haphazard journey but one designed to open up the delights of modern tarot to you.

There will be a great amount of imagery for you to look at. For a number of reasons it is impossible to show all the card images of each tarot in the lessons. All modern tarot designs are copyright, and for legal reasons one cannot blithely scan and freely distribute the artwork that people have laboured over, sometimes for years. Instead some examples can be shown in the low resolution of the computer screen under the fair use of copyright material. At the end of the lesson links will be provided to web sites where one can see more of the cards in the deck. In reality, one can really only study tarot imagery by buying the actual cards or books, and I would urge people to do this. I could never have created this course if I had not been able to collect all the decks and been able to handle them and look at the detailed printed image. The imagery of a jpeg scan is usually far too low for one to be able to appreciate the amazing artwork. A example of this can be seen with the *Bilder Zum Tarot* of Helmut Wonschick created in 1984, which are originally large pen drawings with fine lines reduced onto 4 by 2.2 inch (10 by 60mm) images on card.



We can see how the standard scan of the image, gives merely a smeary, almost unreadable impression of the card design, whereas a 600 dpi scan of part of the image shows the details almost as they are printed. Here we have the image of the Tower and we see here in the detailed image how Wonschick has depicted the falling human figure as fractured, with his top half white and bottom half shaded. Details like this are easily missed when one only has access to poor quality scans.

To truly appreciate tarot art one must surely buy tarot cards and have them as real objects and not think one can get by with scans taken off the internet. It is not that expensive to collect tarot. Many 1980's and later tarots can be bought secondhand for under \$20. Of course, the rarer tarots, some of the earlier ones, and those that are totally desirable and now out of print, fetch high prices and can cost over \$300. If you are prepared to invest such a sum then you can come to own a series of 22 rare artworks, and sometimes you just have to pay such prices to have such beautiful objects ready to hand. Many of these tarots were made in small editions, some as small as 20 copies, so they do have a collectable value as well as an artistic one. Collecting tarot can be an investment opportunity and this has pushed up prices considerably recently as interest grows in this neglected artwork. I have provided some links to online shops that specialize in tarot cards, as an appendix to this first lesson.

As I indicated earlier, I could not have constructed this course without developing a considerable collection of tarot. Here is a picture of a small sample of the thousand or so tarots I own. Later in the course I will provide a comprehensive (though not exhaustive) listing of modern tarots based on my collection and various other references, which may help you in building your own collection.



In this course we will look at tarot, **thematically** (celtic tarots, feminist, magical, cat tarots, etc), **by country or region** (Italian tarots, Japanese, South American, Eastern European etc), **by their medium** (oil paintings, watercolours, line drawings, etc), **promotional decks** given out for free, the **works of important tarot artists** (Folchi, Solari, Casari, Gillabel, etc), **decks from a particular period** or made by the important publishers, and so on. There is a wealth of material to examine, so I hope you will want to join me on this journey through the artwork of modern tarot. This will be an experiential course, one of exploration, rather than deep intellectual analysis or complex history. Though it will be important to analyse the designs and place them in their proper context, this course is not designed to be a formal, intellectual, scholarly treatise, but rather an intelligent guided journey through the riches of tarot art.

APPENDIX

Some suppliers of tarot cards accessible through the internet.

Tarot garden	http://www.tarotgarden.com
Alida	http://www.alidastore.com
R. Somerville	http://www.playingcardsales.co.uk/cards/
Ganesha	http://www.ganesha.be/kaarten.htm
House of Tarot	http://www.houseoftarot.com/
librairie Dix de coeur	http://www.dixdecoeur.com/pages/vente/liste-tarot.htm

Please check this web page for additional material related to this lesson.

<http://www.alchemywebsite.com/tarot/course01notes.html>

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot

Lesson 2 : The guises of the tarot Fool



Even people who have no interest in the tarot will probably have some image in their minds of the tarot Fool, which has been appeared in so many contexts, in novels, films, music and other aspects of our contemporary culture, that he is difficult to escape.



Our brave little fool wanders across a landscape seemingly rapt in a daydream oblivious of the cliff he is about to fall over. The image in the Rider-Waite of 1910 is perhaps the best known. His garment here is embroidered with foliage and flowers, he has a feather in his cap and holds a flower in his left hand. His dog seems to bark at his heels. Is he warning his master or just going along for the fall himself?

On the right is a version of the Rider-Waite redrawn and painted in watercolour by Roberto de Angelis and published in the early 1990's as



I Tarocchi della Zingara (tarot of the gypsies) as a majors only deck which was later in 2000 expanded to a full 78 card deck and issued as the *Universal Tarot*. Roberto de Angelis' paintings are delightfully modelled and sensitively coloured compared with the Pamela Coleman-Smith designs of 80 years before. She was not able to take advantage of modern colour printing techniques and had to settle for the imperfection of a kind of stencilled colour which could hold no subtle shading. In his redrawing of the Rider-Waite images de Angelis remains mostly true to the original and only adds a few major changes to the depictions.

Another influential tarot deck is that of Oswald Wirth. Wirth, was a student of the occultists Stanislas de Guaita and Eliphas Levi, and he based his tarot on the earlier *Tarot of Marseilles*. This was created in France in 1889 for his book *Le Tarot des Imagiers du Moyen-Age*. We see this on the left. A rather fine edition of this rare book was issued by the French publisher Tchou in 1978 which had the images reproduced in the text as line drawings and coloured card in a pocket at the back of the book. (This is not that expensive and can still be easily found on the second-hand market). Wirth's tarot was redrawn and reissued in 1926 (the third image).



It was published again in 1966 and in many editions since then. It is a majors only deck. Just as Roberto de Angelis reworked the Rider-Waite, ‘Sergio’ had redrawn the Wirth cards and this was published as the *Tarocchi Ermetici* in 1989 (the fourth in our line of illustrations). In the Tchou edition, which follows the original, the Fool is placed at the end as trump 22. A great deal of angst and heated discussion has been made over the years by various esoteric people as to whether the Fool is card 0 or card 22, whether it is the first or the last in the trumps, and some even take the position that being card 0 it is somehow special and transcends such ordering. Such matters are not important to our study course as we are really only concerned with the images themselves. In the Wirth type decks, which follow the Tarot of Marseilles, the Fool’s dog bites him on the leg rather than merely accompanying him on his way. Also our Fool, rather than being about to step over a precipice is walking blindly towards a crocodile.

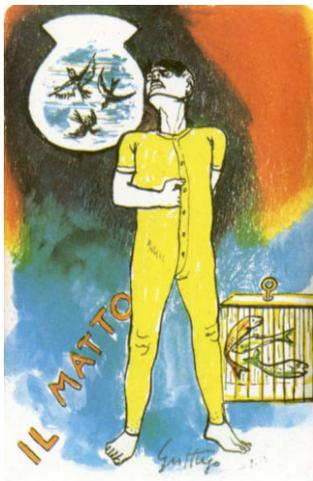
The Fool can be delightfully elaborated while still holding to these simple original forms. Thus although Paul Stuck’s designs for the tarot published by Ansata in 1981 as the *Mertz-Stuck Tarot* is full of new ideas and replete with Egyptian symbolism, his Fool remains conventional though beautifully depicted. Here he strides across a landscape his dog biting at his leg with its torn trousers. His eyes are turned to the sky above but there is no danger for him ahead. This image follows more the *Tarot of Marseilles* symbolism by not including the precipice or the jaws of a waiting crocodile.



In the *Napo Tarot* published in 1998 we are still with a recognisable image of the Fool. This was created by an Argentinean artist using bright stylized human figures. Here the Fool has his head in the form of a spiral from the centre of which his nose pokes out. The author says that his head is a whirlwind of ideas so much that he has his back to the sun and so cannot see where he is going. In his stylized poncho he wanders oblivious to danger towards a precipice in which a crocodile or

alligator awaits, thus, unlike Paul Stuck's vision, Napo decides on a double jeopardy. The Fool, being foolish, is wearing spurs on his sandals. He is not accompanied by a dog. At the top right is the astrological symbol for Uranus. Napo or the designer of the deck, Betty Lopez, associates each of the tarot trumps with a zodiacal or planetary sign.

The tarot of Silvia Maddonni published in France in 1981 appears to have been created in 1978. Her images are drawn in a fine pen then coloured. Her Fool is shown without the usual accoutrements. No dangerous precipice, no crocodile, no dog, but instead he is burdened by being tied to four objects - a fish, a caged bird, a cauldron or pot and a card labelled *Le fou* 'The fool', and bearing the image of a serpent seizing its own tail. Here we are being asked to shift our conception of the Fool. Maddonni wants to present us with the image of a Fool being someone burdened by being tied or attached to enigmatic, almost surreal objects. All the figures in her tarot seem self-absorbed and immersed in some existential anxiety. The images are beautiful but bear a certain unsettling quality. In this relatively early modern period deck we see a reassessment of the nature of the Fool.



Renato Guttuso (1911-1987) was a well known Sicilian painter who worked much of his life in Rome, though he had to flee from there during the rise of Mussolini as he was an anti-fascist and a member of the underground resistance. Later he established a reputation as Italy's foremost social realist painter of the twentieth century. In 1883 he was commissioned to produce a tarot deck. The Fool of this deck is shown in pyjamas or a buttoning-up undergarment. On the right is a bird cage with fish in it, while in the opposite corner is a fishbowl with birds. The birdcage and basin relates perhaps to the Maddonni tarot image, and here the fool is defined by his inability to find the appropriate containers for his pets. Guttuso's Fool, who bears a passing resemblance to Hitler, stares upwards in a wild, manic, almost mad way. His tarot is both erotic and has aspects of humorous social comment which is typical of much of his output.

The *Jungian Tarot* created in 1984-1988 by Robert Wang presents us with a different image of the Fool. Here he seems almost self assured, holding a flaming red Rose in his right hand and gazing outwards. At his feet on the right is a famous symbol found on some Gnostic amulets of the serpent Ophis encircling the world egg. On the left is a mandala - each of the twenty two major arcana in this tarot have a different mandala - this one is in the form of twelve spokes. In the foreground, like in some early Flemish paintings, is a row of leaves and flowers. The Fool in this Jungian context is a positive assured archetype, and is neither a voyager on a dangerous journey, nor a deluded soul, nor a figure of fun.

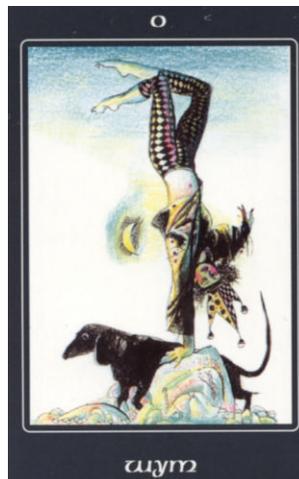


We can now see how the depiction of the Fool can strongly determine the nature, the style and message of the particular tarot. Some tarot creators have said that this is their most difficult card to design as it is like the opening window onto the deck, and its outer face. Many people remember decks primarily through their Fool card.

A beautifully painted French deck, *Le Tarot d'Or* by Joëlle Balle published in 1998 shows the Fool as a secure character proceeding on his journey across the checkerboard pavings of a chessboard complete with some black pieces. This Fool card is actually entitled *la quête alchimique* ('the alchemical quest'). He seems to be moving towards a white queen who appears like a lighthouse emitting a beam across the sea. Our Fool appears confident enough, even though his walking stick is bent in places and the suitcase he holds in his hand is open and in danger of spilling out its contents. In a brilliant piece of self reference Joëlle Balle shows us in the suitcase a copy of the tarot d'Or (naturally with a golden cover). This tarot is delightful and worth collecting. It is a majors only tarot though Balle is working on designs for the minor arcana.



In this interesting Russian *Tarot of Fortune* the artist Klim Li shows the Fool as a kind of clown, wearing a jester's cap and bells, doing acrobatics, balancing on one hand, upside down on a rock. A yellowish moon is seen beside him and his dog wanders about on the ground below. This is one of the more creative of the Russian tarots. The artwork is in pen with some colour wash and coloured pencil. This is a 78 card deck, published in 2001, and all of the pip cards carry elaborate illustrations.



The Japanese *Gundam Wing* children's anime or cartoon series depicts a future world in which humans, wearing elaborate fighting suits called 'Gundams', fight against an oppressive regime. A number of tarots have been marketed based on this series, most of which seem just to be vehicles for presenting the characters in the series. One of these decks illustrated by Ugeppa holds close to the traditional tarot images with artwork of a finely crafted style. The Fool is here shown as a clown with baggy pants walking the tightrope in a circus tent.



A tarot called the *Tattoo Tarot* shows the Fool as a circus juggler. He juggles what must be plastic containers of pigments used by tattooists. I have been unable to find out anything at all about this particular tarot, which are small cards and were probably issued as a promotional item by some tattoo parlour. They are distinguished by their strong almost luminous colours, and the device of depicting the faces of the characters in the stylized form of a cross.



Ciro Marchetti's *Gilded Tarot* of 2004 shows us the Fool as a jester with his triple peaked cap of bells juggling the signs of the zodiac, the icons of human fate. He spins, simultaneously, a hoop with his left leg and below we see his jester's wand. In 2005 Marchetti issued his *Tarot of Dreams* with the same highly skilled technically perfect artwork which is a delight to the eye. Again he chooses to depict the Fool as a species of medieval jester. The detail of the imagery makes these cards worth visiting again and again. Here our Fool is not juggling but balances on a large ball (accompanied by a kitten who reaches out to attempt to catch a butterfly).



He holds the globe of the earth in his right hand and a hoop in his left. A delightful little detail is that he wears a strip of three medals, one with a sun, another with the moon and the third with a star. As if the tarot cards were not enough *Tarot of Dreams* includes a CD-Rom with animated versions of the cards, a new departure for tarot.

We have seen how the Fool can become pictured as the clown or the jester. Tarot artists have extended the image of the Fool beyond the buffoon or victim of circumstances to a figure totally in control of himself, almost rivalling the strong figure of the next card in the series, the Magician. But we are not yet finished with our visits to the tarot fools. There are still some

surprises awaiting us in the packs of yet unopened tarots.

Lunaea Weatherstone issued a limited edition tarot deck in 2005 called the *Full Moon Dreams*. This is a photo collage deck and as we will see in a later lesson, collage decks can be rather variable in quality of production. Here, however, we have a high quality collage deck in which the interesting images have obviously been very carefully chosen and brought together in the 78 cards - even the pips are full collage. Lunaea present the Fool through the picture of an innocent child walking on a rainbow. This image totally captures the idea of the Fool and yet is quite an original conception. The doll like child possibly taken from childrens' 'scraps' (brightly printed images which children cut out and paste into scrapbooks) is accompanied by a walking cat and an owl. A little cherub appears in the top right corner and a maternal figure looks on at the antics of the child.



From a picture of innocence we move to a different world through the *Skins Deck* of the prolific Canadian tarot artist Shandra MacNeill. This is a strongly erotic deck in earth tones of chalk on a dark textured paper. She chooses to depict her Fool as a young woman standing before a four poster bed. It seems she is not necessarily thinking of that bed as a place of sleep. The cards, which are irregularly cut perhaps to give them a less manufactured and more immediate feel, depict this woman's sexuality through the various arcana. The sexual scenes though sometimes explicit are in no way prurient, and seem to be documenting a woman's journey exploring the aspects and boundaries of her sexuality. Shandra MacNeill's art is challenging but very creative, and her tarots are a wonderful example of how an artist today can use this ancient structure to express their vision without restriction. In the *Skins Deck* our Fool is a young woman bravely setting out to explore her emergent adult sexuality, no victim, clown, or lost soul. We will return to Shandra MacNeill's art later in this course.



The *Tarot of the Old Path* was designed Sylvia Gainsford and published in 1990 as a 78 card deck. A printing of the majors of much lesser quality was issued by the Italian magazine *Astrella* as *I Tarocchi dell'amore*. The Fool card shows the fool with his bundle on a stick over his shoulder making his way along a path that leads up a high distant mountain. He has left behind a scene of chaos and danger as the child is about to enter an open fire. A woman rushes to the rescue. Here we have the Fool as one so self-absorbed in his own personal quest that he is thoughtless about others. When we look further up the path we see that it branches three and more ways, so even his goal is uncertain. In the booklet that comes with this deck one of the keywords for this card is "foolhardiness", yet another aspect of the Fool.

The 1978 *Tarot of Frown Strong* is composed of richly symbolic coloured images. It is a great delight to the eye. The Fool card stands out from the rest by its stark almost monotone image. A figure with the word 'Fool' written across his forehead raises his hand to push us away. He does not even meet our gaze but turns his eyes away from us. The author and artist Leo, sees the Fool as a card of negation. He says "[This card] speaks for itself in that it negates a place or card in the actual reading. The only way a person can negate themselves at a high level is by suffering loss of face. The words that go with this card are unclean, fool." This is certainly a negative view of our Fool.



Negation



Ingerid Blakstad in her amazing tarot designs in the medium of embroidery which were printed as a full 78 card tarot in 1998, takes a startling approach. The Fool card just bears the words "The missing Fool". On the left I show the Magician card from her tarot so we can appreciate something of her style of embroidered image.

Is it the ultimate and most outward journey of the Fool as a tarot image, not to be depicted in the deck? Has the zero card here been taken to its outermost limit? We will see what future tarot artists can further devise.



This lesson has been designed to serve two main purposes. Firstly, to explore the nature of the Fool as he is imaged in the different tarot decks. The conventional image of the foolish person at the mercy of circumstances and almost oblivious of dangers awaiting him, has been expanded to give a more positive image of the Fool being one who is open to new experiences, then further we saw how the fool can be viewed as clown, juggler and medieval jester, and then an innocent, and a soul exploring themselves. Finally we were asked to picture the Fool as negation and emptiness. We have only been able to explore a few facets of the Fool in this lesson, and we should be aware that in the thousand and more tarot designs that exist there are many more treasures and beautiful imaginings of this figure.

The second purpose of this lesson was to introduce you to the multiplicity and variety of tarot imagery. Not all lessons will adopt this approach. It would be perhaps too indulgent of me in designing this course to merely trawl people in each lesson through each of the arcana in turn comparing the different ways of depicting the essence of each card. Though informative and instructive, I suspect this would not make a satisfying course. However, it would be a good exercise for you to undertake with whatever tarot decks you own. If you have the time and a reasonable collection of decks (say 20 or more) do try and work through the different arcana as they are found in the different decks you have available, in the same way as we have explored the tarot Fool.

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot



Lesson 3 : The different types of tarot - purposes and intentions

When the human mind is presented with a thousand and more related things each different from the other in various ways, it cannot help wanting to classify them, and put them into different categories, hoping that this might throw some light on the subject. So now we inevitably find ourselves drawn to categorise our tarots. It would be a very complex task of almost forensic scholarly analysis to see the various influences on each tarot and draw up a kind of family tree of imagery, with so many branches and interconnections. Such an approach though interesting will be better left to some student to undertake in their Ph.D. thesis, as it would be a bit tedious, breaking the momentum of our journey in our course of exploring tarot art.

So though we will not be looking at a scholarly categorization of tarot designs, there are a number of easier and more immediately meaningful approaches we can take which will help us see different types of tarots. We can, for example, look at the intention of the designer in making the images. What was the purpose they intended in creating their individual set of designs. Now such an approach is fraught with danger as, unless we have discussed this with the artist or designer, what right do we have to say what their intentions were? (Artists in any case usually duck questions about their motivations, or at least give all sorts of obscure answers, so we might not get very far by asking them directly.) We will not get our Ph.D's with this approach of guessing or estimating the artists' intentions, but we should get some understanding and insight, flawed though this method may be.

So what are categories can we recognise based on this idea of the intention of the creator of a tarot ? A few examples immediately spring to mind.

A deck designed for cartomancy.

An art deck designed more to please the eye.

A deck presenting a system of self development.

A deck to be seen as part of a magical system.

An issue deck.

A deck designed to amuse or make some humorous point.

A promo deck, designed to promote some event, television show, etc.

A regionalising deck in which an artist seeks to locate tarot within their own country or cultural region.

In this course we will look at many such categories, but for this lesson let us just quickly survey some of these types of tarot.

Decks designed for cartomancy.

These are almost invariably 78 card decks, as tarot readers find it difficult to work only with the major arcana but need the minors to give fullness to a reading. Thus the *Tarot of Marseilles* is a good standard deck, and many variations have been made upon this. We will look at these variations in a later lesson in the course. The *Tarot of Marseilles* and similar decks have their pip cards depicted merely as numbers, and it was the amazing creative power of the Pamela Coleman-Smith's *Rider-Waite* deck with its emblematised pip cards which have made this the primary deck for readings. Many cartomantic decks either copy the emblematic material from the pips, making their own variations of course, or step out into designing their own individual emblems for the number cards. Here are some example of number card emblems from the *Rider-Waite* and its descendants. We will just look at the Four of Cups which is a simple image of the man sitting below a tree with three cups and one being handed to him from out of the air.



Rider-Waite



Thanya



Ator



Pagan (Lo Scarabeo)



Médiéval



Arcus Arcanum



Nimue



Saki-Saki

Here we have some examples of the playful way in which the various tarot designers have taken up the emblematised pip cards and reworked them in their own style. For those who have a reasonably large collection of tarots it is an interesting exercise to lay out the same pip card from various decks and see the variations and how the artist has used the tight structure of the *Rider-Waite* deck as a vehicle for their own creative explorations. This is the power of the tarot - it gives structure and freedom to the imagination at the same time. There are other cartomancy decks which create their own unique emblems for each of the pip cards and we will look at these in a later lesson.

Art decks.

As tarot emerged into mid 20th century culture, various artists became inspired to create artworks based on tarot. Often they chose only to illustrate the 22 major arcana, which to an artist was the exciting dramatic aspect of a tarot deck. We have already seen examples of such art decks in lesson two in the works of Renato Guttuso and Shandra MacNeill. There are some amazing tarots that fall into this group. A powerful and dramatic example is Alain Bocher's *Tarot de la Réa* of 1982. Salvador Dalí created a collage tarot in 1984 which has become quite well known and he incorporates various elements from his paintings, flowing clocks, his wife Gala as the Empress. Niki de Saint Phalle a sculptor and painter even created an amazing sculptural Tarot Garden in Tuscany, with Gaudiesque structures. She also produced a set of art tarot in 2000. On the right we see the art tarot of the Italian artist Franco Gentilini, whose tarot designs of 1975 pay homage to a number of 20th century, primarily surrealist, artists. Here in his Luna we are decidedly in a Giorgio de Chirico landscape.



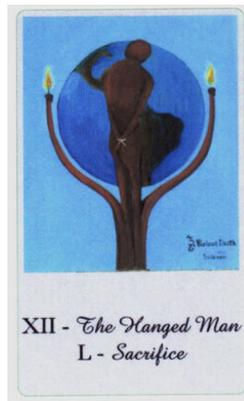
These art tarots were made by established artists but there are many tarot made by lesser known and amateur artists with the same impulse, that of using the tarot structure as a vehicle for an art work. We will be exploring this in later lessons in the course as this is an important group of tarots.

Decks presenting systems of self development.

In the 1970's when people became especially concerned with their inner development, certain writers realised that they could overlay their ideas onto, or fold them into, tarot imagery. Rather than using cards to tell our future, we were now being asked to use tarot imagery as a way of changing our nature and destiny. Thus evolved a whole new species of tarot. One of the forerunners of this style was Marty Yeager's *Tarot of Meditation* (1975) which invited the owner of the deck to use the images as sources for meditation. In the booklet that accompanies the cards Yeager shows his leanings both to Eastern philosophy and the writings of Jung. A later example of this psychological type of tarot is George Hess' *Analytical tarot* whose images were painted by Rose Szalewski. This dates from the late 1990s. The *Dance of Life* tarot by Audrey Savage and Pamela Scott Frantz provides a substantial book showing how these cards can be used as the basis for some self-developmental process involving the usual meditations etc. The *Universal tarot* of Maxwell Miller was issued by the Findhorn Press in 1996 and this brings together within the tarot structure symbols from all varieties of traditions and culture in an attempt to provide a kind of universal guidebook in symbols for our inner development. There are a growing number of this type of tarot which is not necessarily intended to be used for readings but for the psychological or spiritual development of the individual.



Yeager



Analytical



Dance of Life



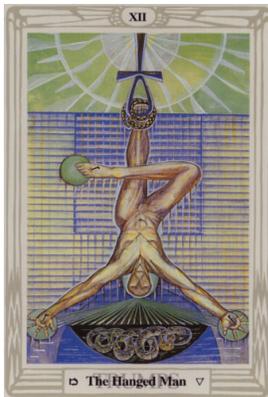
Universal

Designers of this class of tarot often felt the need to change the names of the trumps in order to give them some more accessible handles or hooks linking with the theme of inner development.

Deck to be seen as part of a magical system.

Modern tarot emerged in the 19th century out of magical and occult orders, through such people as Paul Christian, Eliphas Levi, Oswald Wirth, Papus, Mathers, Wescott and the Golden Dawn through to Waite. So it is not surprising that many modern decks continue this tradition and rework it. One of the most important of such magical (or perhaps we had better spell that 'Magickal') tarot was the *Thoth* deck designed by Aleister Crowley

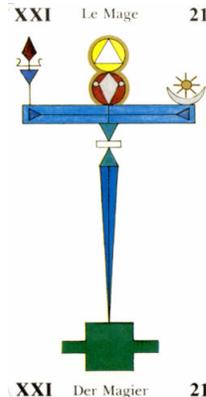
and painted by Lady Frieda Harris which they worked on during the war years and published in 1944 as a small limited edition within small circle of associates. It was later, in the 1960's, made more widely available through being issued by major card publishers and its flowing expressive artwork had a profound influence on modern tarot art. There are relatively small numbers of such magical decks and we will devote a couple of lessons to these later in the course. One of the key magical sources for tarot was the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn which spanned the 1890's and the first few years of the 20th century. As part of their magical instruction the adepts in this small Order had to make their tarot cards following the information in the restricted papers of the Order. These decks were not published and did not make a direct impact on tarot artists. In recent years much of this material has been published, so much so that in 2004 Richard Dudschus and David Sledzinki issued a *Classic Golden Dawn Tarot* deck in line drawings. One of the most weird of modern tarot decks is the *Le Tarot Magique* designed by Frederic Lionel and published in 1980. We are here far removed from the flowing interweaving of symbol, form and colour that is seen in the Crowley deck, and instead we are presented with what appear more like magical sigils used in ritual magic. With the more recent (2001) *Golden Dawn Magical Tarot* of Sandra Tabatha Cicero we return to more conventional tarot images, powerfully and boldly coloured.



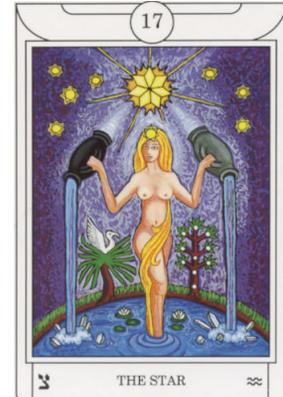
Thoth - Crowley



Classic Golden Dawn



Magic - Lionel



Golden Dawn-Cicero

Decks based on addressing or presenting issues

People seem to love rhetoric, to have some point made in an engaging way. Thus it is not surprising that various creative people began to see tarot as but another medium for distributing or packaging a message. Thus arose decks with an agenda. We can perhaps place some of the feminist decks in this category. Of course it is not just gender and sexuality that was promoted as an issue by tarot cards designs. In 1981 Dirk Dykstra created the *Ravenswood Eastern Tarot* which attempts to present the European tarot images within a middle eastern context in a strange melange of eastern styles. The pip cards use the Rider-Waite emblematic structure. Raymond Buckland attempts much the same thing in 2001 with his *Romani Tarot*, presenting tarot as an emanation of gypsy or

Romany culture, even giving the cards Romany titles. The paintings are rather pleasant with good characterisation but they present a wholly romanced world, in which one finds it difficult to believe. In the five of staves we even have a group of men doing Morris dancing. This is clearly a work of rhetoric, but since it went out of print the deck is much sought after. There are also a number of political issue decks such as the *Anti-G7* deck of 1994 or the *Anti-Nuclear Wendländisches Tarot* of 1980.



4. THE EMPEROR

Thea's Tarot



Brotherhood



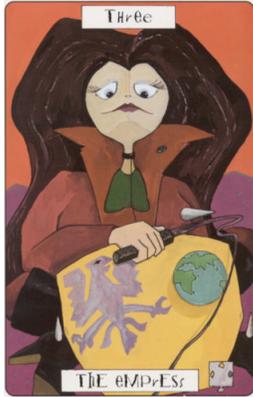
Ravenswood Eastern



Romani

Decks designed to amuse.

Not all tarot designers are deeply serious and immersed in mythology, Jungian psychology, or the intense mysteries of esoteric studies. Some just like to poke fun at their audience. The *Ator Tarot* above is an example of subtle humour carried in the style of the artwork, but others are perhaps more up front. Many of these adopt the medium of cartoons. A fine example from 1999 is Graham Cameron's *Phantasmagoric Theater Tarot* with its delightful and direct humorous images. In 1977 *F'Murr* created a series of humorous tarot images for the French magazine *Pilote*, which was later published in book form in 1984. These reduce tarot images to absurdity. The Chariot, which is entitled 'Vroum' is being pulled by two Mickey Mouse figures, while the driver of the coach has his cap drawn over his eyes and puffs on a cigarette. Peter Wood makes the small square tarot cards of his *Goblin Tarot* by hand to order. The goblins are beautifully drawn and great fun. A photographic tarot was issued in Britain 2004 which literally 'takes the piss' out of tarot pretensions. This is the *Alcohol Tarot* with its suits of wines, spirits, lagers and beers. The humour is rather juvenile perhaps but it hits its target. Strangely this became quite sought after, though it seems to have annoyed a few people in the tarot community because of its irreverent theme of alcohol and drunkenness.



Phastasmagoric



F'Murr



Goblin



Alcohol

Promotional Decks

As tarot became more popular during the 1970's and 1980's some organisations realised that they could hitchhike on this developing art form and use it to promote themselves, or some film, television show or pop music. We have already seen an example of this in lesson two, the *Tattoo tarot*, which was probably given away by a tattooist to promote their work. Some tarot were given away in magazines. An example of this is some small cards based on the *Tarot of Marseilles*, given away in the Spanish Rock and pop music magazine *Super Pop*. They seem to have issued a number of such tarots. In the May 1979 issue of the Italian fashion magazine *Annabella*, the Lancôme cosmetics company created a rather fine majors only tarot designed by Giancarlo Carloni to promote its Magie Noire ('Black magic') perfume. The artwork is of a stylish art deco nature, depicting rather sophisticated people, no doubt reflecting the image they wanted to associate with their product. In 2003-2004 HBO produced a television series called *Carnivàle*, which was a very dark and almost surreal melodrama incorporating tarot images in its opening credits and a fortune teller as one of its main characters. In 2004 they decided to issue a tarot deck as a promotional item. This has no relationship to the tarot imagery used in the TV show and are simple oval mask like faces. In the major arcana the eye on the right bears a symbol associated with the tarot trump, while with the minors the eye on the left holds a symbol for the suit. Here we see the Wheel of Fortune card with the appropriate symbol in the eye on the right. The creators of this tarot had probably not even seen the television show as they base their designs on carnival mask forms, whereas the show is about a traveling circus.

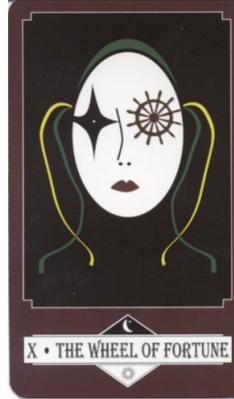
In Taiwan and China which has seen an explosion of tarot production in the past few years, tarot are often given away as promotional items. Some of these are trivial and of indifferent quality, but the Chinese National Geographic Magazine recently gave away, as a gift, the *Cosway Tarot*. This is a tightly composed 22 card photographic tarot in which various actors pose in tableau based on the tarot trumps.



Super Pop



Annabella



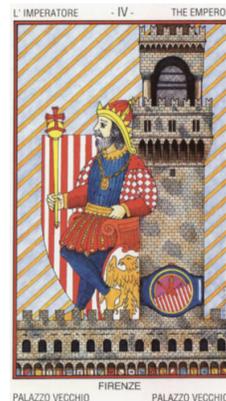
Carnivale



Chinese National Geographic

Regionalising decks

Some creators of tarot decks decide to structure their tarot designs around imagery from their own region or country. Thus in a sense they try to locate a tarot within their own culture, perhaps thinking that this might make tarot more accessible to their fellow countrymen (or even a group within a small region of a country), or on the other hand wishing to draw the wider tarot community's attention to the delights of the culture of a particular place.



The *Siamese Tarot* by P. Sukij presents the conventional *Rider-Waite* designs but expressed in a Siamese style. He reflects a Thai Buddhist imagery in these delightful images. Osvaldo Menegazzi, the creator of a number of striking tarot designs, in his *Sardinia Tarot* of 1984, depicts images of various artefacts, bronze sculptures and pottery vases from Sardinia on his major arcana. The minor arcana pips reflect the different regions of Sardinia, while the court cards show people in the particular peasant dress of these regions. Amerigo Folchi, another prolific designer of tarot decks, created his *I Tarocchi nei colori della Toscana* (the tarot in the colours of Tuscany) in 1992. This 22 card deck takes the main image from the *Tarot of Marseilles* and places these beside an

important building in Tuscany. Thus the Emperor is shown beside the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, the Hierophant with the Cathedral in Siena. The already heightened colours of the images in this deck are further stressed by the inclusion in each design of a Swatch style watch. I am not sure if Swatch actually sponsored this deck, whether they had a manufacturing plant in Tuscany, or whether this was just a playful conceit of the artist. Our final example here is the *Aztec tarot* from 1986 designed and painted by Jane Denant and Gerard Martin, using imagery from Aztec manuscripts. This non-standard tarot attempts to locate tarot within the creators' conception of Aztec mythology and culture and arises perhaps more from imaginative invention rather than an in-depth study of Aztec ideas.

So we have categorised tarot decks according to what we perceive as the intention of the creator of the tarot. Here we have just taken eight such ways of looking at tarot decks from a perspective of the motivation of the creators. If you have the enthusiasm, as an exercise do try and list other intention categories you might see expressed in the decks you have in your own collection, or can see as images on the internet.

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot



Lesson 4 : Tarot with a purpose - Some issue decks

Perhaps one of the most basic of issues for human beings centres around gender and sexuality. Societies have so often restricted the development of women or created unfair prejudices against gay people that it is not surprising that some tarot artists have used the medium of tarot to explore such issues.

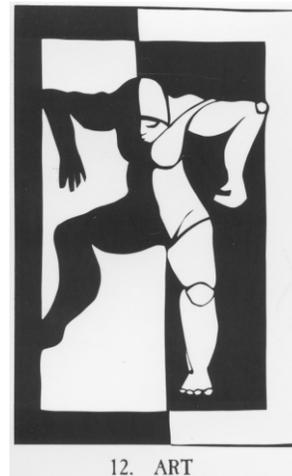
One of the early feminist decks is *Thea's Tarot* (1984) by Ruth West. This presents us with a woman only tarot in which there are no male figures. The conventional tarot seems to balance male and female figures so one can see that it was perhaps necessary for some artist to push that balance over to an extreme. *Thea's Tarot* was made by cutting black paper, like old silhouettes, rather than being drawn in pen, and despite the limitations of the medium Ruth West is able to create powerful expressive images. Her deck of 78 cards is fully emblematic throughout, with conventional wands, cups, sword and pentacles as the suits. The courts are named Child, Daughter, Mother and Amazon of cups, etc. The images on the pip cards to some extent draw on the Rider-Waite pip emblems, though rendered entirely in Ruth West's style, so that it is not always easy to see the parallel. But a few key cards, such as the Two of Swords clearly demonstrates the influence from Pamela Coleman-Smith's classic pip emblems. Her major arcana remain close in conception to the Waite deck, though she adopts the Marseilles order (with Justice 8 and Strength 11). She



renames some of the cards. Thus her Fool is 'Innocence', High Priestess 'The Seer', Empress 'The Creator'. Her Wheel of Fortune becomes 'The Comet', Hanged Man 'Art', Death 'The Juggler', Temperance is for her 'Grace', while the Death card is renamed to 'Oppression' showing a woman in chains. The remainder use the same titles except for Judgement which is now 'Rebirth'. These are not radical renaming of the cards and instead Ruth West chooses to reflect the issue of women in a subtle and charming way, rather than engaging in polemic. 'Thea' is a feminisation of the Greek



‘Theos’ (masculine God - ‘Deus’ in Latin). The artist seems to enjoy using ideas of polarity in her imagery. Thus her ‘Seer’ or Priestess is shown balancing a dark and a light side, her Lovers are a white and a dark skinned woman, while her ‘Art’ (Hanged Man), is a woman, pictured almost like a puppet, hung between black and white. So much careful thought has gone into the designs as well as the creativity of the artwork itself, that this deck repays much study.



There is an excellent web site, *Herstory of Women's Tarot*, devoted to the evolution of Women's tarot.

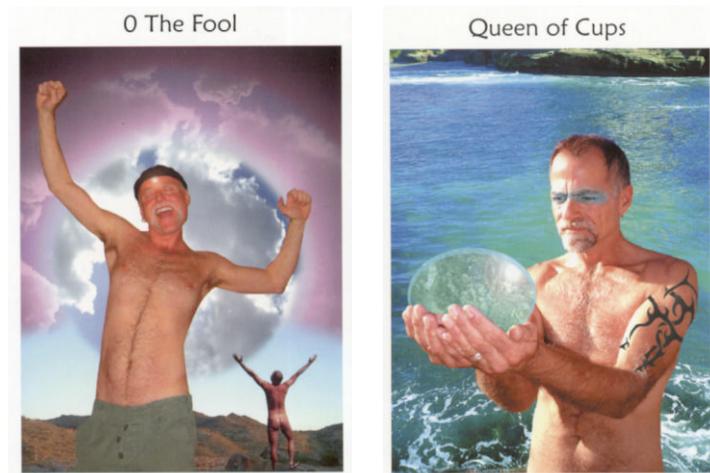
<http://www.lelandra.com/comptarot/womanstarottimeline.htm>

Many of the so called ‘women’s tarots’ seem celebratory of womankind rather than directly challenging the societal role of women. They opt for positive affirmation rather than attacking stereotypes and prejudices. A number of such decks emerged including the *Amazon* (1979), *Book of Aradia* (1980), the *Daughters of the Moon* (1986), the *Tarot of the Crone* (1998), the *Wise Woman’s* (2002) among others.

I have not been able to find a tarot which identifies itself as entirely lesbian in orientation, and the ‘women’s tarots’ seem not to wish to become exclusive. In the case of the issue of male gay sexuality, of course, things are different. Some tarot artists explore aspects of the male image through their designs but these are not exclusively gay. In 2004 two gay tarots were published, one with painted images by Antonella Platano designed by Lee Bursten called the *Gay Tarot*, which is very innocent and I suspect lacks any reality or street credibility, while the other, a photographic collage tarot by Patric Stillman called the *Brotherhood Tarot*, is more realistic and thus might be recognisable by the gay community as reflecting, even in a small way, realities of the gay experience in progressive Western societies, or at least the West Coast American scene. Chris Butler in the UK is working on the *Son Tarot* which presents a rich web of symbolism with a focus on maleness.



Here we see the *Gay Tarot's* rather sentimental and perhaps overly politically correct view of the Lovers and the Wheel of Fortune.



The *Brotherhood Tarot* steers away from the idealised younger male forms of the *Gay Tarot* in favour of more mature male bodies in photographic collage.

In 2004 a tarot of gay bears the *Tarocchi Gay Orsi* was issued at Rome in a small edition of only 30 copies. This was based on a series of 22 watercolour paintings by Emilio Ortu Lieto, a theatrical scene and costume designer, which had been exhibited at various Gay Pride events in Italy. This was printed as a deck of 22 large format cards 150x90 mm for the occasion of the Gay Pride events in Rome, 2004. These are humorous and satirical images from an insider, and gently poke fun at the heavier built type of gay man.

* * * *

Political issues other than gender have also been explored through tarot designs. One early example is the *Anti-Nuclear Wendländisches Tarot*, designed by Waltraud Kremser back in 1980, at the height of the anti-nuclear movement. This tarot addressed the issue of the proposed construction of a Nuclear waste processing and disposal site at Gorleben in the Wendland region of Lower Saxony in Germany. The facility was eventually built and protests still continue. The Wendland Anti-Nuclear tarot is a majors only deck. It presents the anti-nuclear theme within a more positive view of a hippy rural idyll. The Fool depicts perhaps a representative of a German citizen oblivious of the issues, striding with his staff and a rifle over his shoulder towards a nuclear power station. The Lovers on the other hand shows us a couple, two people living close to the land, he with a saw to cut wood for fuel instead of relying on nuclear power and she sitting a large cooking pot over the fire. In the background we seen to glimpse a tepee and a wooden building with the flag of the Wendland, a sun radiating its heat and light. The Devil, of course, is the horror of nuclear power, shown as the German eagle holding a nuclear missile and the world in its grasp. In its feathers are an arsenal of nuclear weapons. This tarot was designed to highlight the nuclear issues for the local region of Gorleben when the nuclear processing plant was being proposed. This drew many protestors who wanted to keep the area free of this development and envisaged a kind of idyllic rural world. A contemporary report stated :

“Activists built and lived in an alternative village built on a test drilling site in Gorleben. They stayed throughout May 1980, until heavy police and army forces cleared away the village and protestors. [...] An estimated 10,000 police and army forces obliterated the ‘Republic of Free Wendland’. The site was occupied on the 3rd May by thousands of demonstrators and named “hut village 1004” (the site was officially named deep drilling site “1004”). The village was built of wooden huts and grew to a remarkable small village, including a sauna, piggery, windmills, solar energy heating system and even small tourist attractions. For many people, the Republic was not only symbolic of the struggle against nuclear energy but also an alternative way of living. On 4th June the village was cleared by using severe police force, for instance by flying helicopters very low above the people.”



This little tarot documents and idealises this political struggle. Here tarot documents an

important part of cultural history.

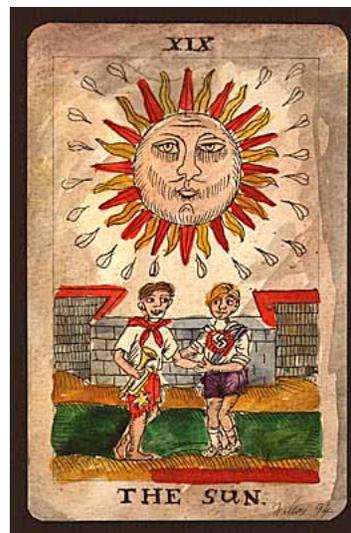
During the 1990's the growth of an anti-globalisation alternative politics lead to a series of often violent protests at the G7 conferences, which were seen as the forum for the developed nations to present a globalisation agenda, and were thus a sitting target for protestors. This tarot was produced in Naples in 1994 by GRIDAS 'Gruppo risveglio dal sonno' (the group awakening from sleep) which is a reference to a sentence from one of a series of engravings the *Caprichos* by Goya "the sleep of reason produces monsters". The back of the cards shows a face divided vertically, the left side being shown as a clown while the right side of the head is a skull. This is a majors only deck, of twenty cards, a few of which correspond to the usual tarot card names - il Papa, la Fortuna, la Luna, la Morte, il Sole - while the others are renamed and to some extent connect with the tarot card symbolism. The seven leaders who met for the 1994 G7 at Naples are caricatured as, Clinton the saxophonist warmonger, Mitterand, the ex-socialist neo-colonialist, Helmut Kohl of Germany, the anti-Turkish crook, the Canadian anti-native (for his supposed anti indigenous peoples policies). John Major, the British Conservative Prime minister, then immersed in scandal concerning an affair with a female colleague, is shown with erections sprouting like devil's horns from his head, while the Japanese are shown as the 'Miniaturista' a reference to their supposed ability of mass produce small items. A final doze of venom is reserved for the Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, who is labeled as the 'Fascist' card, arials sprouting from his head indicate his media and television interests. Here we are firmly in the area of polemic rather than serious political critique. The included leaflet indicates that "the consequences of the foolish politics of these seven leaders, in arranging for the capitalists to starve the people" is seen in the next group of cards - War, Embargo, Death, Unemployment, Ecological Disaster, Murderous Debt, the Aging Pope, the Monitarisation of the economy, North-South debt and the I.M.F. (International Monitary Fund). But they cannot destroy everything as is shown in the remaining four cards - the Sun, the Moon, the Wheel of Fortune, and the Circle of the People. Here we have a rather simplistic, if not naïve, political testament in the form of this *Tarocchi del "Anti-G7"* deck, which is nevertheless entertaining and fun.



Another deck designed with a political agenda is that of the Russian artist Igor Makarevich. This was created in the later part of the 1990s (between 1995 and 1998). Makarevich satirises the Hitler-Stalin Pact. This is also known as the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, after the Foreign Ministers of Germany and the USSR who actually signed this non aggression document which allowed Hitler the freedom to conquer various European countries without fear of the Russians declaring a state of war. This is a Majors only tarot and it does not seem to have been issued as an actual deck of cards though individual art prints are available.



Here we have the two main figures Hitler the Magician and Stalin the Emperor. Hitler is depicted masturbating while Stalin is shown seated upon a skull and bones, a reference to the many massacres of opponent that he carried out in order to sustain his political power.

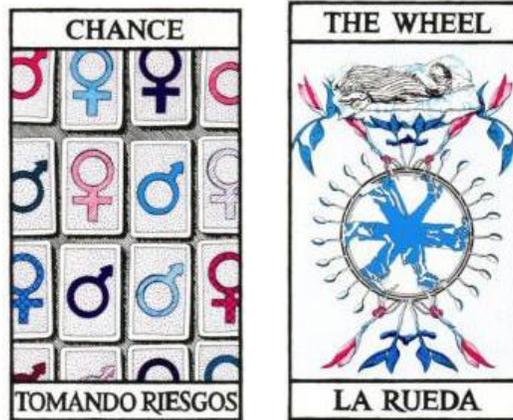


Temperance shows the vessel bearing the star of the USSR pouring into and nourishing and sustaining that with the Nazi swastika. The Sun card has a Hitler Youth figure

greeting warmly a Communist Youth. The satire is very obvious and quite cutting in places.

* * * *

A tarot deck was also used as part of a public health information scheme in Los Angeles in 1992, to help provide information about HIV/AIDS. Only seven cards were issued, though it is not clear whether the artist, Kim Abeles, planned to issue a full deck. The backs of the cards had important health information in English and Spanish about HIV/AIDS. The imagery is only loosely related to tarot, but I include it here as an example of how the idea of a tarot deck could be considered as a vehicle for distributing information on an issue.



Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot



Lesson 5 : Tarot with a purpose - Some promotional decks

A large number of tarots have been produced in order to promote or sell some other item. Though this would have been the intention of the publisher it was not necessarily that of the artist and some really fine tarot designs have been commissioned in this way. The first ever such tarot appears to be that produced by Brown Company of New York in order to promote their Linweave range of paper, which were art papers coloured and with a textured surface. Here is a list of some such promotional tarots.

- 1967 Linweave
- 1968 James Cooper Tarot - *Eye Magazine*
- 1972 Eddy Match Co.
- 1975 *Jackie Magazine* 25 Oct 1975
- 1979 *Annabella* Magie Noire Tarot
- [1970's] Atorel
- 1991 Cher Promo Tarot
- 1996 Gundam Wing - Ugeppa
- 1997 Aura Soma
- 1997 Pete's Wicked Ale tarot
- 1998 *Young & Modern Magazine* – Feb 1998
- 1998 Caring Psychic Family
- 2000 *New Woman Magazine* Tarot
- 2001 *13 Ghosts* Promotional Tarot
- 2002 Elle Tarot (Hong Kong magazine)
- 2002 Ribon Furoku Tarot
- 2002-2003 Escaflowne
- 2003 *Cosmopolitan* 12/2003 Karma-Tarot Karten
- 2003 *Carnivàle*
- 2003 Penny Farthing Press
- 2004 Cartoon Network Tarot
- 2004 *Charmed* Tarot
- 2004 Fullmetal alchemist Tarot
- 2000-2004 Tarot de la Revista *Super Pop* (3 different tarots)
- [2004 ?] Japanese - Manga Tarot from Spanish Magazine *Mas Manga*

2005 *Chinese National Geography Magazine* Gift - Cosplay tarot
 [2000-2005 ?] Taiwan - Telecom Fairy Promo Tarot Cards
 [2000-2005 ?] Japanese - Manga Gift Amazing Tarot Part 1
 [2000-2005 ?] Japanese - Manga Gift Amazing Tarot Part 2
 [2000-2005 ?] Japanese - Manga Gift Here Tarot
 [2000-2005 ?] Japanese - Manga Gift O-ra Tarot
 [2000-2005 ?] Japanese - Manga Gift Original Tarot
 [2000-2005 ?] Japanese - Manga Gift The Great Love Tarot
 [2000-2005 ?] Japanese - Manga Gift The Tarot of Wonderland
 [Unknown date] Tattoo tarot
 [Unknown date] Ballet West Carl Orff tarot cards

The *Linweave tarot* of 1967 was one of the earliest of the modern tarots. Someone at the Brown Paper company must have liked tarot and had the paper company commission the designs for 42 cards, the majors, court cards and aces, then had these printed on their different papers to distribute as a sample 'swatch' of their Linweave paper. Four artists contributed - David Palladini (who later created the well known *Aquarian Tarot*, 1970 and his *New Palladini*, 1996), Nicolas Sidjakov a Latvian-born American illustrator of picture books for children, and two other illustrators Hy Roth, and Ron Rae. None of these, except Palladini seem to have worked on tarot images subsequent to the Linweave commission.

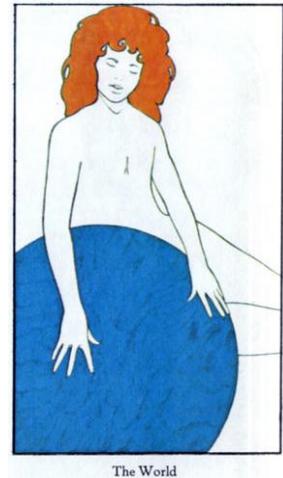


The designs have, of course, a 60's flower power or hippie style to them, particularly those of Ron Rae. Sidjakov takes his inspiration more from traditional woodcut tarots, such as the tarot of Marseilles. Hy Roth has his own rather attractive style with linear forms, modelled with shading and then coloured. Palladini's work is very distinctive but were not directly used when designing his *Aquarian Tarot*. Each artist seems to have been given ten cards to illustrate, with Palladini the extra two, to make the 42. The 'cards' are rather large 8.5 by 5.5 inches (215x140mm). Each has a divinatory meaning printed on the back of the card.

From paper we next move to safety matches. In 1972 the Eddy Match Company of Pembroke, Ontario, Canada issued a series of 22 matchbooks each with a tarot card image. These were apparently designed by D'Arcy Jonathan Dacre Boulton. These were not issued as cards but as small brightly coloured matchbooks.



Pop magazines readily took up the idea of providing tarots as a promotional item. The first to do this may have been the *Eye Magazine* of New York in its October 1968 issue, where it printed a fine series of tarot designs by James Cooper as a poster that could be detached from the magazine. This is a rather early, modern tarot. Being included in this rock music magazine it must have inspired other artists to see tarot as a valid art form. Like the *Linweave*, with which it is contemporary, it has the hippy style artwork, reminiscent of the Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band* period. The artwork, though in this late 60's style, adheres quite closely to the established tarot imagery.



In the UK, *Jackie*, a magazine aimed at female teenagers, printed a series of tarot designs in its 25th October 1975 issue. These were obviously re-drawn from the *David Sheridan* tarot of 1972 but much more sensitively and subtly coloured (the *Jackie* Magician is shown on the left). They understandably missed out the Devil card and renamed the 'Pope' to 'Jupiter'.



Other tarots were issued with the UK based *New Woman* magazine. *Cosmopolitan* magazine issued at least two decks. One with a 2001 French edition, and the other with the December 2003 German edition. Neither of these are traditional tarots, and both adopt a humorous and sexy style. *Young & Modern Magazine* February 1998, in the UK, produced a tear out tarot, with small (2 inch high) cards. The artwork by the illustrator Elizabeth Lada is surely much too well designed merely to be just given away for free, and these cards are now almost totally unknown even to tarot collectors, so I will show some of them below.



In Spain the magazine *Super Pop* has produced at least three tarots as promotions, free with its issues, and the magazine *Mas Manga* has issued a rather fine manga tarot which unlike many of this genre, actually holds to the tarot structure. A German magazine issued a *Sailor Moon Tarot* which is now well sought after by collectors.

Other media also got into the act of using tarot decks to promote their products. A number of television shows have given away tarots as part of their promotional material at openings etc. The dark and brooding *Carnivàle* series which actually had a tarot theme running through the episodes, issued a full tarot promo deck, which was apparent created extremely quickly by a graphics company. It makes no direct references to scenes in the show or to the opening credits which show an elaborate tableau of tarot imagery. Fans must have been a bit disappointed by the deck, which is instead based on stylized carnival masks. The US *Charmed* television show must be popular in France, as a French publisher was able to issue a 78 card deck. The pips and courts are rather poor and conventional images, but the major arcana contain within a stylized border, photographs of characters from the show. Being published in France it is rather rare in the USA and consequently very collectable by the fans of the show. The artwork is so poor that few tarot collectors will be interested in this deck. The US *Cartoon Network*, which produces a number of major cartoon shows, issues some trading cards to promote and sustain interest in its shows. Among these is a stylized cartoon tarot deck of majors, which is stated to be based on the original series. The artwork is rather busy but surprisingly respects the tarot structure. Like many of these tarots issued as promos with shows, there are many people apart from tarot enthusiasts wanting to collect them so this deck is rather difficult to find and can be expensive. The cards are rather large 5.75 by 3.5 inches (145x88mm) and are printed in muted greens, greys and reds. The children's cartoon show *Fullmetal Alchemist* has spun off a few tarots, some of which may not be authorised. The version initially produced by the company was issued in 2004. Although it is in the form of a 78 card deck with majors and the suits, there seems no discernable tarot imagery on the cards, even on the majors. This is quite common with anime series which issue such 'tarot' decks. These are really just a form of collectable card, each of which bears a scene or character from one of the shows, with little or even no tarot content, even though the deck is called a 'tarot'. The *Gundamwing* cartoon series, on the other hand, has produced at least three tarot decks, two of which are really expressive 22 card decks respecting the tarot structure. The version issued in 1996 with artwork by Ugeppa is a beautifully designed tarot, and the artist only allows 'gundams' or mechanised fighting suits, to intrude into the backgrounds of a few of the cards as a token gesture. Instead we are presented with an almost traditional tarot deck, though the cards use characters from the cartoon.



Another anime series, *The Vision of Escaflowne*, entirely focussed on tarot. The main protagonist is a 15 year old girl called Hitomi who reads tarot. Each episode is prefaced by tarot card and the action reflects something of the symbolic content. When the production company released the series on DVD's they included 22 tarot cards designed by Shouji Kawamori (who uses the name 'Sunrise') and painted by artist Kimitoshi Yamane. One had to collect all the DVDs then send away to the production company to get the full set. For this reason, as well as the fact that these are eagerly sought by anime fans, the deck usually sells at a premium price. Strangely for a Japanese deck they opt for Italian names on the cards rather than the more usual English. The images are entirely traditional and not in an anime style, which must have somewhat disappointed the fans of the series. The line drawn and coloured images are set in an ornate border.

There are a number of other anime and manga promo or gift tarots. Many of these were produced in Taiwan and we will look at some of these in later lessons on Chinese and Taiwanese tarots.

It is not just films and television shows that have used tarot as promotional items. Even the elevated art of ballet has turned to this form. Ballet West, the Salt Lake city ballet company, issued a set of at least five tarot cards as part of a promo for a production of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, composed in 1937 and inspired by medieval music and themes, being based on a collection of love and satirical poems in Latin written about 1230. I am not sure of the date for the production of these cards. Like the *Escaflowne* they are traditional line drawings though they are brightly coloured primarily in red and blue. My own set only includes the High Priestess, the Devil, The Lover, Force and the Wheel of Fortune. I am uncertain as to whether more images were issued. The

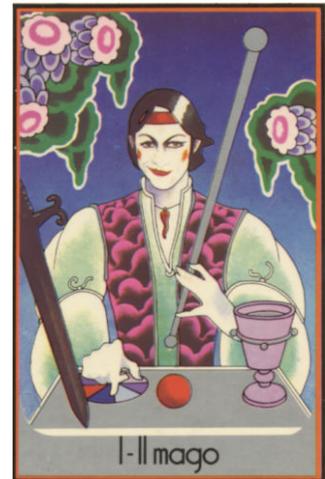


numbers on the cards does not relate to the normal major arcana numbering, for which I have no explanation at all.

Pop musicians have, of course, occasionally turned to the tarot. An early example of this (1991) is Cher's *Love Hurts* CD album, one version of which comes in rather attractive hinged wooden box containing eleven cards, one for each song on the CD, each having the lyrics to the song and the other side bears an emblem, mostly taken from alchemical and other emblematic sources. Though this is in no way a tarot as such, it has been described in this way. A more creditable tarot was produced by the goth rock artist Marilyn Manson in 2000. We will see this described in a later lesson on Gothic themed decks.



Even the perfume company Lancôme has sponsored a tarot deck to promote one of their products, a perfume appropriately called *Magie noire*. This was created in 1979 and amazingly the perfume is still sold. The cards were issued in collaboration with the Italian magazine *Annabella* in their May 1979 issue. The art deco inspired artwork was by illustrator Giancarlo Carloni. It was, of course, a majors only deck. It is beautifully colour printed with an additional silver ink, which is used in the border and



also tastefully in areas of the images themselves. The art deco styled figures on the cards adopt a remote expressionless pose apart from the Magician and the Devil who smirk and seem almost to wink at us in a knowing manner. This is a very stylish deck and well worth collecting. Surprisingly, these turn up quite often, and are not especially rare, so many thousands must have been issued. It is really much too good a deck to have been given away as a promo.

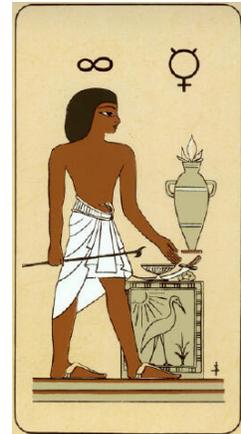
Our final item in this wide ranging list of promotional tarots is one issued with a French patent medicine called *Atorel*, produced by a company called *Eutherapie* at Neuilly. I am not sure of the date of production for these cards but it seems to have been sometime in the 1970's. The cards are very large 10.5 by 6.25 inches (270x160mm). The backs of the cards carry an advert for *Atorel*, which appears to have been primarily aimed at digestive and liverish conditions (a euphemism for over-indulgence in food and wine, one suspects) and was an effervescent tablet perhaps similar to the *Andrews liver salts* in the UK. The 22



cards in the series are beautifully printed. They appear to be a redrawing of the so-called Charles VI tarot from 1392, supposed painted for him by an artist Jacquemin Gringonneur, but now thought to be misnamed and instead these designs are more properly located to Northern Italy in the late 15th century. The early history of tarot is very complicated and difficult to unravel, and it is not the focus of this study group to concern ourselves over much on this. Nevertheless, the Atorel cards are quite astounding designs based on an early tarot deck but sensitively and subtly coloured and modeled. As the cards appear to have been given away with consignments of the Atorel medicine, consequently, one rarely finds a complete set but instead individual cards are sometimes offered for sale by dealers in such ephemera, however some complete sets appear to have been produced in a carton.

We have thus made a wide survey of the promo decks. While some of these are no doubt rather trivial and lightweight, we can see that a number of these designs can be placed among the best of modern tarot art.

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot

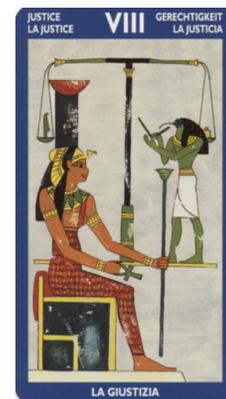
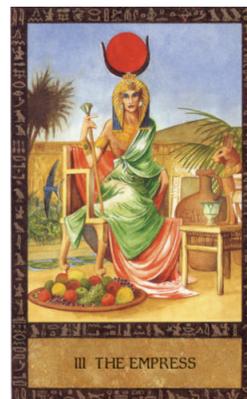


Lesson 6 : The different types of tarot - Themed decks

In lesson three we looked at tarot designs as falling into categories based on the intention of the creators in making the deck - for cartomancy, as an art deck, self-development deck, magical, humorous, promo, etc. Another way of looking at the artwork of some tarot decks is to group them under various themes. Thus we see that there are :-

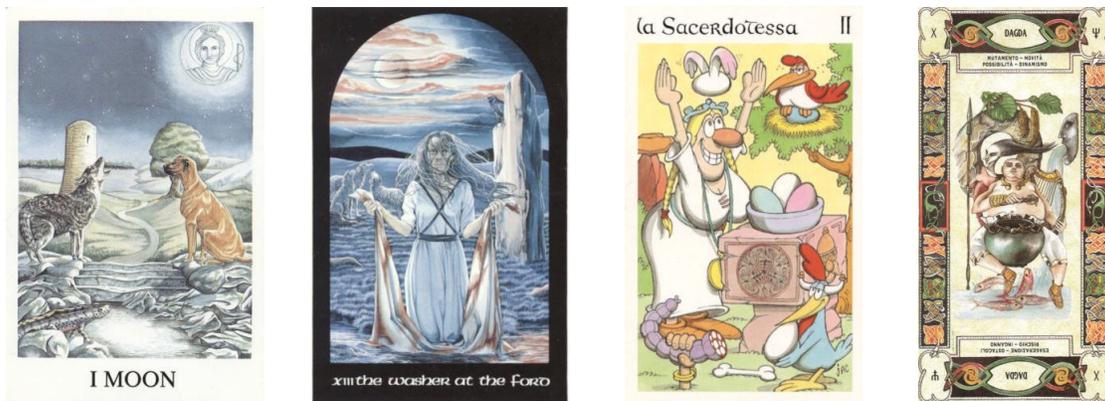
- Egyptian decks
- Celtic decks
- Shamanistic decks
- Pastiche, or decks in the style of a particular artists
- Erotic
- Dark or Gothic
- Cat tarots, and so on.

One of the first such themed decks to emerge was the Egyptian deck. One was produced as early as 1896 as 22 pen drawings by Otto Wegener which were published in the book *Les XXII lames hermétiques du tarot divinatoire* by R. Falconnier. This deck 'Egyptianised' tarot, and later led to a plethora of such Egyptian tarots. In my own collection there are about 30 such Egyptian tarots and there are a number more still to find. Here are just a few examples beginning with the *Zain Brotherhood of Light* deck (1936) which was the first to follow up on the Wegener deck, the images being redrawn by Gloria Beresford and the minor arcana cards added.



Next we have another influential tarot, the *Egyptios Kier* produced in 1970 in Argentina. A number of tarots, especially in South America, derive from this. In the last few decades some very fine workings of Egyptian imagery into tarots were created, such as the Clive Barrett *Ancient Egyptian Tarot* shown third above. The final item is the *Tarot of the Sphinx* by Silvana Alasia, 2000, copying the style of the images on the walls of Egyptian tombs. We will devote a complete lesson to the diversities of Egyptian tarots later in this course.

In the 1980's there arose the construction of a 'celtic' esotericism, based on some early Welsh and Irish mythological texts intermixed with Holy Grail esoterics. A rush of books appeared to popularise this newly devised Celtic esoteric philosophy, and the tarot creators were not far behind these publications. These primarily arose out of British occultists, such as Dion Fortune, Gareth Knight, John and Caitlin Matthews, Bob Stewart, among others. Their books, written in the 1970's and 80's, were extremely influential in constructing this stream of 'Celtic' esotericism, and this quickly shaped the development of some tarot decks. We will find, confusingly, a number of different tarot designs each called the 'Celtic Tarot', then we have *Celtic Wisdom*, *Celtic Dragon*, *Arthurian*, *Avalon*, *Merlin*, *Greenwood*, *Tarot of the Druids* and so on. There were a few early unpublished tarots which explored the Celtic theme, but the main group of Celtic tarot decks appears from about 1990. Bob Stewart's *Merlin Tarot*, was among the first, being issued in 1988. The deliciously soft and yet detailed artwork for this deck was by Miranda Gray. Bob Stewart restructures the deck to reflect his understanding of the Merlin myths. The major arcana are renumbered and the suits are Serpents, Birds, Fishes and Beasts, mirroring the four elements. A few years later Miranda Gray was again called on by the same UK publisher, Aquarian Press, to produce designs for a Celtic tarot, the *Arthurian Tarot* of Caitlin and John Matthews. Her wonderful paintings are here even more sharply drawn.



Some of these Celtic tarots are rather solemn, severe and self-absorbed, such as *Legend: The Arthurian Tarot* of Anne-Marie Ferguson of 2003 or the *Celtic Tarot* of Julian de Burgh issued in 2000, but this was countered by the Italian Celtic tarots issued by Lo Scarabeo which are more irreverent and humorous. Here we see the *Tarocchi dei Celti* 1991 by Benito Jacovitti the Italian comic artist who died in 1997, and the *Laura Tuan I Tarocchi Celtici* of 1997. Lo Scarabeo has published at least five Celtic themed tarot decks.

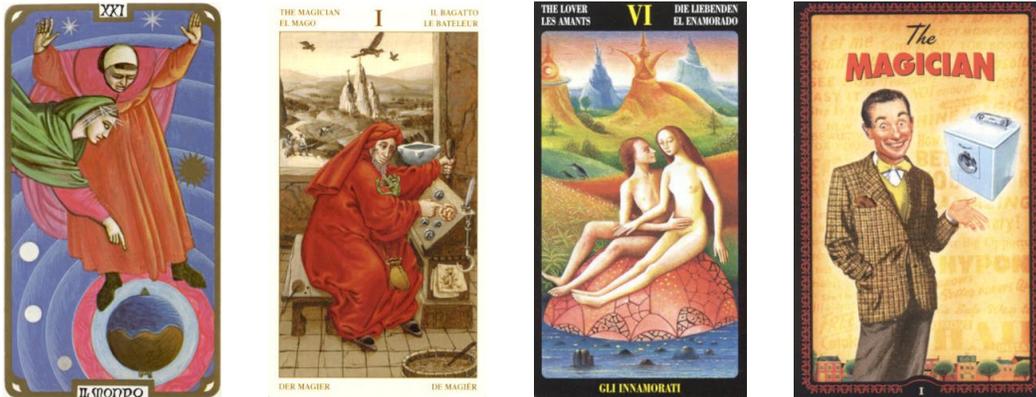
Paralleling the development in the 1970's and 1980's of a 'Celtic esotericism', we also saw the emergence of interest in a reconstructed esoteric shamanism. This was perhaps partly inspired by the 'factional' books of Carlos Castaneda, who presented shamanistic practices in a way that was approachable by the twentieth century mind. A rash of books appeared in which the authors trawled through anthropological research and repackaged this for the emerging esoteric audience, and the somewhat crude superstitious practices of tribal peoples, became elevated to deep spirituality. This impacted on and was reflected in tarot. Tarot artists seem always close to interesting new ideas and quickly soak up an emerging perspective and give it a tarot form. So shamanistic themed decks began to appear. Many of these drew on the perceived imagery of North American indigenous tribes, though seen perhaps through a veil of romanticism. Thus we have the *Native American* of 1982, *Medicine Woman* 1990, *Santa Fe* 1994, *Tarot of the Southwest Sacred Tribes* 1996, the *Vision Quest Tarot* produced in 1998, which rapidly expanded to include other indigenous cultures such as that of the Australian Aborigines celebrated in the *Australian Contemporary Dreamtime Tarot* of 1991 and early stone age culture in the *Rock Art Tarot* of 1996.



There developed among some tarot creators from the 1980 onward a wish to create a deck in the style of some well known artist. We could pejoratively label this as pastiche, but it is often a more positive wish to honour or reflect in some way a well loved artist through the medium of a creating a tarot in their style. Among the earliest of these must be Wolfgang Poggi *I Tarocchi di Dante e dei Fedeli d'Amore* which was printed in Milan in 1983. These large cards are in the style of 15th Century Italian painting. As a conceit the artist has signed the Magician card "Anonimo Bolognese del XX sec" - indicating that this is by an unknown artist of Bologna during the 20th century.

The Italian mass market tarot publisher Lo Scarabeo has commissioned a number of this type of deck, such as their *Giotto Tarot* of 2001 painted by Guido Zibordi in style similar to Poggi's 'Dante' of some 18 years earlier. In 2003 they issued the *Breugel Tarot* by Guido Marchesi. Atanas Atanassov, a Bulgarian artist, is perhaps the real master of this form and he has made a number of these tarots for Lo Scarabeo, the *Bosch Tarot* of 2000, the *Leonardo da Vinci* of 2003, the *Golden Tarot of Klimt*, and a few others. The *Bosch Tarot* is so well constructed. This is no 'cut and paste' collage, but a repainting of the imagery into a tarot context. Those who know well Hieronymous Bosch's paintings will recognise the scenes on which Atanassov has drawn. He simplifies the artwork a

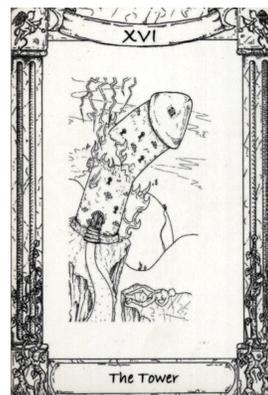
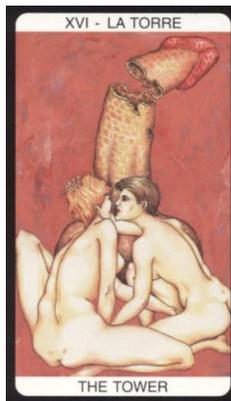
little and focuses it into serving the purpose of directly reflecting tarot imagery. It is not just high art that can be used as a stylistic model for a tarot deck. We find for example the wonderfully humorous conception of the *Housewives Tarot* of 2004 which is in the style of 1950's American consumer advertising and packaging imagery. This is even provided in a box imitating the way in which people collected recipes on cards back in the 1950's and 60's.



Playing cards with erotic designs have been produced for many years so it is not surprising perhaps that this theme appeared in a number of tarot decks. Of course, some of the individual tarot arcana have lent themselves to an erotic interpretation, the Lovers and the Devil being the two obvious examples, but some tarot artists went the full way and placed all the cards into an erotic context. *Tarot Druuna* (1998), being a jeu de tarot, or French deck used for playing the card game, is perhaps closest to the conception of playing cards with erotic designs. It is based on the main character Druuna in a series of science fiction comic book stories the *Morbus Gravis* by Paolo Eluteri Serpieri. She seems to be merely a vehicle for Serpieri's rather adolescent fixations, and the *Tarot Druuna* will not disappoint that readership (or perhaps "viewership"). The American artist Lori Walls has created a *Tarot Erotica* with amazingly detailed paintings. She brings an erotic component to each of the cards, some of which have rather disturbing imagery, however this is not the adolescent view of Serpieri but a more mature conception. We should not fail to mention the infamous erotic tarot by Amerigo Folchi. Folchi's work has often had an erotic charge to some of the cards, but in 1991 he must have almost exhausted himself creating his *Tarocco Erotico dei Giardini di Priapo*, his "erotic tarot of the garden of penises". Priapus is the Greek male God of fertility usually depicted with an erect phallus. Folchi's work here, though totally explicit, is in a cartoon style and full of humour, and this tarot deck should not offend too many people. The most recent erotic deck I have seen is the *Astar or Astaroth Tarot* from Russia issued in 2006. This is a collage deck, most of the cards of which have an erotic content. Astaroth is the name of a demon in western magic, who tried to seduce souls into hell through offering them worldly delights. There are a number of other erotic decks whose approach to the subject is unique and distinctive, so we will devote a lesson later in this course to surveying the variety of erotic decks. Many of the erotic tarots seem to depict the Tower as an erect penis!

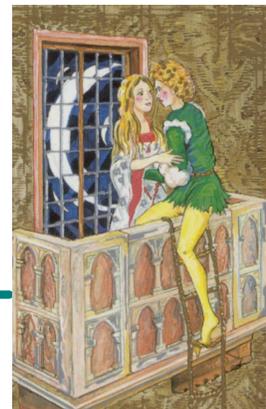


Here are the Tower cards from the Folchi, the Swedish Ylva Trollstierna *Erotica Tarot*, the Esteban Lopez and the Lori Walls.



There are many themes one finds explored by tarot artists. We will look at cats and gothic themed decks in some detail shortly and the next lesson will show a small group of decks on a rather specialist theme.

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot



Lesson 7 : Shakespeare themed decks

In the last lesson we looked at the general way in which tarot creators and artists have explored the tarot structure through various themes. Here we will look at the small group of tarots that try to give tarot a Shakespearian slant.

There are four tarot decks that use this theme

I Tarocchi di Giulietta e Romeo of 1990, by Luigi Scapini [Also known as the 'Shakespeare Tarot' and the 'Romeo and Juliet Tarot'.]

The Shakespearian Tarot of 1993, conceived by Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki, artist Paul Hardy.

The Shakespeare Oracle of 2003, conceived by A. Bronwyn Llewellyn with artwork by Cynthia von Buhler [Despite the name 'oracle' this has a true tarot structure.]

A Russian *Shakespeare Tarot*, edited by Vera Skljárova, in 2003.

So we have an Italian, a British, an American and a Russian view of Shakespeare through tarot. Firstly let us note these are all 78 card decks. Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki's *Shakespearian Tarot* provides us with a fully emblematised Minor arcana, the imagery of which is freshly conceived, rather than being some variation on the familiar Rider-Waite emblems for the pip cards. Here the suits are named Sceptres, Orbs, Swords and Crowns corresponding to the more conventional wands, cups, swords and pentacles or coins. The *Shakespeare Oracle* does not have emblematic pip cards, and the suits are named Sceptres, Chalices, Quills [the pen is mightier than the sword obviously] and Coins. Luigi Scapini's tarot takes a middle path, with the pip cards set out in Tarot of Marseilles style, but with additional emblematic imagery placed on this conventional layout. He keeps the standard names for the suits, Wands, Cups, Swords and Coins. The Russian deck has fully emblematic Minor arcana.

The court cards on the Ashcroft-Nowicki are named Lady, Lord, Queen and King and the imagery depicted there is not the conventional figures, but reflects scenes from the plays. The *Shakespeare Oracle* has a name at the bottom of each card of a character from one of the plays.

	Sceptres	Chalices	Quills	Coins
King	Philip the Bastard	Antony	Richard II and Henry Bolingbroke	Shylock
Queen	Katharine of Aragon	Hermione	Beatrice	Helena
Lord	Richard Plantagenet	Valentine	Armado	Falstaff
Lady	Volumnia	Rosalind	Viola	Mistress Page

This does seem at first sight a rather strange choice in places for characters associated with the court cards, but all is explained in detail in the accompanying book.

Scapini's court cards are more conventional, being Fante (page), Cavallo (knight), Regina (queen) and Re (king) with kings and queens shown on thrones, the knights all on horseback, and the pages standing and holding the symbol of the suit, as is usually found in the tarot courts.

Scapini entirely avoids any textual references, but both the Ashcroft-Nowicki and the *Shakespeare Oracle* use quotations from Shakespeare as a part of their tarot. Each card in the Ashcroft-Nowicki has a short quotation with the source play at the bottom of each card. These are appropriately chosen to resonate with the imagery on the card. With the *Shakespeare Oracle* we find a different approach, for here the short quotations and sources are only placed handwritten on little scrolls on the pip cards. The Majors and the courts do not have any such quotations - here we have the imagery only.

So we can begin to see the different approaches that each of the designers and artists have adopted. The Majors, always the heart of a tarot, reveal a great deal about the style of the artist and deviser of the deck. Ashcroft-Nowicki's Major arcana adopt the Rider-Waite order (Strength VIII and Justice XI) while the other two use the Tarot of Marseilles order which has the Strength and Justice cards interchanged. Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki holds to the Rider-Waite order in her other *Servants of the Light* tarot of 1991, even though her mentors and fellow British magicians Dion Fortune and Gareth Knight hold to the Marseilles order in the tarots associated with them. The Ashcroft-Nowicki and the Scapini both have the standard names for the Majors, but the *Shakespeare Oracle* associates a character from one of the plays or some other Shakespearean link with each of the Major arcana through a subtitle at the bottom of the card. Thus the Fool is Feste from *Twelfth Night*, the Hermit is Caliban from the *Tempest*, and so on. The Magician is Shakespeare himself (no doubt echoing the speech closing the *Tempest*) while the World depicts the Globe Theatre itself, a rather engaging image.

The artwork of these three tarot could not be more different. Paul Hardy has created detailed highly polished paintings (probably in acrylic) for the Ashcroft-Nowicki. Cynthia von Buhler, the artist who created the *Shakespeare Oracle*, is a well established American artist and illustrator. Her artwork appears to be in the medium of oils and used larger brushes and often a thin layer of paint so one can see textures through the paint layer. Though less polished and detailed than Hardy's work her style is very expressive and well suited to its playful use of symbolism. The Magician card with its puppet master Shakespeare working a puppet, which works a puppet, which works a puppet, in an seemingly infinite regress is a truly amazing image. Luigi Scapini has made a number of

tarots and is a very accomplished artist. He knows 15th and 16th century Italian art very well and creates artwork which echo this, though he is not averse to quoting images from more modern paintings. His work here is thus dense with allusion and quotations from paintings and from illustrations in manuscripts. The cards in the original edition are large and allow the fine detail of his artwork to be seen. Each card has a stylised border (differing for the four suits and the Majors), and the backgrounds have a kind of parchment wash which is very attractive. The outlines of the figures appear to have been drawn and then coloured making a very tight, well thought out and coherent work.

Let us now look at a few of the Majors from each deck.



In the world from the Ashcroft-Nowicki *Shakespearian Tarot* we find the text "all the world's a stage" with the actress proclaiming in a stylised theatrical space. The four shields have the symbols of the four holy creatures lion, bull, eagle and man which are usually found on the World card. The four curtains in the windows and doors have pictures of the four elements fire, air, water and earth. The moon card draws on a *Midsummer Night's Dream* with its text "Ill met by moonlight proud Titania". Here Oberon meets Titania under the full moon. Each have a dog on a leash thus keeping to the conventional tarot image for this card, and stand in front of a pool. The inclusion of the child is again a need to hold to the conventional tarot Moon card symbolism, and the child has no relevance to that section of the play. We see here how the choice of a text to reflect the tarot trump does not really structure the imagery of the card in these cases.

In the case of the Judgement card, the conventional tarot image has been abandoned in favour of a textual source for the imagery. Following the concluding speech of the play Pericles,

Virtue preserved from fell destruction's blast,
Led on by heaven, and crown'd with joy at last:

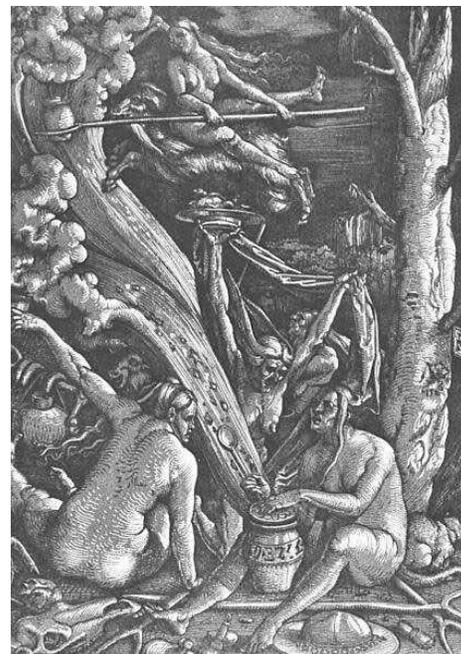
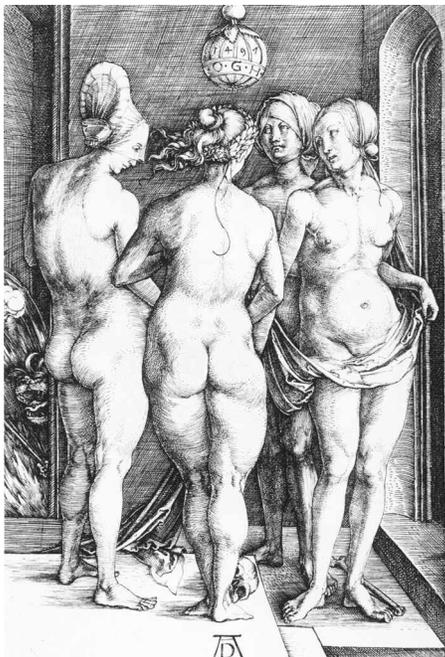
the imagery shows Pericles and his Queen Thasia. Until this point Pericles thought her to be drowned but in the final scene she is brought forth having been saved from destruction. We can see how this might echo the idea of a judgement. Here they are given a crown of laurel leaves, but the artist has moved a bit far from the play where the crowning with joy is metaphorical rather than actual. This deck is interesting in that it tries to bring together something of the text with the tarot structure. On some cards they meld and in others they struggle a little against each other, but it was a great idea to attempt this union.

The *Shakespeare Oracle* is perhaps more decorative in intention. The artist's coherent style plays delightful games with the imagery. Here are the Magician and Moon cards.



As we have already indicated the magician has that deliciously engaging self-referential image of the puppet manipulating a puppet, manipulating a puppet, which appeals so much to the modern mind. The moon card, with its three witches is a pictorial quotation partly from a woodcut of the 16th century German artists Hans Baldung Grien (the witch flying across the moon) with a cut down

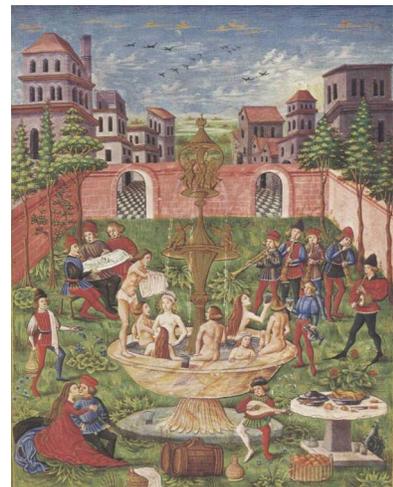
version of Albrecht Durer's *Four Witches* to three! Images like these are truly among the the treasures of modern tarot art.



Italian tarot artists are so lucky to have all the imagery, that originally flowed into and formed the traditional tarot designs, still living around them in their culture and art galleries. Luigi Scapini is obviously immersed in this material and he is able to weave many strands of visual material into his tarots. His Romeo and Juliet tarot is in his best style.



The hanged man is suspended over a pool within which we see the drowning Ophelia, quoted from the famous Pre-Raphaelite painting of Sir John Everett Millais (1851). The Ace of Cups draws more on an image contemporary with the origin of tarot, from the 15th century *De Sphaera* illuminated manuscript produced for the Duke of Estensi. This has the fountain of youth placed within the walled garden. Scapini adapts the image modernising the figures of the bathers and places the faces of Romeo and Juliet on the stem of the fountain. This Scapini deck has so many amusing details contrived to delight the viewer. Just one example - in some of the pip cards for the suit of cups he has his name set in a little paper boat floating on the water. This deck will repay



many hours of study. Scapini focuses particularly on the story of Romeo and Juliet but there are many general references to Shakespeare's work. The book that accompanies the deck was written by Scapini himself and shows the breadth of his study, both of text and image.

The Russian deck of 78 cards each depicts a scene from a Shakespeare play. The Fool, for example, shows Hamlet looking at the skull of Yorick, the court jester that he had known when he was young. Whether Hamlet or poor Yorick is here meant as the Fool is uncertain, perhaps they both are. The Hanged Man is again a scene from the play *Hamlet*. Here we see Ophelia drowning in the pool, depicted, like the Scapini, after the famous painting by Millais. Although the images chosen for the Majors seem related to the tarot imagery, it is very difficult to see why a particular image from a play is associated with the Minor arcana cards. In any case the Minor arcana are not divided into suits, being merely numbered 23 through to 78. Card 62 shows the famous scene of the three witches from *Macbeth*.



This small group of tarots devoted to the Shakespearean theme serves to illustrate the different approaches that creative individuals can bring to the task of creating a themed tarot. We will look at many more themed decks in this course. This is a good compact little group with which to make a start.

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot



Lesson 8 : Cat themed decks

I feel sure most tarot people also have a cat. So it will come as almost no surprise at all that a number of cat tarots have emerged to unite both these interests. My own collection currently has fourteen cat themed tarots, and there are a few others still to collect.

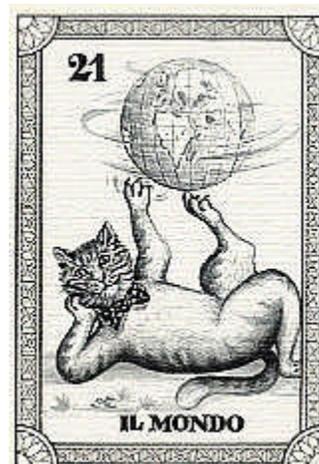
- 1985 Les Chats d'Evelyne Nicod
- 1985 Tarot of the Cat People
- 1990 Gatti Originali Tarot - Menegazzi
- 1990 22 Arcani 'i Gatti Buffi - Menegazzi
- 1990 Japan Cat Tarot
- 1993 Tarot du Chat - Sedillot
- 1996 Tarot Cards for Cats - Regen Dennis and Kipling West
- 1997 Taiwan - Cat's Tarot
- 1997 Japanese - Cat's World Tarot
- 2000 Cat's House Tarot (a.k.a. Neko's House Tarot)
- 2004 Baroque Bohemian Cats' Tarot - Karen Mahony
- 2004 Medieval Cat Tarot Deck - Gina Pace
- 2004 Chat du Marseille
- 2004 Taro Gatti
- 2005 Tarot of White Cats
- 2005 Japanese - Manga Furoku Wachifield Dayan Tarot

Let us first look at the earliest cat tarot which seems to have appeared in 1985. To say that Evelyne Nicod is totally obsessed with cats is no overstatement. This French artist now living in Italy has produced a great number of etchings and coloured prints mostly on cat themes. Her designs for her major arcana tarot were published by the Italian card publisher Meneghello in a limited



edition of 1500, which must have been quite popular as it was later reissued in a further edition of 1000. Her cats often seem to engage the viewer with an almost defiant gaze. There are a number of web sites devoted to her work, details will be found in the lesson notes.

Five years later in 1990 Osvaldo Menegazzi produced two cat tarots, the 22 *Arcani* “*I Gatti*” or original cat tarot and the *I Gatti Buffi* the humorous cat tarot. These majors only decks are in a style very similar to Evelyne Nicod, fine line drawings enclosed in an ornate border. In his original tarot the cats are depicted in a naturalistic way, though often placed in the unusual pose of a tarot image. His humorous cat tarot, on the other hand, takes this a stage further, as the cats are given human facial expressions and gestures indicating their inner feelings. It is interesting to compare these two ways of workings with the cat theme. These decks are inexpensive and it is well worth purchasing these and, as an exercise, making a comparison for yourself.



I resist the temptation to show the same cards from each deck side by side and leave this interesting exercise for you to do. If you like to see cats as they are, then you will love the *Gatti originale*, but if you like to see cats as you would like them to be, perhaps the

Gatti Buffi will amuse and delight you.

Carole Sédillot, a French writer, who has produced books on various esoteric themes, including alchemy, Jungian psychology as well as tarot, created her *Le Tarot du Chat* in 1993. The artwork was created by Claude Trapet and is based on the familiar Tarot of Marseilles structure and is a full deck of 78 cards. We can expect that Carole Sédillot had some input into the designs. She sees the cat as a mysterious animal acting as a messenger between us and the mysteries of the tarot. As both of these are a mystery to us humans, it was a happy fusion for her to create a tarot of cats.



The tarot designs are so closely derived from the tarot of Marseilles, that it will be a useful exercise of those who have a copy of this deck, to place the cards side by side and see how the artist, Claude Trapet, has worked with these archetypes. She uses the medium of coloured drawings. Her cats have engaging eyes but without going so far as the more expressive aspects of Menegazzi's *Humorous Cats*. The pips of the suits are not emblematic but they do show a cat relating on some way to the pip symbols. For each suit we see a different variety of cat, a longhair, a Siamese, and a tabby. The humour here is subtle and often hidden in the detail. The Moon card shows two dogs howling at the moon within which is a contented and perhaps rather smug cat.

In 2004 an American, Elaine Moertl produced a *Chat du Marseille* majors only deck. Her simple pen drawings are based on the 1761 Convergier edition but with cats replacing the human figures. One can see the way that both Moertl and Trapet have worked closely within the structure of the classic Tarot of Marseilles. Elaine Moertl suggests that one colours her images.



In 1996 Regen Dennis and Kipling West, having no doubt noted the appearance of the cat tarots, came up with a different approach. Here they produced not a 'cat tarot' but a 'tarot for cats'. Dennis created a book to go with the deck to help cats read the tarot. It is very funny and well worth reading, particularly the introduction which gives a cat-centred history of tarot. The illustrations for this majors only deck are by Kipling West who has also produced the *Halloween Tarot* (1996) and the *Amazing Fortune-Telling Book* tarot (1997). The paintings are not so contrasty and cartoon based as are those in the *Halloween*, and she here creates softer textured backgrounds against which her main images are shown. The main ingredient of most cat tarots seems to be the use of subtle humour and this certainly holds for this beautifully conceived deck, whose images are reworked from a cat-centric viewpoint.



There is the rather fine image of the kitten snuggling around the dog's muzzle, and the cat-centred image of the chair as Tower.

Since the idea of the cat tarot had become well established it is not surprising that a number of far eastern tarot designers turned to explore this form. There was an early 1990 example from Japan, but in the later 1990's we have the *Cat's Tarot* from Taiwan (1997) a *Cat's World Tarot* (1997) from Japan, and the *Cat's House Tarot* (2000) also Japanese, and in 2005 we see the *Wachifield Dayan Tarot* based on a Japanese Manga character.



The *Cat's Tarot* by Terry Tsai, published in Taiwan in 1997, is aimed at a younger audience. The cards are brightly coloured with chunky, boldly modelled cats, all with large appealing eyes and engaging smiles. Even the poor cats falling from the Tower are smiling! Each of the figures on the 22 cards are framed between a rod on the left with the Moon at the top, and one on the right with the Sun, around



which is woven a roll of parchment. On many of the cards the cats play happily with mice or with bells. Surprisingly for a child-focussed deck the creator included conventional Death and Devil cards. The artwork, though cute, is nicely modelled and has a uniform style throughout the cards.

A later Japanese tarot from 2005 is based on a manga character, a cat called Dayan, who lives in the imaginary world of Wachifield, created by author and illustrator Akiko Ikeda. There are apparently nearly forty books featuring Wachifield and its inhabitants, so the time was ripe for a Wachifield tarot. I leave it up to the reader, if they have the enthusiasm, to research the different characters that appear on the tarot. I can report that one of them is a female hare called Marcy, who is depicted in an amazingly cat like form. Here we see



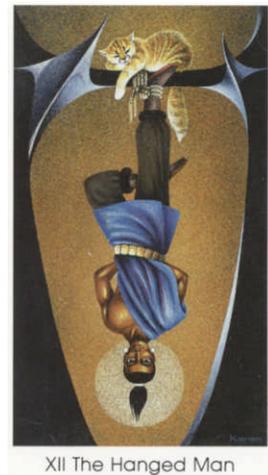
the mysterious Dayan as the Magician, and then he with his friend Marcy on the Lovers card. This is a majors only deck and could well be seen as a promo deck, promoting the Wachifield books.

In 2004 and 2005 we saw the appearance of three major cat tarots the *Baroque Bohemian Cats' Tarot*, the *Medieval Cat Tarot* and the *Tarot of White Cats*, all full decks with the major and minor cards. These three have sumptuous, highly polished artwork, but now our cats are seen dressed as humans. We are far away from the depictions of Osvold Menegazzi or Kipling West, and instead in a world where cats have become little people. The *Tarot of the White Cats* adheres very closely to the Rider Waite deck especially in the minor arcana. They are almost without exception, painted wearing elaborate costumes, skirts, robes, tunics, jackets and trousers and their paws are depicted very much like human hands being able to grasp and manipulate items. The artwork by Severino Baraldi is highly finished and detailed in the best Lo Scarabeo style. One has the distinct impression, however, that there is little of the essence of cat in this deck, and if the artist were to replace the cats heads with human ones we would find that entirely acceptable. The *Medieval Cat Tarot* takes a different approach and presents us with a deck in the style of a 15th century deck such as the *Visconti Sforza*, though not copying this directly. The majors and the court cards all have dark brown backgrounds set within ornate borders, against which our medieval cats dressed in colourful garments pose in the familiar tarot tableau. The artwork by Laurence Teng, reflects early Italian, and to a lesser extent Flemish, paintings and manuscript illustrations, but in a more chunky and modelled style. The cats faces seem devoid of fur and have a pink almost human skin tone. There is no attempt now at remodelling paws (as in the *Tarot of the White Cats*) and our medieval cats now have full human hands with opposable thumbs. The pip cards are not emblematic as such, but have a small circular oval set amongst the stylised pips, in

which a scene is depicted which in many cases is drawn from the Rider-Waite minors. The Aces are a delight, the three mice on the Ace of Pentacles being especially fine. There is a grace and elegance to the artwork and it has obviously been well considered and worked into a stylistic whole. The *Baroque Bohemian Cats' Tarot* takes an entirely different approach again, not using painted depictions. Instead it uses photo-collage to present us with cats appearing dressed in elaborate costumes and posed against the architecture of Prague and other places in the Czech Republic to act out the tarot emblems. The pip cards are emblematic and entirely drawn from the familiar Rider-Waite imagery. A great deal of work, by Karen Mahony and Alex Ukolov, must have gone into creating this deck in melding so well the cats' heads, paws and tails with the costumed dolls and then inserting this into the architectural backgrounds. It would probably have been easier to draw or paint the images, but in a strange way the use of actual photographs of real cats, makes the images more striking and gives them a sharper impact, compared to that, say, of the *Tarot of the White Cats*. Instead of a remote connection to cats, as viewers we are here drawn more into the tarot space occupied by these animals. One sees them simultaneously as real cats and as tarot tableau, and this works very successfully. This deck has much subtle humour within it.

It is an interesting exercise, if you have these three decks, to lay them out side by side and compare the ways in which the artists have tried to achieve their goal. These are readily available inexpensive decks, and are essential for anyone interested in Cat tarots.

In 1985 there appeared a strange science fiction or fantasy tarot by another 'Cat Lady', Karen Kuykendall, the *Tarot of the Cat People*. This lavishly illustrated deck was produced together with an extensive text describing the strange regions of the Outer World in which she set her imagery. The people of the major arcana were Sky people of the Diamond Kingdom, those in the suit of Swords were Fire people of the Ruby kingdom, those of Wands were Sand people of the Emerald kingdom, while the Cups depicted the Salt people of the Topaz kingdom, and finally the suit of Pentacles has the Rock people of the Sapphire kingdom. This imaginative structure of worlds and their inhabitants is depicted in the tarot, the figures in elaborate costumes being set against gorgeous textured backgrounds. On each card cats appear as guardians, companions, decorative forms, statues, totem animals, and often as major figures in the drama. The Tower (Major 16) itself is in the form of a large cat sculpture struck by a meteor or comet.

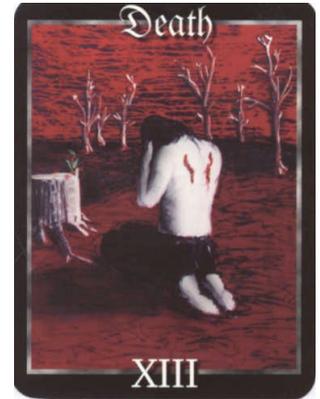


* * *

Here, with our small set of sixteen Cat tarots, we have been exploring a little world within a world. We have seen how an artist or designer has had an idea, worked and played with it, until a clear conception arose for their cat tarot. For those interested in both cats and tarot this is a relatively small group of tarots to form into a collection and these are still inexpensive, only *Les Chats d'Evelyne Nicod*, the *Japan Cat Tarot* and the

Taro Gatti are difficult to find. Once you have some of these decks you will find it instructive to compare the different styles and approaches. We will find many of these little worlds of themed decks within the greater world of the tarot, and be exploring these in future lessons in our course.

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot



Lesson 9 : Gothic themed decks

We now jump to the opposite pole, away from the sweetness, humour and sentimentality of the cat themed tarots to the darker side that is found in the Gothic decks. Of course, not all of these are grim and gruesome, but more often are stylised and self-mocking.

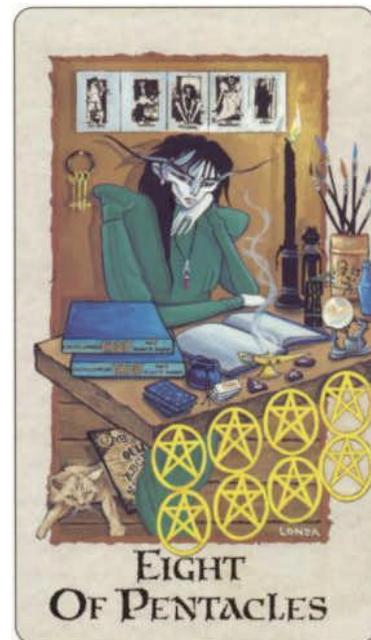
- 1987 Tarocco dell'Orror - Gianni Maiotti (Menegazzi)
- 1993 Londa Tarot - Londa Marks
- 1994 Necromantic Tarot - Leilah Wendell
- 1995 Gothic Tarot - Dawn Williams
- 1996 Lovecraft Tarot - David Wynn, Daryl Hutchinson and text by Eric Friedman
- 1998 Gothic Tarot - Leilah Wendell
- 1999 Fantastical Tarot - Nathalie Hertz
- 2000 Black Tarot - Luis Royo
- 2000 Marilyn Manson Tarot
- 2002 Gothic Tarot - Joseph Vargo and Christine Filipak
- 2002 Vampire Tarot - Nathalie Hertz
- 2003 Gothic Tarot of Vampires - Riccardo Minetti, Emiliano Mammuccari
- 2004 Book of Kaos - Orryelle Defenestrata-Basculé
- 2004 Guardian Tarot - Jeff Mincevic
- 2005 Labyrinth Tarot - Luis Royo
- 2005 Savage Tarot - MichelleX
- 2006 Corneal Edema - John R Dybowski

The Italian tarot publisher Meneghello seems to have been one of the first to jump into this theme with the *Tarocco dell'Orror*. This is a full deck and the artwork is comic book cartoon style, and with imagery seemingly drawn from the horror 'B' movie genre. This is a realm of irreverent fun rather than offensive or even dark and brooding gloom. The artist Gianni Maiotti, plays this theme for laughs rather than to shock. The major arcana designs often seem to stand on their head the normal meaning assigned to the card. Thus Temperance shows a glutton, the Hierophant or Pope depicts an inept surgeon with a sawn-off leg, the High Priestess is a fat, rather menacing and one suspects, sadistic, nurse, bearing a large hypodermic syringe about to descend on a patient. The Emperor is a fat gangster, the Wheel of Fortune is a torture device, and so on. It is horror, but definitely of the amusing kind. The pip cards, for the suit of cups, present us with a goblet



of blood in which an octopus is swimming, for pentacles we have a set of false teeth with ‘Dracula’ pointed fangs, swords shows us an eyeball impaled on a dagger, while wands depicts a frog being smashed with a club. The cartoon style renders these as images a childish humour, rather than anything serious or dark, but it appears to be one of the earliest of the gothic or horror tarots.

Londa Marks produced her first tarot in 1993, and since then has issued one more, the *Crow's Magick* in 1998 and is currently working on her *Alchemist Tarot* and a *Distant Sun Tarot*. We can perhaps include it in this group because of its ‘goth’ references. All the figures in this tarot are stylized as thin androgynous Goths. Apparently Londa Marks worked for some time in the 1980s designing costumes for a glam rock group. Her women often have those square profiled padded shoulders so popular in the 80’s, and all the figures adopt a rather cold expressionless stare, often engaging and almost challenging us as viewers. There is an undercurrent of magic and a knowing use of symbolism in her images. Her artwork is painted, with great attention given to the foreground figure. Her figures communicate as much by their posture and stance as by their expressions. Unlike the *Tarocco dell'Orrore* this is not primarily a tarot structured around humour, but it does have make little subtle visual jokes - the Eight of Pentacles is a particularly engaging self portrait complete with sketches and volume II and III of Kaplan’s *Encyclopedia of Tarot*. This is a tarot with attitude, it reaches out and shouts its style. It is well worth studying and just enjoying its imagery. Much has been made of the extra card which poses the question “Who are you really?” I doubt many of us are like the gothic characters with which she has populated her tarot, but we can be intrigued and drawn into their world. The tarot itself is based firmly on the Rider-Waite, and has emblematic pip cards obviously derived from that classic deck.





Leilah Wendell is truly interested in death. Her artwork reflects this entirely. In 1994 she issued her *Necromantic Tarot* to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the business venture Westgate Press that she had set up in 1979 to market her books, artwork and prints. This *Necromantic Tarot* is now rather rare but copies can still be found second-hand, though at a very high price. Leilah Wendell incorporates various elements into her paintings - beings of darkness and beings of light, skeletal figures, lightning strikes, graves and cosmic spaces. This is not a contrived style but is obviously a key part of her intellectual and symbolic ideas. This deck is regrettably printed in such a small format (a mere 3.5 by 2 inches - 90 by 50mm) that it does not allow us to fully appreciate her artwork, though some of these paintings are available as larger prints from her website. A few of the images are not paintings but photographic collage or photographs of sculptures. Her deep and sincere interest in the occult is

obvious from a glance at her output on her web site. In a strange way one comes to feel that her fascination with and centring on the idea of death is not at all morbid, but instead a realistic focus upon the one thing that is certain in our life.

Later in 1998 she produced the better known and more widely circulated *Gothic Tarot*. This was another majors only deck, but this time using photo-collage, based on monumental sculptures probably for the most part from graveyards. These have added collage elements, her lightning strokes make another appearance along with flows of light and cosmic spaces.

In 1995 another *Gothic Tarot* was published. The artwork was by Dawn Williams and the full deck of 78 cards was produced in a small edition of only 150 decks by www.themysticeye.com. This focuses on the Bram Stoker vampire theme. The suits thus are Stakes (second death is final), Blood (life everlasting begins with the blood), Fangs (the dead are ever hungry) and Coins (human loyalty can be bought with gold). The Pips are not emblematic and the Court cards are also designed. The Majors each have a subtitle making a reference to the underlying 'vampire' mythology. Thus the Magician is 'Worker of the dark trick', the Hierophant 'Self-righteous ass, enemy of the undead', Demons (the Death card renamed) 'for the dead still dream', the Tower 'resting place of the never changing', and so on. Many of the major cards are re-named to fit into the vampire agenda. The artwork is in the style of a graphic artist



who does advertisements for newspapers or magazines. It is well executed with bold black outlines, strongly coloured areas with much use of fades and merges. Though it was done on a computer it mimics the style of airbrushed graphics. This is an excellent 'vampire' deck.



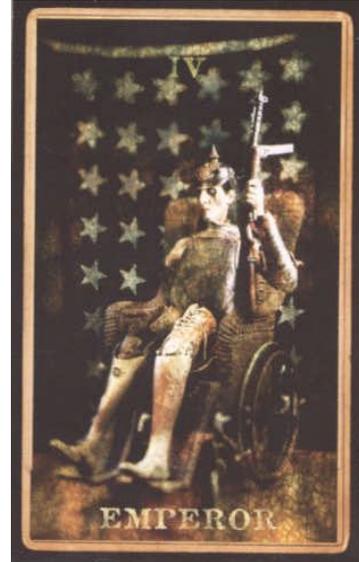
Luis Royo is an important and popular Spanish artist and illustrator, best known for his large format illustrated books and for his artwork on many CD covers. He is a prolific artist and has produced thousands of highly detailed paintings. Most of these could be categorised as 'fantastical art'. In 2000 the Spanish playing card publisher Heraclio Fournier issued Luis Royo's *Black Tarot*. This presents us with a kind of 'science fiction erotica' rather than gothic darkness. The accompanying text states in one place "The Black Tarot forms a symbolic group of the darkest side, so that the own 'self' and its demons emerge. The Beauty and the Beast which we carry inside." The pip cards of this full deck are not emblematic. The imagery on the major arcana does not closely adhere to the conventional tarot structures, though it is recognisable. There almost seems to be a narrative running through the major arcana. Scantly clad women seem to battle with or seduce in their BDSM gear, rather gruesome creatures in some science fiction landscape. The artwork is lavish and delightfully detailed.



Royo's 2005 *Labyrinth Tarot* also published by Fournier, is more tarot in conception and truly more gothic in tone. Here we have some truly amazing tarot images, in a greenish-grey toned sepia. This locates the artwork in a more gothic landscape than the highly polished colours of the *Black Tarot*. The artwork on the cards is small, but luckily Royo has published these images in a large format book, and here we can appreciate the imagery in all its detail. He also writes about the tarot imagery in a truly informed way and his text here shows he has studied tarot and esoteric ideas very intently. For his Minor courts, rather than the greenish-grey cast of the Majors he shifts the tones of the artwork on the suits, to earthy-brown for Pentacles, reddish-rose for Cups, Prussian blue for Swords, and a earthy-green for Wands. This is a very well conceived deck. The pictures for the major arcana are so imaginative and yet entirely traditional. There is an overall gothic style to the artwork, and though brooding and gloomy it does not have a sense of menace and angst. In his *Labyrinth Tarot* Royo touches on this dark gothic world with the delicacy of a sensitive, and aesthetic creativity. It delights in the beauty of this gothic style.

We now come to a truly dark gothic tarot, the partial deck of ten cards, which began to be issued with Marilyn Manson's CD's beginning with his 'Holy Wood' album of 2000. This is, in fact, a rather well constructed collage deck. As one would expect from a rock

music star, Manson's face appears on most of the cards. He is the Fool, Magician, High Priestess, Emperor, Hierophant, Hermit, Justice, Death, the Hanged Man and no doubt he also lurks behind the ram's head mask of the Devil. The figures are posed within primarily dark spaces and incorporate various symbols juxtaposed to be critical of American politics and culture. Thus the Emperor is a figure with artificial legs seated in a wheelchair and holding an automatic rifle. He wears a German Imperial helmet and behind him is set the stars section from the US flag. This is essentially a promo deck, but the artwork and intention of the artist is to reinforce the message of Manson's music. It certainly has dark images, but the collage is so well done and the messages well articulated that we should not dismiss this as something thrown together as a promotional feature. The artwork of this gothic deck does have its own integrity and strength. It may repel but it does engage its audience (as no doubt Manson's music does).



In 2002 and 2003, the two major tarot card publishers U.S. Games Systems and Lo Scarabeo both decided to visit the vampire theme. U.S. Games invited a French artist Nathalie Hertz to explore this. She adopted a light and gently humorous approach and presented us with thin, gaunt figures similar to those earlier used by Londa Marks. Here most of her figures are clearly vampires with sharp, pointed eye-teeth fangs. They all sport incredible hair styles. The backgrounds to most of the cards are dark, but style overwhelms any sense of the sinister and we have here an entirely entertaining deck. It is a full deck. The figures on the Court cards all seem to have recently been enjoying a blood meal and not had the decency to wipe their faces clean. The pip cards incorporate emblematic imagery in different ways on each suit. This seems unique to this deck. The emblematic forms fill the whole space on Pentacles (like on a normal emblematised deck), in Cups these are suggested through windows in the background, Wands have a emblem on each pip card shown in a small picture frame, while Swords have emblematic forms in grey, like statuary. There is lots of blood and vampire fangs about, but the sheer joyous style of the artwork means that one need not fear visits from nightmares after looking through this *Vampire Tarot* deck.



With Lo Scarabeo's Gothic Tarot of Vampires we are perhaps being asked to step into a more disturbing space. This is set in our contemporary world and many of the cards depict violence, bloodletting, and a number of cards seem to depict suicide through the cutting of veins in the wrists. The Major arcana of this 78 card deck do not have titles only numbers. The paintings by Emiliano Mammucari are in a comic book style with

drawn outlines, toned and highlighted with relatively large brushstrokes and modelled with washes. There seems to be some underlying narrative running through the Major arcana that is hinted at in the booklet as the 'Metaphor'. Through this metaphor of the vampire's journey (seen akin to the classical 'Journey of the Hero', perhaps that articulated by Joseph Campbell), the vampire moves from innocence, through a first awakening to knowledge of its power, and then to damnation and some final deliverance.



If this is the subtext to the Major arcana it is perhaps rather occluded. Many of the images may be found disturbing. Is it vampire sheik, and self-vampirism that is being depicted on card II? What exactly is that bloody kiss about on Card XIII (supposedly the Death card)?

Does the Two of Cups really present us with the image of a suicide pact between two women lying in a bed, or are they merely mixing and sharing one another's blood? A similar image appears on the Queen of Wands. The Four of Wands seems even more gruesome. I can only suppose that there is some narrative behind all this imagery that would help us grasp it as a series of stages in the vampire's development, but with merely the cards in hand, we only see perplexing and distressing depictions, that we are unable to properly contextualise. This deck certainly challenges and entirely reflects the darkness of the gothic.

We descend even deeper into gloom and darkness with the Savage Tarot. This is probably the darkest expressions of the tarot to date - and not just dark in concept but dark in printing! This is realised in photo-collage. Some images are very disturbing, depicting people broken down by drug abuse and violence and involved in BDSM or torture type activities. We will find here echoes of filmmaker David Lynch's imagery and even Francis Bacon's paintings. This deck was designed by an American artist called MichelleX, who specialises in photography and is especially drawn to images reflecting the goth lifestyle. Her photographic style is very developed and she certainly understands how to create powerful graphic effects. Her Savage Tarot reflects back to us a deeply disturbing world of violence, despair, gun-shiek, bondage, blood and extreme body piercing. There is a constant hint at BDSM activities, through the depiction of chains, and those strange gas-mask fetish wear. The photographs have been extensively manipulated by a computer graphics program to embed them in a textured, usually dark, space. On some figures the heads have been distorted and metamorphosed. The images require considerable contemplation to make out the details.



This is certainly a deep and well thought out tarot, but one that few will be able to resonate with.



The *Corneal Edema* tarot by John R Dybowski is a true goth tarot. It differs from the Manson tarot cards which have more a fixation on making political and social statements, and also from the Shadow Tarot, though it shares their general background. Dybowski's tarot is uncompromisingly goth in style, but it is definitely stylish. Thus he is perhaps closer to Leilah Wendell than to Manson or MichelleX. His imagery indeed



celebrates and positively explores a goth view of the world, filtered through the tarot imagery. The term 'corneal oedema' means an inflammation of the corneal part of the eye - the main symptom of which is blurring of vision and sometimes pain on looking at an object. So entirely in empathy with a goth view of the world this *Corneal Edema* Tarot is supposedly giving us a painful and distorted view, but in reality Dybowski's perspective is aesthetic and positive. This is a photographic collage deck and the photographs have been skilfully manipulated and placed within a textured frame. The tones have been shifted to sepia and one has the impression, when looking at a card, of gazing through a old window. The photographic tableaux that are the basis for the imagery are expressively posed, then collaged and given a surface texturing, that makes them look like aged photographs.

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot



6. THE FOOL

Lesson 10 : Tarots printed in books

There are many tarot decks that come with books, but there are also a few tarot designs that were not issued as cards but instead printed in a book as illustrations. Among these are :-

- 1920 *Der Tarot* by Ernst Kurtzahn ("Daityanus")
- 1922 *Le Tarot Egyptien* by Elie Alta
- 1951 *The Royal Road* by George Fathman (John Dequer Tarot designs)
- 1954 *The Painted Caravan* by Basil Rakoczi
- 1961 Antoni Uniechowski
- 1965 *The Esoteric Tarot* by Simon Kasdin
- 1969 *The Prophetic Tarot* by Rudolfo Benavides
- 1972 *Liebe & Tarock* by Esteban López
- 1973 *The Book of Paradox* by Louise Cooper (Barbara Nessim tarot)
- 1973 *The Tarot and Transformation* by Lynn M. Beuss (Roxana R. Donegan)
- 1974 *La Tour de Feu* 118 'Propositions pour un nouveau tarot'
- 1974 *La Tour de Feu* 121 'Le nouveau tarot de Jarnac'
- 1978 *Magia dei Tarocchi* Donato Piantanida
- 1979 *Tarot Therapy* by Jan Woudhuysen (art by Louise Aaltje)
- 1980 *The tarot design coloring book* by Caren Caraway
- 1981 *The Cynic's Tarot* by John Kolyer
- 1982 *Astrology, Alchemy and the Tarot* by John Sandbach
- 1991 *Brazil in Tarot cards* by Israel Pedrosa
- 1994 *The Tantric Tarot* by Keith Morgan
- 1995 *Genege des Tarotas* by Marcello Peola
- 1995 *Mise en Abyrne* by Nanda Lanfranco
- 1997 *Il Mondo e la Magia nei Tarocchi* by Roberto Poloni
- 2000 *The Particle Tarot* by Dave McKean
- 2005 *Tarot Shuji* Terayama and Shigeo Otake

A number of decks were issued in the form of printed and often scored sheets bound into books. These can be treated more as actual decks distributed in this special format, rather than tarot designs primarily conceived of as illustrations in books rather than as actual cards. In this lesson we should be focusing on tarots as illustrations, and we will be particularly interested in complete decks of 22 or 78 cards devised for a book, rather than merely illustrations of single cards which are very common in general books on esoteric or new age themes.



Among the first of these tarots would appear to be that by Ernst Kurtzahn, who was a member of various Rosicrucian and magical orders, and especially interested in Kabbalah. In his book published in 1920 *Der Tarot. Die kabbalistische Methode der Zukunfts-erforschung als Schlüssel zum Okkultismus*, he included a full set of 78 tarot illustrations, as black and white line drawings.

As far as I know these were never issued as an actual deck of cards. Kurtzahn wrote under the pen-name of 'Daityanus'. As he takes a kabbalistic perspective on the Tarot his designs incorporate Hebrew letters and their associated numerical correspondences. The designs are clearly based on the 19th century Etteilla deck.



Another early book was that of Elie Alta *Le Tarot Egyptien* of 1922. Although this claims to be the work of Etteilla reborn, it reproduces black and white line illustrations from a Tarot of Marseilles.

Much later in 1951, George Fathman illustrated in his book *The Royal Road*, the tarot designs by Dr John Dequer, created some 20 years earlier and described in his book *Arrows of Light*, 1930. In Fathman's book he says that the 22 Dequer designs were redrawn by Paul Hagerup and Pedro Krause, though they are obviously derived but not copied from the *Falconnier/Wegener* tarot of 1896, which had been issued in the USA in 1901 under the name of the Comte de Saint Germain. In 1936, Elbert Benjamin (C.C.Zain) issued his *Brotherhood of Light* deck which has illustrations based on the same designs. In Fathman's version most of the major arcana are renamed. Thus, for example, the Magician is now 'The Prodigal', the Lovers is 'The Two Paths', Temperance is 'The Alchemist', the Star 'The Naked Truth' and so on. For comparison, the Falconnier/Wegener version of the Magician is to the right of the Dequer/Fathman Magician card renamed to 'The Prodigal'.

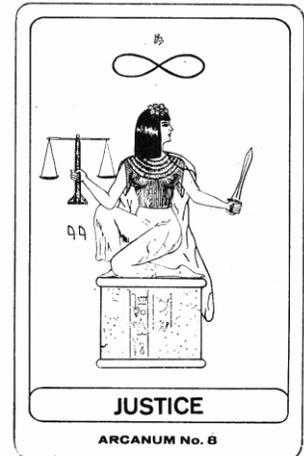


One interesting feature of the Dequer/Fathman designs is that the images in the second half, 10-21, have a little rectangular panel below the stylised cartouche. These panels contain

symbols which appear to be related to the elements. We have trees, clouds, mountains, fish in the sea, and so on. This is an interesting tarot and the book in which it is printed can still be found on the second-hand market at a modest price. It is an absolute must-have for those interested in Egyptian tarots.

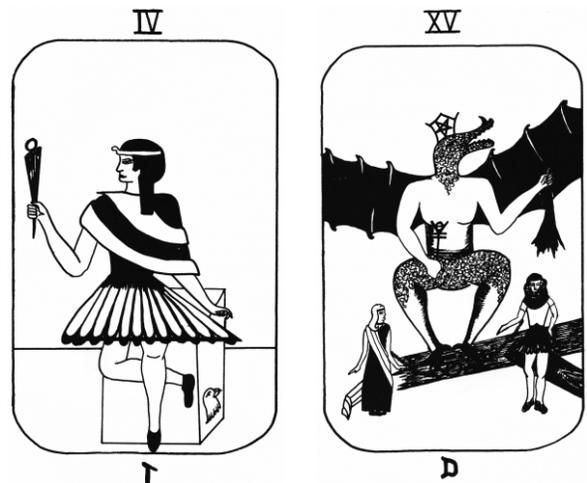


Another Egyptian tarot followed a decade or so later - *The Prophetic Tarot* by Rudolfo Benavides, published originally in Spanish in Mexico, 1969. Later this was issued in English. The book develops an apocalyptic interpretation of the tarot, using the tarot images in conjunction with selectively chosen verses from the Book of Revelation together with symbolism from the Great Pyramid (in the 1960's very popular as a mystical source) to make a series of prophecies. His text shows the more restrictive side of



religion wedded to a self-serving esotericism and it seems now only worth reading as a lesson in the dangers of taking oneself too seriously and the folly making predictions about a year (1970) close to the publication of the book. If we just ignore his text we are left, however, with a rather finely drawn major arcana tarot in an Egyptian style. You can still buy this book for a small sum and you have the delights of owning a rather fine Egyptian tarot.

The early phase in the development of modern tarot (1950's-1970's) seems often to have drawn on Egyptian imagery. *The Tarot and Transformation* by Lynn M. Buess, 1973, is illustrated with pen drawings for a full 78 card deck by Roxana R. Donegan. The text itself is a psychological/esoteric view of tarot as transformational tools for the human soul. Donegan's tarot designs obviously draw ultimately from the Falconnier/Wegener, possibly through the Zain deck well known in the USA in the 1970's. She is not a particular good artist and her style is perhaps rather clumsy, but this can be seen as a good modern reworking of the 'Egyptian' theme in a tarot.



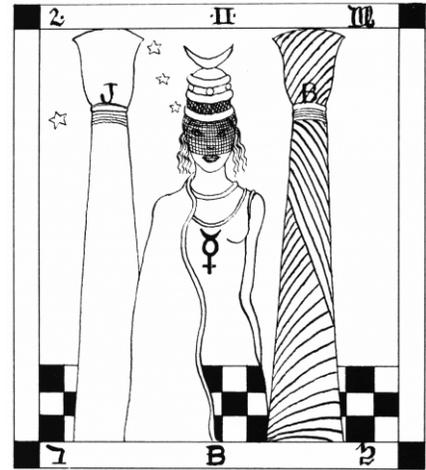
In 1954 Basil Ivan Rakoczi wrote his book *The Painted Caravan*, in which he presents a rather romanticized and fanciful view of the gypsies and tarot. It is a good read, even though one will find there little solid material, but instead a nicely woven account that will still appeal to some people. The book is rescued from oblivion, as with Benavides' work, by some original tarot illustrations. These are primarily a reworking by Rakoczi of the Tarot of Marseilles images, but with some additions and modifications. A few are shown in colour and the endpapers of the book show some paintings based on tarot designs.



Rakoczi includes designs for a full 78 card deck. His book is expensive but well worth buying for the tarot images, even if his text today seems too rhetorical and presents a too romanticized and fantastical image of gypsies and their involvement with tarot.

In 1972 Esteban López drew some rather sexually explicit tarot images which were included in his novel *Liebe & Tarock*. These have proved rather controversial but we will examine them in a later lesson in erotic tarots. Another sexually explicit tarot issued in book form rather than cards was the *Tantric Tarot* of Keith Morgan, 1994. Again we will include this under the theme of erotic tarots.

1973 saw the appearance of tarot illustrations by Barbara Nessim in Louise Cooper's novel, *The Book of Paradox*. This book is structured around the tarot and the hero Varka is taken on a journey through the experiences of each of the 22 major arcana. Each chapter is allocated to the major arcana in turn, from the first, as the Magician, through to the Fool, as the final chapter. Each chapter has a tarot image drawn by Barbara Nessim. These pen drawings provide us with a very acceptable tarot. For the book cover, the illustrator has reworked her Fool as a coloured image. It would have been a delight had she done this for the complete set, but at least we have her remarkable pen drawings. These are in square format, unusual for tarot cards, of course, and each card incorporates part of a checkerboard, perhaps reflecting the idea of a chess game. The novel itself presents us with the allegorical journey of the hero through the various archetypal forces of life. In the fourth chapter, the Emperor, he is given the Book of Paradox which acts as his guide through his subsequent struggles.



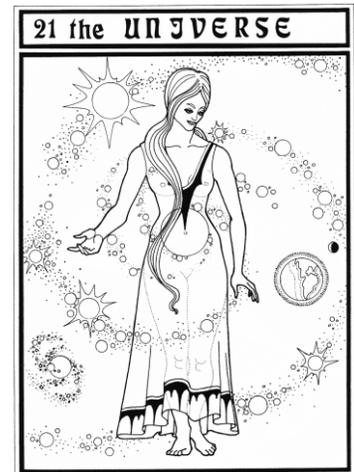
Jan Woudhuysen *Tarot Therapy* book 1979 (also published under the title *Tarotmania*), subtitled 'A guide to the subconscious' included some very charming designs by Louise Aaltje for the Major arcana. As far as I know these were never issued as an actual tarot deck. This has become quite a well known little tarot, perhaps because the book itself was well distributed. It is a well written and easy to read work which directly engages with the reader. It is a work of popular psychology, primarily Freudian, and is very anecdotal in style and not at all heavy or scholarly. The tarot images by Louise Aaltje, drawn in pen with some large solid black areas, are a confection of little humorous emblems. Even the Devil and the Death card have a light and fluffy humour. Her imagery is comforting and in no way challenging. This could perhaps sit rather uneasily in a book purporting to lead us into the tangles of our subconscious, but then Woudhuysen's text is pitched at the same sort of level. His text can hardly touch the difficulties that people with difficult psychic problems face. It is instead a happy, upbeat and entirely cheerful account of our relationship with our 'subconscious'. Woudhuysen's world seems one of happy domesticity, but far removed from the real struggles that people face inwardly and outwardly. But, he and Louise Aaltje, have left us a warm and cuddly little tarot which delights and amuses.





1980 saw the appearance of *The tarot design coloring book* by Caren Caraway. This was a large format paperback 11 by 8.25 inches (280x210mm). It contained line drawings for a complete 78 card deck. The Major arcana and the Court cards were printed one to a page, but the Minors were half the size at four to a page. This was ostensibly a book of designs for the reader to colour in. I am not so sure that many people will have completed this with any good results. The images are large and many have large open areas. These require subtle shading and modelling to produce a good result. The examples shown on the cover and back in colour, have this fine subtlety, but one wonders if many amateurs could achieve similar results. Colouring-in perhaps works best when there are

not so many open areas requiring modelling. Also the large format of the images exaggerates this. This being said the designs are really fine, with clear lines and beautifully constructed curves. Caren Caraway certainly knows how to draw a series of related curves. This book sold for \$2.95 back in 1980. It is difficult to find today and second-hand copies sell for \$100 or more, but it is a classic of its type. It was not the first tarot to be issued for the reader to hand-colour, that had already been done with the B.O.T.A. tarot. Her designs are original and take the tarot imagery and for the most part place it within a cosmic space, against a background of stars. She is confident enough to rename some of the Majors as well as work the symbolism creatively into her own style. Thus Strength to her is 'Vigor', Justice 'Equilibrium', and Judgement is 'Transformation'. Her pip cards draw on the emblems from the familiar Rider-Waite deck.



John Sandbach's *Astrology, Alchemy and the Tarot* has some small tarot images based on alchemical emblems. We will look at that in a later lesson devoted to alchemical tarots.

One of the major treasures among tarots printed in a book is Marcello Peola's *Genege des Tarotas*, published as a limited edition of 160 copies, at Turin, Italy in 1995. The text is printed in the three languages Italian, French and English. The book is a large folio sized volume at 13.5 by 9.5 inches (345x245mm). Marcello Peola has made incredible detailed pen drawings of the 22 major arcana. Each drawing is crammed with symbolism and Peola has obviously made an in-depth study of the modern esoteric ideas about tarot symbolism. His studies are documented in the descriptive text for each illustration, which illuminates and points to the symbolism he has incorporated into each of his designs. Into each tarot arcana he condenses imagery from paintings, emblematic engravings, and magical and alchemical symbols. Each image is so detailed that it would take much study to recognise all the details he has woven into his artistic conception. These are works to contemplate at leisure, though they also have a strong direct impact upon the viewer. Few copies of this book seem to have left Italy and they are incredibly expensive as befits such a signed very limited edition, but the print quality is, nasturally, very high, and the artwork is exquisite. Consequently few people have ever heard

of, let alone seen, a copy of this work.



We must also look at another amazing tarot, this time from Dave McKean, the well known and prolific British illustrator, who made his name producing comics, art books and CD-covers. His art is collage and painting based and usually incorporates dense textures, and layering of imagery. In 1995 he produced his *Vertigo Tarot* which is still eagerly sought after. This was a book and also a pack of cards. In 2000 his *Particle Tarot* was published in book form. This is a series of 22 (mostly posed) photographs which have been graphical manipulated adding collage elements. His striking images are shown on the recto pages while on the versos

are collaged versions of parts of a table of elementary particles, the fermions and bosons that fundamental physics recognises as the building blocks of matter. The sequence begins linking the Fool with the charmed quark, Magician to the electron, the Female Pope to the electron neutrino, Empress to the muon, Emperor to the muon neutrino, and so on. It is a rather neat idea. The imagery is extremely powerful, almost elemental in its energy. Though not nightmarish, many of the images are not easy to forget and tend to live on in ones mind for some time.

Finally, to come almost up to date, in 2005 the astounding *Kinoko Tarot* by Shigeo Otake was published in book form. These 22 paintings apparently made in 1995 are among the best of modern fantasy art. The painting is very well modelled and each image is set in a kind of surreal space. The concept is that each card is associated with a species of mushroom and indeed, mushrooms appear on each painting, but though this is a theme it does not dominate and instead the tarot images speak through their familiar forms, though filtered through Shigeo Otake's imaginative reworking. The idea is loosely based on the 1963 novel *Matango* ('The attack of the Mushroom people') in which people eat mushrooms and themselves turn into mushrooms. The artist's subtle handling of texture is very noteworthy, as is the restrained colour tone. The images engage, charm and seduce us. Here Hieronymus Bosch meets Alice in Wonderland. Otake is a major Japanese painter, obviously well studied in early Flemish and Dutch paintings, especially Bruegel, as well as modern surrealists such as de Chirico and even Paul Delvaux. All these influences flow into Otake's work. The book was originally published in Japanese, but an English version with an article by Terayama Shuji was released shortly after. You can see the entire deck as well as many of Otake's other painting on the excellent web site at



<http://web.kyoto-inet.or.jp/people/ignatius/index.htm>

I hope I have been able to show that not all great tarots appear as actual decks of cards and that there are many hiding away between the pages of now almost forgotten books. These are well worth collecting.

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot



Lesson 11 : Tarots based on books

In the last lesson we looked at tarots that were only published as illustrations in books. Now let us look at tarots which were inspired by a book.

- 1986 I Tarocchi del Re Sole
- 1988 I Tarocchi di Pinocchio
- 1989 Alice in Wonderland
- 1990 Tarocchi de Giulietta e Romeo
- 1991 William Blake Tarot
- 1993 Decameron
- 1994 I Tarocchi di Pinocchio
- 1995 Le tarot Ambre
- 1996 Lord of the Rings
- 1996 Kalevala
- 1998 Tarot Druuna - The main character in Paolo Eluteri Serpieri's science fiction epos *Morbus Gravis*.
- 2002 Tarot of Oz
- 2002 Tarot of the Journey to the Orient
- 2002 H.P. Lovecraft
- 2004 Le Tarot de L'Ange Liberte
- 2005 Tarot of the Thousand and One Nights

Some examples of tarots based on comic books rather than novels or written stories.

- 1991 Martin Mystere - Tarocchi di Atlantide
- 1992 Nathan Never - Tarocchi del Futuro
- 1993 Diabolik - I Tarocchi Neri
- 1991 Dylan Dog - Tarocchi dell'Incubo
- 2001 Condorito
- 2003 Fradella Adventure Tarot

The *Wonderland tarot* designed by Christopher Abbey with the artwork by Morgana Abbey, draws on the famous 19th century Tenniel illustrations for Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass*. The majors are a delight and introduce many of the major characters and events in the two stories. The Hatter is the Fool, Alice herself the High Priestess, while the Cheshire Cat appears as the Emperor. The Hierophant is the Caterpillar in the opening section of *Wonderland*, and the Lovers are the scowling Tweedledee and Tweedledum. The dormouse in his teapot is the Hermit, and the Moon card shows the Walrus and the Carpenter, chatting to the naïve oysters who are not expecting to be the main item for lunch. The suits have emblematic pips which are closely drawn from the Rider-Waite deck, though they are here renamed. Wands is now peppermills (remember the chapter 'Pig and Pepper' in *Wonderland*); Cups are now the Mad Hatter's Hats; Swords are renamed to Flamingos (who were used as the mallets in the game of croquette); and Oysters is the name now used for the suit of Pentacles. The artwork is simple pen drawings with lovely clear lines, and subtly coloured with watercolour or acrylic. The modelling of forms relies on the drawing not on the colouring and the artwork has an integrity and coherence throughout the 78 cards. It is a well thought out and executed tarot deck.



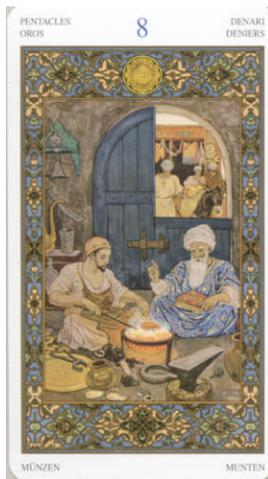
The suits have emblematic pips which are closely drawn from the Rider-Waite deck, though they are here renamed. Wands is now peppermills (remember the chapter 'Pig and Pepper' in *Wonderland*); Cups are now the Mad Hatter's Hats; Swords are renamed to Flamingos (who were used as the mallets in the game of croquette); and Oysters is the name now used for the suit of Pentacles. The artwork is simple pen drawings with lovely clear lines, and subtly coloured with watercolour or acrylic. The modelling of forms relies on the drawing not on the colouring and the artwork has an integrity and coherence throughout the 78 cards. It is a well thought out and executed tarot deck.



The *Tarot of Oz* is based on the books of the American Frank Baum written in the early decades of the 20th century, and later made famous through the Judy Garland *Wizard of Oz* film. The artwork for this deck published in 2002 was made by the illustrator David Sexton who also created the *Winged Spirit Tarot* in 1999 and has worked on a number of comics. The majors depict various characters from the books, beginning with Dorothy as the Fool setting out on her journey along the yellow brick road, then the Wizard of Oz, naturally appears as the Magician. The four suits have emblematic pips, but the imagery does not draw from the Rider-Waite but instead each suit tells the story of some of the major characters in the stories. The Swords tell us about the man of straw, Wands about the history of the cowardly lion, while the tin man is the subject of the suit of Cups, leaving Dorothy as the protagonist in the Stones or Pentacles suit. The artwork is more modern compared to that of the *Wonderland Tarot*, with detailed modelling with graduated tones probably using an airbrush, giving a more mid twentieth century feel. The images are intended to be more like modern cartoons than old book illustrations. Like the *Wonderland* we have a deck which closely reflects its source books.

Giovanni Boccaccio was an Italian writer from the generation following Dante. His main known work (outside of the scholarly community) is his *Decameron*, a series of ten stories

written around 1350 reflecting and satirising the society of his day. Though parts of these stories have a bawdy nature (like Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, written about 40 years later), the *Decameron Tarot* published in 2003 with artwork by Giacinto Gaudenzi bears almost no link to the text itself. Instead it is just seems a peg on which to hang a series of erotic drawings. It is not worth considering this as reflecting Boccaccio and instead we will look at this deck under a later lesson on Erotic Tarots.



The *Tarot of the Thousand and One Nights*, 2005, is based on a book most of us know about but few indeed have ever read in totality. The structure of the book is that the stories are being told by Scheherazade to entertain the misogynist Sultan Schahriar, who had got it into his head that he had to have each woman he married, killed after their wedding night. Scheherazade, being determined to live a bit longer, tells him such amazing tales that he foregoes the ritual execution as he wants to hear the next episode. It is a good line around which to weave a series of stories, most of which are versions of traditional Indian, Persian and Arabic tales. We are all familiar with Aladdin, Sinbad and Ali Baba who appear in some of these stories, but the material is dense and complex. Sir Richard Burton's famous translation of the *Arabian Nights* 1885 amounted to some sixteen volumes each of around 300 pages. The artwork for the tarot deck is by Léon Carré, which he originally created as illustrations for a French edition of *Le livre des Mille Nuits et une Nuit*, Paris, 1926-32. These are very fine paintings, which on the cards are placed within such a rather large ornate border, that they are consequently reproduced rather too small and we are not given the opportunity to see all the detail that Léon Carré has put into his work. The artist, were he still alive, would I am sure be not a little disappointed that the thousands of hours spent working on the detail was lost so much in the printing. Léon Carré created perspective, drama, texture and incredible density of detail in his work. The original 1920's edition with the Carré paintings is nowadays an expensive collectors item but luckily a condensed version (in one volume) was recently published with many of the original illustrations. Of course there is no connection between *The Thousand and One Nights* and the tarot, but the editor has managed to find reasonably good fits for most of the Majors. The Minors are more difficult to choose within the theme but the artwork surely delights enough for this not to matter.

Earlier in 2002, Lo Scarabeo, the publisher for *The Thousand and One Nights Tarot*, had issued a *Tarot of the Journey to the East*, ostensibly based on Marco Polo's account of his travels which he dictated at the end of his life while in prison in 1298-9. This account *Il milione* was later widely circulated and provided much of the European understanding of Chinese society and culture up till the 18th century when closer cultural and economic connection was made between European nations and China. It is not entirely sure if Marco Polo had travelled as far as China or was merely retelling stories he had heard at second hand from other travellers, but his account was taken as authoritative at the time. The tarot of paintings by Severino Baraldi, is well constructed, the Major arcana being quite fine workings

of the tarot archetypes into Eastern forms. Baraldi is a quite prolific tarot artist who has illustrated at least four other tarots - *Tarot of the White Cats*, *Tarot of The Druids*, *Dragons Tarot* and *Ramses: Tarot of Eternity*. He seems to adopt a rather muted palette and with thin paint models his figures with immediate brush strokes, rather than overworking the detail. This produces a rather appealing style which seems entirely suited to the limited space available on a tarot card. The Minor arcana depict scenes from Marco Polo's account of his travels.



The story of Pinocchio written by Italian author Carlo Collodi in 1883 has had a universal fascination. Being a classic of Italian literature it is not surprising that two Italian tarot artists have turned to this children's story as a source for tarot images. The earlier of these two was Armando Valcauda's *I Tarocchi de Pinocchio* published by Lo Scarabeo back in 1988 when that company was still focussed on producing art tarots rather than mass market items. Valcauda produced children's cartoon images for his tarot which are engaging, very colourful and amusing. He recognises his debt to Walt Disney and indeed he was drawn to work in the film industry, producing graphics and special effects. The 22 cards are



disappointingly not connected with the standard tarot structure, being renamed to the various characters in the stories and with little attempt to link these to the ideas and imagery of our familiar Major arcana.

The other *I Tarocchi de Pinocchio* was by the Bulgarian artist and illustrator Iassen Ghiuselev, who works for some of the best-known publishers and magazines in Sofia and Italy. This deck, produced in 1994, has large cards, 9 by 4 inches (225x107mm), which give space for all the details of the artwork to be appreciated. His images are very fine detailed and subtly toned paintings. He is obviously talented at drawing, and these at first glance appear like fine drawings, but I understand they are tempera paintings, some of which are still for sale at around \$5000. Ghiuselev has subsequently illustrated a printed edition of *The Adventures of Pinocchio*, but for this he made line drawings rather than using his earlier tarot card images. He recently received a great deal of critical praise for his detailed illustration for an edition of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. His Pinocchio tarot, as I have said, is excellently illustrated, but he does struggle to produce Major arcana which tie together the traditional imagery with that of the story. As the stories of Pinocchio have nothing to do with tarot as such this is a problem. A few cards work okay in this regard, the Magician as the carver who created the puppet, the Chariot, Justice, Hermit, Wheel of Fortune, the Hanged Man and Death work well enough, but with most of the other cards our illustrator merely turns to important themes in the stories, rather than trying to fit this to our



tarot archetypes. This is a problem, of course, for all these decks which try and produce an artificial parallel between the stories in a book with tarot imagery. This is a fine effort and the sumptuous artwork is a delight in itself.

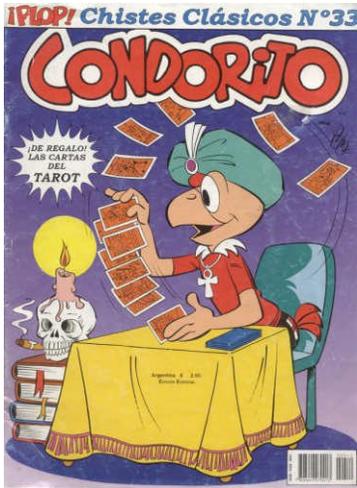
Another childrens' story (though perhaps many adults will disagree with it being labeled as such) is Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*. Two tarots have appeared on this theme. The first, predates the recent film (2001, 2002, 2003), being issued by U.S. Games back in 1997. This is based on paintings by Peter Pracownik, a well know British fantasy artist, who also worked on the Dragon Tarot (1996) for the same publisher, and has a large output of album covers, cards and computer game designs. Pracownik's images suffers in this deck from being surrounded by an unnecessarily large border which does not allow them to be printed sufficient large enough for us to appreciate all his work. The Lord of the Rings is such a long and complex narrative that it has not been too difficult for Peter Pracownik to find tarot like associations, and the Major arcana seem to work quite well - Gollum as the Fool, Gandalf the Magician, Lady Eowyn the High Priestess, and so on. The pip cards depict key events from the story but there does not seem to any particular reason (except in a few cases) behind why one image was chosen to be mapped to a particular pip and suit. They are not even in time sequence. The courts each have a key figure from the books. Interestingly another contributor, Mike Fitzgerald has created a card game for this deck, the rules for which are in the little white book.



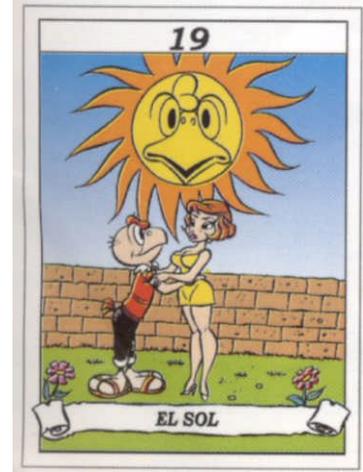
In 2003, the Taiwanese company New Line Cinema, issued a Lord of the Rings tarot using posed still photographs from the famous film trilogy directed by Peter Jackson. Like the Pracownik the Fool and the Magician are assigned to Golum and Gandalf. The Major arcana work quite well, but whoever chose the photos found the task more of a struggle with the Minor arcana, and we have a multiplicity of characters with swords and staffs with little clear symbolic content. This deck was designed for collectors of 'Lord of the Rings' memorabilia rather than for the tarot enthusiast.



We can finish with a promo tarot issued with a Chilean cartoon comic 'Condorito', an anthropomorphic figure based on the condor, the national bird of Chile. The cartoon character was created back in 1949 by René Ríos known as 'Pepo'. *Condorito* is not a comic made for children, but instead the stories have an established formula, in which one of the adult



characters is set up to give an inappropriate response which causes the other figure to keel over with a characteristic 'Plop!' It is social humour, poking fun at peoples' preconceptions and prejudices rather than political satire. The cartoon comic is very popular in South America, so much so that Microsoft used it in its branding for the South American version of Windows 98 and the associated issue of Internet Explorer. The



Argentinean edition 33 of March 2001 included a story line in which the Cordorito character sets himself up as a tarot reader. The comic included 22 tarot designs printed on thicker card in the centerfold, so that this could be removed and cut up into cards. The instructions provided are very funny. Although far removed perhaps from high art of the Thousand and One Nights Tarot it is very effective in its own terms.

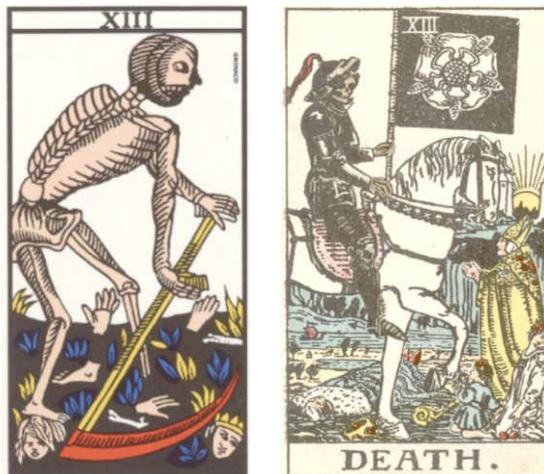
You should as an exercise try and explore some of the other tarots based on books. The series issued by Lo Scarabeo based on comic novels Martin Mystere, Nathan Never, Diabolik, and Dylan Dog are very interesting. Roger Zelazny produced a series of novels with a tarot theme which was later produced as 'Le tarot Ambre'. All these are worth following up and investigating further.

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot

Lesson 12 : Many views on Death

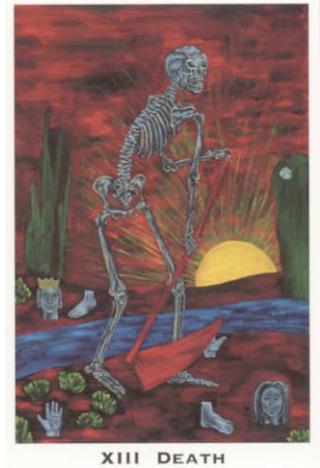


When one asks a person who has little knowledge of tarot, about which card they can recall, they often respond with the Death card. Indeed, the more superstitious sort of person finds the Death card confirming their view that tarot is sinister and frightening. The two best known decks, the Tarot de Marseilles and the Rider-Waite both present us with the conventional skeleton.

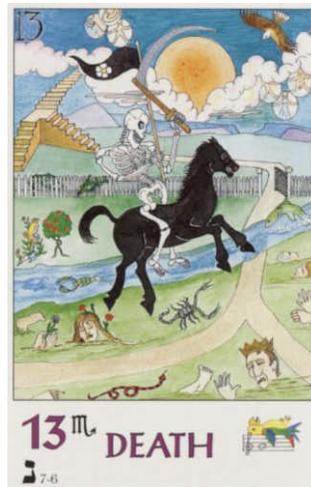


The Tarot de Marseilles opts for Death as the skeleton reaping heads like corn, while Coleman-Smith has Death as a knight on a pale horse treading on the dead (reflecting perhaps the fourth horseman of the Apocalypse appearing at the end of time from the Book of Revelation). Older decks and those derived from the Tarot of Marseilles often do not even dare to put the 'D word' on the card, and is it merely an untitled thirteenth card in the deck. This convention we find in most of the decks derived from the Tarot of Marseilles, such as the Wirth type decks and even quite recent variations such as the Rolla Nordic, but the Papus dares to title its thirteenth card 'La Mort'. The Knapp-Hall of 1929 though derived from the Wirth designs includes the title. Those following the Rider-Waite tend to title the card.

There seem to be two main symbolic elements reflected in the early modern decks, the skeleton reaper with his scythe and the Horseman-Knight. Thus Alison Stone's Tarot of 2000 follows the Tarot of Marseilles convention, though she feels comfortable including the title.



It is interesting to see how these two elements begin to become fused by later tarot artists. Thus the Rider-Waite apocalyptic horseman is soon depicted carrying a scythe, as in the well known deck designed by Jonathan Dee, the Parrot Tarot, the Japanese Saint Seiya manga tarot or even the recent children's tarot, the Gummy Bear.



The Dimenzio tarot from Hungary printed in 2001 keeps our skeleton on his feet but now has him in a suit of armour like our horseman on the Rider-Waite.



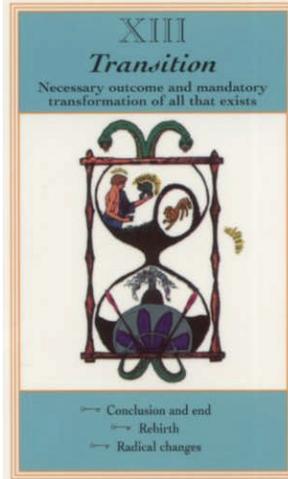
One of the puzzling elements emerging from Pamela Coleman-Smith's artistic imagination in creating the Death card for the Rider-Waite deck is the white rose which appears on the black flag born by the horseman. This white rose continues to be used by later tarot artists and is by some artists even deconstructed from its original context on the flag.



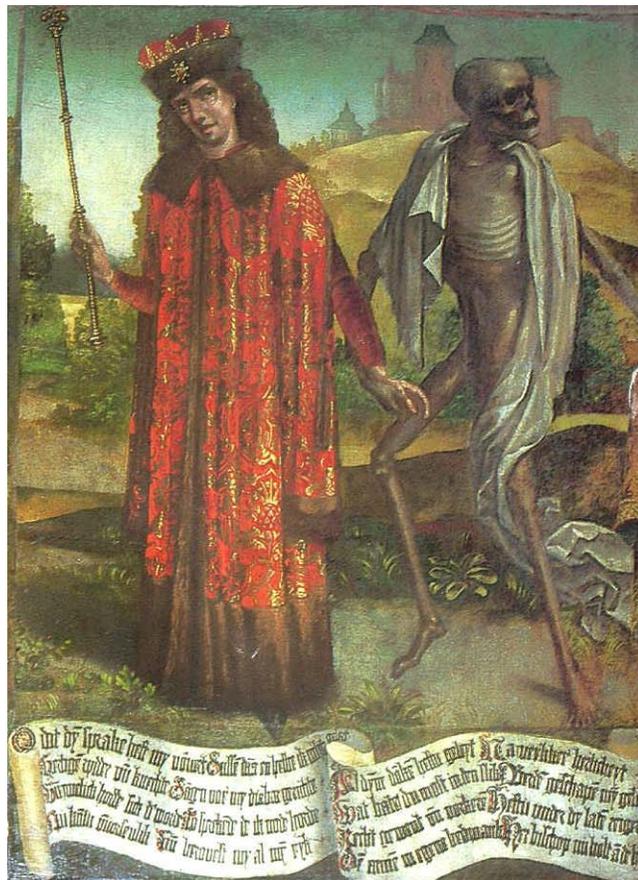
Here we see examples of the use of the white rose symbol in the New Palladini, Robin Wood and Morgan Greer decks. These last two also indicate a shift to representing Death in a cloaked form, moving away from the image of the naked skeleton or the horseman-knight in suit of armour.



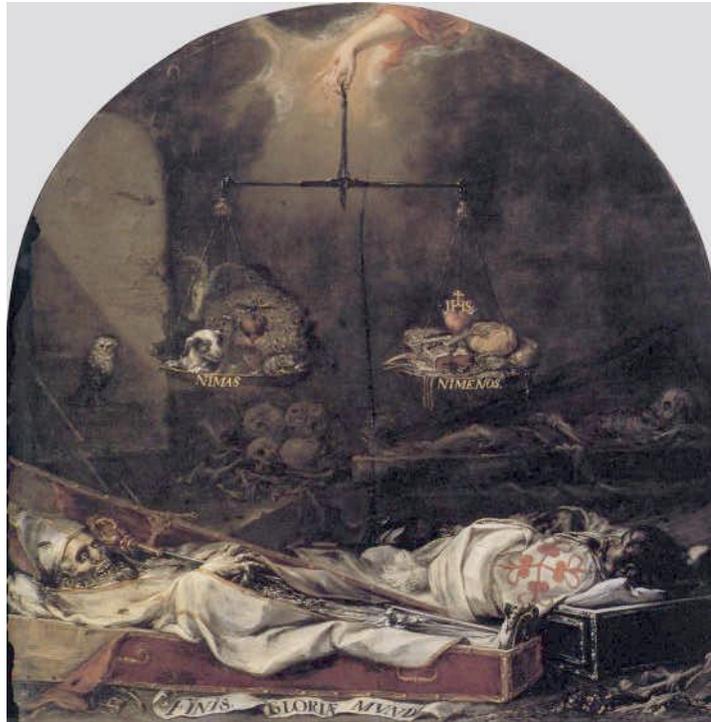
The Tarot Clasico a later copy of the Royal Tarot of 1995 presents Death to us as a robed skeleton against fiery background. Josephine Gill's tarot of 1990 has Death as a robed angel with black wings. This dark angel theme is used by a some other tarot artists. The Aleph Tarot has Death as an obscure dark-robed form. Robert Wang's Jungian tarot of 2002 instead has Death in a white robe while his black horse appears in the background. Another symbolic element is also included here, the hourglass that measures the span of ones life. We find this symbol in other tarot designs.



We are beginning now perhaps to see a connection with La Danse Macabre, also called Dance of death, La Danza Macabra, or Totentanz, a late-medieval allegory on the universality of death which was often illustrated with imagery of skeletons.



Another association that has informed tarot artists could be the 17th century vanitas genre paintings which reflected on the immanence of death and the vanity of holding on to worldly possessions. Such paintings often incorporated the skull and the hourglass. Here is the vanitas painting 'Finis gloriae mundi' of the 17th century painter Jean de Valdes Leal.



Some tarot artists understandably decide to walk away from the grimness of such skeletons and skulls and instead merely to show a body lying in the repose of death.



Here are examples from the beautiful Tarocchi Omaggio a Federico II created by Pippo Madè in 2000, and Nina Montangero's Tarot Médiéval of 2004. The struggle of dying is over and we are presented with the body at rest on a bier. The Solleone Tarot of Elisabetta Cassari from way back in 1983 shows a body being carried away unceremoniously in a sack.

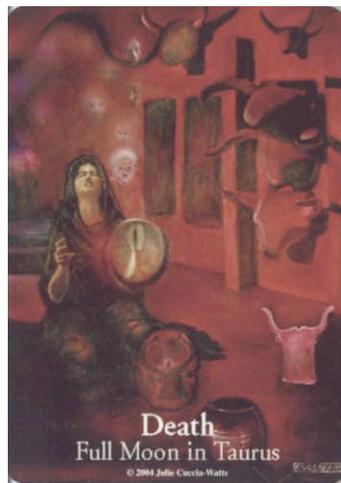
One interesting tarot Death image is found in the Nimue tarot. This deck was created by Vivien Stewart-Jones who uses the pseudonym 'Nimue'. It does not appear to have any direct connection to Celticism. A few card images follow closely the standard Rider-Waite symbolism, but most of the cards are entirely freshly created in a charming and coherent style. Her Death card is especially interesting as it shows a cloaked skeleton with scythe, holding open her cloak to show her pregnant abdomen within which we clearly see a developing foetus. This indicates that within death is new life. This is a radical departure from the conventional sentiment of the Death card and is particularly interesting in that 'Nimue' brings together the older symbolism with this new conception. Now, this tarot artist was not the first to present the idea of life within death, or death as a kind of rebirth, but this image is certainly very evocative and powerful.



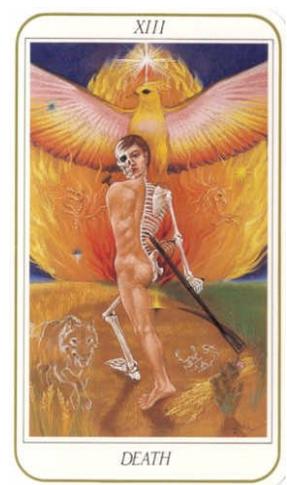
There is a whole slew of modern tarots which choose to present on the Death card an idea of rebirth, a positive transformation into some new state rather than an end to life. This resonates with our modern age which tends to ignore the reality of our mortality, and replaces this with a vague idea of some kind of rebirth. We find this beautifully articulated in the Oracle Tarot from 2003. Here it is not death so much that is being shown but release from the burden of the past. Melanie Gendron's tarot of 1997 renames the card to 'Transition' and shows us images of butterflies (reflecting their metamorphosis in dying from the form of a pupa to the magnificence of a butterfly). The Cornish Tarot decides to call this card 'Renewal' and shows us one of those tunnels of light that some people report as near-death experiences. The Merryday's 'Metamorphosis' card continues the theme of butterflies and soaring birds.



Other decks reflect this approach of the idea of transformation but through more idiosyncratic and less obvious symbolism. Thus the Tarot of Metamorphosis shows us a male figure walking along a path that leads to the large scale image on his horizon of a young woman. Is this supposed to be an image of reincarnation, the old man figure with his staff walking towards his future incarnation as a woman? It is puzzling and not entirely obvious from the imagery. The Blue Moon deck is equally obscure, depicting what appears to be a female shaman surrounded by cattle heads invoking spirits of the dead. Monica Knighton's Tarot of the Dead (2003) has skeletons and depictions of death on every major arcana card except the Death card. Here the format of a tarot about death seems to be forced to a contrarian position, and instead presents us with a pregnant woman. "In the midst of life we are in death" states the Book of Common Prayer. Here Knighton seems to suggest that death is with us even when we are in the womb. Now that is a challenging thought.



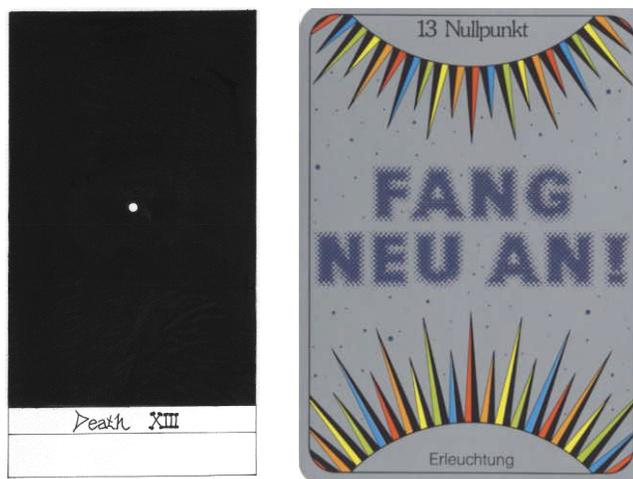
This idea of the interweaving of life and death is depicted in some tarot decks as existing simultaneously. Thus Marcel Kastaun's Tarot der Schatten of 1995 shows us a woman's head, one side a skull the other as a vibrant living being. The almost unknown Australian deck, the Millenium Tarot - The Tarot of the Four Worlds (1984), beautifully painted by Ziba Vilmanis-Westenberg, shows Death as a reaper, his body split half between a living man and a skeleton.





The Astro-Tarot of 1992 with its upbeat imagery, shows as its Death card a skull from which a red rose bush is growing. A similar image is shown in the abstract imagery of the Dutch Tarot van Nu created by Frits van der Ploeg in 1993, but here the rose is growing out of the handle of the scythe of Death. The Waking the Wild Spirit tarot (2002) which is full of New Age and neo-pagan elements, wanting to give a positive spin to Death (renamed to ‘Spirit of Change’), shows us a magician holding a baby. In front of him is his magician’s top hat complete with emerging rabbit. The only reference to death here are a few bones and leaves in the foreground. Eileen Connolly’s tarot of 1990 takes this even further with her Death or rather ‘Transition’ card whose imagery seems to have nothing symbolically connected with death at all. If we saw Connolly’s image outside of a tarot context we could surely never guess that this was a depiction of the tarot Death card.

The removal of all death related imagery is perhaps taken to its final conclusion in decks such as the yet unpublished tarot by Peter Rotin of Malta (2002) where Death is a lonely white dot seemingly shrinking into the dark void. The idea of rebirth is used in the Sternenmadchens Wahrsagespiel Tarot of 1975, where the Death card has a space empty except for the words “Start again”.



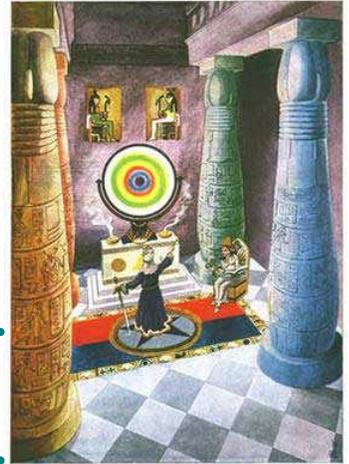
In the case of tarot decks primarily intended for a younger audience, the artists have sometimes sought some symbolic euphemism. Thus the Japanese Dr. Rin Tarot promo deck based on a comic book, shows us a ghost or spirit appearing within the body of the presumably dying character, presaging or foreshadowing death. The large format Inner Child card, which relate the tarot imagery to fairy tales, chooses Sleeping Beauty as its Death card. The Girlfriends Tarot of 2005 uses the image of a bowl of roses, however, as this seems somehow not to sufficiently reflect the idea of death, a little skull and crossbones is placed on the vase or urn, just to make it clear.



It will be an interesting exercise for you to try and discover the various devices of euphemism used in this group of tarot. Of course, many childrens' tarots are entirely upfront and explicit about the image of Death. We have already noted the Gummy Bear deck image.

We can see that all the nuances and complexities of the modern symbolism of death have certainly been embodied in the Death card designs of modern tarot decks.

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot



Lesson 13 : Magical tarots

In the 19th century Tarot was reborn through the French occult revival by such figures as Paul Christian and Eliphas Levi, who gave a magical spin to tarot imagery. In the closing decade of the 19th century the magical order of the Golden Dawn adopted tarot as a major component to their scheme of initiation, and those who aspired to join the higher degrees were given the exercise of creating their own tarot deck. Some examples of these Golden Dawn tarots still exist. First we see a drawing by the poet W.B. Yeats, who was a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, of a design for the Temperance card, next to this is the Star card design used in the order, and finally a coloured drawing of the Temperance card by Dr Felkin a prominent member of the Order.



The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn was extremely influential on the way which magic evolved during the early 20th century, though its rituals and study material remained to a great extent out of the public domain until the stream of publications about this order that were produced in the 1970's and 80's. A.E. Waite was a notable member of the Order, though he later set up his own magical or mystical group. Out of this emerged the Rider Waite deck, created by Waite and Pamela Coleman-Smith. There is so much written on the background to this deck but we will not go into all its complex history in this course - though it is a very worthwhile investigation. A whole study course could easily be devoted to this one deck! Those of you with sufficient interest should, as an exercise, undertake some research into the

origins of the Rider-Waite deck.

Waite's Order was responsible for another amazing tarot deck, but one which is almost entirely unknown as it is held within the organisation that inherited Waite's papers. These are the tarot designs by J.D. Trinick made in 1921-22. Some of these were recently published in Decker and Dummett's book *A History of the Occult Tarot 1870-1970*, 2002. Sadly it is unlikely that this beautiful tarot will ever be published, and instead will continue as one of the hidden gems of early 20th century tarot art.

Various people with interests in magic worked with tarot imagery during the first half of the 20th century, but it was not till the 1940's that a tarot entirely inspired by magical ideas emerged - the Aleister Crowley deck painted by Lady Freida Harris. These designs were originally issued in black and white illustrations in a limited edition of Crowley's *Book of Thoth* in 1944, but her paintings were, some fifteen years later, published as the Thoth deck in 1969. The wonderful flowing forms, and dense, busy textured backgrounds certainly moved tarot art forwards and inspired many of the next generation of tarot artists. Freida Harris' style is obviously influenced by 19th century symbolist art, art nouveau, and art deco. Apparently she was not particularly knowledgeable about tarot and must have relied on Crowley. She made a number of different designs for various cards, before a final version was arrived at.

Once the Thoth tarot appeared, many magicians decided to issue decks as a way of reflecting their individual magical philosophy. We can form a list of some of these. Not all were particularly 'magical' in inspiration, but held more to traditional tarot images.

- 1977 A Thelemic Tarot - Augustus Donnelly
- 1978 Golden Dawn tarot - Robert Wang
- 1980 Hermetic Tarot - Godfrey Dowson
- 1980 Le Tarot Magique (Magical Tarot) - Frederic Lionel
- 1983 Tree-of-Life Tarot - Rufus Campausen and Apolonia van Leeuwen
- 1984 Gareth Knight Tarot - Sander Little
- 1985 Tarot des Mages
- 1986 Magickal Tarot - Anthony Clark
- 1991 Servants of the Light - Jo Gill and Anthony Clark
- 1994 Tarot of Ceremonial Magick - Lon and Constance Duquette
- 1999 Tarot of the Sephiroth - Dan Staroff
- 2000 Enochian Tarot - Gerald and Betty Schueler and Sallie Ann Glassman
- 2001 Golden Dawn Magical Tarot - Sandra Tabatha Cicero
- 2002 Dion Fortune Tarot - David Williams
- 2004 Libet T - Andrea Serio
- 2004 The Book of Kaos Tarot - Orryelle Defenestrade-Bascule
- 2004 Magical Tarot of the Golden Dawn - Richard Dudschus and David Sledzinski

Let us first look at those magical tarots which drew upon the Crowley Thoth deck.

1977 A Thelemic Tarot - Augustus Donnelly

1999 Tarot of the Sephiroth - Dan Staroff

2004 Libet T - Andrea Serio

These three decks rework the imagery of the Freida Harris paintings. Let us compare the Fool cards from the Thoth and these later derivatives.



The Thelemic tarot, produced by Augustus Donnelly as a signed limited edition of 499, was printed as black and white line drawings, but I have a copy in which the Fool card has been handcoloured. We notice, in all these versions, one of the characteristic features of Freida Harris' Fool design, the spiral which circles around the main figure. None of these decks are slavish copies of the original Harris paintings but rather use her images as the starting point for their own interpretation of the design.

The original designs for the tarot used in the teachings of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn were similarly taken up by later tarot artists.

1978 Golden Dawn tarot - Robert Wang

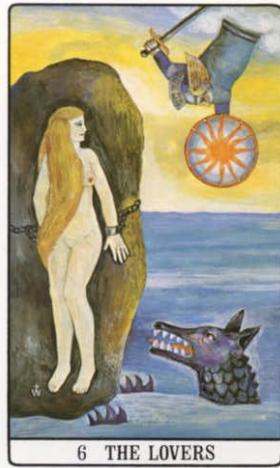
2001 Golden Dawn Magical Tarot - Sandra Tabatha Cicero

2004 Magical Tarot of the Golden Dawn - Richard Dudschus and David Sledzinski

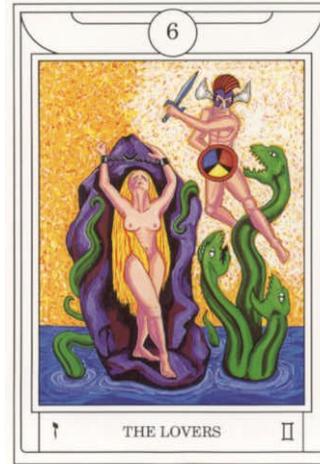
For some reason I don't entirely understand, the creators of the original Golden Dawn tarot designs, Mathers and Westcott, adopted a number of variations in the symbolism. We see this particularly in the Lovers card, where the usual conventional meeting of the man and woman, is replaced by the classical myth of Perseus and Andromeda. Here the hero Perseus, he who cut off the head of the gorgon Medusa, rescues Andromeda who has been chained to a rock in the sea by the monster Cetus. Perseus is, of course, captivated by the beauty of Andromeda and they marry. This Perseus-Andromeda idea is carried in all the tarots based on the Golden Dawn and is not found in many other decks (except Godfrey Dowson's Hermetic Tarot, which though reflecting some Golden Dawn elements is really his own creative envisaging).



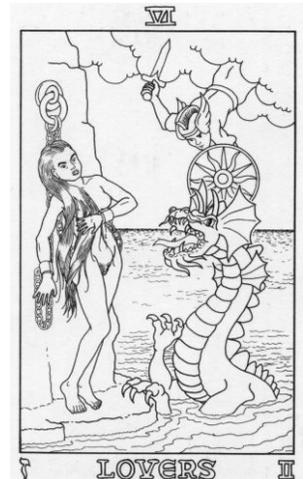
Golden Dawn Felkin



Wang



Cicero

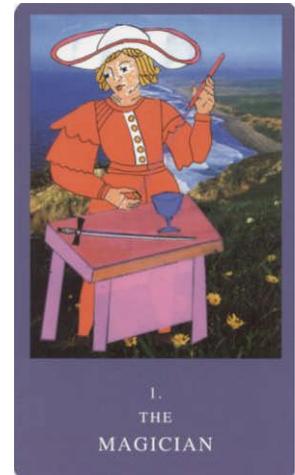
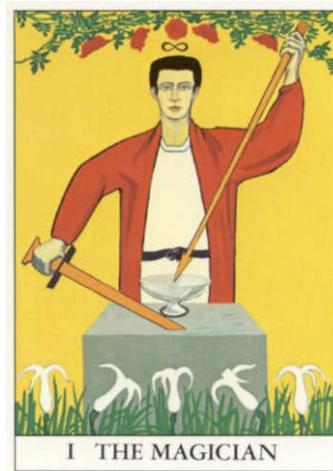


Golden Dawn Magical

A number of the 1960-80's period British magicians have had tarot card designs issued in their names or those of their organizations.

- 1984 Gareth Knight Tarot - Sander Little
- 1991 Servants of the Light - Jo Gill and Anthony Clark
- 2002 Dion Fortune Tarot - David Williams

These tarots fail to live up to the deep understanding of magic that these authors display in their books, and do not seem to incorporate their magical ideas, but instead are conventional tarots. The Gareth Knight deck is perhaps rather simplistic. The Dion Fortune designs try to marry simple child like drawings with photo-collage elements. Both these decks, it seems, let down the people in whose name they were issued, and though they are competent enough tarots no magical insight is presented to us.



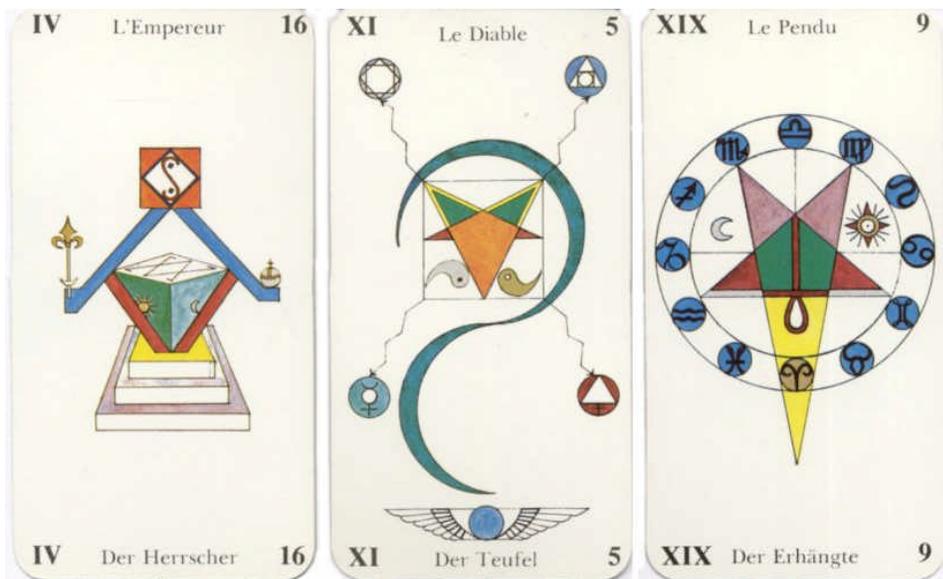
This group of tarots issued in the name of the three major British magicians of the mid to late 20th century, is saved by the delightful paintings that Jo Gill with the help of Anthony Clark made for the Servants of Light deck. The S.O.L. is the magical organization run by Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki during the 1980's up to the present. It provides courses, levels of initiations, conferences and other meetings on magic. The artwork for the S.O.L. is truly remarkable, with great attention given to the Major arcana. Here we find detailed and wonderfully composed thoughtful imagery. The Major arcana were originally painted in the late 1970's by Jo Gill (who later produced a tarot under her own name). In the late 80's when it became obvious to Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki that it would be possible to have this published as a deck, she asked Anthony Clark to produce the Minor arcana. Clark has succeeded well at

Flame'. Angelic names appear in Hebrew on the Pip cards. Unlike many of the little white books which accompany tarot decks, Dowson's detailed explanations of his cards are essential reading. This is one of the best conceived and thought out decks. The artwork is given form by the underlying magical ideas and philosophical structure of the deck. This is a deck one could study for many hours and still not entirely grasp all the details of the complex symbolism.

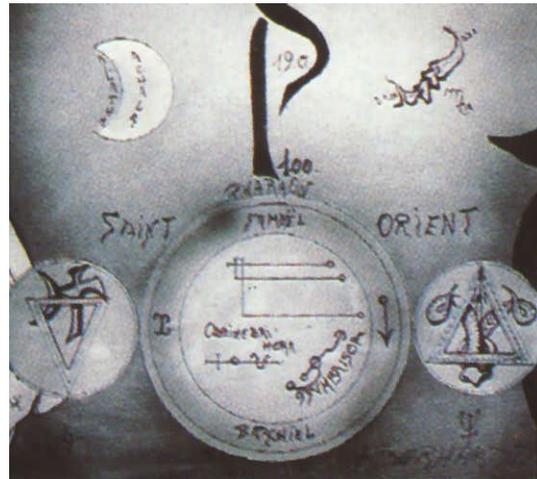
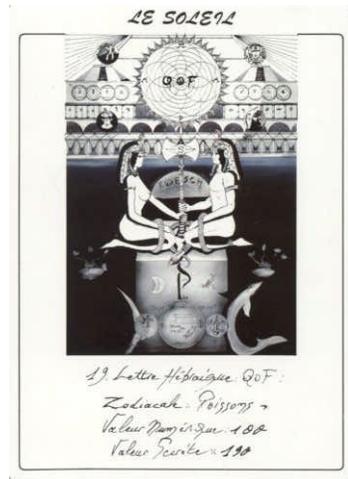


This deck has been out of print for many years and consequently has a high secondhand value. Recently, there has been some indication that it will be reprinted. It will be found well worth collecting for those interested in complex symbolism.

In 1980 the writer Frédéric Lionel, issued his book *Le Tarot Magique* with a series of tarot cards. Lionel was a prolific writer on philosophical and esoteric subjects. His magical tarot is idiosyncratic, and departs in the order of the cards from the normal arrangement. Indeed, he provides two separate numbering systems on the cards (in Roman and Arabic numerals). These systems are explained at length in his book, however, the cards bear the conventional titles. The artwork is abstract and geometrical, being line drawings with some regions coloured (probably with watercolour). At first glance they appear almost like the magical sigils found in western magical manuscripts and notebooks, however on closer inspection we can see them as being constructed from various elements. There are a number of Egyptian images, the eye of Ra, winged disc, Ankh, etc., also the Chinese Ying-Yang appears on various cards, sometimes deconstructed. There are many astrological signs, constellations and planets, as well as the magical sigils. These individual elements are all subsumed into abstract geometrical designs, which geometrically imply associations and links between these symbols. The design of each card is an abstraction of the idea of each arcana, and with only a little contemplation, in most cases, easily recognized. Thus the Emperor card shows us a sort of dais on which stands a figure holding orb and sceptre, the design for Justice obviously incorporates the balancing of forms, and the Wheel of Fortune indeed has a wheel. The Devil shows the inverted pentangle, as used in the famous image from late 19th century magical writings. Some cards designs are more obscure - the Hanged Man presents an inverted ankh, and if we recall our Egyptian symbolism the ankh symbol means 'eternal life', thus inverting this is perhaps a good, though subtle, image for the Hanged Man. This deck repays detailed study as it is likely that there are no 'rogue' or merely decorative elements, and that every component of the designs is put there for a purpose. It is a difficult work to read but worth the effort to make sense of these highly abstract forms.

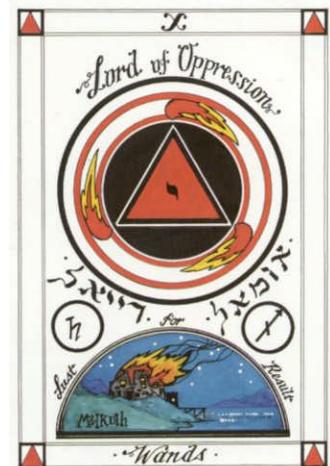


The Tarot des Mages is a wonderful Majors only art deck of large format cards, about 7 by 5 inches in size (175x125mm). These were finely drawn in pen with some pencil, then sensitively coloured and textured with watercolour. Regrettably it seems one can find out almost nothing about the artist Philippe Eberhardt. His artwork, however, speaks well for him. It is obvious that he is totally acquainted with the sigils and circles found in European magical manuscripts, as he has copied or adapted some of these and incorporated them as elements within his designs. There is a strong focus on Hebrew names and letters.



The detail on the images is so dense that illustrating a card in the standard size adopted in this study course does not do it justice, and one can appreciate very little from the scan. This illustrates why it is essential to collect actual tarot decks and not rely on scans found on the internet. We can zoom into a small area at the base of the cube shown on the Sun card and see a magical circle with various angelic names. In the top half of the circle is a magical sigil formed of three interwoven lines. Here we have, as with the Dowson a truly magical tarot, not one of the rather disappointing tarots to which some famous magicians have given their names.

Anthony Clark, who we met before, finishing the Minor arcana for Dolores Ashcroft-Nowicki, had already produced his own Magickal Tarot. The imagery on the Majors is rather simple, being in most cases based around a central mask-like figure. These are usually set within a geometrical form or between some stylised abstract columns. One needs to know the tarot imagery well in order to see how Clark has worked this into the masks. The cards are, like with Dowson, all given subtitles following the nomenclature in the Golden Dawn *Book 'T'* but with a few variations (or simplifications) in places. The Minor



arcana are characterized by their use of the elemental colours as a key. Thus Wands, the fire suit, is keyed to the use of red, Cups or water is primarily keyed to blue, and so on, which gives the deck a strong coherence. Each Minor arcana pip has a circular form, and below that a little emblematic scene which reflects its *Book 'T'* description. Thus the Ten of Wands the 'Lord of Oppression' is shown with the scene of a house set on fire, the Three of Cups 'Lord of Abundance' has fruits shown growing on bushes, while the Eight of Cups 'Lord of Indolence' has some flowers in a vase drooping from lack of water. The pips also bear the Hebrew names of the Kabbalistic Sephiroth. This deck is obviously well thought out and based on a Kabbalistic and elemental magical system.

Lon and Constance DuQuette's Tarot of Ceremonial Magick sets out to provide the reader with the detailed magical correspondences associated with the tarot imagery. Each of the cards has a strip of three panels at the bottom within which complex and esoteric magical correspondences are shown. Thus with the Major arcana, the left panel holds the magical seals of the Geniis, while the rightmost panel has the seals of the Carcerorum Qliphoth. The central panel holds more familiarly, the Hebrew letter and the astrological sign. The Court cards have the watchtowers from the Enochian Magic, and Tattwa symbols, while the pips 2-10 each have two sigils of the Spirits of the Goetia. In the Minor arcana there is also a space in the upper left which has either an Enochian square, I-Ching Hexagram, or Elemental Cross from the Enochian system. We are certainly in deep magical areas here. The DuQuette's have here truly created a book of the correspondences used in twentieth century ritual magic in the form of a tarot deck. They have also used the various colouring schemas used in the magical system of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Unfortunately, their magical abilities are to some extent let down by their art work, a particular problem being their difficulties in achieving smooth washes in the larger areas of the images, and one sees all the brush loading and attempts to push paint around the edges of forms. One wishes they could have taken the advice of some graphics artist when creating their deck, then we would have seen the conjunction of complementary colours, the 'Flashing colours' of the Golden Dawn magical system, truly come to life.



This deck must be the practicing ritual magician's tarot deck par excellence. It will be of use to anyone wanting to glimpse into the complexities of a well worked out esoteric system of

magical correspondences. We can contrast this with the Tarot des Mages, which is obviously by a creative artist weaving similar material into an artistic construct, while here we have a series of correspondences accurately and systematically outlined but without any creative artistic power. These are two valid though opposite ways of working with this magical material in a tarot context.

Under this group of magical tarots we should perhaps include the large illustrations made by Marcello Peola's for *Genege des Tarotas*, 1995. You can see one of these complex images, which perhaps occupy the middle ground between Eberhardt and the DuQuette's, in lesson 10 which dealt with tarots printed in books.

There remain some magical tarots which are worth investigating further. Among these, we should mention, is the Enochian Tarot of Gerald and Betty Schueler issued in 2000. This is not a true tarot, being based on the magical system of Enochian devised originally by Edward Kelly and John Dee in the late 16th century, but essentially structured and given abstract form by the magicians of the Golden Dawn and Aleister Crowley. Sallie Anne Glassman produced a series of 86 paintings, which though evocative are in a rather clunky style, with solid rather than ethereal forms. The idea is perhaps that of 'pathworking', a practice popularized in Western magic in the 1970's and 80's, partly through the inspiration of the British occultist Gareth Knight. Here one is encouraged to meditate on some image that will lead one to some inner experience of one of the paths on the Kabbalistic Tree of Life. This has already been done in conventional tarot, but here the Schuelers have extended this to the Enochian system. They link their system to the traditional tarot structure, in that they have 30 Major arcana and 56 Minor, however there are few overlaps or parallels that can easily be recognized.

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot



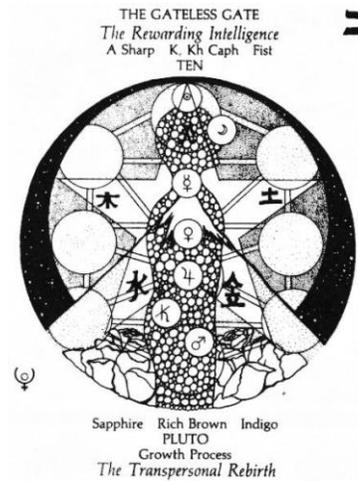
Lesson 14 : Round tarots

Tarot cards were originally cards for playing a game and like other playing cards they evolved into the familiar vertical rectangle, which is convenient for shuffling and dealing. But tarot artists are ever inventive and there were some experiments in circular designs and eventually some brave pioneers managed to find printers willing to print and cut circular cards.

- 1979 Angelic tarot - Amy Carroll (circular on rectangular cards)
- 1979 Cothic Tarot (unpublished designs by Cilla Conway) (ovals on rectangular cards)
- 1980 Nature Tarot (round cards)
- 1981 Motherpeace (round cards)
- 1982 Shekhinah's Tarot (unpublished round cards)
- 1984 Book of Aradia (round cards)
- 1986 Daughters of the Moon (round cards)
- 1987 Mandala Astrological Tarot (circular on square cards)
- 1991 Daughters of the Moon (coloured version)
- 1992 Cecilia Mayer Tarot (round cards)
- 1993 Songs for the Journey Home (round cards)
- 1993 Tarot of the Cloisters(round cards)
- 1994 Floral Ellipse (Elliptical cards)
- 1994 Granny Jones (ovals on rectangular cards)
- 1996 Tarot of the Rishis (unpublished)
- 1997 Oracle de Giselle Flavie (circular on rectangular cards)
- 2000 Scented tarot - Witta Jensen (round cards)
- 2001 Tarot del Arco Iris - Marcela Garcia (ovals on rectangular cards)
- 2002 Star that never walks around (round cards)
- 2003 Gaye Wright's Intuitive tarot ((circular on rectangular cards))
- 2004 The Intuitive Tarot - Cilla Conway (ovals on rectangular cards).
- 2004 Soul Tower Tarot - Cyvern7 (Oval cards)



Among the earliest is the wonderful Angelic tarot of Amy Carroll which has circular designs in pen and ink drawn on a standard format card with various phrases, correspondences and associations filling the open areas. She renames the cards the “Scintillating Intelligence”, the “Luminous Intelligence” etc., which are taken from the well-known Kabbalistic book the *Sepher Yetzirah*. The designs have a strong esoteric, magical



and kabbalistic structure, with many references to magical symbols and emblematic images, such as the Gnostic Phanes egg circled by the serpent, the Tetragrammaton in the heart, with other Christian, Egyptian and Eastern references. The Wheel of Fortune card even has the Kabbalistic tree of life with its ten sephiroth and paths. Though the designs were circular the cards were rectangular.

Also in 1979 Cilla Conway created oval designs on rectangular cards for a deck which she then called the Cothic tarot. You can see these in Kaplan’s *Encyclopedia of Tarot* Vol III, pages 152-153. After twenty years trying to get her wonderful paintings published as a deck, she eventually succeeded and these were issued in 2004 as *The Intuitive Tarot* (not to be confused with Gaye Wright’s deck of the same name).

The first deck issued as actual round cards appears to be the Nature tarot, published in Japan in 1980. This 22 card deck is entirely in European art style, as is common with the early Japanese tarots. The artwork was created by a graphics design studio under the direction of Alexandria Mokuseioh. The images are quite conventional being rather fine drawings sensitively watercoloured with good modeling of the forms, and incorporating all the standard tarot imagery. This is a beautiful little gem of early modern tarot art.



The next appearance of round tarots is in America. During the early 1980's a number of women artists were working on tarot designs based on round cards. These artists were all inspired by the feminist movement and they brought feminist imagery and concerns also into the designs for their decks. As these artists all knew each other, the exact historical sequence of these creations is not entirely clear and they worked together and influenced one another. One of the major inspirers of this group of decks must be Shekhinah Mountainwater. Her own Shekhinah's Tarot probably created in 1982 was never published as a deck, though the designs for some of the cards are included in her book *Ariadne's Thread : Workbook of Goddess Magic*. She devised five suits, four (Blades, Flames, Cups and Pentacles) correspond with the Minor arcana except that they have thirteen rather than fourteen cards (10 pips plus Maiden, Mother and Crone Goddesses), while the suit of Spirit has twenty cards associated closely to the Majors.



It seems very difficult to work out the exact sequence of publication of the Motherpeace, Book of Aradia and Daughters of the Moon, all round tarots produced during this period. Some were self-published and then later taken up by major publishers. One can consult the timeline of the Herstory of Women's Tarot at

<http://www.lelandra.com/comptarot/womanstarottimeline.htm>

but it is probably a bit more complicated than that. There appears to be an early Matriarchal tarot which was conceived at Samhain 1976 by Ffiona Morgan and Shekhinah Mountainwater, but this became modified and restructured into the Book of Aradia tarot around 1984. The Daughters of the Moon deck (1986) seems to have derived in turn from that. The Book of Aradia tarot appears to be named after Charles Godfrey Leland's classic book *Aradia or the Gospel of the Witches*, 1899 which recounts the story of Aradia, the daughter of the Roman goddess Diana, who comes to Earth to teach witchcraft and relieve Diana's worshippers of oppression. The dates given for the issue of the decks vary considerably in different sources. My copy of the Daughters of the Moon deck bears the date 1986, though Ffiona Morgan's website www.daughtersofthemoon.com gives a publication date of 1983 and Kaplan gives 1984, so there may have been some sequence of early printings. The Book of Aradia and the Daughters of the Moon tarots seem to have been different envisagings by different artists of this Matriarchal tarot, the designs for which do not seem to have survived and may only have existed as a concept. It is best if we look at these two in parallel.



The cards in both the Book of Aradia deck and the Daughters of the Moon have been renamed but they clearly retain tarot structure. We can see the connection between their 'Empress' cards which depict a woman in the act of giving birth. The Aradia has five suits, echoing Shekhinah's Tarot, and the suit of Aether incorporates many of the conventional major arcana. Thus the 'Maya' card is related to the Empress. With the Daughters of the Moon there is a conventional tarot structure of Major and Minors. The Empress is here named 'Mawu' and she is seen giving birth atop an elephant. The Hanged Woman cards are very similar and both decks use the title 'Reversal'. Finally let us look at the Star card from each deck. In both of the decks this retains its conventional title. We can see clearly how the artwork for each deck reflects the same underlying ideas and sentiments. If you are lucky to have copies of both decks, it will be very instructive to place them side by side and explore the links and the individual ways the different artists have chosen to depict the same image. The Book

of Aradia deck arose from the cooperative efforts of Shekhinah Mountainwater, Ffiona Morgan, with Jan van Slyke usually being credited with the actual drawings. The Daughters of the Moon again involved Shekhinah Mountainwater and Ffiona Morgan as the creators of the deck, with the actual drawings being credited to a number of different artists, Kate Taylor and Lily Hillwomyn being the major contributors. Most of the cards are signed by the individual artist. The Daughters of the Moon drawings were later coloured and issued in 1991.

The confusion of the early history does not detract from the fact that Shekhinah Mountainwater and Ffiona Morgan produced some exceptional re-envisioning of the tarot within the emerging movement exploring the feminine aspect of spirituality. These decks have been very influential on the development of tarot imagery. Their choice of the round form for the cards was perhaps intended to consolidate their reworking of tarot within a women centred

system, and signal a departure from what they saw as the constraints and angles of the rectangular card form.



The Motherpeace Round Tarot was self published in 1981 and quickly taken up by U.S. Games Systems who published this to the wider community in 1983/4. The deck was conceived by Vicki Nobel and Karen Vogel and the artwork was coloured by Lily Hillwomym, whom we saw was involved in the Daughters of the Moon tarot. The Motherpeace, was a tarot centered in the Great mother Goddess, but is perhaps more eco-feminist and inclusively multicultural than the Dianic or wiccan oriented decks of the Aradia or Daughters of the Moon. There are many references to classical mythology in the Majors, with design elements taken from Greek vases and sculptures as well as Egyptian symbolism. The Minor

arcana mirror back to us aspects of various indigenous peoples. Vogel wants to express the idea that in an earlier age the world lived in matriarchal Goddess-worshipping communities which became overrun and destroyed by patriarchal invaders from cold northern climates who brought and imposed the idea of the Father-Sky god. This, perhaps, rather naïve view, resonated with the politics and rhetoric of the 1980's and we can today see how the creators of this deck could be drawn to such a simplistic world view. Vicki Vogel pictured in her Minor arcana, these peoples associated to the East/Swords as the supposed indigenous peoples of Europe, South/Wands (Africa), West/Cups (Cretan) and North/Discs (pre-Colombian American indians). Although this deck has a strong political tone the expression of its artwork is gentle, with romanticized, inclusive and entirely positive images..

The Mandala Astrological Tarot was created by the astrologer and writer A.T. Mann. He presents us with square cards which have circular designs. The symbolism is entirely abstract being devoid of any human figures, though a skull appears on Death and an ape-like headless body on the Devil. The Minor arcana are rather simple and do not bear much emblematic material, but the Majors are very well thought out and constructed. Although the artwork is round, these are not in themselves classical mandalas which present symbols in a circular form dynamically balanced one against the other in the geometrical divisions of the space. Instead the symbolism is set primarily in the centre of the emblem space. Here the idea of the mandala is rather that the reader uses the square cards to construct mandalas which can be used for the readings. The artist is obviously very familiar with alchemical, kabbalistic, magical, mystical, Egyptian as well as astrological symbolism and bring all this to bear in creating his designs. In a few places he quotes symbolically from well known Western magical and



mystical emblems. The artwork will be a joy to anyone who delights in exploring a system of symbolic ideas, as this is very tightly constructed with no spurious, rogue or decorative elements. Each symbol is placed within the space with an intention, and thus everything in the design bears a meaning and significance. Colour is a very important component of this deck, and Mann uses Golden Dawn colour scales in depicting the symbolism.

The 1999's saw a continuing use of round cards or circular designs. I have not yet managed to obtain a copy of the Chilean artist Cecilia Mayer's Tarot but you can see black and white illustrations in *Manteia* Issue 7 and in Kaplan Vol IV, p 125. This would appear to be a deck with only female figures and faces. The artwork seems rather beautiful. It was originally produced as a small edition made by gluing photographs of the original 22 paintings onto card.

1993 saw the publication by U.S. Games Systems of the Tarot of the Cloisters by Michelle Leavitt. This was 78 card round Rider-Waite clone, with imagery translated into medieval style stained glass complete with leading. This leading appear rather modern in conception being rather thin and radiating more from the centre, rather than following the contours of the images as we find in real stained or painted glass. The box states that it "captures the essence of 13th century stained glass", but to my eyes it is rather too modern to evoke that period, however, it is a fine production, and the effect of the colours and the contrasting leading is effective.



The Songs for the Journey Home was created by two New Zealanders, Catherine Cook and Dwariko von Sommaruga who describe themselves as alchemists and artists. The 78 card round deck they have produced is a celebration of life. It has a strong ecological core to the imagery, but it rises above coarse political rhetoric and instead presents us with delightfully positive images. Thus the Devil card depicts, in its lower section, all sort of negativities which are transcended in the image of a tree growing out of a cloud. The artwork is a truly creative reworking of tarot imagery within the artists own concerns and pictorial language. They often use images of trees and the globe of the earth. The Minor arcana are called Earth songs, Wave songs, Wind songs

and Flame songs. The imagery here is truly captivating. For Catherine Cook and Dwariko von Sommaruga the 'Journey Home' must be to some idyllic perfected world, that could come about if only we humans just got on with the positive things about life on planet earth. They present us with 'songs' in the form of their pictorial images that can lead us to this positive vision. In the Magician we see him sewing up tears in the fabric of the Earth globe. Perhaps this is why they want to be seen as alchemists, transforming and transmuting the world into a better place by bringing its potential into



actuality. Thus this is a celebratory set of images, rather than one that opens us to darkness and gloomy despair. It rises above locating itself in antipodean concerns, nor does it focus on multi-culturalism as does the earlier Motherpeace. It transcends all this by exploring a more universal panoramic symbolism.

Beth Crawford's Floral Ellipse tarot, of course, uses flowers extensively. The Major arcana each have the image standing between or surrounded by a particular flower. The pip cards are associated with four different flowers, Cups with roses, Pentacles with varieties of daisy, Swords with poinsettias and Wands with dogwoods. The drawings in coloured pencil (or perhaps crayon) are soft and gentle in texture and contrast. The cards are upright ellipses. This is a well conceived and well executed deck, and will be a great delight to those who like flower imagery.



Giselle Flavie was one of the most famous clairvoyants in France in the late 1990's. She still undertakes private consultations in Paris, has written many books and taken part in radio and television programmes. In 1997 she issued her 'key of life' or the Oracle de Giselle Flavie. This is not an oracle deck but a true tarot with 22 cards. Being a clairvoyant, Giselle Flavie has of course 'channelled' the text of the little white book that goes with the cards. The art on the cards is by a Russian artist Marina Makovsky, the daughter of the famous Russian academic artist Konstantin Egorovich Makovsky (1839-1915). His daughter, who appears to have lived on into the 1950's, seems to have become one of the Russian émigrés who located to France after the Russian Revolution. I have been unable to find out anything about her. Giselle Flavie must, however, have come across some of Marina Makovsky's paintings and seen the opportunity to present these in the form of a tarot. Her art is not so technically accomplished as her father's wonderfully detailed oils but is strongly Russian in tone, reflecting Russian illuminated manuscripts and Icons. I doubt whether these were originally conceived as a tarot, though they seem to have been created as round paintings and not merely cropped to that shape. Giselle Flavie has made some fine choices to associate the paintings with a Major arcana card, and some work extremely well. One of the delights of exploring modern tarot as an art form, rather than as a divinatory device, or esoteric system, is that one finds such little treasures as this. Few would probably ever have found their way to Marina Makovsky's art had they not been presented as a tarot. The artist



reverses her name when she signed her paintings - thus they have 'Aniram', and one of these, the painting used for La Lune, she even signed using Cyrillic script.

The Taiwanese deck by Cyvern7, presumably called the Soul Tower tarot, is in the shape of ovals. The images are computer modified, and some seem based on figurative forms from drawings or photographs which have been divested of detail and thrown out of focus so removing them from the ordinary that they become more archetypal and symbolic. These diffuse forms, however, still remain recognizable, and some seem as if drawn in light. This seems to give them a soul or spiritual resonance. The forms seem woven out of light, and there are often flowing areas of colour similar to diffuse or shifting clouds, and sharper radiating patterns appearing like fireworks or lightning bolts, however, this almost abstract imagery still seems to hold sufficient form for us to easily recognize the familiar tarot arcana.



Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot



Lesson 15 : Alchemical Tarots

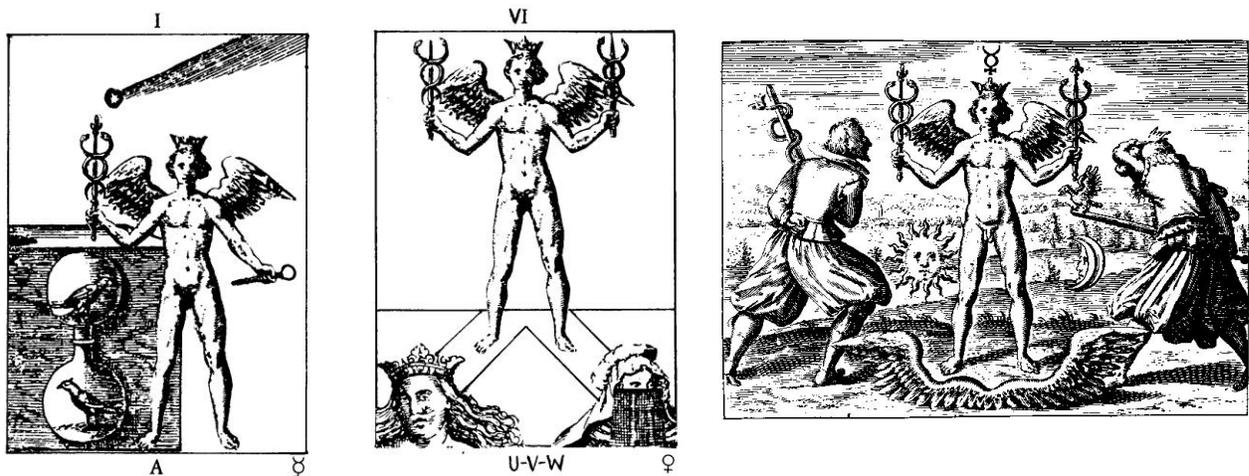
The wonderful imagery of alchemy has often influenced tarot artists of our age, however, it seems that no original alchemical text ever mentioned tarot, and it is likely that alchemists would only have viewed tarot as a card game, and not have seen any connection of this card game to alchemy. The modern mind, having been immersed in a century or more of the mystification of the esoteric writers, has come to believe that there is a direct connection. This mystification or myth creation began in the late 18th century with Etteilla (1738-91) whose ideas were consolidated by Eliphas Levi (1810-75). Arising from such writers was the idea that tarot was an esoteric system connected with alchemy. This is an entirely a-historical and false idea unsupported by any evidence in books and manuscripts but one which is, nevertheless, seductive and appealing, so much so that it is now accepted by most people as actual reality. This confusion arises primarily out of the fact that alchemical texts, manuscripts and books, were often illustrated with emblematic pictures. These emblematic pictures can appear, on the surface, very similar to the pictures on tarot cards, and for this reason people are drawn to perceiving a connection, even though this is not in the historical record.

The French occultists of the late 19th century, as well as the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and other groups, so muddled the matter by projecting all sorts of alchemical ideas onto the tarot, that is it impossible for most people to untangle this. Suffice it to say, that there was no connection between alchemy and tarot till the 19th century.

During the modern tarot period, which is the main interest of this study course, a number of people were drawn to the rich symbolic material of alchemy and decided to incorporate this into tarot designs. Books such as John Reid's *Prelude to Chemistry*, 1936 and Jung's *Psychology and Alchemy*, (English edition, 1968) had printed many examples of the emblematic woodcuts and engravings found in alchemical books, and sources like these were raided for imagery. So we saw the appearance of a number of tarot decks constructed out of this vast sea of alchemical emblems.

- 1976 Golden Cycle Tarot - John Sandbach
- 1979 Tarot de Gwen
- 1987 De Hierofant's Alchemisten Tarot - Guido Gillabel
- 1988 Alchemical Tarot - Rafal Prinke
- 1990 Hermetic Tarot - Dirk Gillabel
- 1990 Alchemical Tarot - Dirk Gillabel
- 1993 Tarocchi di Paracelso
- 1995 Alchemical Tarot - Robert Place
- 2004 Full metal alchemist
- 2006 Alchemical Emblems Tarot
- 2006 Alchemical Wedding Tarot

The first alchemical tarot is probably that of the American astrologer and occultist, John Sandbach. He issued a 78 card deck, the Golden Cycle Tarot in 1976 as an edition of 500 copies and later in 1982 used the 22 Major arcana from this deck as the basis for his book *Astrology, Alchemy and the Tarot*. John Sandbach collaborated with Ronn Ballard and Antoinette Sandbach in creating the Golden Cycle Tarot. They did not use alchemical imagery straight from its original context, but rather collaged bits and pieces from various alchemical engravings and other related emblematic engravings and drawings. In a number of the major arcana he re-uses the same imagery but modified by cut and paste. This deck, produced before the computer graphics age, was made by cutting up photocopies of alchemical emblems and pasting these into collages. Many of the images appear in Manly Palmer Hall's *An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic, and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy*, a large format book which was well known in America at that time so I suspect this could be one of Sandbach and Ballard's primary sources. Below we see their Magician and Chariot cards. Both of these draw on the figure of the winged double Mercury from a well known early 17th century alchemical text the *Twelve Keys of Basil Valentine* - here we have the engraving of the 'Second Key' from this work. We can see how they have altered it in the first image of the Magician, but leave it unchanged in their Chariot.

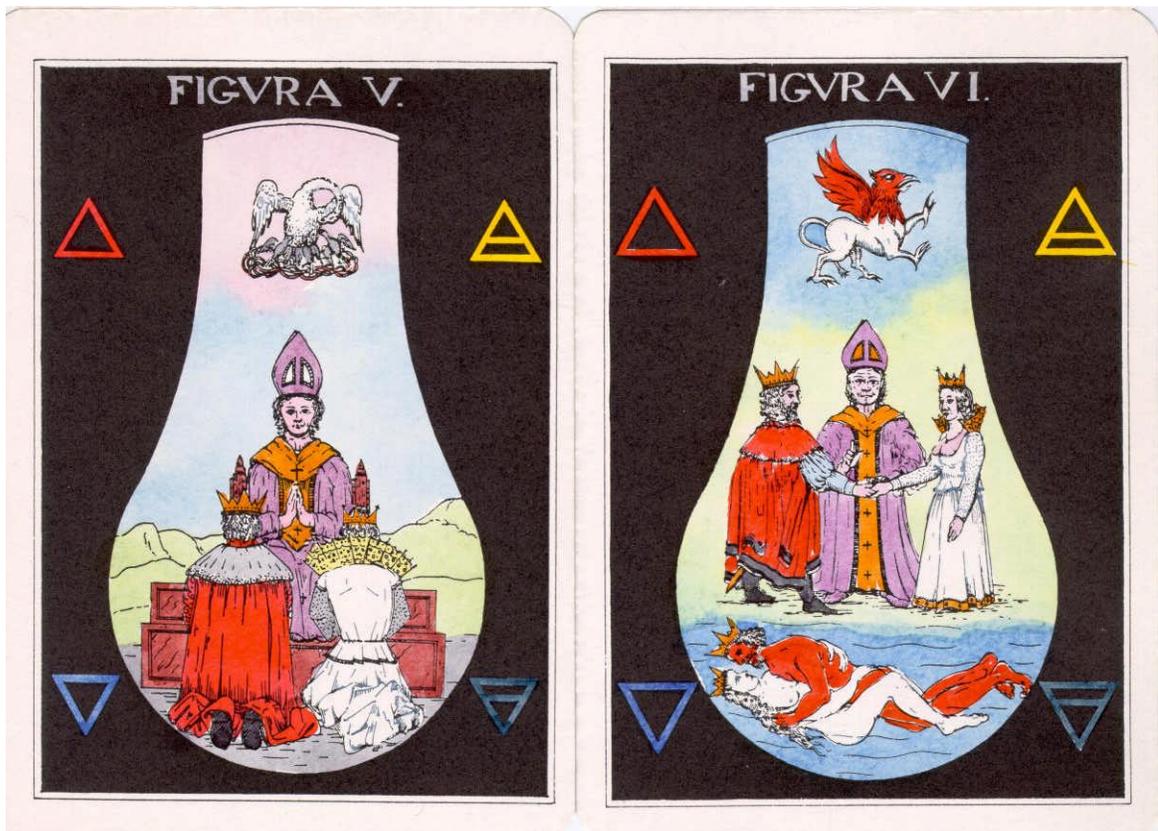


This is a rather interesting deck in that its creators have a reasonably clear philosophy underlying their designs and they feel entirely comfortable in pillaging and altering the alchemical emblems to achieve the ideas they want to portray.

engraving from the 17th century hermetic and alchemical writer Robert Fludd which has been photographically reversed into negative, with an image from Eliphas Levi and a small section of a 17th century engraving from an alchemical book by J.D. Mylius pasted on top. It would be a good exercise for those familiar with such imagery to attempt to identify as many of the components of the Tarot de Gwen card images as possible.

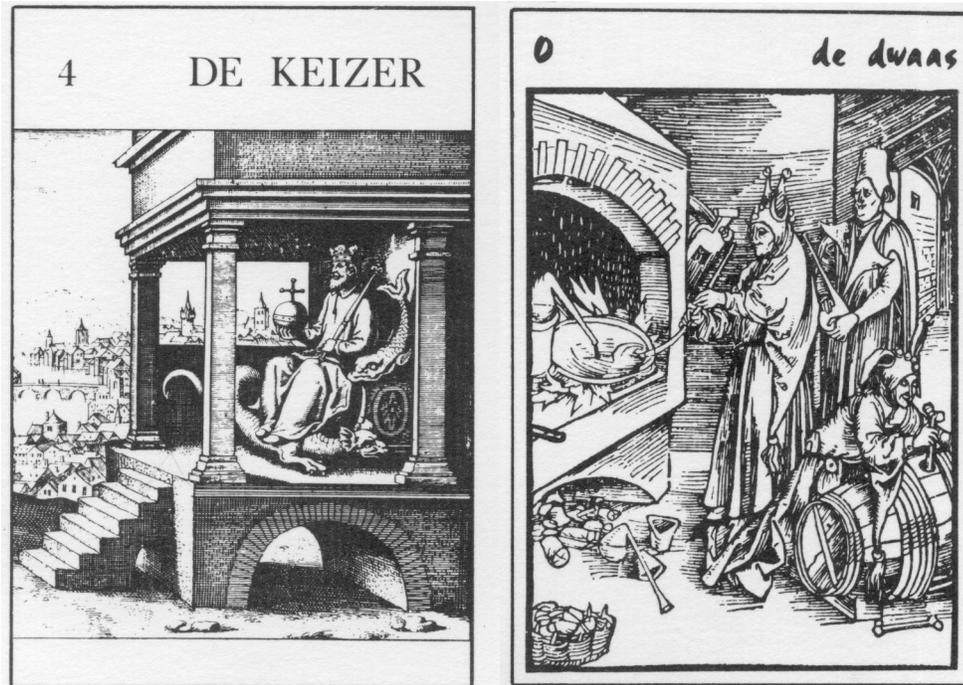
Later in the 1980's, my friend, the Polish writer and scholar Rafal Prinke, who had made a considerable study both of tarot and alchemy, produced a series of 22 designs for a tarot deck. These I published in the Summer and Autumn 1988 issues of an alchemical magazine that I edited called the *Hermetic Journal*. I came up with the idea of publishing this as a deck but in a hand coloured version, and had approached another colleague of mine, Edward O'Donelly to redraw the imagery and hand colour the decks. These were taken up by K. Frank Jensen's publishing venture Ouroboros in Denmark and published a year later in both a black and white and an individually hand coloured version.

Rafal Prinke, being well studied in both tarot and alchemy, tried to find in alchemical symbolism some parallels with the tarot Major arcana, rather than basing his imagery on the perhaps more aesthetic considerations of Gwenaël Belleil, or on the cut and pasting of fragments of emblems that characterizes Sandbach's tarot. Prinke's work attempts an integration of tarot with alchemical imagery through understanding both traditions, rather than merely choosing imagery with aesthetic considerations. The colouring scheme is also very important as this corresponds to the use of colour in original alchemical manuscripts.



Few copies of this deck ever come onto the market.

The Alchemisten Tarot of Guido Gillabel was produced in 1987. This is a Major arcana deck and my copy is printed black on cream card. Guido Gillabel (not to be confused with his brother Dirk Gillabel a prolific creator of twelve tarot decks to date) here uses for most of his cards entire emblems from alchemical books and manuscripts. One or two are cropped, but these are integral images and not collaged or constructed from fragments as with the other decks we have looked at so far. These images have been really well chosen to reflect the tarot card symbolism, and Gillabel must have thought very carefully about his choices. It is a rather nice conceit to use different typefaces for the titles of each of the cards.



For his Fool Gillabel uses the well known satirical image of the foolish alchemist from Sebastian Brandt's *Das Narrenschiff* or 'Ship of Fools' engravings from 1494. The Emperor is from the alchemical 'Book of Lambspring', 1625.

This is a very well conceived deck and comes in a rather fine little wooden box. It was printed in an edition of 120 copies and is well worth collecting.

In 2001, the other Gillabel brother, Dirk, under his nom de tarot, 'Medicator', issued his Alchemical Tarot. Originally conceived as paintings on glazed tiles in the late 1980's, for the printed version these were redrawn on terracotta backgrounds in bright colours. Many of the images for the cards derive from alchemical emblems. He also produced a Hermetic Tarot, again originally painted on tiles (square rather than the upright rectangles of the Alchemical Tarot) and in a similar styled artwork. The imagery on his Hermetic Tarot is perhaps more archetypal tarot than alchemical, though there are symbolic references to alchemy on many of the cards.



6. The Lovers

Here we see Dirk Gillabel's painting for the Lovers for his Alchemical Tarot. This is taken from a well known alchemical engraving which appears on the title page of Elias Ashmole's great compendium of early English alchemical poetry the *Theatrum Chemicum Britannicum* of 1652. This engraving was itself taken from a drawing in a 15th century manuscript now in the British Library. This is a good choice for the lovers as it shows the two alchemical principles, personified here as male and female, being brought together by being bathed in a shower of liquid derived from the sun and moon in the flask with seven spouts which is being held by the monk like



figure descending from the clouds.

Dirk Gillabel's choice of alchemical material as the basis for his paintings would seem to show that, like his brother, he has made some considerable study of alchemy and is not merely choosing items because he felt attracted to them aesthetically.

In 1995 the first mass market alchemical tarot was issued by Harper Collins. This was created by Robert M. Place and Rosemary Ellen Guiley. Place has also created the Angels Tarot in 1995, Tarot of the Saints 2001, and Buddha Tarot 2004. He is a fine artist and illustrator using fine pen drawings to mimic the style of woodcuts and engravings. He has a very good eye for creating related curves which brings a harmony to his drawings. These have been coloured using thin layers and such subtle graduations of tone that they could well have been done in Photoshop or some other computer graphics program. He does not slavishly copy original alchemical woodcuts and engravings but recreates them in a modern way. The expressions and bodily forms he gives to the figures depart from the 16th and 17th century style and are entirely modern and thus perhaps more approachable by a general audience. It is this perhaps that persuaded a mass market publisher to handle it. It certainly proved to be very popular and engaging to its audience. If someone with a deep knowledge of alchemical imagery looks through the cards they will recognize many sources in alchemical emblems.



Here we see an example the way Robert Place has reworked the original alchemical image which was an engraving from a book by the alchemist Michael Maier *Symbola aurea mensae*, printed at Franckfurt in 1617. Maier's book presents us with alchemists of twelve nations, and here we have a depiction of Maria the Jewess. The idea being originally depicted is perhaps not entirely that of Temperance, but rather an alchemical idea about two fumes which must be united in order to prepare the white stone.



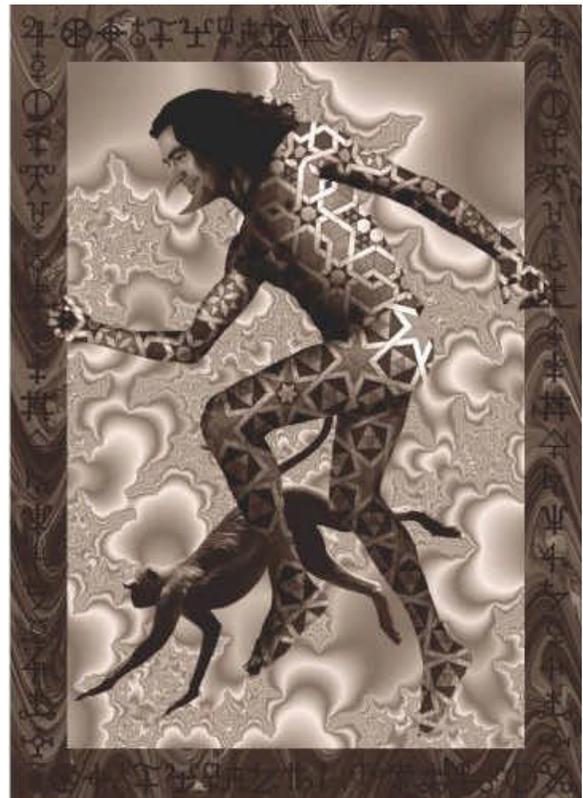
For the Star, Place drew on an engraving from a book printed in 1613 called *Azoth*, sometimes ascribed to an alchemist called Basil Valentine, which depicts a strange double-tailed mermaid. In the original engraving and in the text of the book no 'star' is mentioned, and the focus of the emblem is upon this Goddess of the Sea who emits blood and milk from each of her breasts which are to be cooked by the alchemist into gold and silver. Place perhaps recognizes this and puts the Sun and Moon (the gold and silver planets) among the seven stars (planets) in the sky above.

This deck is well conceived and beautifully realised. Once it went out of print it became very sought after and collectable. It has, in 2006, been reissued by Place as a limited edition larger format art deck.

For many years I myself have been colouring alchemical emblems, woodcuts, manuscript drawings and engravings, from the original alchemical works. I put scans of these paintings onto my web site and indeed sold a few of these as prints, and used these in other projects. It came as quite a pleasant surprise when in 2005 I discovered that F. J. Campos in Spain had taken these thumbnail images and turned them into a tarot deck. I got in touch with him and offered to publish this as an actual deck of cards and thus the Alchemical Emblems tarot was born in 2006. I myself had no part in choosing the imagery for the cards. Campos decided to use whole images or cropped sections of images rather than resorting to collage. Some of these are remarkably appropriate. Campos has a good eye for imagery and has created over forty tarots from different types of material. You can see and download most of his work from the Orphalese tarot system.



In 1616 an amazing allegorical alchemical story was published, the *Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*. This idea resonated with various alchemical emblems of the period which depicted the meeting and merging of the two opposing aspects of the alchemical work as a kind of 'alchemical wedding'. Much use of this idea was later made by Carl Jung and his followers, and the idea became almost essential in any book on esoteric ideas published in the late 20th century. So the idea became almost commonplace and entered into the esoteric phraseology. The prolific American artist David Aronson, who works in the media of drawings, painting and digital art, created designs for a tarot deck based on this idea of the alchemical wedding, or conjunction of opposites. The artwork is powerful and disturbing but also seductive in the quality and finish of the imagery. As in all his art, he here deals with hard and disturbing ideas, bringing together and clashing polar opposites against one another. These images were realised on a computer and use all the tricks and techniques of that medium. He bases much of his work on photographs and drawings, modifying them digitally, adding special textures and rendering the surfaces to create a sumptuous three dimensional aspect. In many ways the imagery is conventionally tarot, though seen through the highly polished perspective of Aronson's graphic work. There are disturbing images here, and the use of masks tends to give the human figures an archetypal, yet at the same time, a sinister presence. I myself was so seduced by these images that I decided to publish the Major arcana in my Art Tarot series in 2006.



There remain just a few alchemical related tarot to discuss.

In 1993 a Tarocchi di Paracelso was designed by Arrigo Pecchioli who had earlier in 1982 created the Tarocchi del Duomo di Siena. Paracelsus (1493-1541) was, of course a famous 16th century alchemist, and this deck was issued to mark the fifth centenary of his birth. This tarot uses images from a famous 16th century alchemical manuscript, contemporary with Paracelsus though not in any way connected to him, called the *Splendor solis*. This manuscript has twenty two illuminated images painted on vellum, though there was no connection at that time to the twenty two trumps of the tarot and the symbolism instead entirely reflects alchemical allegorical ideas. I have not seen this deck, though it is mentioned in Kaplan IV page 456. Pecchioli, or the graphic artists who worked on the cards, have unfortunately muddled the order of some of the images and in some cases seem to have given them the wrong titles.

In 2002 Editions Fabbri of France issued a deck entitled the Tarot Alchimique. This in fact was a reprinting of the late 16th century Sola Busco tarot, perhaps the earliest complete tarot deck to have survived. Two years before in 2000 Lo Scarabeo issued this as the Ancient Enlightened Tarot, using images apparently redrawn and coloured in the early 20th century, copied quite closely from an original 16th copy which seems to have subsequently disappeared. Lo Scarabeo must have allowed Editions Fabbri to issue this in their 2002 version, which dispenses with Lo Scarabeo's multilingual labels and the titles which intrude into the lower part of the image. Despite the relabelling, this tarot has minimal alchemical content as such, but instead arises out of 16th century Italian art and emblematics.

I cannot resist mentioning the Japanese Manga Full Metal Alchemist. This cartoon show for television has many of characters using magical circles to effect transmutations, the 'alchemists circles'. From 2004, as part of the marketing of the cartoon show, a number of different tarot decks with this title were issued. These have no real tarot structure but just use the set of cards as a way of showcasing the characters in the anime show. Some Taiwanese companies seem to have pirated version of these decks.

To summarise, we can say that although tarot and alchemy continued to live entirely separate existences during the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, they were conflated by 19th century occultists and through the 20th century this idea became consolidated, so much so that most people today, including tarot artists, believe there is a connection. So modern tarot designs reflect alchemical imagery. In some cases this may just appear on an individual card in a deck, but as we have seen in this lesson, there were a number of decks which were conceived as somehow 'alchemical'.

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot

Lesson 16 : Some further perspectives to consider.



So far we have tried to grasp the artwork of tarot from a number of different viewpoints. We examined ways of looking at tarot decks in terms of the perceived purpose or intention of their creators, and then we saw how decks could be grouped together according to the particular theme of the artwork. We also looked at tarot designs that only appeared in books and not as printed decks, and we turned that idea around and looked at tarots which were themselves based on books.

There are thousands of tarot designs. There must be well over two thousand actually printed, with many more designs created that did not find a publisher. In order to have some grasp of these Tarots it is important to locate common features or ways of categorizing the designs and artwork, however, there is no single way of doing this. An interesting attempt was made in the book *Tarot and other Meditation Decks* by Emily E. Auger. Here she presented some abstract categorizations into Annotative Types One to Three, and Discursive Types One to Three. For me this attempt failed as I found I could not realistically use such abstract categories, but the book remains a delight, despite this failed categorization, as this art historian has many insights that enable us to place tarot decks in a particular context.

Let us now consider a few other perspectives we can take on Tarot.

Regional Tarot

We can attempt to look at Tarots from a particular country as having sufficient similarities of style that we can group them together in a coherent way. This immediately fails when we consider the output from the USA which is so diverse that one fails to find any common features, but in the case of, say, South Korea, the output is small but coherent in style. Italy, the birthplace of Tarot, has a massive output in the modern period, but these works perhaps reflect the underlying historical traditions of Tarot in Italy and it can be instructive to see these deck designs as a



totality, even though the style of the artwork is very diverse. Italy, in particular, continues the tradition of Art Tarot, often as Majors only decks, which are really designed to be viewed primarily as art works rather than as divination cards. In France, tarot is still a popular card game and there are many Jeu de Tarot issued. These card game decks have also influenced designers of other French decks. Russian tarot fall into two groups, those which reprint, often without permission, European or American deck designs and increasingly we see a number of original tarots emerging there. It is also very instructive to look at Russian tarots alongside the former Eastern Block countries such as Poland (which itself has a respectable base of tarot designs).

Japanese artists took up tarot relatively early and a large number of decks were issued from the 1990's onward. I have about sixty decks and there remain many more than this to collect. It is interesting to see how Japanese tarot initially holds close to the established Western pattern, but later in the 1990's tarot designs emerge that reflect aspects of modern Japanese society, such as the influences of anime. Japanese tarot are often issued as major only decks and some are intended perhaps more as artworks for collectors rather than for necessarily for divination, though they usually incorporate a book with detailed instructions on how to use them in this way. The number of Taiwanese decks has increased greatly in recent years. Many of these seem to use tarot imagery as a vehicle for promoting anime characters or computer game scenarios. Regrettably, there has begun to emerge recently cards named 'tarot' which are merely collectors or trading cards, with a set of 78 cards with no discernable tarot structure. It is disappointing to buy a deck which is essentially a promotion for a TV cartoon show merely displaying the characters in scenes from various episodes with no attempt to link these to tarot imagery, however, there remains a considerable group of interesting conventional Tarots designed in Taiwan and this is a fascinating group to study.

We could also look at the smaller output of Australian tarots as a group. These do not cohere stylistically but have refreshing originality of approach. South American tarots often rework tarot imagery within the context of their own cultures. A similar thing could be said for British tarot which has been especially influenced by the Celtic mystical theme from the 1980's onwards, though there are a few other British decks unconnected with this and more universal in approach. It makes an interesting study.

The different art media

It will also be instructive to look at tarot decks and designs through the medium in which it

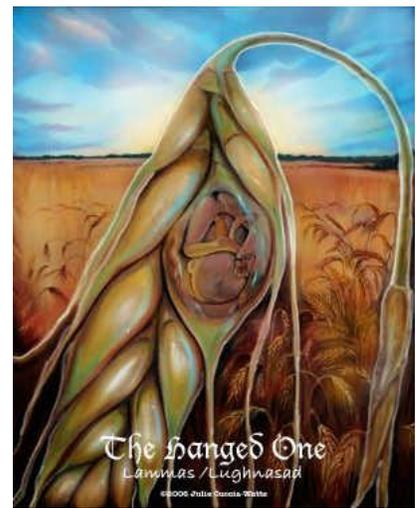


was created. Perhaps by far the greatest number of modern period tarots have been produced by line drawings in pencil or pen, which were then coloured, often by watercolour or by block graphic colour applied by hand or by computer graphics. There are too many tarots created in this way for us to list. The use of line drawing to some extent keeps the artwork stylistically anchored to the early woodcut and engraved tarots of an earlier age. A good example of this is seen in Robert Place's work with his Alchemical, Tarot of the Saints and Angels Tarot. His Buddha mimics Buddhist block prints. There are pure watercolour tarots, in which the paint flows into forms without the restriction of the enclosing line. The Aquatic tarot is perhaps one of the best

examples of this. Of course, acrylic paints can be used in an aqueous way as well as conventional gum-based watercolours. The essence perhaps of this form is the absence of hard edges and with the flowing forms invoking a mystical atmosphere. A similar effect can be achieved using coloured pencils or crayons, diffusing and blending colour without containing it within hard forms.



Ernest Solari uses this in some of his work, though he often adopts the pointillist style using small dots or dabs of colour to build up his forms. Tarot painted using oils or acrylic, on board or canvas, form a considerable group. Like modern painting in general these can be extremely detailed photorealistic works or more impressionist in style. Among the former, say, are the precise surrealism of the Fergus Hall tarot, Marie-Claude Purro's work, Julie Cuccia-Watts incredible output or H. R. Giger's detailed paintings later used in his tarot.





The more impressionistic works are such as the Andar tarot of Darlaine Foley, De Freehands or the Elsa Dax tarot. There is, of course, a continuum of styles found in painted tarots. If you have a reasonably sized collection, it could be a useful exercise to try and group painted tarots into styles and see just how the individual artist worked with their materials.



There are tarots created in high art media such as engravings, woodcuts and serigraphy, and even a few created in tapestry. Here are examples of the Viviani (engravings), Storm (woodcuts), St Phalle (serigraphs/screen prints) and Ingerid Blakstad's embroidered tapestry.



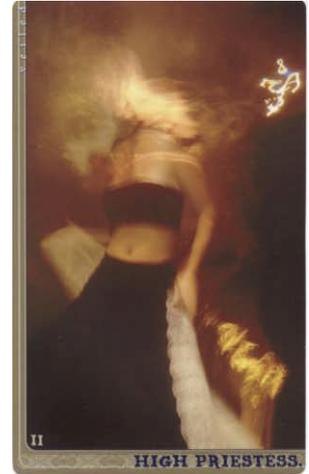
Collage tarots first emerged in the 1960's with the Martin Sharp designs included with the London *Oz* magazine issue 4. Collage can be very powerful but in the wrong hands can be rather disappointing. There are some incredibly beautiful and engaging tarots made using collage.



We think of the considerable output of Arnell Ando, the *Mansions of the Moon* and *Sheba's Tarot* by Zadok (Dennis Hogue), and the wonderfully professional productions of the Magic Realist Press in Prague. Collage is of course a medium which can also be used by people with limited artistic skills as they can create images that they can envisage and yet would be incapable of drawing or painting. Some people also lack sufficient aesthetic sense to make a meaningful deck and then we find instead clichéd images that make the work tired and tedious. Early collage tarots used photographs or images from books and magazines, but with the development of fast personal computers



and scanners in the 1990's we have seen a growth of computer assisted collage. Some artists extend this further by using the features of computer graphics programs like Photoshop or dedicated painting programs to filter, modify, distort and restructure images by adding layer upon layer to the initial conception. Some of the resulting decks are truly amazing, such as the Alchemical Wedding tarot or Shelly Corbett's Abyssal Tarot. There are also a number of pure photographic decks, in some of which people are posed, often in costume, to create the tarot composition, while other photographic tarots are more impressionistic.



We will look at representatives of some of these tarot art media later in the course. As ever, tarot artists are incredibly creative, and use all sorts of media. The Chateau at Avenieres in France even has tarot murals in the form of large mosaics. In the Autumn of 2006 we saw the appearance of two tarots based on drawings on biscuits, by an Italian artist!

Individual tarot artists

There are a small group of artists who have produced a number of tarots, indeed who seem to have devoted a major part of their creative output to tarot. We immediately think of the Italians such as Amerigo Folchi, Osvaldo Menegazzi, Luigi Scapini and the artists who have worked with the publisher Lo Scarabeo, but there are a number of artists who have produced multiple tarot decks, such as the collagist Arnell Ando, Shandra McNeill, Brian Williams, F.J. Campos among many others. Later, in part two of the course, we will find space to devote some lessons to individual artist's output.

Most tarot creators give their decks a title that reflects some idea or concept that contributed to the design, however peripheral or obscure this might be. Thus we have a continuum from the simply descriptive names such as Tarot des Chats or Arthurian, through to the more abstruse and recondite such as Tarocchi Tharbon, l'Oeil de Lotus, the Three Rabbits or the Corneal Edema.

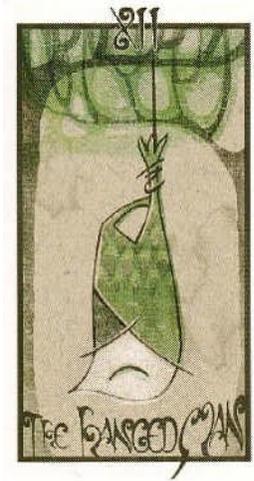
Another group of tarot decks are named after their creator. We immediately call to mind such as the Gill Tarot, Manzoni, Moure, Roberto Polloni, Samantha's Tarot and many many more. It is interesting to try and see why the artist has chosen to name their creation with some descriptive or other title, and in other cases to give their own name to the deck. How a Tarot is named can so orient the viewer, by loading them with perceptions, that they can come to see

this Tarot in a certain way. The Cornish Tarot, the Templar Tarot and the Karma Tarot (just to take a few examples) do not necessarily inform us on Cornwall, the Knights Templar or on karma, which is not to disparage them at all as artworks. It is interesting to try and see why a tarot is given the name it has, and how that name can make us take a view on the art presented in the deck.

I wanted to present in this lesson just a few more ways in which we can look at the complex mass of tarot designs and try to find some common features. There would appear to be no simple, monolithic, way of categorizing and grouping tarot decks, instead, faced with the explosion of creative thinking and re-envisioning that underlies modern Tarot, we have to apply whole batteries of critical tools in order to gain some overview of the material. This course, in a sense, remains centred in such phenomenological approaches, but keeps away from making rigid categories. One of the great delights of Tarot is its quixotic nature. Just when you think you see a clear pattern linking some tarot designs, another one turns up that knocks down your abstract theory.

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot

Lesson 17 : Regional tarots - Japanese



Most Japanese Tarots seem to have been intended for a Japanese audience rather than being distributed to the wider world and consequently many are unknown to American and European tarot enthusiasts, being difficult to collect. The earliest Japanese tarot I have been able to find is a Tarot of Marseilles style deck published by Keishobou in 1973, with the artwork by Gaichi Muramatsu.



(魔術師)

In 1974 a black and white pen drawn tarot called the Japanese Egyptian was issued by Futami Shobo in Tokyo. This to some extent drew upon the Falconnier/Wegener late 19th century tarot designs which had inspired a long line of Egyptian tarots. The Minor arcana of this Japanese 78 deck are based on the emblematic forms in the Rider-Waite deck but here 'Egyptianised'. This was reprinted in 1980 and 2003 in an alternative version, photo-reversed, as white on black



(魔術師)

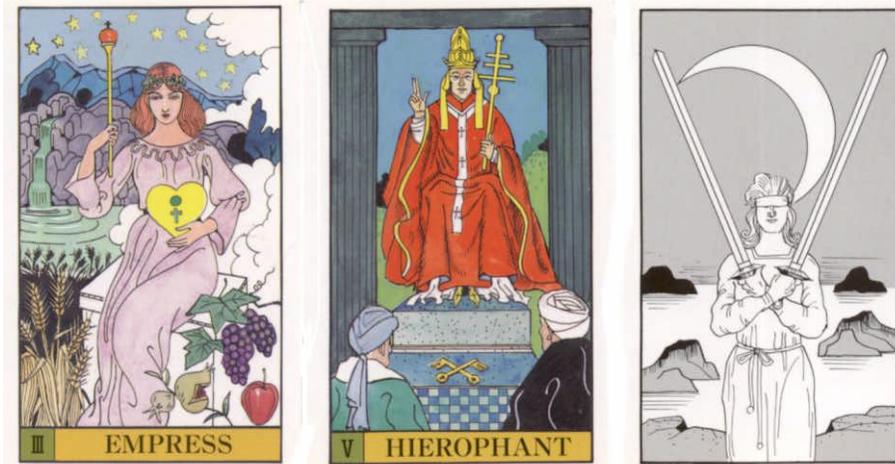
Another early deck is the Renaissance Style Tarot published in 1978, the Magician of which is shown opposite. This was printed in black and white, though the original artwork (by an uncredited artist) appears to be in watercolours. There was also the Nature Tarot printed in 1980 which we looked at in the lesson on Round Tarots.

It is likely that Tarot was originally seen by the Japanese as an entirely European tradition which, though it fascinated them, the artists did not immediately try and relocate tarot imagery within Japanese cultural forms. Thus many of the decks produced in the 1980's were tribute decks, echoing the European and American tarot images that they had been exposed to. So we find then a number of Rider-Waite clones, which though redrawn and not slavishly copied, nevertheless retain a European cultural form, even to the extent of the facial types.



THE MAGICIAN
○ 魔術師

An example of this is the Tarot Fortune Telling cards by Will and Shigeyuki Ozawa, 1989. Here only the Majors of this Rider-Waite clone were printed in colour.



It is really amazing to see how the various Japanese graphics artists took up the tarot format and elaborated it into a variety of styles, almost all European. Thus we have George Domon's Tarot Fortune Telling for Love published in 1989, with its exquisite paintings and the underlying strongly detailed drawings.



During this late 80's and into the 1990's, Japanese tarot flourished. Many of the publishers adopted a packaging format where the book and the deck were issued in a surrounding printed sleeve. The deck itself was enclosed in a little folder with a foam pad which was cut away to provide a protective pocket for storing the cards. A number of the decks during this period were Majors only decks. Although these decks were issued with books with instructions as to how to use the cards for divination, one suspects that these were collected more as artworks.



Many styles were mimicked, such as art nouveau, in the Mysterious Tarot Fortune Telling Cards of Nobotu Aoki, published in Tokyo in 1989;



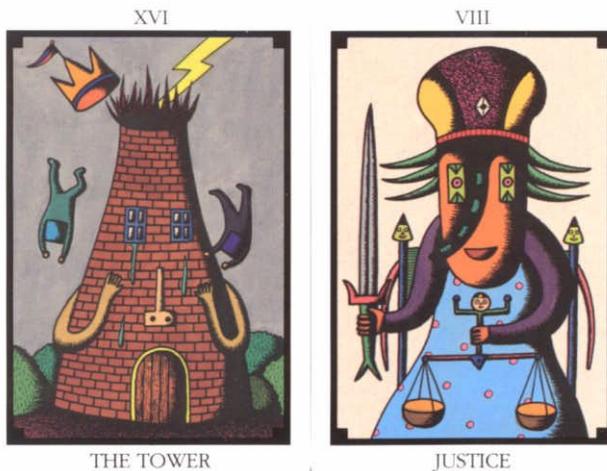
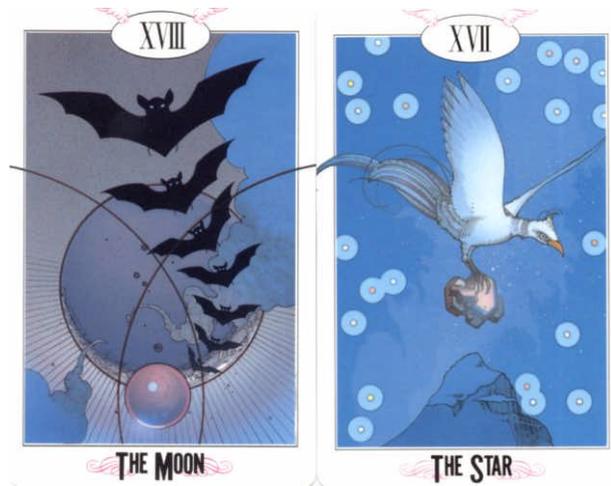
or the more art deco inspired style of K.H. Nicholas' Tarot of Love which calls Happiness, Tokyo, 1991, with the illustrations by Belne;



or the almost Aubrey Beardsley style of the Moonprincess Tarot of Kyoko Tsuchiya, 1989 (which is not to be confused with the later and better known Moonprincess Himiko Tarot of 1993).



As Japanese tarot developed through the 1990's, artists began to create their own images, rather than just reworking the traditional images in various classical styles. Alexandria Mokuseioh having produced the Nature tarot and the stylish Newwave in 1980, the Tarot Of Wicca in 1983 and her Cat Tarot in 1990, began to move Japanese tarot imagery further forward with her Crystal Tarot of 1991. Here, though the imagery remains firmly rooted in the conventional tarot archetypes, the designer has begun to extend the material further with the associations with crystals and allow new creative ideas to shape the pictures. There is even a mini CD included with the deck, giving a synthesizer sound track with a spoken meditation in Japanese and English.



In the same year, 1991, Ariadne Yuko's Tarot 22 was published. The artwork was by Toshiko Tsuchihashi, an illustrator who has produced designs for albums and book illustrations including children's literature. Here Tsuchihashi applied her unique style to creating a tarot. She adopts strange exaggerated rounded forms for the bodies, which are multicoloured with some of the features, eyes, mouths, etc., often reduced to odd geometric forms. The noses are sometimes elongated like elephants trunks. She even personifies the Tower by giving it a face. This tarot is quite a radical departure

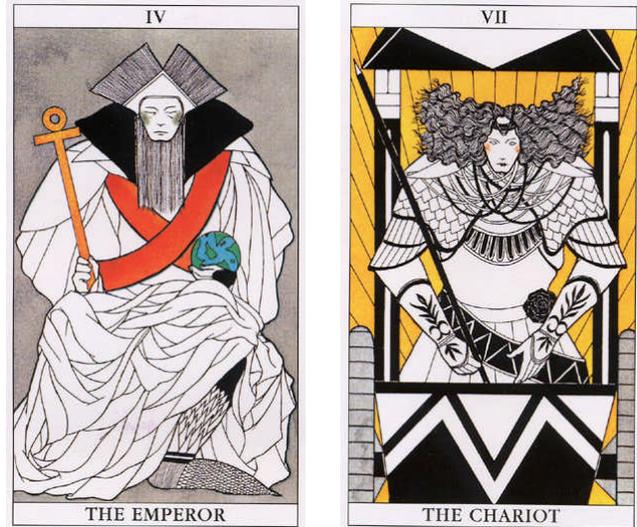
from earlier Japanese tarots in that it moves away from the classic art styles to a creative reworking, here into abstract forms like to children's drawings. Though they might initially appear surreal and disturbing, they are really childlike and fun images.

1991 was good year for Japanese tarots as it saw the publication of one of the most creative and delightful of decks, that of Yoshitaka Amano. These amazing detailed and wonderfully coloured drawings are best appreciated in the full page illustrations in the artbook about this deck. Many of the characters seem to brood, be inwardly active and contemplating their situation. The Devil and the Star are indicative of the style and power of his imagery. Amano had earlier produced a number of illustrated fantasy



books, some theatre designs and had worked on the important animated film *Angel's Egg* of 1984. He brought all his style and influences to a focus in his tarot deck. In Amano, Japanese tarot loudly shouted that it had arrived and had something original to say.

Yoshitaka Amano's work was totally modern and he located his tarot in his contemporary Japanese cultural landscape of the 1980's and 90's. Mondo Oki and Mei Unasaka issued their Big Arukana 22 (Major arcana) deck in 1991. This looked backwards to earlier Japanese cultural depictions of figures in prints, and though not slavishly copying these forms, distilled their essence into tarot images. Oki and Unasaka also produced in this same year their Derakkusu ban Hihou Tarot, which is more 19th century European fin de siècle in its artistic focus.



There are many interesting and beautiful Japanese tarot decks of the late 1980's and early 90's, but a new turn of the Japanese wheel of tarot was about to occur through the evolution of manga comics and computer assisted anime which came increasing to dominate Japanese youth culture from the mid-1990's onward. The Gundam Wing tarot of Ugeppa (probably 1996) which we have looked at before in this course, keeps close to the traditional tarot imagery, though the characters are drawn from the anime. The 'gundams' are mechanised fighting suits are the key element of the cartoon, but here they do not intrude much on the tarot.



The tarot *La Fillette Révolutionnaire* (the revolutionary girl) of 1998, is based on a series of five Japanese Manga *Utena* published by Suehirogaru. This tells the story of Utena, an orphan, who mysteriously receives every day a letter sealed with a rose from a secret society, the Ohtori School. The series of comic books follows her adventures in search of her destiny. The card images chosen closely reflect the traditional tarot, though the pictures are all from the manga book. Strangely there are two Empress cards.

These seem to show the two different sides to our Revolutionary girl, Utena. Many of the cards incorporate roses, reflecting the secret society of the dark rose.

Another deck based on anime from this period is the Sailor Moon. This was initially a manga comic series which was later made into an anime series for television. The heroine of this set is a young schoolgirl named Rabbit, who meets a black cat who tells her that she is the

reincarnation of a former lunar warrior, 'Sailor Moon'. Then the action begins.



The Sailor Moon tarot was issued free with a German magazine in 1999, being an example of a promo deck.

The Sol Bianca tarot (1999) was printed in the USA but based on a well known Japanese science fiction style anime. Sol Bianca is a spaceship with a crew of five female space pirates. Strangely they are named after months. There is Jani, the violent one, Feb, their drunken leader, April, who is idealistic and vengeful, May, who even though she is still a child is able to control a missile-firing mechanical robot suit, and Jun, the resident technical genius. There is surely a touch of the gothic about these characters.



Many manga and anime tarots began to emerge, with also tarots based on computer games. Once tarot became established as a promotional item or even revenue raising merchandising, the motivation perhaps for creating a tarot deck changed. Taiwanese publishers especially began to issue 'tarots' or rather set of 78 cards bearing images from their anime show. With decks such as Full Metal Alchemist the roots in the archetypal tarot arcana began to be lost.

The future of Japanese tarot does not necessarily rest, however, in the hands of the manga/anime promoters, and we have seen a continuing creation of fine quality decks by Japanese artists. In 2001 the art photographer Yukinori Tokoro, produced a Majors only deck of really large cards. He uses digitally modified and manipulated photographs of models he has posed. There is a sumptuous use of glowing diffused lighting effects and a sometimes surreal choice of imagery. The Death card is especially engaging, with the female reaper holding a human head in a birdcage.



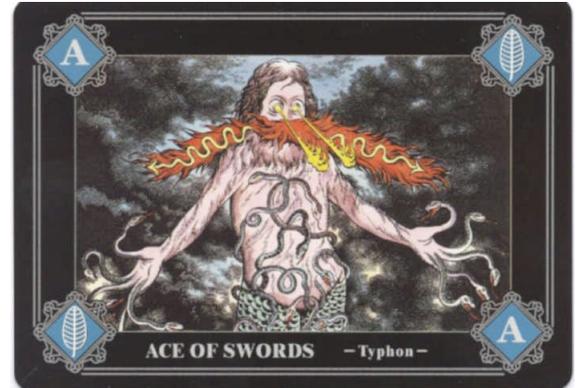
The Yukari Ichijo Tarot, which was issued in 2003 is a return perhaps to more classical tarot imagery through her wonderfully detailed painted drawings. Unfortunately the cards are printed too small to do justice to the art work. Although Yukari Ichijo works primarily as a manga illustrator, she has put this aside in creating her tarot. Instead she seems to locate her tarot somewhere in the medieval Middle East, in a realm of imagery close to the imaginative world of Scheherazade.



We can look again at the Shigeo Otake book of tarot illustrations published in 2005, which was mentioned in an earlier lesson. This Kinoko Tarot was created in 1995 and draws inspiration from the earlier writer Terayama Shuji who died in 1983 and had produced with the artist Usuki a small edition tarot which is almost completely unknown even in Japan. In his tarot Otake dwells on the theme of mushrooms. The artwork with its strange modeled rounded forms echoes perhaps that of Toshiko Tsuchihashi's Tarot 22.



Finally, we have a recent tarot which returns to the older Japanese superstitions of the Yokai, the world of spirits. This tarot (usually called the Monsters Tarot in English) by Youtaro and Takeshi Ogasawara, was inspired by the artist Shigeru Mizuki, an older Japanese artist who is immersed in the old tales of the Yokai and brought some of these into his manga art. He is well known for creating *Gegege no Kitarou*, a childrens' manga and animated series revolving around the ghosts, goblins and spirits of traditional eastern folklore. This 78 card tarot draws on world mythology, rather than merely on Japanese spirits. So we have mythological creatures from Greek, Celtic, Norse, Chinese, Indian and other traditions apart from Japanese. The cards themselves are in landscape format and sadly printed rather too small for the detailed images. These appear to be computer collage with some redrawing and at first glance they look as if they are newly drawn, however, on deeper examination it seems that the foreground figures are on a separate layer from the backgrounds. Some of these foreground figures are no doubt taken from Shigeru Mizuki's cartoons, while the backgrounds appear to be taken from prints, engravings or photographs, some apparently redrawn. The Majors follow the usual archetypes quite closely, but the Minors are unique and don't seem to link to other systems of emblematic images. The artwork is superb and this tarot justifiably fetches a high price.



This lesson is just a short survey of Japanese tarot attempting to give an overall view of the diversity of the material and the trends in the artwork. There are so many beautifully designed Japanese tarots, that it is impossible to do the subject justice in merely a few pages. I myself have managed to collect over 60 Japanese tarots and there are many more than that. There is a listing of over 90 decks in Kaplan's Volume IV, but it is not exhaustive. One could devote a whole study course just to Japanese tarot.

Japanese tarots certainly have style.

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot



Lesson 18 : Regional tarots - Chinese

Chinese tarots came much later to the scene than did the Japanese, but when they did in the late 1990's onwards, they exploded on the tarot scene in a riot of colour and new ideas.

'Chinese', to the Western mind, covers two distinct countries. While we may confuse Taiwan with China, no one in the Far East would. Taiwan is a distinct country, the island of Formosa about 100 miles from the Chinese mainland, that did not follow Mao Tse Tung into Communism after the Second World War. The present day Peoples' Republic of China still claims ownership over Taiwan. The Taiwanese developed an economy that was rooted in trade with the West and consequently tarot cards seem to have emerged in Taiwan primarily as part of commercial products, sometimes as promos for games or anime cartoon shows. Hong Kong, a small peninsula and islands, was a British Protectorate up till 1997, when it was handed back to the Peoples Republic of China, however, it still retains its distinct cosmopolitan identity. Many of the Chinese decks were created and produced in Hong Kong. The Peoples' Republic of China has changed remarkably over the past decade and we find there a cultural freedom that allows the emergence of such things as tarot cards. There are an increasing number of tarots now being created in mainland China.

It will be best perhaps to look at 'Chinese' tarot as two distinct groups, those from Taiwan and those emanating from China, though there is a definite convergence as both economies are now servicing the same audience. These tarots are often created for commercial reasons, and thus the tarot images reflect modern culture of games, TV shows, etc., rather than high art and aesthetics. While Japanese tarot, as we saw, has many fine art tarots, Taiwanese and Chinese tarots are perhaps more reflective of popular culture. This is not to say that they have no great artwork, but we can see it is rather different from the impulse of Japanese tarot.

There would seem to be no really early Chinese Tarots, and the first seem to appear in the late 1990's. I have in my collection over 90 'Chinese' decks about half of which are from Taiwan and half from China. It is extremely difficult researching these decks without any knowledge of the Chinese language and one finds that the names of decks are translated differently by different sellers, so it is easy to confuse items. It also makes it a hard task to identify the artists and even dates of publication. Let us first look at the Taiwanese Tarots.

Taiwanese Tarot

Among the early tarots are the Cat's Tarot by Terry Tsai and the Accurate Prediction Tarot Text Game both from 1997. The Cat's Tarot which we looked at earlier in lesson 8 is a charming and appealing deck aimed at a younger audience. The Tarot Text game consist of large format cards presenting a traditional tarot of Marseilles majors but with the images simplified to rounded geometric forms in bright colours. These are probably designed for younger people. The faces are divided in two, almost Picasso-Cubist, showing profile and full face simultaneously. A later full 78 card deck, variously named as the Happy tarot or the Astprince tarot from 2004/5, also reduces the tarot images to simple forms, here more angular. Interestingly, each of the majors has a background net of a simple symbol reflecting the arcana. Thus the Magician has a net of little top hats, the Empress and Emperor have crowns, Lovers has hearts, Justice scales, and so on. The Minors reflect the emblematic imagery of the Rider Waite deck, but again reduced to simple forms. The Amorist or Lovers' Tarot of 2004, produced as a book with tear out cards at the back, is another quite conventional design, here drawn in thick and thin pen lines and coloured with watercolour. The figures are not depicted with Chinese features and unless one noticed the Chinese names on the cards, one could be excused for thinking this to be a Western tarot.



Tarot Text



Astprince



Amorist

There are many conventional tarots produced in Taiwan, some for an older audience such as the Empower Tarot of 2004 (which was reissued or copied as tear out cards in a book entitled the *Love of Tarot* of 2005). The designs for this deck are based on photographs or collaged parts of classical European paintings which have been graphically modified in a creative way, diffusing and dissolving the sharp forms, probably with a computer paint program to produce some rather fine images. The artwork is atmospheric with a subtle blending of colours. There is no attempt to locate the imagery within Taiwanese or Chinese culture and it remains firmly rooted in European tarot. The book, which accompanies the deck, helpfully reproduces the images in a larger size. The card backs have a wonderfully contoured image of a fractal set (a Julia set rather than a Mandelbrot, one suspects).



Japanese manga and anime, which had developed commercially in the mid 1990's, had a considerable influence on Taiwanese (and Chinese) tarot designs. The image of the doe-eyed young women seems to have particularly resonated with many of the graphics artists working in Taiwan and we have a whole slew of tarot decks bearing such images.

An early example is from the team of four Japanese manga comic artists who work collectively under the name 'Clamp'. Their manga comics were published in Taiwan and the tarot deck based on their graphics were used for the Clamp X Tarot (or X-wars Tarot). Their artwork is wonderfully creative often dealing with themes of innocence and sophistication, love and aggression, the polarization of forms and emotions.



Here we see the innocent doe-eyed young woman, the seductive vamp (almost a goth), the sophisticated young man, and the brooding male figure. Their card images incorporate symbolism from Western magic, as we clearly see in the Page of Pentacles with imagery taken from a book of the late 19th century French occultists, Eliphas Levi. Their Ace of Wands depicts a long limbed woman in tight rubber or black vinyl jump suit bearing the words 'Beast 666'. The X manga series of comic books (later made into a anime film) elaborates a complex tale of apocalyptic cosmic battles (a Japanese 'Lord of the Rings' or Wagnerian cycle). The tarot spun off from this is remarkably informed and surely must stand as one of the major modern reworkings of tarot. Regrettably many other manga based tarots are empty vessels when held up against the powerful symbolism and artistry of the mysterious Clamp graphics team.

Leaving this adult world of the X-wars behind, the doe-eyed lolita woman makes a major appearance in the Fantasy Alice deck from 2006. We have seen this deck before in our lesson on tarot based on books. This is a fine Rider Waite clone with full emblematic pips and the artist has tried to incorporate as many elements as possible from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*. The artwork is tightly drawn, then subtly and softly coloured, and so well finished that it would not look out of place in Lo Scarabeo's series.



Many Taiwanese tarot decks are obviously oriented towards a younger readership. Another Rider Waite clone, issued by the same Taiwanese publisher as the Fantasy Alice, is the popular Elf of Heaven tarot by Cola King (whose real name is Chan Chen-hsing). The images of this deck seem to be primarily directed to female children, reflecting their transition from childhood into adolescence. Thus we have the child like Fool and the more grown up and confident Priestess. The pip cards are fully emblematic and follow the Rider Waite.

So much tarot material has emanated from Taiwan over the past decade, I have over 40 Taiwanese decks, that it is very difficult to give an appraisal in a few pages. We will have to pass over and merely mention the delightful Elota tarot of the A Chu family from 2005, the Fairy tarot by Yo Su-Lan, (issued as a promo for Taiwan Telecom and reissued a number of times as the 'Ideal Tarot', or the 'Love Will Find the Way Tarot') and Leo Tang's Tarot of the Magical Forest, whose images of large eyed animals in the Magical Forest has delighted and engaged many people with its charming forms.

We will just leave our all too short survey of Taiwanese tarot by looking at two high art tarots. Firstly, we can look at set of 22 Major arcana printed in a limited art book *Les Fleurs du Mal* in 2002. The 22 images are finely printed on heavy stock paper on facing pages with the reverse page having the title of the card and a short poem. This work seems to be inspired by the mid-nineteenth century French romantic poet Charles Baudelaire, who wrote a famous collection of short poems entitled *Fleurs du mal* ('flowers of evil') during the 1850's and 60's. Baudelaire's poetry often uses intense heightened description to evoke ideas and emotions. The artist who created this tarot (whom unfortunately I have been unable to identify) seems to have been inspired by this approach of Baudelaire and has translated this into their tarot. Here we have a powerfully detailed depiction used to evoke the tarot archetype, rather than the use of standard symbolism. The artwork shows the figures in classical Chinese court costume, though the faces with their triangular shapes and characteristic eyes are perhaps more drawn from contemporary manga. It is a delightful merging of ancient and modern styles. If you are very

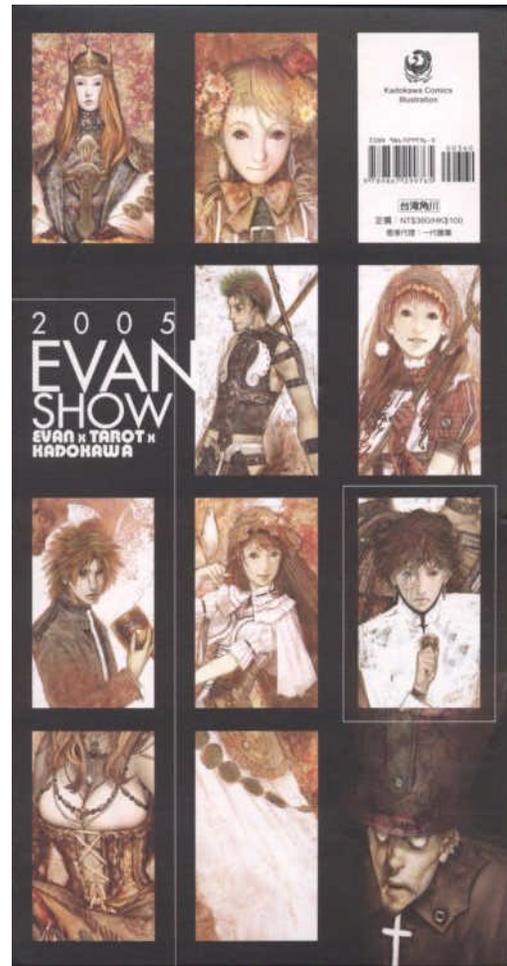
careful you can cut off the spine of the paperback book so that you can have the individual images in the form of large cards. The book is difficult to find and somewhat expensive. Here is the Temperance image in reasonable size so as to display the exquisite detail of the watercolour paintings. Each image bears flowers.



Our final Taiwanese tarot is the totally delightful, contemporary, in-your-face, gothic, neo-symbolist, Lunatic Tarot of Evan Yi Feng. Though born in Hong Kong, Evan has now based himself in Taiwan and has worked on many art projects. He is not only an accomplished expressive painter but also an illustrator and sculptor. His Lunatic Tarot was published like a stack of postcards glued together along the top edge. It is very easy to part the 'pages', which are printed on thick stock, from the glue, so that one has a set of rather large tarot cards (10 by 5 inches - 250 by 130mm). Like *Le Fleurs du Mal* the image is printed on the front side (here it is varnished) while the card title is on the back (here with a line drawn version of the familiar Rider Waite). This has now been issued in standard deck format, though the large format 'book' is best for those primarily interested in tarot as art.

Evan's artwork has been favourably compared to Klimt, and although one sees some influences from there, his reach is much wider. He has obviously studied the symbolist and decadent painters of the late 19th century, and though he does not copy their style, in some way he seems to be working out of this aesthetic. His tarot, apart from a handful of cards, expresses its ideas through a human figure. This figure is usually sharply drawn and painted, while the backgrounds in many cases are just blocked in with washes of colour and texture, often over graphically collaged flowers. In places he has inserted what, to a first glance, seem to be sketched construction lines for his figures, however, as these are on top of the painted surface it is just a neat device to make the photorealism of the paintings appear more spontaneous and lively. He is a true master of his medium being willing to incorporate tricks like this. He uses a small group of models (a young woman and two men) who thus appear on many of the cards

and this integrates the imagery and ties the whole concept neatly together. It is likely that he worked by initially taking precisely posed and well lit photographs as the basis for the paintings. The figures are often depicted in BDSM sheik, with leather straps and rivets, some having facial piercings. The Queen and King card of each suit are in a more classic symbolist fin-de-siècle style, rather than the modern bondage fashionware. These are sumptuous images, and though some of the images seem disturbing on an initial glance, this is not a dark gothic deck, but merely one glorifying a style, underneath the outer surface of which lies rather conventional tarot imagery. The Minor arcana closely echo the familiar emblematic material of the Rider Waite deck.



Chinese Tarot

Like the Taiwanese tarots some Chinese tarots, aimed at children, reduce the forms of the figure to simple geometric shapes. Thus the Mo Huan Ta Luo Pai or Magic Tarot of Mrs Liu, a 22 card deck issued in 2004, has obviously been created with a computer graphics drawing program and reduces the faces to ovals and with the various elements of the card design as simplified linear and curved forms and much use of gradient fills to give subtle modeling to these shapes. The colour palette has been carefully chosen to give a subtle balance to the imagery. It is a well known and rather fine tarot for children. The Coming Fantasy Valley tarot would also appear to be designed for children but it instead provides a more complex and intense imagery. Here the human forms often seem to break apart into spirals and interwoven shapes that can be difficult to read. The work was again designed with a computer graphics drawing program and is intensely coloured. The faces are depicted in a definite mask like style with the eyelashes strangely ending in little circles. The backgrounds are diffused and out of focus to heighten the sharpness of the foreground figure. I have not been able to uncover the meaning of 'Coming Fantasy Valley' and we can presume it to be some childrens' cartoon series in China. The artwork though enigmatic is rather intriguing and engaging. Another interesting deck aimed at children must be the promo deck given away with an issue of the Chinese National Geographical Magazine in 2005. This is a cosplay tarot, that is, it is made by photographing people dressed up in costumes reflecting the tarot archetypes. Cosplay - 'costume play' - perhaps began in Japan in the 1980's when young people gathered in public squares at weekends dressed as their favourite characters - with plenty of Elvis Presley impersonators. Later with the rise of manga characters, cosplay has become a significant part of the mainstream culture with cafes and various clubs and centres devoted to this activity. Needless to say this fashion hobby has spread to other South Asian countries. Perhaps a parallel in Western culture can be seen in the goth phenomenon, though this has more of a underlying lifestyle and philosophy, than mere dressing up. The National Geographic Cosplay tarot is very professionally undertaken and beautifully photographed. Each of the characters is posed, within an ornamental arch, against a background of a deep space photograph of stars and cosmic dust clouds.



Magic Tarot

Coming Fantasy Valley

National Geographic

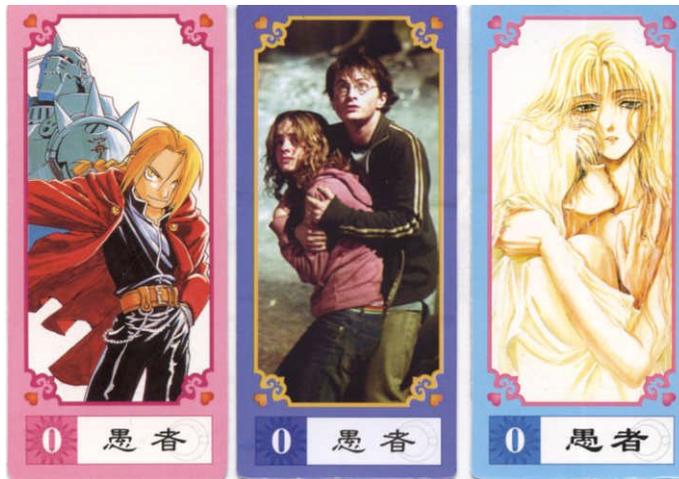
When Chinese publishers met up with manga and fantasy art in the early 2000's they came up with the idea of selling what became named 'collaborative' decks in big clunky boxes. When you buy one of these decks you also buy a massive box, with book and often a poster with the deck. The designs for these decks were obviously chosen by a committee, almost as a showcase for their stable of artists, and consequently different artistic styles sit uneasily together in the same tarot deck. A number of these were issued in 2002 to 2005, as the Tarot Style I, Tarot Style II, Tarot Style III and Tarot Style special edition (a reprint with different borders of the Style I). The format of the cards is somewhat elongated in the Style I and III and this may be an influence from traditional Chinese playing cards which were similarly elongated compared to European cards. The artwork jumps between manga cartoon style and photorealist fantasy art, and these decks consequently lack a coherence and overall concept.



The artwork jumps between manga cartoon style and photorealist fantasy art, and these decks consequently lack a coherence and overall concept.

The IHS deck of 2003 shamelessly borrows artwork from various fantasy artists including H. R. Giger, Frank Frazetta among others, but produces a muddle of images rather than a coherent tarot. A number of Chinese tarots turned to fantasy art as the basis for their imagery, either reproducing the whole image or a cropped section from some artwork with the intention of reflecting the tarot imagery. Not all of these attempts were successful but this is understandable, considering the short tradition of Chinese tarot and its previous lack of penetration into the culture.

As if these fantasy art *mélanges* were not bad enough, worse was to follow with the appearance of 'Tarot' associated with anime or computer video game characters. The Fullmetal Alchemist is typical of this style. This is based on a Japanese anime series. A number of Chinese publishers seem to have tried to cash in on the success of this series by issuing sets of tarot cards. It is safe to say that there is absolutely nothing of tarot in these cards, except that they have 78 cards with one group numbered 0 to 22 and the others in four suits of 14 cards. There is no discernable link to tarot symbolism but merely scenes from the anime are presented. Indeed different issues of the decks can have the character scenes placed on different cards. These publishers adopted the elongated format of the Tarot Style decks and the contrivance does not unfortunately end there, as someone has obviously created a standard border and card title format which was reused for a whole slew of similar 'tarots'.



FullMetal Alchemist Harry Potter Angel Sanctuary

There are dozens of such pseudo tarots. It is worth having one or two in a collection as this does indicate the limits of tarot. Here rampant commercialism merely uses the tarot as a format for selling cards to fans of television shows, films and computer games.



We might be forgiven for thinking that Chinese publishers have entirely let down tarot, but this is not true. In spite of these productions there are some wonderfully creative outpourings. We should look at the Lorland Chen Tarot. He is a very fine artist, a freelance illustrator and teacher at Chengdu Fine Art Academy in Northern China. You can see some of his art realised on Photoshop on his website

<http://lorlandchen.cgsociety.org/gallery>

His tarot was issued in 2005 and is in the best fantasy art style. It is quite a rarity and well worth collecting. This is in fantasy art style but we are back in familiar tarot territory as the imagery reflects the Major arcana. Chen loves to put elf-like ears on his characters. The tarot is nicely printed in soft colours on a matt finished card and is one of the real treasures of Chinese tarot.

A less professional but nevertheless wonderfully original tarot is the Rainbow Storybook tarot created by a Chinese student and apparently sold to subsidise the costs of his education. Decks were only made to order and are quite highly priced. The cards are signed with the initials A.M. This is a happy colourful child-oriented deck created in coloured pencil or crayon, with the delightful soft tones that this medium allows. Rainbows (or shapes coloured in the tones of the spectrum) turn up on most of the cards. The Magician holds a hat out of which pours a rainbow, the Hierophant's hair is in strands coloured with the spectrum. The Lovers each have their hair coloured with half a



rainbow. The theme of the rainbow and the effects realised in the art work are delightful. The cards are printed with a rather fine textured laminate in an elongated format. There are lots of little humorous touches - the flying pigs on the Star, and the clown fish swimming in the anemone like hair of the Moon. This is a little gem of a deck and one should try and get a copy before it disappears for ever.

An interesting attempt was made in 2003 to locate tarot in Buddhist iconography in Mr. Lee's Buddhism Tarot. Here photographs of Buddhist sculptures, of aspirant monks, Buddha, various gods and demons and some thangka or Buddhist religious paintings have been chosen to reflect the 22 Majors of the tarot. On the face of each card are also four small line drawn symbols, wand like forms, chains, pots or vessels, flowers, mirrors, bells and so on. These seem familiar Buddhist paraphernalia. All these symbolic correspondences appear to be explained in the accompanying book, which is, of course, in Chinese. This deck is interesting in that it takes a step backwards into an older tradition in China. Most Chinese tarot seem to reflect only the modern 21st cultural landscape of science fiction or fantasy, so Mr. Lee's is an interesting little tarot standing entirely on its own.



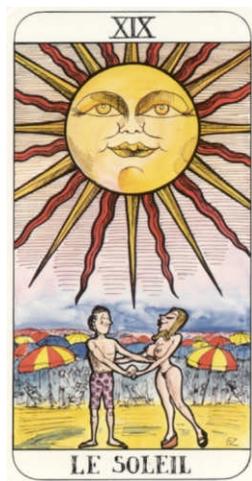
Chinese tarot has come a great distance in only a few years, not so much a 'Long March' but definitely some giant steps culturally. Tarot was never a part of the Chinese cultural tradition and yet as China emerged from its period of isolation from Western ideas, various artists and publishers have discovered tarot and tried in various ways to work and develop it within the Chinese context. In just the few years from about 2000 more than fifty tarots have been created. Though some are not particularly creative or individually inspired, there remains a strong core of Chinese decks that interest the collector. We can be certain that many fascinating tarots will emerge out of China in the years ahead. Watch this space !

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot

Lesson 19 : Art Medium - Watercolour



Paintings made in watercolour or other water based pigments such as acrylic, coloured ink and gouache tend to have some distinctive qualities. There are perhaps two main ways of using watercolour in illustrations such as tarot. In one method, the artist draws the images, perhaps initially in pencil, then inks in the outlines in a water resisting ink and the images are then coloured using watercolour. This is a method often taken up by relatively unskilled artists, though often used by people with great drawing skills. Here we have watercolour used only as a way of applying colour to the image, rather than exploiting its distinctive aqueous properties. Tinting rather than painting. The other method, true watercolour painting, is more skilful and requires a lot of planning to fully exploit its techniques. There are only a few tarots in which artists use true watercolour painting. Let us look at examples of these two different uses of watercolours.



The example of the first is by the Italian cartoonist and comic strip artist Giuseppe Zaccaria, better known under his pseudonym Pino Zac. This is his Cartomancie de l'an 2000. The strength of his tarot images lies in the detailed pen drawings, which he has later coloured with water based pigments. The other tarot, as yet unpublished, is the Aquatic Tarot of Andreas Schröter. Here the artist has dispensed entirely with hard outlines and painted the forms in watercolour to produce wonderfully soft and yet radiant images. These are two very different methods of using water colour in tarot illustrations. Many tarots artists have worked within

these two extremes.

Water based mediums, quickly penetrate the paper, and can follow the grain of the fibres. Water colour artists, painting portraits, still life or landscapes, choose their paper very carefully. These heavy watercolour papers have a surface of open fibres and absorb the pigment in ways which the artist can exploit and control. These papers can be worked quite wet. This paper is entirely unsuitable for inking in lines as the pen nib catches in the open fibres. Also the ink spreads and lines lose their sharpness. So artists working with line drawings which they later tincture with watercolours, usually choose a smooth surfaced board. One of the problems with this kind of board is that it is not suitable for wet working and does not always absorb the water based pigments in a consistent way. It grabs the colour and pulls it into the board. Thus it is extremely difficult to make any corrections, as the imprint of the original brushstroke remains, and resists any attempt to dissolve its shape. Thus artists, trying to create flat areas of colour, can here encounter problems. There are also problems when one tries to create a smooth colour wash up to a hard line. The more skilled artists have ways of avoiding this, but one often sees how others have struggled with the medium.

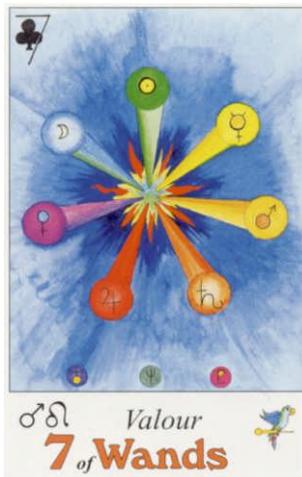
An example I have used before is from the Tarot of Ceremonial Magick. Here the artist attempted to create solid smooth areas of solid colour, but the medium in places defeated her. The too small brushstrokes remain, especially around the edges of forms. To create smoother washes with watercolour one really has to use a large and expensive brush which can hold a considerable volume of colour so that one does not have to return to the palette to reload a small brush and thus create these stabbing artifacts.



M. Guarnaccia the creator of the Nuovo Tarocco Ligure Piemontese, 1982, perhaps being aware of these problems adopts a different approach in leaving large flat areas, such as sky or other backgrounds, uncoloured. Guarnaccia avoids colouring areas with intricate borders which would not easily colour successfully. Brian Williams in his Pomo Tarot (postmodern) uses a more subtle palette and thus avoids having to create dense areas of colour. He also is happy to exploit the effect of showing brushstrokes, such as are in the sky above the two female figures in his Two of Guns. I also seem to detect in some of his cards the use of a masking agent. A good way of avoiding water based colours bleeding into an area is to paint it with a removeable latex rubber. Once the image has dried, one can rub the latex off to reveal uncolored paper.

Williams also uses good modeling with more saturated colours at the edges of the drawn forms which helps avoid brushmarks.

The flowing forms of the water based pigment on the paper often help us identify the tarot as having been painted in watercolour. Coloured pencil or crayon can produce the subtle gradations of tone that can characterizes watercolours, however, only water based pigments will show the marks of colour flows and the ghosts of brushmarks.



Parrott Tarot



Detail showing typical watercolour artifacts



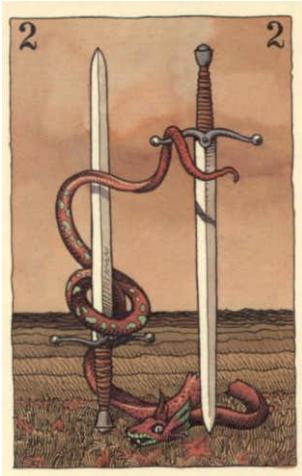
Tarot d'Or



Detail showing typical watercolour artifacts

Marks like this are diagnostic and indicative of watercolour painting. Certain pigments are grabbed by the paper more quickly than others - blues for example, especially cerulean and aquamarine, two of the more popular blue pigments.

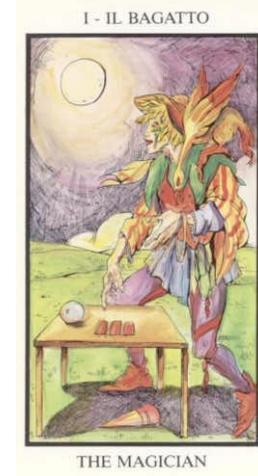
Let us now look at some examples of the two main styles of watercolour tarots - a first group which rely on strong drawing which is tinted with watercolour, and a second in which the art is conceived more purely in watercolours. Of course, artists don't necessarily like to be placed into neat categories and we find to some extent a continuum between these two methods of working.



Tarocco Favoloso (Michelangelo Gaudio and Piero Alligo), 1987. This is a strongly drawn deck which has been subtly coloured. Here one sees the controlled use of bleeding watercolour in the sky to give the effect of clouds.



The Celtic Tarot by Manuel Gonzales Miranda, Piatnik, 1990. The artwork of this deck relies on bold angular forms and triangles. The drawings are coloured in a not so subtle style. The artist seems in places to apply his watercolours rather thickly as they sometimes cover up the underlying lines. Perhaps he used gouache as well as conventional watercolours.



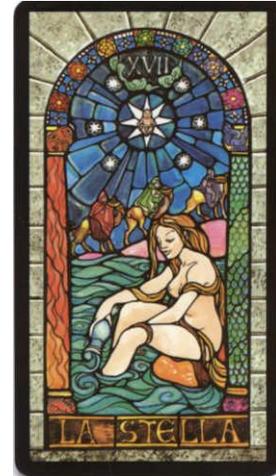
Solleone Tarot by Elisabetta Cassari, US Games, 1983. Here we have a deck that excels both in the line drawing and the watercolouring. The artist has here used very fine pen lines on a bright paper, thus leaving a lot of white areas so that the watercolour pigments are able to shine out. Thus the colour is not fighting a too dark drawing and yet the drawing provides much of the modeling of dark and light. This deck beautifully balances drawing and colouring. One has to have an actual deck of the large cards to appreciate the artwork fully.



Yoshitaka Amano Tarot, 1997.
 Amano used the same technique as Cassari, with fine pen drawings allowing plenty of white space for the watercolours to radiate. His Colouring is very subtle in places, too subtle to be appreciated in a jpeg scan, so to truly see this deck you need the actual deck or preferably the large format art book containing the Majors, Aces and Court card designs, full page.



Juni Seiza Tarot Uranai, or Zodiac Tarot of Shurei Etoile, 1988.
 A number of Japanese tarots from the late 1980's seem to show the use of airbrushing to achieve smooth gradations of tone without the artifacts usually found with watercolours. We find in this deck beautiful gradated tones, such as in the sky, mountains and sea of its Temperance card.



Il Tarocco della Vetrata, Luigi Scapini, 1997.
 Here the artist avoids any problems of watercolour artifacts by dividing his images into small areas in mimicking the leading of stained glass windows. These small regions clearly show the unevenness of a watercolour wash, but in these small areas this does not become visible to the eye, but appears as a texture or even optical effect, as if it were a result of the thick glass. Here this works extremely well.

Thus we have seen a few ways in which tarot artists have used watercolour to tinct a drawn design. Now let us consider decks which are conceived more in the medium of watercolour itself.



Tarot de Patrick Jéau, 2003. This is a rather interesting deck. The backgrounds, usually a cathedral interior, are painted freehand in watercolour while the foreground figure is drawn in pen and coloured with watercolour. Thus this deck contains both forms in one. The cathedral interiors are reused on various cards so, obviously, these two components have been graphically merged. The tarot designs are assigned to both Patrick Jéau and Sklaerenn Imbeaud (an artist in stained glass).



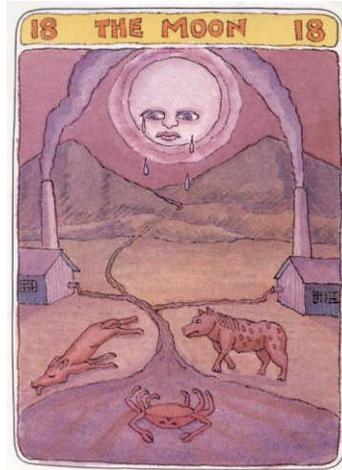
The 26 Cartes Didactiques de Tarot by Christiane Dhooge, 1995, Belgium. This set of Major arcana and four aces, is painted directly onto the paper in watercolour without any apparent under-drawing in pencil. This produces a rather lovely effect, and makes the images appear like early manuscript or miniature paintings. There is something quite special about figures drawn with the brush rather than with pencil or pen.



The Tarot and You, by Penny Lovelock, 1995. This large Majors only deck is again painted without using hard outlines. There are some traces of an underlying pencil drawing, but these construction lines are almost invisible. This artist certainly knows how to use white and to mix her colours. She avoids using pure transparent colours, but instead paints with more solid colour (these are possibly in gouache). We can see how this gives strong form to the armour of the charioteer and the modeling of the black horse. It appears as if even the white areas of her cards are painted with white and thus the whole surface of the paper has been painted.



The Aquatic Tarot painted by Andreas Schröter between 1995 and 2004 is a wonderful interpretation of the Rider Waite deck in watercolour and sadly as yet unpublished. Schröter exploits the medium to its full advantage and creates light filled almost glowing images as well as more moody pictures such as the Two of Swords. He avoids creating outlines of edges to his forms so that the images remain soft. This is recognized as among the best examples of a watercolour tarot.



William Kircher's Arcana for the New Dark Age was published as a book of oversized tear out postcards in book format in 1994. This is very similar in style to Brian Williams' Pomo Tarot also issued in 1994. Kircher's idea is to take a negative view on each of the arcana. His watercolour paintings uses the same flat tones as in the Pomo. He has achieved very subtle gradations of tones and a textured paper which shows a distinctive grain which gives his images an impeccable style. The pages, printed on a heavy stock are easily detached from the book and then treated as a rather large set of tarot cards.



The Merryday Tarot conceived and illustrated by Louisa Poole and published in 1997 is a well known and somewhat notorious deck as Louisa Poole has substantially reinterpreted many of the arcana altering their names and associated symbolism. Be that as it may, her artwork is quite astounding. The backgrounds to many of her paintings are incredibly textured, no doubt through sponging and stippling watercolour. The foreground figures are more sharply delineated and the intense colour tones suggest the use of acrylic with a medium as they stand out clearly against the background textures. Like many beautifully painted tarots, one really must have the actual printed deck to hand to appreciate its quality. A similar use of watercolour is seen in The Pagan Tarot of Robin Payne and Rosemary Lewsey, 1999.

I hope we can see in this short survey that there is much to be learnt and appreciated through looking at the art medium and the way this has been used by the artist in creating their tarot. Without even analyzing the symbolism or content of the images, merely viewing them through the perspective of the way they were made can give us a fresh insight into their artwork.

Many tarots, far too many to list, are based on ink drawings which were coloured with water based pigments and a substantial number were created by painting directly in watercolour. One could even focus a collection around watercolour tarots. This would not be a small collection, but one amounting to many hundreds of items. As an exercise, look through your own collection and identify all the watercolour decks, then see if you can divide them into groups as we have done in this lesson.

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot



Lesson 20 : Art Medium - Coloured pencil

Coloured pencil can achieve wonderfully soft and yet detailed pictures, however, there are relatively few tarots created in this medium, unlike the many hundreds created in the liquid media of painting. It is, perhaps, a more demanding method of working and can take a great deal of time and careful planning to achieve the desired effect, so it is not surprising that few artists work with coloured pencils. It also may lack some 'street cred', being associated in some peoples minds only with the artwork of children, nevertheless, we will find some of the most creative and beautiful tarots amongst its small numbers.



A greatly admired tarot from US Games is the Hanson-Roberts Tarot, 1985. Mary Hanson-Roberts derived her designs from the Rider-Waite deck and has a full set of emblematic pip cards. She outlines each figure with a hard black edge while more minor lines in the construction are in a finer pencil line. The forms are well modeled with good texturing. Strangely she draws in the rounded corners (though not on all the cards) so one suspects she intended these to be printed borderless, though they have a white border in the published cards. She makes no attempt to

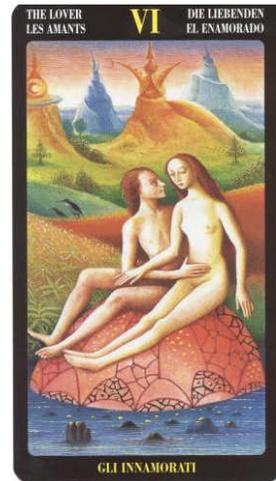


disguise the coloured pencil textures and this perhaps gives the artwork a directness to which many people have responded. Later in 1990 US Games gave her the opportunity to create a edition of the Pamela Colman Smith images and issued this as the Universal Waite deck. Here she redrew the images, even using that slightly thickened line around the principal form, staying closed to but not slavishly following the originals. Thus she improves the detail and, of course, provided subtle modeling that was not possible to print at the time of the original Rider-Waite deck. Here the coloured pencil style does not dominate and many people will not necessarily realise that it was done in that medium.

Let us now look at what could be two extremes of coloured pencil use in tarot. First we have the delicate almost ethereal colouring found in the Pythagorean Tarot. This was issued by Llewelyn in 1996 being created by American University professor, John Opsopaus. The deck came with a long and complex book which explained all the principles on which the deck was founded. I am not sure who undertook the artwork for the deck. Cryptically the book cover states “illustrations by Rho”. Apparently she was a graphics artist and worked to Opsopaus’ exact instructions and sketches for the cards. Rho opts for thin veils of colour applied on top of tightly drawn forms. The line drawing is everything here and the thin gradated layers of coloured pencil complement the precisely drawn forms. The artwork is thus simple and restrained in contrast to the heavy mass of esoteric lore that is found in the book. The images have a coolness and poise, as they stand or sit didactically presenting their associated symbols.



At almost the opposite pole is the lush, sumptuous colours of the Bosch Tarot, issued by Lo Scarabeo in 2000. At first sight you would take these for oil paintings, but on closer inspection, one clearly sees that they are in colour pencil. The artwork here is by Atanas Alexandrov Atanassov. Atanassov is a very fine draughtsman and has produced a number of tarots - the majors of Lo Scarabeo’s Da Vinci tarot perhaps show his work at its best. A number of the tarots with which he has been associated, perhaps have suffered his art to be buried under too much gold foil. Here, when he works with a tarot based on imagery of Hieronymous Bosch, he is given the opportunity to show his abilities to the full. He raids the paintings of Bosch and chooses little vignettes to reflect each tarot archetype. Those who know Bosch’s work will have great fun recognising from where he took a particular image. For this deck Atanassov uses the full intensity inherent in coloured pencil. The reds are wonderfully intense and the whole palette very saturated. Whether this was exaggerated in the printing I do not know. Some areas do seem painted rather than drawn in pencil, but perhaps that is the power of his art. Lo Scarabeo has happily given him black borders to the cards that contrast up and frame the image well.

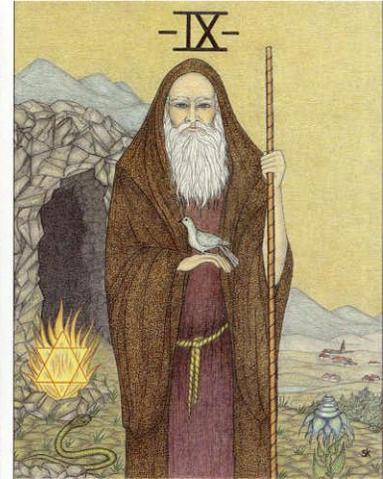
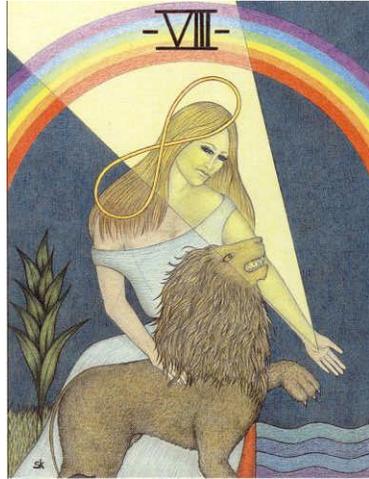


In his Mantegna Tarot, Atanassov uses a more subtle colouring but it is very effective, though sadly buried under the rather tacky metallic foil. Happily someone with taste seems to have insisted on including his original drawings on a separate group of cards, though reduced in size with two on each card.

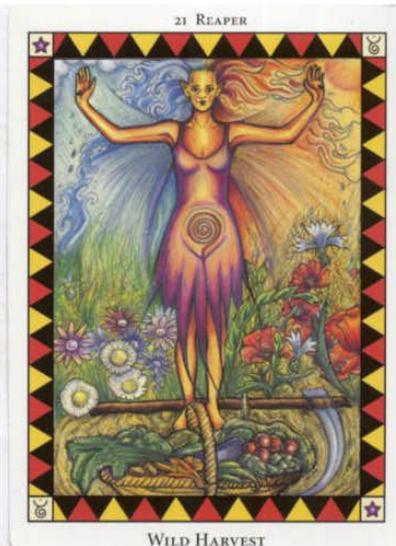


We can see a similar contrast of styles in the Tarot 2000 and the Waking the Wild Spirit Tarot.

The Tarot 2000 is sadly not better known. It is a German production from 1990 by Urania Verlag. The artwork for this Majors only deck is by Ursula Schostok, about whom I can find no information. Her artwork relies on her extremely precise and fine line drawings in pencil, to which she has added the subtle colours and textures. She is truly a master of texture, giving a variety of surfaces to clothing, masonry, rocks and backgrounds, just through the use of different ways of using coloured pencil. The robe of the Hermit is so different in texture from that of the female figure in the Strength card. This is delicate softly drawn, almost understated, artwork, somewhat similar to that of dear anonymous 'Rho' of the Pythagorean Tarot.



Waking the Wild Spirit, Llewellyn, 2002, is a much brighter more 'in your face' sort of deck, bubbling with energy and strongly coloured. The artist, Poppy Palin, is also very accomplished but with a somewhat different talent than Ursula Schostok. She does not rely on a precise under-drawing that she colours, but seems rather to have a central figure (or figures) drawn in and then improvises to fill in the extra space. This makes the images quite animated and engaging. She



presents a romanticized paganism with all the usual associated archetypal figures, and obviously takes great delight in drawing animals and birds which appear a plenty in her Minor Arcana. In some places, it would seem likely that she has worked from photographs, but in other areas she just creates straight onto the page. Here we have romanticized symbolist art in contrast to the classical formalism of Tarot 2000, though both are worked in the same demanding medium of coloured pencil.

Carole Sedillot, who has written extensively on alchemy and Jungian psychology as well as tarot, has also collaborated with the artist Claude Trapet to produce two animal tarots, *Le Tarot du Chats* in 1989 and *Le Tarot du Chien* in 1992 (thus both cats and dogs). Trapet adopts a similar style for both decks. These designs rest on the incredibly detailed drawings - such fine work. These have then been coloured with pencil. At first glance one would think these are tinted watercolour, but on close examination of some cards the tell tale signs of pencil strokes can just be seen. The sky and other backgrounds are very delicately graduated. Trapet in some cards seems



to have used the technique of rubbing back to white paper to produce lighter areas. The cat tarot seems less subtly coloured with very intense reds and blues being used on some cards that they mimic watercolour or acrylic. I have been able to find out nothing about Claude Trapet, sadly, as is the case with many other tarot artists and illustrators.

The Tarot Namur is one of the most beautiful and creative to have emerged from South America. The traditional forms of the 22 Majors are here reworked by the artist Martha Leyrós in bright colours. Most of the images stand against a cerulean blue sky and their colours radiate out. Professor Namur Gopalla probably discussed and gave indications to the artist about how he wanted the images depicted, but the deck has its own integrity of style. Martha Leyrós' coloured pencil work is here more direct and dynamic than Trapet's or Schostok's. She does



not attempt to hide the medium and allows the clear traces of pencil strokes to appear on many of her illustrations. As with other artists in this medium, she uses a pen drawn bold outline to the major forms, while the detailed interior parts are in a thinner pen or pencil line. This tarot is claimed by Gopalla to be the first tarot created and produced in Brazil. The drawings are dated from 1985 through to 1987, which contradicts the supposed publication date for the first edition of 1986, which is mentioned in a number of sources. There is an edition definitively

dated 2000, but I am unable to clear up the date of any earlier existing edition. Martha Leyrós is, happily, not entirely invisible, and is even given a page on Professor Gopalla's web site www.tarotnamur.com.br (including a photograph of her at work). It turns out that she is Argentinean and Namur Gopalla's 'professorship' may even be self-appointed, but what does this matter when they have created these wonderful cards. They are not easy to find and quite expensive, but this deck will be a fine addition to any collection.

The New Zealand tarot, *Songs for the Journey Home*, was created by artist Dwariko von Sommaruga with inspiration from her co-worker Catherine Cook working under the partnership of 'Alchemists and Artists'. We have looked at these round cards earlier in our course, but now we should look not so much at their subject matter but at the way in which they were made. Dwariko von Sommaruga lets the medium of coloured pencil reveal itself as an essential part of her art. She is not merely using this as a means of colouring a pen drawing, but creating and drawing directly in coloured pencil. Thus her images do not have dark pencil or pen outlines to their forms, but are drawn in colour. This gives them a lush softness and harmonizes with the ways in which forms merge and flow into one another in their designs. On the cards we can often see all the individual pencil strokes as she works layers of one colour on top of another without necessarily blending these together. The direction in which the pencil strokes are applied often produces to our eyes a sense of movement, of the shifting or metamorphosing of one form into another. One has to have these cards to appreciate the artwork. Internet scans do not do the work justice at all, and by merely looking at scans one misses all the subtlety and skill of the artists. The artwork in this deck shows us the power of coloured pencil art as a thing in itself.



Another deck, also round, which uses coloured pencil in a direct way is the strangely entitled *The Star that Never Walks Around*, 2002, by the American, Stella Bennett. These drawings are in a naïve child-like style which I am quite sure is not merely a contrivance or artistic device. It could well be that Stella Bennett's had little skill as an artist yet the will power and vision to push on and create 78 tarot cards designs. In the introduction to her book she says "But I can't even draw a smiley face, let alone a deck of cards". Here there is little evidence of any preconceived construction drawing, and Stella Bennett seems just to have worked directly onto the paper with colored pencils. The images exhibit some strange cropping, which is partly a result of the division of the circle into two segments by the twig placed vertically. This twig does not seem to be the work of the artist and it seems likely that her drawings were structure and reworked by a graphics designer into the round form in which they were published. In order to get all the images into this format, this graphics designer seems to have had to make some difficult decisions in cropping the images resulting in some components of the pictures being strangely placed in the frame. Thus here the horse's head is too close to the circumference and the wooden drag rails it pulls are cut off by the vertical. In spite of this, the actual drawings serve the



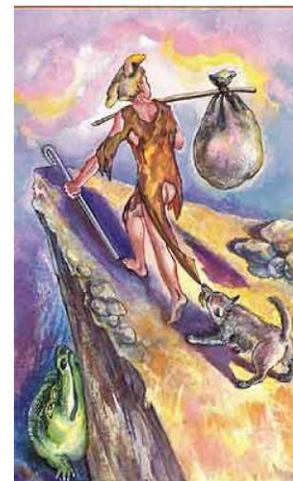
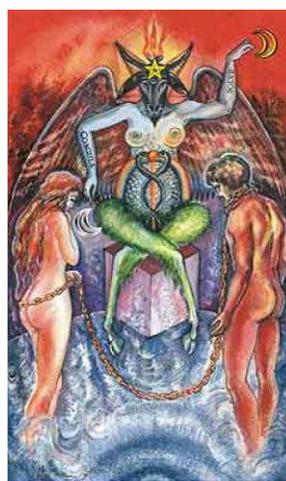
purpose of illustrating the tarot ideas that Stella Bennett was concerned with. Their child-like nature is here perhaps their strength.

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot



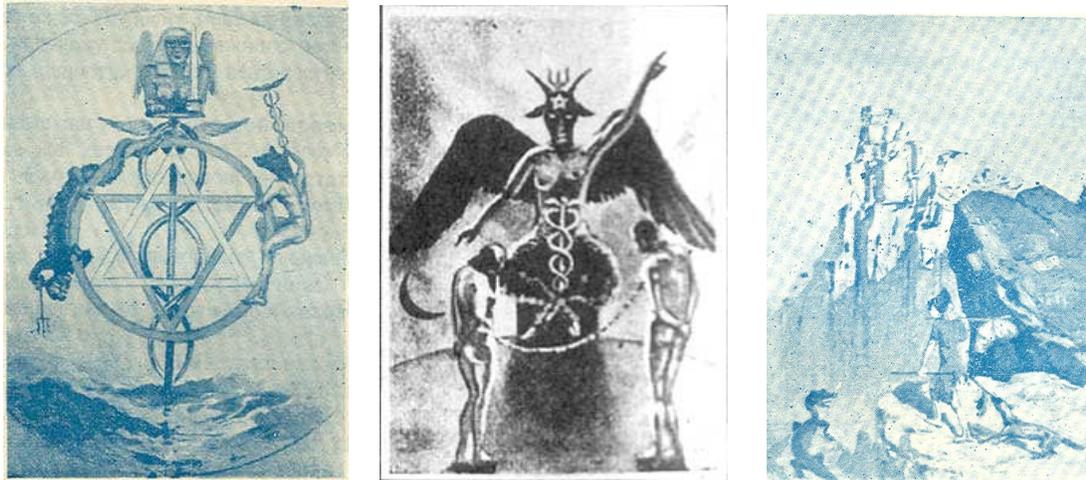
Lesson 21 : Regional tarots - Russian

Tarot in Russia appears in the early decades of the 20th century, but is entirely eclipsed by the emergence of Communism in 1918 and only re-emerges after its fall in the early 1990's. Before the Communist period, Russian intellectual culture had a long history of interest in mysticism, occult, philosophical and theosophical ideas. The founder of Theosophy (a powerful influence on A. E. Waite) was the Russian émigré Madame Blavatsky, and a number of other Russians were drawn to such ideas. There were active tarot study groups in Russia in the first decades of the 20th century. To a great extent these focused around Gregory Ossipovitch Mebes, who created a now famous study course on tarot which was later translated, reworked and issued by Mouni Sadhu as his own work in *The Tarot - A Contemporary Course of The Quintessence of Hermetic Occultism*, 1962. Mouni Sadhu was the pseudonym of the Pole Mieczyslaw Sudowski. Mebes does not seem to have created an actual deck but the descriptions in his book were sufficiently clear for the Russian publisher Aenigma to create a deck following the indications. This is the Cabalistic Tarot G.O.M. of 2003. Though painted in watercolours by a modern graphic artist, the imagery reflects the early 20th century tarot ideas of G. O. Mebes. We clearly see how the 'Wheel of Fortune' and the 'Devil' cards derive from magical figures from works of Eliphas Levi.



Mebes' study course was originally published in 1912 in Russian as part of 'An Encyclopedic Course of Occultism'. This was later republished in Shanghai in 1937 and this

book included some tarot designs seemingly by the well known Russian artist Vasily Nikolaevich Masjutin (1884-1955). We see how the modern artist copied from and reworked these lithographic illustrations by Masjutin.



Masjutin had earlier produced an art tarot, in which he drew more on the cultural ideas of the time, with art deco and neo-Egyptian imagery. This was apparently produced as a series of coloured lithographs for an exhibition, but the location of these is presently unknown. This must be the first genuinely art tarot to have been produced.



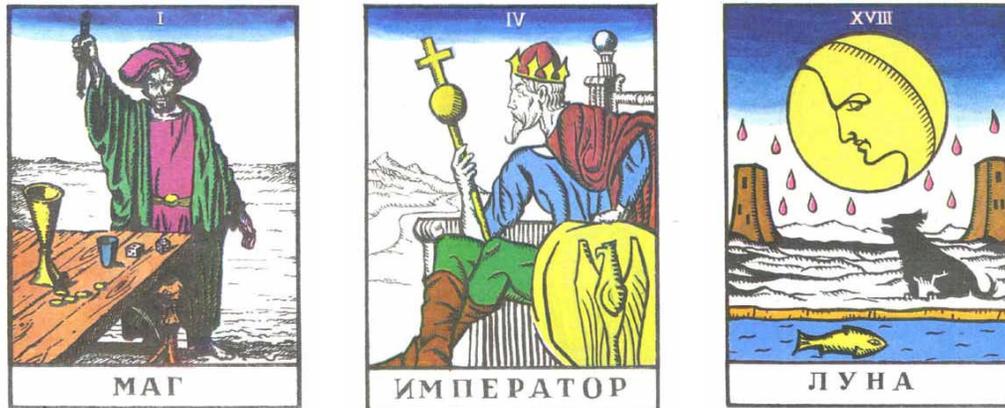
With the fall of Soviet Union Communism in 1991, aspects of Russian culture which had been held back and suppressed began to emerge again. The new freedom to publish led some pioneers to print up some tarot decks. Many of these tarots were pirate copies of standard Western tarots but with Russian titles, though some may be authorized Russian versions. Here is a list of just some of these tarots.

1999 Mythological Tarot, (The Mythic Tarot Tricia Newell 1986)
 1999 Tarot of Spiritual Evolution - Key of Hermes (Rider-Waite with alternative cards)
 1999 Lovers Tarot (Burston)
 2000 Tarot of Aquarius's era (Rohrig Tarot)
 2000 Duerer Tarot (described as designed by Alexey Gavriletz but really copy of the Italian deck by Giacinto Gaudenzi of 1990.)
 2000 Universal Tarot (reprint of Connolly's Universal Tarot)
 2000 The Cosmic Tribe Tarot (Stevee Postman)
 2001 Gregori Tarot (described as designed by G. Kravchenko but really a copy of the images from the Arcus Arcanum, 1988, here set in designed borders with Russian titles.)
 2001 Tarot of the Gold Dawn - Tabitha Cicero
 2001 Tarot of A. E. Waite
 2001 Tarot of Marseilles (reprint of Grimaud 1930 edition)
 2001 Tavaglione's Stairs of Gold Tarot
 2001 Tarot of Transformations (Shapeshifter Tarot, 1998)
 2001 Tarot of Third Millenium (Rohrig Tarot)
 2002 Round tarot of Woman Authority (Motherpeace Round Tarot)
 2002 Tarot of ancient wisdom (Tarot of the Old Path)
 2003 Osho Zen Tarot
 2003 Manara Tarot

Russians are not mere imitators of Western ideas and as soon as it became possible for artists in Russia to have their images freely published, they produced a number of original designs. Here is a short and not exhaustive list of some original tarots produced in Russia from the early 1990's.

1992 Unisam (Moscow) Tarot - G. Eliseev
 1993 Russian Tarot
 1993 Tarot 93 (L. Korazbei)
 1998 Tarot of Aquarius's era - M. Bolgarchuk
 1999 Transcendental Tarot - Key of Hermes
 1999 Egyptian Tarot
 1999 Mysterious Tarot of Egypt
 2000 Union Chernobil Tarot
 2000 Vedic Tarot
 2000 Magic Tarot - Aleksey Kluev
 2001 Soliter Tarot
 2001 Tarot of Fortune - Klim Li
 2002 Tarot of Nostradamus's dreams - Zakjan Gajane, V. Sklyarova
 2002 Gold Tarot of Doctor Paracels - V. Sklyarova
 2002 Marseilles style Tarot
 2002 Tarot of Love
 2002 Holy Tarot of Tot - V.M. Khorkov
 2003 Cabbalistic Tarot G.O.M.
 2003 Rocambole Tarot
 2004 Tarot of Shadows
 2004 Apollo Tarot
 2004 Fairy Tale Tarot
 2006 Tarot Astar
 2006 Biblical Tarot

Among the earliest of these must be the deck created in coloured woodblock style by G. Eliseev. This majors only deck obviously draws on the Tarot of Marseilles and also the Rider-Waite deck, but it is a rather fine and fresh reworking of the standard tarot imagery.



The Russian Tarot - Magic fortune telling and meditation tarot cards, was issued in 1993. This is a full 78 card deck. The pip cards are not emblematic. The imagery for this deck draws to some extent from the Wirth and Mebes tarots and the artwork consists of wonderfully detailed oil or acrylic paintings by Victor Bakhtin. The Court cards portray the King, Queen, Knight and Page, but in a strange variety of costume styles, from Tudor, Eighteenth Century court dress, Symbolist Celtic and Renaissance Italian clothing. This is a rather fine tarot by this accomplished artist well known for illustrating numerous Russian books. He seems to have relocated in 1994 to the USA where he produces wonderfully detailed wildlife art.



In 2000, the Vedic (Vedicheskoe) Tarot, an inventive 78 card deck was published. The artwork was done in fine line, possibly created in a computer drawing program, but it could also have been pen drawn. These appear to have been coloured using a computer graphics program, with the familiar solid colours and smooth gradation effects. The pip cards closely follow the Rider-Waite emblems, while the Majors draw more from the Wirth and Mebes images, with, for example, the crocodile (here depicted more as a dragon) on the Fool card. I am not sure to what the title 'Vedic' here refers. This word usually indicates the early period and writings of Hinduism in Sanskrit, but we find no Indian imagery here. This tarot is entirely Western and conventionally derived from the Rider-Waite and Wirth imagery. Though the artwork by Tatyana Lodko and S. Levchenko is not especially original, the way in which it has been created with its choice of bright clear colours, has produced a very attractive deck. This artwork style seems to have been taken up in Vera Sklyarova's Doctor Paracelsus Tarot of 2003.



Vedic Tarot



Doctor Paracelsus Tarot (Taro Doktora Paratsels)

This tarot has a wonderful clarity of form and colour. I have not been able to identify the artist but the deck is issued with a book by the prolific writer Vera Sklyarova. The connection to the 16th century Swiss alchemist and physician Paracelsus is not obvious from the artwork, but perhaps this is explained in the accompanying book. The deck includes eight extra cards, seven of which are depictions of the lotuses of the chakras which to modern esoteric thought are apparently located in the human body along the spine. The eighth card shows a rather riotous scene in a medieval tavern, with figures seated around a table drinking, eating, gambling and fighting.

Another deck using a 16th century figure as inspiration, is the Tarot of Nostradamus' Dreams issued in 2002. These appear to be acrylic paintings with most of the forms established in line drawings. The colours are especially luminous and well harmonized.



The imagery is in places close to conventional tarot, such as the Fool, but we have some really interesting interpretations, such as the empty throne of the Emperor. Some of the Majors are renamed, though the symbolism coheres for the most part with the usual tarot imagery.

0	The Madman	XI	The Lion
I	Solomon on the Tripod	XII	The Blind Sphynx
II	Celestial Omens	XIII	The Death
III	Venus	XIV	Stairs to the Temple
IV	The Throne and the Sceptre	XV	The Number of the Beast
V	The Priest	XVI	The Tower
VI	The Rose and the Magpie	XVII	The Star
VII	The Ship	XVIII	The Moon
VIII	The Scales	XIX	The Fire
IX	The Monk in the Desert	XX	The [Last] Judgement
X	The Wheel	XXI	The Key

The Pip cards use various symbols to represent the number. Thus the five of Pentacles has five locusts. I cannot say how much the imagery of this deck derives from a reading of Nostradamus' prophetic dream-like poems *The Centuries*, but it certainly is an original reworking of the tarot. Unfortunately I am unable to read the accompanying book in Russian by Vera Sklyarova which no doubt explains the symbolism. The deck includes an extra card (the 'Blank Card') with an Ankh symbol. The artist is Gayane Zakian.

In 2001 the Tarot of Fortune, by the St Petersburg artist Klim Li, was published. It must have sold well as it was reprinted a year later with slightly different box and card backs. This deck uses a theme often used in tarot, that of circus clowns, jugglers, harlequins and Commedia dell'Arte imagery. Li creates fine line pen drawings which he colours with pastels. Many of the images are gently erotic, but always fun. The Pips show the relevant number but with a human figure or figures dancing or posturing. Li has a subtle sense of humour which he works into these depictions. The pastel colouring is intense in places, where he used deep reds and blues, but also soft thin veils of colour to model the human bodies. He has created a wonderfully original tarot.



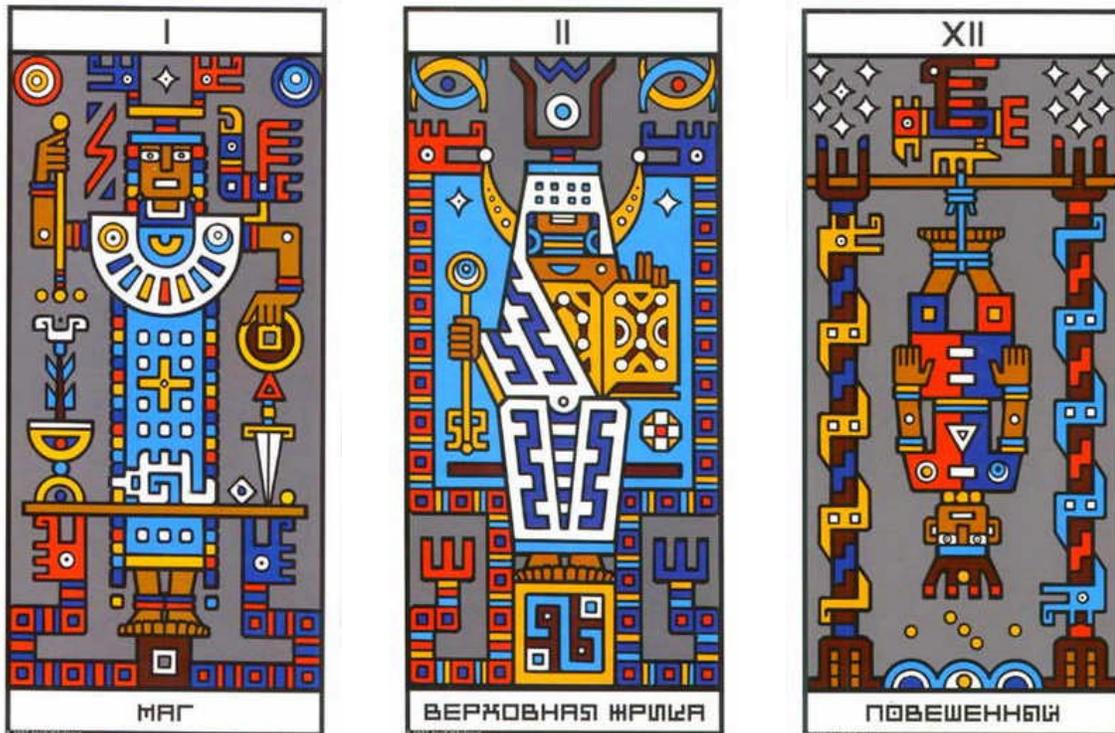
Vera Sklyarova seems to have devoted most of the past decade to tarot and in 2004 her Tarot of Shadows was published. Similar perhaps in artwork style to the Tarot of Fortune with fine pen drawings, here coloured with watercolour. This deck seems to present itself as a dark magical deck full of demons, but it is really infused with the same sort of humour we find in the Klim Li's art. The cards are renamed with demonic or devil names.

- 0 Antichrist (Fool)
- I Satan (Magician)
- II Lilith (High Priestess)
- III Hecate (Empress)
- IV Lucifer (Emperor)
- V Ahriman (Hierophant)

However, though this deck purports to be exploring the dark or shadow side of reality, the images are charming and not without wit.

The Fool as jester in cap and bells is an unlikely Antichrist. The Magician as Satan is appropriately a falling dark angel. The High Priestess, Lilith, is a bat winged goth, under a dark Moon, but here she is set in a scene of maternal domesticity, tending her rather chubby and well looked after child. In card XV, The Devil, Asmodeus is making a pact with Faust. The Minor arcana do not appear to be divided into suits but continue a similar retinue of demonic forms.

Though there are as yet only a few dozen decks by Russian artists, they are truly original and explore tarot in a creative way. As a final example of the creativity that has been recently unleashed in Russia we can look at the Tarot of Sergey de Rocambole and Anna Nikolayeva. Sergey de Rocambole lives in St Petersburg and is immersed in art and esoteric systems. He especially focuses on the idea of the labyrinth. In 1993 he set up a art group called Dragon's Springs. He later worked with Anna Nikolayeva on a tarot for this group, and it was eventually published in 2003. The artwork is neo-Mayan abstract computer graphics, but still quintessentially tarot. De Rocambole requires all sorts of complex underlying philosophies to give form to his work, and seems to need to retreat into a kind of exercise in non-communication "Labyrinth, as a sign of archaic meta-code, as a module-hieroglyph of initial hypertext, joins together a message of ancient tradition and tendencies of contemporary art with the possibility and desire to overcome the limits of binary axiomatic language with all its consequences for a person." The book that accompanies the deck has many complex cosmological, kabbalistical theories, and ideas from Gurdjieff (a Greek-Armenian mystic and spiritual teacher of the early 20th century who spent some time in Russia). De Rocambole obviously delights in this abstruse, esoteric, obscure and elevated theory, but the tarot deck created through his inspiration by Anna Nikolayeva is wonderfully straightforward, though translated into abstract geometric forms. She embeds this within Mayan symbolism and the result is rather impressive. Here is the Magician, the High Priestess and the Hanged Man.



Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot



Lesson 22 : Erotic themed tarots

Modern tarot, to some extent, draws upon the long tradition of standard playing cards as well as directly from historical tarot. Card games, being, in some environments, played by an exclusively male audience, it is not surprising that pin-up models, erotic and even pornographic playing cards designs have been in circulation for many years, predating the rise, since the 1960's, of modern tarot. This influenced the production of a number of erotic themed decks, examples of which we find in

1992 Tarocco dei Giardini di Priapo - Amerigo Folchi

1993 Tarocchi del Decamerone - Giacinto Gaudenzi

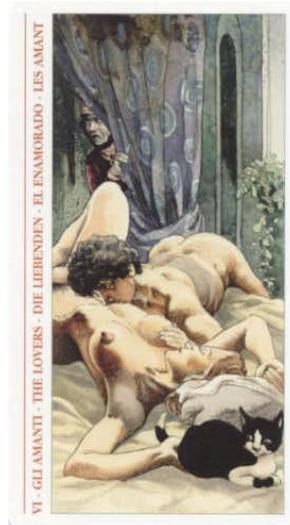
1998 Tarot Druuna - Paolo Serpieri (Jeu du Tarot)

2000 Manara: the Erotic Tarot - Milo Manara.

2002 Tarot Érotique - Luca Raimondo (issued as Tarot of Casanova by Lo Scarabeo)



Priapo



Decameron



Manara



Érotique -Casanova

These decks just take up the style of erotic playing cards and work this into a tarot deck. There seems to be no other underlying reason for the artwork apart from producing an entertaining set of images, though the designers may use the prop of the Decameron or Casanova stories. Milo Manara and Folchi need no such excuse.

Of course nudity is found in historical tarot, which derives partly from emblematic woodcuts. Nudity here is more archetypal than erotic. Thus even in the Tarot of Marseilles we find a number of cards with naked figures. Those on Judgement are figures rising from their graves and are naked for that reason. The female figures on The Star and The World are perhaps shown naked to emphasise that they are archetypal Goddess figures and not mere humans. This use of nudity, in depicting a naked human figure to represent a spiritual, angelic or divine being, is common in 15th through 17th century emblematic imagery, and is not intended to carry any erotic intent. Of course, some puritanical people may have perceived such depictions as erotically charged, and even sought to censure such tarot cards. It is rather interesting that even in our present age we have seen such censorship in tarot. In 1975 Marty Yeager created a tarot which used naked male and female figures on many of the major arcana. When the deck was reissued in 1982 by US Games Systems, they must have felt the cultural climate had changed somewhat from the 1970's and decided to paint clothing or decorative elements (essentially 'fig-leaves') over the offending genitalia. They targeted their censorship on the male figures, though some naked female figures also have their modesty preserved by some judicious vegetation. Strangely the writer of the LWB was left out of the loop and he shamelessly states "In this completely new deck, the artist advances the figure in the timeless costume of humanity - nakedness". He must have received a surprise when he saw the finished deck, now with the Fool walking over the cliff in a neat pair of trunks !

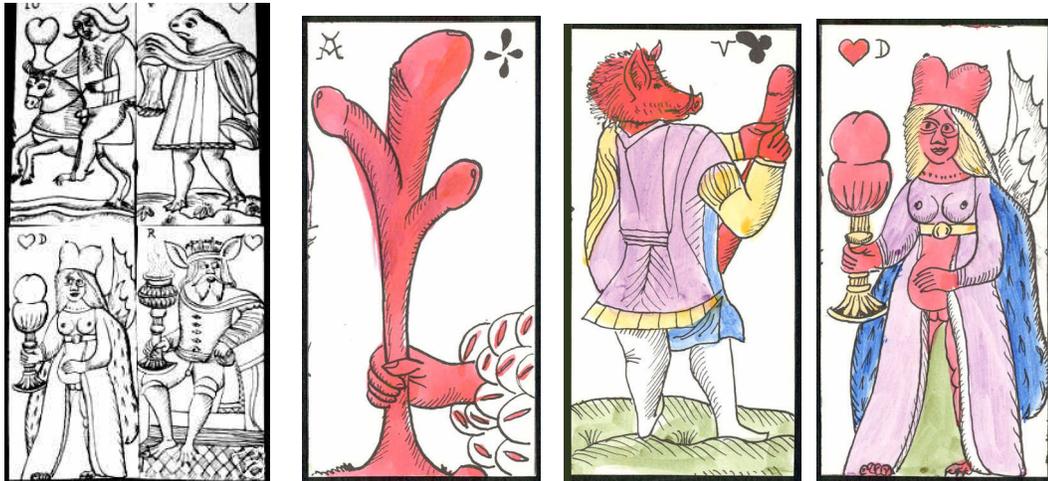


Many tarots have individual cards with a strong erotic content, but we will here consider decks and tarot designs that are primarily erotic in conception. There are also a number of decks in the popular fantastical art style which especially engages adolescents. These have a strong erotic charge, though they are not necessarily conceived as erotic tarots, but merely reflect the fantasy artwork style. An example can be seen in the Black Tarot of Luis Royo. Here scantily clad women often are embraced by strange demons. Women seem to be pictured in this type of artwork either as strong amazons fighting against evil figures, or else somehow held in some bondage or restraint, probably reflecting adolescent male fantasies. We will not here necessarily consider these fantasy art tarots under the heading of erotic tarots.



We come now to tarots which have an erotic element essential to their conception.

Charles Pry, whose Diableries Tarot was published as an actual deck in Brussels in 1970, would appear to be an artist fixated on the phallus. He presents a reworking of the Tarot of Marseilles into an erotic space. The devilry of these designs is in the playful use of sexual imagery. The penis rears its head but usually in some humorous context. This is Rabelaisian satire rather than pornography. The deck is eagerly sought after both for its erotic content and because of its early date and the fact that only 100 copies were issued. Some copies were coloured.



Another early erotic tarot is found in the drawings in back of the erotic novel by Esteban Lopez *Liebe & Tarock*, 1971-72.



XVI DIE ZERSTÖRUNG

0 DER NARR

XX DAS URTEIL

In a section at the end of his book, Lopez uses the imagery of the tarot to reflect back the themes of his novel. His eroticism seems perhaps rather phallicentric and his drawings appear almost like the doodlings of adolescents.

Another impulse, apart from humour, behind the creation of an erotic tarot lay in the esoteric idea of sex magic, which arose to some extent out of the writings of Aleister Crowley, the OTO and related magical orders. Here the sexual content was supposedly serving the higher purpose of some kind of magical or spiritual enlightenment. Among the earliest of these was the Sexual Tarot created by an English magician hiding behind the magical name Frater R. B-B. This was issued as a deck of 666 (naturally) numbered copies by the bookshop 'The Sorcerer's Apprentice'. R. B-B was not a particularly good draughtsman and though his drawings are not especially skilled, he obviously had a clear conception which he was trying to realise through creating his tarot images. Some of the card designs are quite conventional, though using some nudity, The Fool, High Priestess, Empress, Emperor, Hierophant, for example. Many of the cards depict sexual display and overt sexual activity. R. B-B seems unswervingly heterosexual in his imagery.



THE HERMIT



Eight of Wands



Four of Wands



Queen of Wands



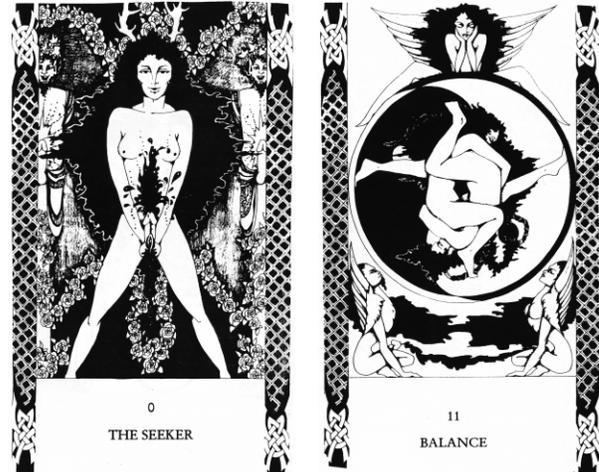
Two of Swords



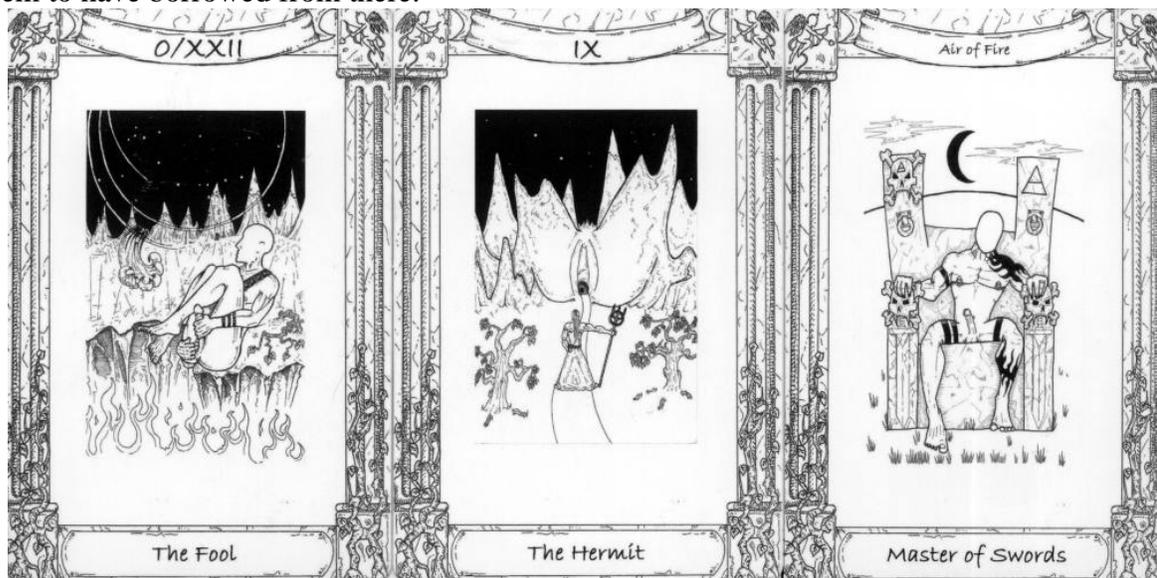
Two of Pentacles

The Tantric tarot by another British magician, Keith Morgan, was created some two decades later in 1994. This was issued as illustrations in a book, but though Morgan does not appear to have produced his Major arcana as an actual deck, he did sell it in the form of 22 large format prints. The artwork in pen drawings was actually made by Elizabeth Taylor. In his book Morgan presents himself as a High Priest of Wicca, but his tarot draws more upon the

constructed conception of Indian Tantric Yoga practices that was being devised in the 1980's and 90's. His ideas are not really drawn from Eastern sources but from the imagined 'tantra' of late 20th century esotericists and magicians. Morgan seems to draw on the OTO system for his imagery, thus the spelling 'Magick' throughout the book. The artwork is rather good, though illustrations in the book are reproduced so small that the fine details in the drawings are sometimes lost. The artist may well have seen the Sexual Tarot of R. B-B, as arcana 11 seems to display the interwoven male and female figures in much the same pattern. The sexuality of the imagery is no longer exclusively heterosexual, but has some lesbian and even male homosexuality displayed.



The Erotica Tarot by the Swedish seer and magician Ylva Trollstierna in collaboration with Patrik Carlsson and created in pen drawings by Pierre Brawin, was published in 2002. Like the previous two this uses sexual imagery as a kind of sex magic supposedly for the purposes of spiritual enlightenment, and Trollstierna issued a book on the 'practice of sexmagick' to be read in conjunction with this tarot deck. Brawin's drawings are rather finely executed. He leaves out the eyes and sometimes other features from the human faces which makes them appear almost like manikins so that we as viewers feel detached. The artist does not seem to have incorporated much overt humour into his imagery and some of the more sadistic images could be disturbing to the sensitive soul, however, the line drawing and the remoteness of the manikin figures makes it difficult to empathise with what is being depicted. The Fool would appear to be a hermaphrodite, strangely able to masturbate with both of his/her organs, while the Hermit lives in a vaginal cave. The Minor arcana of this 78 card deck have emblematic pips but these do not entirely follow the established Rider-Waite pattern, though in places the artist seem to have borrowed from there.



There is an interesting Sexmagick tarot by Philippe Pissier which was exhibited at the Musee de l'Erotisme in Paris in 2003. Images can be found in the internet but it does not seem to have been printed. The images, each incorporating a tarot of Marseilles arcanum, are collaged from magazine images, cartoons, alchemical emblems, photographs, magical diagrams and text. Pissier works within the Thelemic/ Crowley/OTO sphere of magical ideas. The collage here is multilayered and delightfully complex. Here is the Hermit.



The Tarot Erotica of Lori Walls stands in a place of its own. It is a beautiful painted tarot with each image conceived afresh. The artwork, although in the fantastical art style, is created in oils and has a more earthly and grounded feel, as it does not use the high gloss, smooth airbrushed look favoured by the practitioners of that art form. Lori Walls' images engage us directly as paintings and her brushwork and modelling of forms is clearly visible and not smoothed away. I have unfortunately not been able to find any other examples of her work. Her Tarot Erotica was published in 1999 so one might have expected to see other works by her, but she seems to have disappeared from view, which is sad because she is such a good painter. Her deck does not seem to be based on the Crowley/OTO sex magic, but leans perhaps more towards neo-paganism. There is a strong structure or narrative to her Minor arcana suits. Rods and Swords seem to focus on masculine aspects. To Walls, Rods is Man the masculine who enjoys competition, while Swords is Man in touch with his feminine side. Cups is the feminine Female, the lover of men, nourisher of children and protector of small animals, while her suit of Stars is the Female in touch with her masculine side. Using this structure she is able to bring into her imagery a wide range of depictions of erotic material. She is not afraid to use bisexuality, lesbianism, male homosexuality and some domme-sub imagery to illustrate her ideas. Her artwork does not appear to be driven by angst, hurt or inner pain, and though she deals with the powerful emotions of sexuality in an explicit way, this is a gentle and open view, with no disturbing subtext. She does not appear to be a wounded soul turning to art to excise her inner demons. Her designs tend to have a core image that one initially engages with, but there are other details of symbolism in the background that do not strike one immediately. Some of these details draw upon Greek, Egyptian and various pagan mythologies.



Her Star, Moon and Sun cards are very interesting because they all use the image of the human body to depict in three different ways the symbolic content of these arcana. Lori Walls obviously paints out of deep thought. These are not paintings that have grown on the canvas by merely emoting the imagery, but are well structured thought-out emblems. This deck is out of print and the company that published seems to have disappeared, so this deck will be quite collectable.

Paganism, with its sense of fun, can break down the rather heavy seriousness of the Thelemic/OTO/Tantric tradition. Despite the ideas of Aleister Crowley and the tantrics, sex is surely not a serious activity for spiritual enlightenment, to be performed like a prayer, and erotic images are not merely a form of scripture. Thank God for the Pagans! A rather delightful erotic pagan deck is the Tarot of the Ayrshire Witches. The cartoon style line art was created by John Upton for use within a Garnerian Witchcraft coven in Ayrshire, Scotland. K. Frank Jensen, the well known tarot enthusiast and publisher in Denmark, coloured these images and printed a very small edition of six copies in 2000. It is a 78 card deck, and the pips are emblematic but with no relation to the Rider/Waite Minors. The roughly drawn pictures benefit greatly from being watercoloured, and Jensen has used a coherent yet restricted palette of colours. Thus the dominant green background of most cards integrates them together and helps to keep the sense of pagan Nature worship. Most of the human figures are naked and the deck shows various aspects of witchcraft ritual, the instruments of the craft, and some historical tableaux reflecting aspects of witchcraft persecution.



The Devil card uses the familiar image of the Celtic horned god Cernunnos. Upton also uses this for his King of Wands and lifts the image from the famous Gundestrup cauldron (1st or 2nd century BC) much beloved by modern pagans, however, he embellishes the god with an erection. The Two through Six of Cups shows the fivefold ritual kiss of modern witchcraft (at the lips, the breast, the genitals, the knees and the feet). As Garnerian ritual states

“Blessed be thy feet, that have brought thee in these ways.
 Blessed be thy knees, that shall kneel at the sacred altar.
 Blessed be thy phallus, without which we would not be.
 Blessed be thy breasts, formed in strength.
 Blessed be thy lips, that shall utter the Sacred Names.”

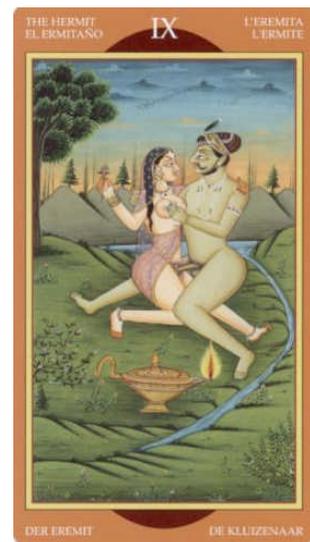
The deck depicts in other sequences of cards, different parts of the Gardnerian Witchcraft initiation rituals. The Summoner of Wands even has the now familiar image of the Wicker Man. Strangely, there are two designs for the Seven of Swords - one being based on an early 16th century woodcut image and the other on the Henry Fuseli painting *The Nightmare*, 1781.

Let us now leave behind the magical and pagan inspired erotic decks to look at Shandra MacNeill's *Skins Deck*. Since 1993 this Canadian artist has produced a number of tarot decks. In her *Skins Deck*, issued in 2002, she uses the mixed media, watercolour, gouche and metallic paint on black water colour paper. She restricts herself to earth colours ochres, browns and greys, these being further muted by being painted on the black ground. The cards are all cut irregularly by hand and are intentionally of slightly different sizes. This makes them immediately feel unique and distinct from all other tarot decks. The deck presents a narrative of the journey of a young woman exploring her sexuality. It begins with her as the Fool standing naked



and gazing at her bed, the place for her sexual explorations. Next as the Mage, she seems to revel in her powers to attract and allure. Then through the remaining Major arcana we are shown, in a series of tableau, her various sexual experiences, and finally with the World card we see her dancing alone, confident and seemingly liberated. In her journey we see her with her lover or lovers in explicit intimate situations though the dark sombre tones of the paintings and their expressionistic style of the artwork mean that they cannot really be viewed in a prurient way. Here we are being taken on a sensitive exploration, using the tarot structure, of a young woman's journey to her mature sexuality.

In remarkable contrast to MacNeil's earthy grainy images is the highly polished *Kamasutra Tarot* issued by Lo Scarabeo in 2006. The artwork is based on the well known 18th and 19th century Indian paintings illustrating the ancient manual of love and sexual guidance, the *Kamasutram*, which dates back to the early centuries A.D. Lo Scarabeo opts not to use these earlier paintings but instead commissioned the Art School Vijai and Ram of Rajasthan to produce a series of paintings in this style. These are truly remarkable reconstructions of the original artwork style and preserve all the charming stylistic elements. It was, of course, impossible on most cards for the artists to make their imagery reflect the tarot structure, so these indications are added as subsidiary symbols in the background or sometimes foreground - thus the key for the Hierophant, scales for Justice, lamp for the Hermit. Thus the imagery



is not entirely integrated into an actual tarot, but as this melding of the two structured systems would be extremely difficult and contrived, if not impossible to devise, one just takes delight in the power of the art itself.



We will conclude with the Russian Astar tarot issued in a very small edition of 10 copies in 2005 but printed as a mass market deck in 2006. It was created by Vladimir Strannikov and Alexy Kluev through collaging photographs and other graphic materials. Astar is the Russian name for Astarte, the Semitic Goddess of fertility and sexuality. Many cards have naked human bodies, mostly taken, one suspects from soft-core adult magazines. This is a 78 card deck and the Pips are also symbolic, though not based on the classic Rider-Waite emblematics. The Court cards are immediately recognis-

able from their structure (the Knight, for example, always appears with a horse), but the Pips do not have any obvious structure to their imagery. The Majors depict closely the usual tarot structure, though seen through the artists' idiosyncratic style. Though some of the collages are really well constructed and have some neat clashes of symbolism, there does not seem to be a firm underlying structure or idea being followed. In a sense they do not forcibly challenge us with their image constructions as many other collage decks do, however, perhaps they do intrigue, tease and puzzle us. Consider, for example, the image of the half-naked female model making a painting of a half-naked female. The artists create subtlety rather than attempting the immediate engagement of the viewer. There is a sober quality to the images and almost none of the figures engages us with a smile, instead they look morose or detached. There is much social and political comment, but only a little humour (and that is restrained). This is, however, an interesting original deck to have emerged out of Russia in the past few years. The direction and intentions of the artists in creating this deck remains obscure and we are left uncertain to its purpose.

This is by no means an exhaustive survey of erotic themed tarots. There are many others to find, view and describe, however, we can see that they fall into different groupings, some merely entertaining while others are designed for some purpose, to illustrate a perspective on the world or present some magical/esoteric philosophy.

Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot



Lesson 23 : European Art Tarots

The European tarot tradition, particularly in France and Italy, has attracted many professional artists into creating an art tarot. Usually, though not exclusively, the artist will choose to work with the 22 Major Arcana and see this as a vehicle or structure for their artistic creativity. Rarely are they concerned to produce a deck that is intended for readings. Such art tarots are usually distributed as limited edition artworks rather than through tarot dealers, and can fetch incredible prices. They were often issued as a small edition of signed and numbered prints. An example is shown above, the Moon card from the German artist Hans Dorflinger's Tarot, a portfolio of 22 lithographs produced in 1975 in an edition of 74 signed copies.

The earliest of art tarots is probably that by the Russian Masjutin which we looked at in Lesson 21. Regrettably the original lithographs of this seem no longer locatable and may not have survived. The earliest Western European art tarot is possibly that of the French artist Jean Bertholle (1909-1996), best known for his abstract oil paintings. This was created around 1949 in a cubist style as coloured woodcuts. These were based on the familiar Tarot of Marseilles, but here the figures were deconstructed into cubist forms. These were apparently intended to be published by Audin in Lyons, but whether this ever appeared is unsure. The only record of these designs appears in the arts magazine *Graphis* for 1949 (issue No 26), but unfortunately the illustrations shown there are uncoloured.



Salvador Dalí's now famous and readily available tarot deck, was originally created as paintings/collages in the 1970's. A series of serigraphs (signed by Dalí) were issued not long after. The first printed edition as cards, as far as I know, was in 1984 and published in Spain by *Distribucions d'art surrealística* and the card-making company *Comos Naipes*.

Italian artists sometimes create art tarots to reflect an aspect of Italian history. An example of this is the *Tarocchi di Sigismondo*, a series of large polychromed woodcuts, produced by the artist and book illustrator Umberto Giovannini in 2003. The designs are a modern allegorical picturing of aspects of the life of the 15th century Italian nobleman Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta, who was, among other things a patron of the arts (he commissioned Leon Battista Alberti to create his Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini and had Piero della Francesca decorate it with frescos. The tarot was produced as 99 signed copies and is beautiful though rather expensive.



In 2000 the Sicilian artist Pippo Madè created I Tarocchi Omaggio a Federico II to commemorate the life of the 13th Century Holy Roman Emperor who, though German, made his home at Palermo in Sicily from 1220 till his death in 1250. He was a great intellectual (founding the University of Naples in 1224), took a keen interest in science, astrology and astronomy and was a patron of the arts, especially poetry. He had a profound influence on Italian culture.



Pippo Madè created a full 78 card deck as a series of gouache paintings rich with

symbolism and imagery from Frederick's life. This was issued as large format cards, 9 by 5 inches (230x150mm). La Luna shows the astrological and astronomical interests of Frederick, while La Forza shows the creation of illuminated books and paintings that he sponsored. The Pip cards of the Minor Arcana depict tableaux of key aspects, events and influences on his life, that of Christianity, Saracen or Islamic influences, Jewish, Greek and his Germanic background.

One of the best known of the Italian art tarots is that of the printmaker Franco Gentilini. This is a relatively early tarot, dating to 1975. The original artwork was printed off of a series of large lithographic plates. Later these were issued as a tarot deck.

IL MATTO

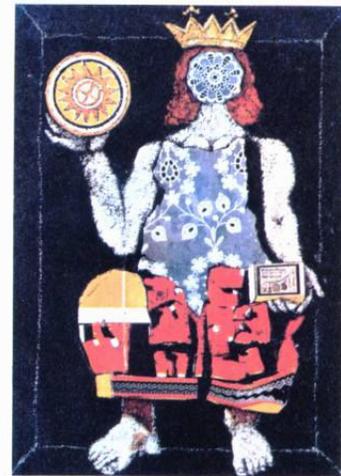


OLLIV MATTO II

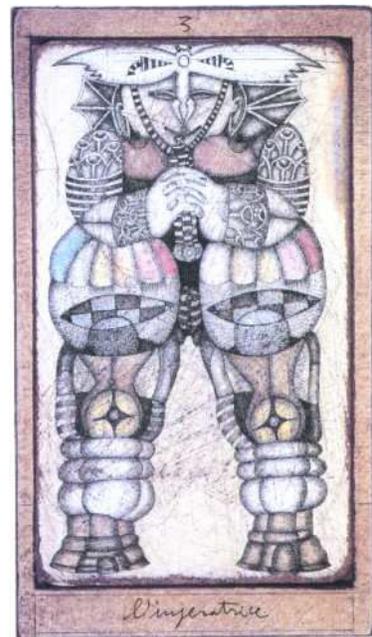
LA LUNA



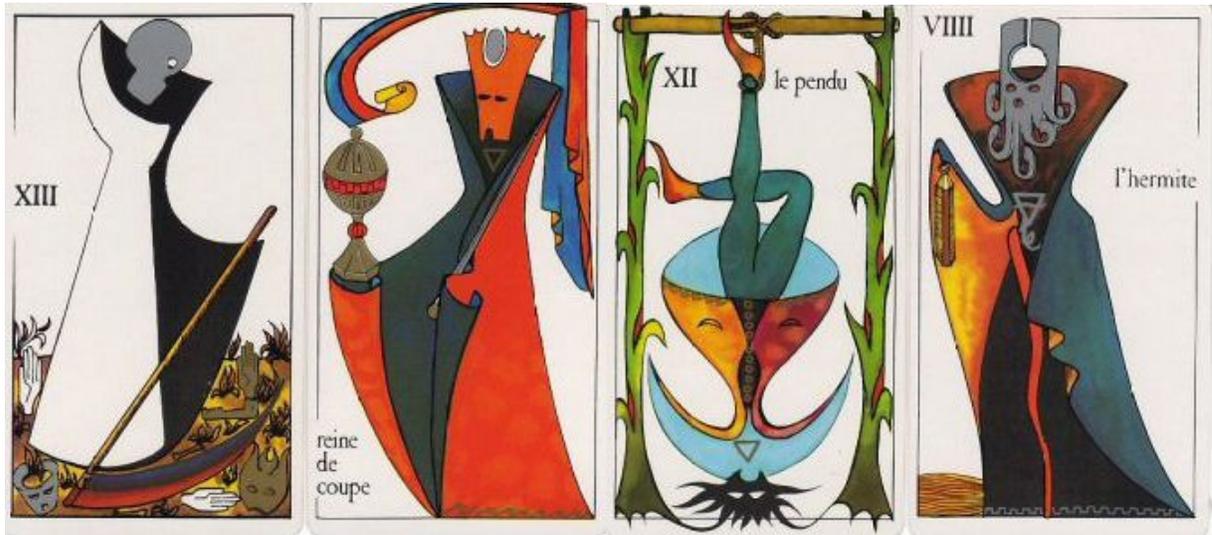
VNUT VI



There are many other Italian art tarots - those of Picini, Gianni Novak, Luciano Caruso, Manzoni, Franco Balan, Canosa, Capitani, Alessandro Baggi, Gambedotti, Mauro Garbarino, Guttuso, Prometti, Pitera, Viviani and many others known primarily as artists rather than as creators of tarot. Here are cards from the Canosa, Viviani and Prometti tarots.

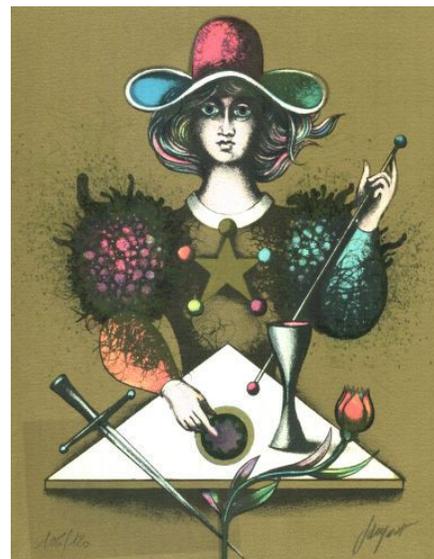


French artists also had a fine sense of style and often applied that to creating art tarots. Tarot imagery was to some extent a familiar part of the cultural landscape in France and not entirely associated with fortune telling so artists probably felt quite comfortable with the imagery. Among the best known and most beautiful is the Tarot de la Réa of Alain Bocher issued in 1982 and still available today from the artist.



Bocher creates his outlines from harmonised smooth curves and though reducing the representational elements to a bare minimum, the faces becoming masks and the bodies cloaks, he creates abstract designs which still retain sufficient figurative elements to keep the imagery accessible. For Bocher his tarot is about secrete things hidden within ourselves, and Réa is also the Greek Goddess Rhea, or Mother Earth. Bocher is an accomplished artist, sculptor and writer with a considerable interest in Tarot. He recently issued a book about the tarot mosaics in the Chateau des Avenieres.

Art tarots are sometimes issued as a portfolio of large prints. Among these is the almost unknown 22 tarot prints of Pierre Jacquot (1929-) - here 12.5x9.75ins (315x250mm) in size.



These are brightly coloured lithographs printed using opaque inks upon a dark golden coloured thick stock. The images seem to be hand drawn on the lithographic plate using litho crayon which makes the prints appear like crayon drawings. Most of the figures charmingly engage us with a direct gaze and the imagery is a stunning reworking of the traditional tarot arcana.

Another set of large prints is the Tarot Serigraphs of R.C. Though these are printed using silkscreen (serigraphy) the originals are obviously oil paintings using thin paint washes on canvas.

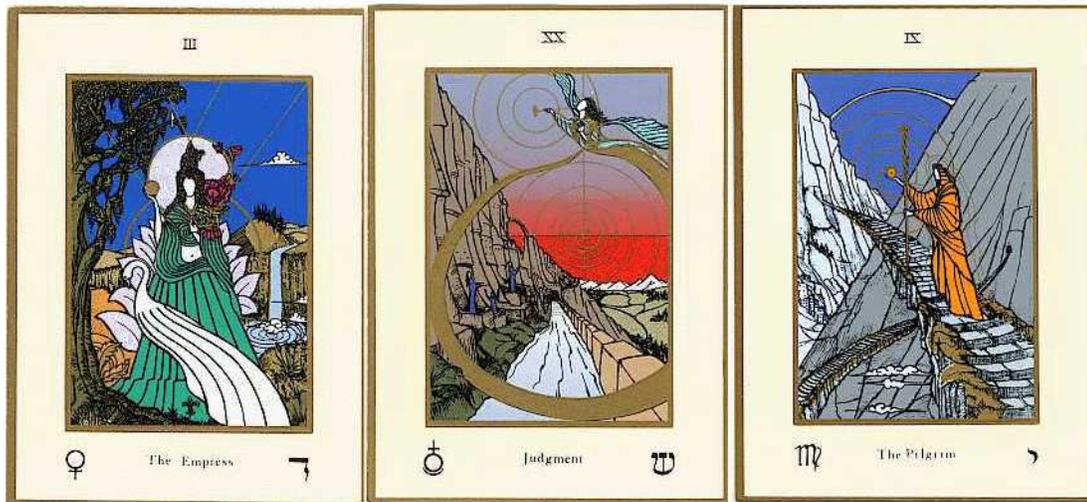


The imagery here is original with some Masonic influences - note the use of the Masonic code alphabet on the left bottom corner of each card.

No account of French tarot would be complete without mentioning the wonderful tarots produced by Pierrick Pinot. The print quality is excellent as he is obviously a master of hand printing and finishing. In 1983 he issued his famous Tarot l'Argolance, and in 1991 his Tarot de la Félicité. The Félicité follows closely the Tarot of Marseilles while the Argolance is an original reworking of the standard tarot imagery. Pinot produces large cards extremely finely printed on thick ivory boards and hand varnished.



Apart from the Italian and French artists there are many other European countries whose artists have created art tarots to include in even this short survey. First, we must think of the now very expensive Kashmir tarot by the Dutch artist Nicolaas C. J. van Beek published in 1984. The deck was printed, from van Beek's original paintings, by the Dutch printmaker Dik Al who used silkscreen printing with up to twenty colours to build each image. Nicolaas van Beek uses a complex geometrical construction to shape the forms for his cards. There appears to be also a strong Theosophical influence with the interweaving of Eastern and Western ideas and the artwork is reminiscent perhaps of the theosophist artist Nicholas Roerich. The faces of the figures are left blank. perhaps to raise them to a more archetypal status, rather than allowing us to engage directly with them.

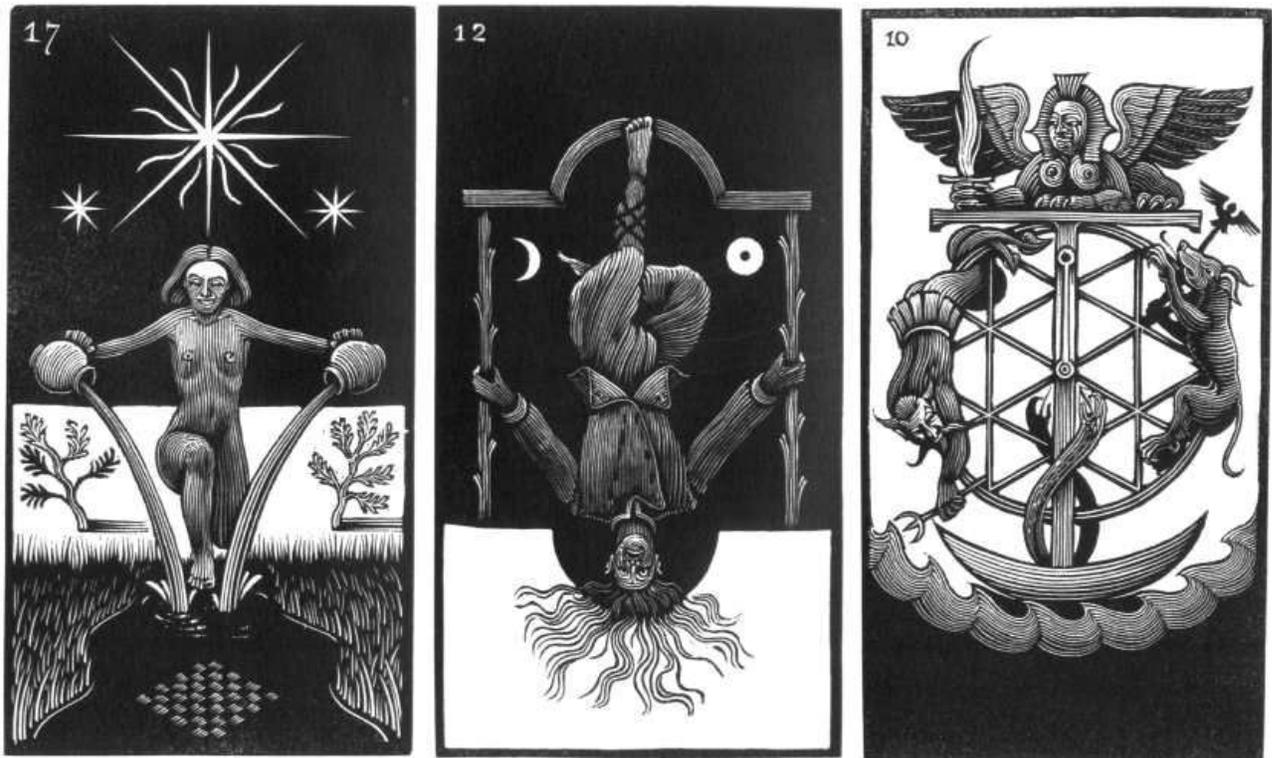


The Swiss artist Francoise Corboz produced her Tarot de Belmont major arcana deck in 1995. The artwork relies on her fine draughtsmanship and much of the card area is left showing her fine pen drawing but with some areas heightened in intense watercolour. The human figures are depicted with thin and elongated forms and the imagery is full of humour. The print quality is excellent allowing all the details of her pen work to show.



The name of this tarot is from the artist's home town, Belmont-sur-Lausanne, in the canton of Vaud, Switzerland.

Actual woodcut prints are rather rare nowadays, but the Prague based typographic artist, Frantisek Storm, in 2001 went to the effort of making woodcuts of the 22 major arcana. These have a delightfully clean line, as one might expect from a typographer. The incised lines themselves show the characteristic thinning towards the end of the stroke of the graver that one sees in quality wood engraving. Many of the designs are quite conventional with one or two interesting variations. Storm uses an interesting technique for modelling and shading the human figures which appear almost as contour lines.



A number of modern tarots are made to look like woodcuts though these are printed using conventional printing techniques. There are only a few woodcut tarots, among which is the *Tarocchi di Sigismondo* we looked at earlier, and three issued by the publisher Pheljna edizion' d'arte e suggestione, the *Tarocchi di Gambedotti* in 1982, that of *Giordano* in 1983 and the *Clizia* in 1985. These three were each printed out on a long sheet of paper folded concertina style.

Thus we see how European artists were able to pursue tarot, considering it only as a source of imagery, a lens to focus their artistic inspiration, rather than seeing their task as one of creating a divinatory or esoteric system.

To conclude, let us look at one of a series of prints of fine pencil drawings by the Austrian artist René Marcel Riviere made in 1987. These are large prints, 13 x 8.5 inches (325x 215mm). Here is the drawing for Strength. The artwork is in deliciously soft pencil beautifully modelled, though the style is on some cards rather brutal and often erotic.



Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot

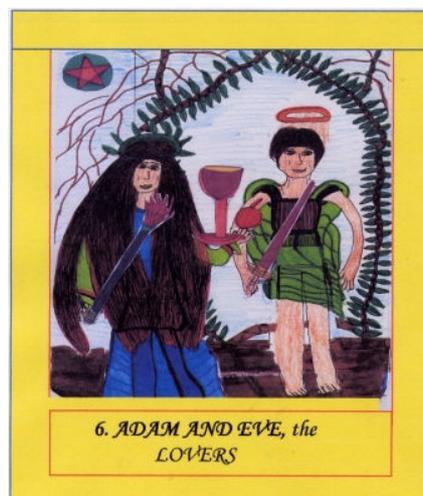
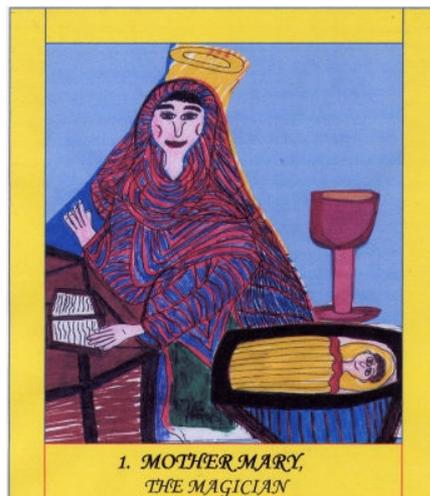


Lesson 24 : Naïve Tarots.

In contrast to the high art tarots we looked at in the previous lesson let us now examine tarots which can be described as being in a 'naïve' style. As we shall see in this area not all is as it might appear to be at first glance.

One of the best examples of naïve art in tarot is *The Star that Never Walks Around*, 2002, by the American, Stella Bennett, who confessed in the book that came with the cards that she had little artistic ability. We looked at her artwork in lesson 20 and saw that despite her perhaps rather poor drawings, the deck worked rather well.

A similar situation holds with the tarot art of the Canadian Cheryl Carlyle. She is very prolific, having produced seven full 78 card decks including *Sacred Circle Native Honour Tarot*, the *Cosmic Circle of Angels Tarot*, the *Guardian Angels of Mercy Tarot*, and the *Hello from Heaven*, with more in preparation.



Carlyle's abilities in drawing are far eclipsed by her imagination and this perhaps characterizes the best of naïve tarot art, where the creative concept struggles with the execution, and out of this dynamic there sometimes emerges a work that demonstrates its own merit. This is certainly true of both Cheryl Carlyle and Stella Bennett.

Another fascinating deck is the Mundane Tarot of American Marybeth Cantwell. She created the designs and drew the outlines in pen and then had her seven year old son, Jon, colour them in with coloured pencil or felt tip markers - the title card for the deck actually shows this in a little picture. The cards are printed on rather poor quality inkjet and cut out by hand with scissors so that they are a bit irregular. We are here far removed from the polished artwork of Folchi, Kat Black or Ciro Marchetti, but here the designs are domestic, autobiographical and full of humour.



The Fool shows a woman being given an ultrasound scan to confirm her pregnancy. The Hanged Man shows a woman upside down on one of those strange exercise machines that people are encouraged to buy, while in the Nine of Pentacle the Mother lies in bed with her child while a cat sleeps on the bedcover. In a strange way the designs for this deck are quite touching, as we are being given a little look into Marybeth Cantwell's life. Her tarot is partly an autobiography. It seems no artifice or cynical manipulation is being pressed on us here. What we see is what we get.

The Kippen Tarot of the Dutch woman Tina Augustijn is a delightful photographic tarot of chickens seen through the 22 arcana.



I De Magiër



XVI De Toren



XIV Gematigdheid

Tina Augustijn seems to have a smallholding with a number of different breeds of chickens and having taken photographs of them over the years came to realise that some of these photos could well stand as tarot images.

As I said earlier, all is not as it appears on the surface. Consider the tarot of Elsa Dax.

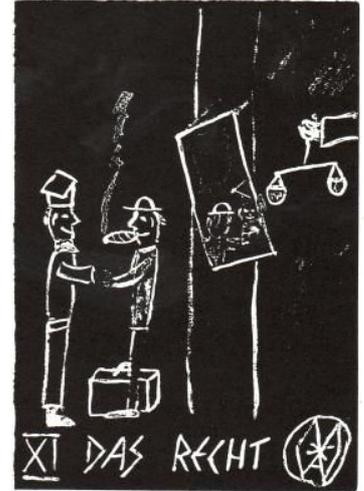


These would appear at first glance to be rather naively painted images, using acrylic broken down into thin washes. The forms lack modelling and appear to show little technical competence. However, we here have no outsider artist such as Cheryl Carlyle or Marybeth Cantwell, but Dax is in fact one of the major players in the anti-conceptual art movement and has had many international exhibitions and been represented by the prestigious Saatchi Gallery in London. Dax is part of a modern art grouping called Stuckism, a term which refers to a derogatory remark of Tracy Emin, one of the conceptualist Brit Art group, who said that figurative art was “stuck” (in a rut) as opposed to the perceived creativity of conceptualism. The Stuckists were apparently happy to adopt this title and promoted figurative painting in opposition to the prevailing conceptual art embraced by the art establishment in Nicholas Serota (formerly of Tate Modern) and the Turner Prize. Dax’s work must be seen in context. She is an insider, part of a well established art movement with a programme of promoting a return to figurative painting and a retreat from the excesses and emptiness of conceptual art. She seems to adopt a style close to naïve art, rather than producing highly finished and detailed photo-realist paintings. We see in her tarot designed in 1999, a battle of modern art movements being played out. All is not as it seems.

An earlier example of a tarot deck by an established artist which appears to be a naïve deck, is the Tarot 88 of the artist Johannes (Hans) Dörflinger, whose tarot of 1975 we looked at in the previous lesson on European Art Tarots. That was obviously in an abstract modern style, but for the tarot prints he later produced in 1988, he adopted forms which appear to be contrived in an unpolished figurative style. During the last decades of the twentieth Century it was difficult for artists (with a few exceptions) to work in a representational figurative style as the art establishment and media had an agenda of promoting an unpolished almost offhand manner of execution. Artistic creativity was stylised as work which appeared spontaneously without much thought, skill or obvious technique. Of course, this was often merely a device and contrivance of the artist. Here Dörflinger, deeply influenced by tarot imagery for much of his artistic life, created tarot prints acceptable to the art world of that time.



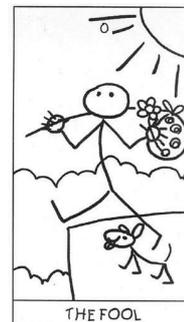
Matthias Bormann is a German esoteric polemicist who has written many books and appears to see society through the filter of conspiracy theories. He works in the field of alternative therapy and has formed a Thanatopsychologisches Institute. This appears to present a psychotherapy which focuses on coming to terms with death. He proclaims himself a priest of the 'mattoistischen Ordens' the Order of Fools, even issuing CD-Roms and books about his magical order. In 1994 he issued his tarot deck and book *Tarot des Matto*.



His Fool lies tied to a bed, like a prisoner in a torture chamber, and his brain appears to be being affected by the rays from the outside world, pictured as the window. From his mouth a bubble of spirit seems to emerge perhaps in way of defiance. Bormann's world is one of paranoia and the manipulation of the individual by external State forces. Thus his Justice shows justice dispensed by a figure with a cigar, representing big business capitalism, and this is reflected in a mirror, suitable skewed at an angle to indicate bias. Bormann's art would appear to have been made with white chalk or crayon on black paper (or even scraperboard). His drawing is rather poor and the style somewhat childlike, but the images are well conceived. The concept is certainly not naïve though the execution of the artwork obviously is. Through his use of white on black, Bormann creates a disturbing space in which his tarot figures appear, and the rather clumsy and stark drawings seem to strengthen the sense of brooding menace that he appears to be trying to evoke in his *Tarot des Matto*. Thus his artwork is entirely appropriate and suited to his message.

Thus we can see that there are a number of reasons why artists have adopted a naïve style for their tarot. To understand their context we sometimes have to consider the 'sub-text' or the intention underlying the images. We cannot look naively at naïve art.

Most of the commercially produced tarots are rigorously edited as they have to survive financially, thus the artwork can sometimes become rather overworked and polished to a high degree. This provides the opportunity for artists to kick against these overly controlled images by adopting a simple style as a contrast to overproduced forms. A rather fine example of this is the Stick Figure Tarot of Lar deSouza, based on the Rider Waite deck. Lar is a professional caricaturist and illustrator, with a broad portfolio of work. In 1999 he produced a simply drawn tarot using the stick figure for the human form, often used by children. One might be excused for initially thinking this to be a naïve tarot but on deeper inspection one can see it is a work of a skilled artist adopting this style for a purpose.



The Italian Marco De Martinis should be well known to collectors, as he is a dealer, mostly in Italian art tarots. He knows the material and the artists as well as anyone. In 2006 he issued I Tarocchi di Marco in a small printed edition of 25 copies. The original artwork was in coloured marker pens, fine tipped pens and some applied tempera. The backs of the cards have a simple flower design added by hand after the fronts were printed.



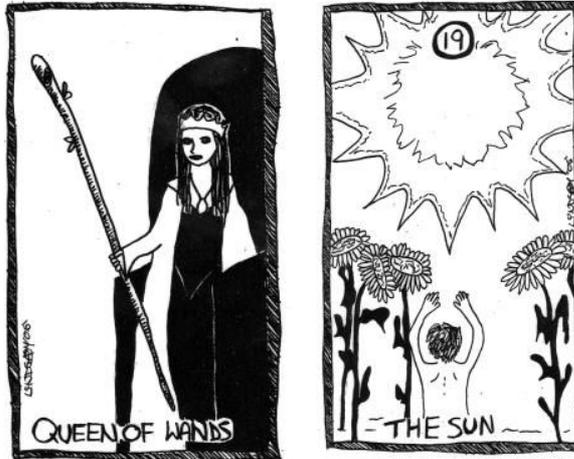
The phrase ‘naïve charm’ springs immediately to mind. There seems to be no subtext to this tarot, no embedded message or intent. De Martinis is totally aware of the art of modern tarot and yet has chosen to create a series of simple, childlike images in outline, done in bright almost luminous colours. Perhaps he was just having fun making a tarot and because of his situation as a tarot dealer was able to sell a few copies to his customers.



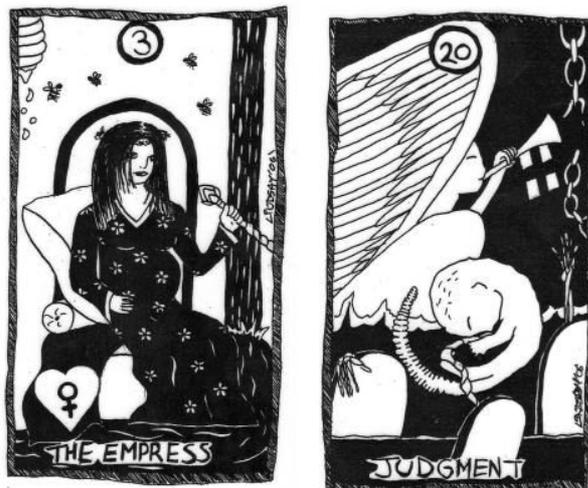
tarot taking delight in making a tarot of his own and wanting to add something to the large body of existing tarots.

Later in 2006 he made another tarot, this time by hand, in an edition of only five copies – I Tarocchi della “Suggestione”. These were made on parchment effect paper. The images are sketched in soft pencil then coloured with watercolours. The use of the translucent parchment no doubt helped the production, the copies could be traced through from an original master. Again there seems to be no grand scheme underlying the imagery and we must just think of this arising as a result of a passionate collector of wanting to add something to the large

At first sight Elliot's Tarot, designed and hand made by Lindsay Waterworth of Tasmania in Australia would seem to be a rather appealing and naively produced variation on the familiar Rider Waite deck in black and white.



The artwork has been drawn in pen and then large areas filled in by brushing black ink. The effect is powerful due to the contrasting areas. Lindsay Waterworth is a pagan wiccan and seems also to have some interest in the goth lifestyle, and we catch glimpses of these influences in details of the imagery. However, this deck arose out of a personal tragedy for Lindsay Waterworth. The 'Elliot' of the title was her son, who was born prematurely with a life-threatening medical condition and sadly died after eight months. He spent his whole life in hospital undergoing operations and medical procedures. Out of that terrible experience, Lindsay Waterworth has created her tarot as a kind of memorial to her son, but here we find no descent into maudlin sentiment, and instead a kind of celebration of life. There are only a very few subtle references, which one will not pick up unless one knows what Waterworth had gone through. The imagery is poignant yet never sentimental.



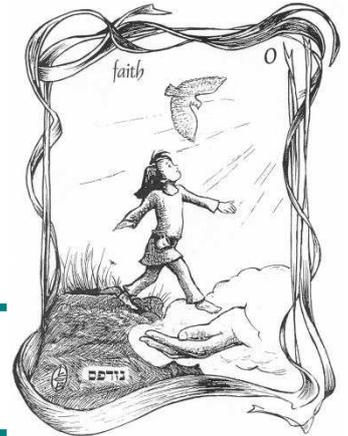
The Empress is here shown pregnant, and Judgment show the angel trumpeting the awakening of the souls from their graves, but here it is a foetus rather than a fully grown human form. This echoes the tragedy of Elliot's life in that he was judged, in a sense, before

his birth, by being struck with his congenital medical condition. One would never pick up that resonance merely by examining the cards with no knowledge of the artist's life experience. Lindsay Waterworth's Major Arcana have some focus on death and she uses the image of a figure split into a skeleton half and a living half in her Justice and Temperance cards, and the skeleton appears also on the World and the Hanged Man. The deck does not, however, dwell on death and her personal tragedy, but is wonderfully open, honest and life-affirming. There is no indication given with the deck about Elliot and Lindsay's life, though one can find this on her personal web site.

We earlier looked at the autobiographical Mundane Tarot of American Marybeth Cantwell and might be tempted to draw a parallel, but here Lindsay Waterworth surely transcends autobiography and produces a wonderfully celebratory deck. Whoever thought that tarot drawn in a naïve style could not be powerful and engaging !



Adam McLean's Study Course on the artwork and symbolism of modern tarot



Lesson 25 : Some enigmas in place of a conclusion.

Now that our study course is drawing to a close it is timely to look back and review something of what we have been looking at in these lessons. We have been able to survey the landscape of modern tarot from a number of different perspectives and become aware that there are many ways in which we can explore the riches of modern tarot. We have looked at the different purposes tarot has been used for, and at a few of the diverse themes for which certain designs were devised to reflect. We have seen that we could not ignore the many tarot designs found printed in books rather than issued as actual cards. It has been possible for us to look at some of the many Japanese, Chinese and Russian tarots with their wonderfully broad sweep of designs and creativity. There remains many more avenues of interpretation through which to view modern tarot art, and later in 2008 a second or advanced study course of twenty five lessons will be issued, following up many other strands that have only just been hinted at in this initial course. This course together with the advanced course will be the foundation for a large scale international exhibition on the artwork of modern tarot currently being planned for 2010.

Pleasant though it can be for our analytical minds to look at tarot using the perspectives introduced in this course, is this merely presenting an aesthetic exercise? Is there any other way in which this course can be of value to the student?

One of the great problems with modern tarot is the sheer volume of material. Well over two thousand decks have been printed. While a significant number of these are mass market publications available in print runs of thousands and consequently can be bought new or second-hand for £5-£20 (\$10-\$40), many others were issued in very small editions and consequently are both rare and hard to find and usually rather expensive at £75-£150 (\$150-\$300).

Many people taking this course will already have built up their own collections of decks. One of the great problems in building a collection is giving it some focus. Naturally, many people just buy decks because they like them or are somehow engaged by them. This can result in a rather strange melange, an idiosyncratic selection of material somehow significant to the individual who collected them. Often the purchase of each deck has some story associated with it. A few other people adopt the wider strategy of buying everything they find. For this one needs deep pockets. A collection of say one thousand decks probably requires an investment of

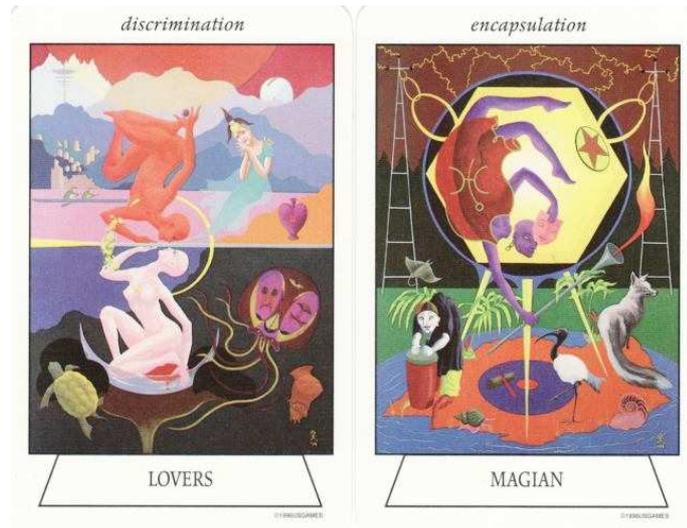
over £30,000 (\$60,000). Luckily we live in an age when the Internet has made various tools available to us, through online auctions and specialist dealers, so building a large collection is not difficult, merely time consuming and expensive. There are only a few such obsessive collectors.

Most people have to narrow their vision a little and somehow focus on a smaller collection within their financial means. This study course, hopefully, has shown us how to identify a small group of decks linked in some way, by theme, medium, region or whatever. Collecting a smaller grouping of decks over a period of some years is entirely practical and realisable. An area such as cat themed tarots is sufficiently small for even a modest investor to collect, even though there are a few items under that theme that are rather more difficult to find and expensive. For the more ambitious a larger grouping, say Japanese tarots, is considerably more challenging with well over 100 items to find, many from the 1980's and 90's, long out of print and difficult to locate. It would probably take many years to accrue a substantial Japanese collection and it would require considerable investment, certainly in excess of £5000 (\$10,000) as many of these obscure decks fetch prices well over £50 (\$100). On the other hand decks given away free with magazines, are usually inexpensive and yet almost no one is collecting these. Consequently, one can build a good specialist collection of this material for a more modest outlay, though items can be very difficult to find in good condition. Self-published tarots are another group one might consider. Some of these are extremely expensive, and yet others are available at ludicrously low prices. One finds one can sometimes buy these amazing works of art produced in very small editions, often for only a few pounds or dollars. As the artist/producer does not make any money out of selling these, they rapidly lose enthusiasm and give up production, and thus one ends up with a collection of 22 or 78 original pieces of art of which only ten or twenty examples exist. Collecting this material is risky but very rewarding, as one is dealing directly with the originating artist.

This course presents a view that modern tarot art documents social history. Sadly almost all art historians dismiss tarot as trivial and will just not engage with it at all. Libraries and museums also take a negative view on tarot, labelling it as ephemera, and thus on the same level as printed handouts and posters. So no institutions seem to collect tarot. Indeed, it is difficult to gift them to a library, as I found out recently when trying to make provision in my Will for my own collection, in that I could find no local major library willing to receive them as a beneficiary of my estate. Thus tarot remains firmly in the hand of the amateur collector. Modern tarot art is underappreciated and to most cultural historians totally invisible. This present study course is an attempt to reassess tarot art and recontextualise it as a key document of modern social history. In modern tarot we see, as through a lens or mirror, aspects of our society held up for us to view. The tight structure of the imagery requires the tarot artist to find some new angle on the symbolism and thus they often endue or fold into the work, their views on things happening in their society, sometimes entirely consciously but in other cases just absorbing, by osmosis, aspects of what is going on around them. Tarot art thus often reflects back to us the societal currents, the way we live, the culture and politics of our modern age. Almost no cultural historians have recognised tarot as such a resource. Perhaps, in time, this study course and the proposed exhibition will set this matter right, so that people can see what a treasure house modern tarot is.

We will conclude this first course with a few ‘lollipops’, ‘weirdos’ or otherwise interesting items, that are almost beyond categorisation. These do not easily fit into categories yet are a part of the richness that is tarot art.

Among the wonderfully creative and enigmatic designs is Julia Turk’s Navigators Tarot of the Mystic Sea. This mass market tarot bravely issued by U.S. Games Systems is quite challenging in its strange use of symbols.



John Glock’s Eternal Dream Tarot is also enigmatic and dispenses with titles or numbers for the cards. Through his beautiful pen drawings he explores tarot imagery from new perspectives often finding deliciously original ways of representing the standard tarot Major Arcana for us.



Penny Chesney's Globalight Angelic Tarot also finds new ways for imaging the arcana to us. She views her creative process as one of channelling, receiving inspiration directly from her subconscious or the Celestine, or Angelic Host themselves. However she chooses to see her source of ideas, her imagery is powerful and original. She incorporates a number of bird and animal forms into each design. The deck is printed in strong, saturated and intense colours.



The Fool is so different from the conventional image, with him emerging from an egg, though perched precariously on the edge of a cliff. Below a crow pushes its beak through a crowned snake seizing its own tail and forming a circle. This is the ouroboros familiar from alchemy. Each image is set in a shield-like form and surrounded by a decorative border.



The Tarot Divinatoire de l'Etoile Rana by Régine Faudot is yet another example, we can turn to, of creative reworking of the imagery. The artist suggests that she came upon this almost by accident when making other drawings. Someone suggested that they could well form a tarot and Faudot set to work and in no time at all had produced these 22 cards of the Star Rana. Rana is the common name for Delta Eridani, a 3.54 magnitude giant star in the

constellation of Eridanus (the River), in the immediate stellar neighbourhood of the Sun, but whether this has anything to do with Régine Faudot's concept for her deck seems unanswerable. Her Magician dispenses entirely with his table and magical implements and instead sits in the familiar yoga posture breathing fire onto his left hand while his right arm is metamorphosing into a bush or tree. Death quotes the image of Salvador Dali's famous 'Saint John of the Cross' painting, while below, the cloaked skeleton of death sees her living form reflected in a pool of water, a wonderfully enigmatic image.

L'Oeil de Myrddin ou Tarot des Princes is a weird French tarot of 78 cards by Philippe Rouchier and Francis Simard. It is dedicated to Steve Hackett, the guitarist of the group Genesis, whose solo album, *Voyage of the Acolyte* of 1975, had its compositions based on tarot imagery. The booklet accompanying the deck is suitably obscure and does not really open us much into the nature of the enigmatic designs. Instead it seems more like a booklet of riddles.



The paintings for this tarot image the forms to us in high relief, like carved soapstone or even wood. The artist has thus achieved delightful kind of faux bas-relief. His imagery is enigmatic and often minimalistic. Thus the Fool only shows a boulder falling from a cliff over the sea, presumably dislodged by the Fool walking along the sea cliffs. The Moon present a rather morose and self absorbed bird by a pool with the moon shining above.

The Energetic Tarot of Wilfried Teschler produced in 1986, remains stubbornly cryptic. Teschler writes “This Energetic Tarot does not show any pictures in the usual sense. By the order of the colors and forms, an energy field, that represents the archetype presented through the tarot energetically in its first recognizable form, was created on the individual cards”. Here we have presumably, the essence of tarot, presented to us in a few dabs and blotches of crayon colour on a white background. The term ‘minimalist’ hardly does justice to these. Damien Hirst’s dot pictures are rich in form compared to these most challenging of tarot images. Even card X, presumably corresponding to the Wheel of Fortune though labelled ‘Neutrality’, is devoid of any circular reference. Perhaps here tarot art has gone to its extreme point of abstraction, and to some eyes doubtless exceeded it. Teschler presents his ideas on his tarot eloquently in a six page booklet, though he keeps to high principles rather than giving any detail as to how his pattern of blotches reflects a tarot arcanum. This is one deck most people will pass over in silence.



Having reached this extreme outpost of tarot art we bring this foundation course to an end. We will be following up many more threads in the next course, looking at oil painted tarots, tarots from South America, Poland and other countries and regions, modern art Tarocchi, prolific tarot artists, collage tarots, Kabbalistic themed decks, self-published tarots, pastiche decks, magazine tarots and many other perspectives. Despite the twenty five lessons over 200 plus pages of this course there remain so many more themes to address. Modern tarot art never ceases to astound and surprise and there are vast areas left still to explore.