

# TAROSOPHIST INTERNATIONAL

THE MAGAZINE OF TAROSOPHY® & TAROT

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INNOVATIVE & INSPIRED TAROT FOR ALL TAROT READERS AND STUDENTS

THOTH DECK ANNUAL SPECIAL ISSUE

FEATURING THE WORLDS LEADING  
TAROT, CROWLEY & THOTH EXPERTS

RACHEL POLLACK, MARY K.  
GREER, K. FRANK JENSEN, LON  
MILO DUQUETTE, MARCUS KATZ,  
R. LEO GILLIS, DR. RICHARD  
KACZYNSKI AND MANY MORE

PRESENTING:

AN ALEISTER CROWLEY TIMELINE

THE THOTH TAROT AND THE  
WESTERN ESOTERIC TRADITION

THOTH DECK PRINTING HISTORY

TEACHING THE THOTH TAROT DECK

HOW TO LEARN THE THOTH DECK

DEATH THROUGH THE THOTH DECK

RACHEL POLLACK TALKS THOTH

THE EGYPTIAN DEITIES ON THE CARDS

THE 10 OF DISKS IS SCREWED!

FOUR THINGS ABOUT THE FOOL

ESSENTIAL BACKGROUND READING

THE QABALAH OF THE NINE CHAMBERS

FOUR THINGS ABOUT THE FOOL

THE HANDBOOKS OF THOTH

AND A MAGICAL NEW WAY OF USING  
TAROT: GATED SPREADS!

PLUS EXCLUSIVE IMAGES & PHOTOS OF  
COLLECTORS ITEMS

ALSO INCLUDED IN THIS ISSUE:

TAROSOPHY 2009 CONFERENCE  
REPORT FROM THE LAKES

TAROSOPHIST OF THE YEAR AWARD!

COVER ART BY ACRYLICK ALCHEMICAL

ANNUAL SPECIAL EDITION

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# TAROSOPHIST INTERNATIONAL

The Magazine of Tarosophy® & Tarot.

Innovative & Inspired tarot for all tarot readers & students

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Cover by Marlana  
<http://acrylickalchemical.com/>

*This first of the special annual issues of **Tarosophist International**  
is dedicated to*

***Anistita Argenteum Astrum***

*The Priestess of the Silver Star*

*She whose light leads the way to the Arcanum Arcanorum, the Secret of Secrets.*

***Vos Vos Vos Vos  
V.V.V.V.***



*... and to **Tali Goodwin**, who patiently typed out pages of transcript, scanned materials  
and much more - at the last minute - to ensure this magazine met deadline  
with every last piece of submitted material.*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editor would like to acknowledge Rachel Pollack, Mary K. Greer, Dr. Richard Kaczynski, Marlena Schafer (Acrylic Alchemical), and Lon Milo DuQuette in particular for working within their busy schedules to contribute to this special issue of *Tarosophist International*, the magazine of Tarot Professionals.

To all other contributors who have engaged with the Thoth deck in so many ways, you are also acknowledged, thanked and applauded.

To my wife who has wondered if she would ever see me sane and whole again, particularly after the day when I rushed downstairs three months ago to play her the sound of an Egyptian Ibis - and proceeded to imitate it.

## PERMISSIONS

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## IMPORTANT STATEMENT

The work in this magazine has taken many hundreds of hours over three months to produce - including the hundreds of e-mails, research, and administration tasks involved in such a project. It has tied up both myself, my assistant, and all the other contributors when we could have been doing other - paid - work.

It is unfortunate that I have to state that whilst this magazine is FREE as a download to members of Tarot Professionals, and may be purchased by members and non-members as a hardcopy print version, the download is not to be transmitted to others, remaining for your use only.

We are raising the bar on Tarot and can only do that with your support. Do not allow this work to be pirated or copied or we'll all be back to Blogging "cut 'n' pasted" inaccuracies and fallacies as the sole representatives of our noble Art & Science!

## THANK YOU

*With a project of this order, working to a tight deadline to meet schedule, it has been impossible to proof-read in absolute detail. Any significant errors or amendments will be corrected in the download version and the print-ready version if felt necessary. The editor accepts all responsibility for any such issues!*



## EDITOR'S FOREWORD

With characteristic bravado, Aleister Crowley (1875-1947) intended his new Tarot deck to take three to six months to produce, give or take holidays, and yet manage to serve as a "Magical Atlas of and guide to the Universe" for the next 2,000 years, that is to say, the whole of the new "Aeon of Horus". In the event, he and Lady Frieda Harris (1877-1962), an artist who became one his ardent followers, spent almost five years labouring on the creation of the deck, whilst suffering various misfortunes, mundane and magical.

In 1942, the paintings for the **Thoth** deck of the "Egyptian Tarot" were exhibited in an Oxford gallery, but neither Crowley nor Harris lived to see them printed on any large scale as cards for divination or self-discovery. Since then, the deck has pursued its own course, as all living (creative) manifestations seem to do - with a veering printing history and response from Tarot enthusiasts which are both covered in this special annual issue of *Tarosophist International*.

Although we are approaching the Centenary celebration of the publication of the Rider-Waite-Smith deck, it was thought for the first annual celebration of this Tarot magazine that it should be the Thoth deck that be revisited. It is an astonishing piece of creativity, and although Crowley himself suggested in 1939 that the greatest difficulty of this work was to make a "completely harmonious pack" it is my belief that he and Harris achieved this - and more - in a truly magical and luminous manner.

As an artefact of a magical working and collaboration, as a deck of cards, as artwork and as an illustrated guide to the cosmology of arguably the world's most accomplished magician (and certainly the most notorious) it is hoped that the Thoth deck here will gain at least a little further re-discovery and prompt you to explore further into its many mysteries.

*Marcus Katz MBA, M.A., PhD Candidate*

## TAROSOPHY™

**Tarosophy**, n. Conflation of **Tarot** (from It., *triumph*?) + **Sophia** (from G. Σοφία, *wisdom*). Meaning lit. 'the wisdom of tarot'. Referred specifically to the living (divine) wisdom of the art and science of Tarot as practised by *Tarosophists*.



MICHAEL ORLANDO YACCARINO

**Practical, ethical, and mystical advice  
for the professional Tarot reader**

## Lucre

When wealth accumulates beyond a certain point, it must either become completely inert and cease to be wealth, or call in the aid of intelligence to use it rightly.

—Aleister Crowley, *The Book of Thoth*

Among an excess of glorious moments comprising the animated classic *Yellow Submarine* (1968), the introduction of George Harrison into this phantasmagoria was of instantaneous appeal when first encountered in my childhood. The most mystical Beatle is shown enshrined amongst a pulsating flock of winged sphinxes, his nirvanic gaze hinting at a serenity few mortals ever achieve. Here was an icon deserving admiration—and one within the rarely spiritually-profound domain of pop culture. A definite yearning for his fab threads only made this vision all the more veneration worthy.

Perhaps the way my dazzled eyes perceived this psychedelically-stylish hero shaped my notion of how a genuine Tarot master should exist—free from every temporal concern, while practicing the divinatory arts; seeking cosmic consciousness so as to share inner-discoveries made with the enlightened; and then finally finding the absolutely

perfect Nehru jacket. In an ideal world of tangerine trees and marmalade skies, this indeed would be so. But alas, at least in the universe of my current habitation, I am fiscally bound to the landlord, grocer, and taxman.

The difference between the professional plumber and the do-it-yourself drain dabbler is that the former typically receives payment—that is, cold, hard cash. A service has been provided. Remuneration is in order. At least analogically-speaking, the professional Tarot reader joins this noble tradesman in rooting out deeper realms. So then it is reasonable, too, that we should merit financially for our efforts as service providers. Still, the philosophical pros and cons of receiving payment for what many among our ranks consider work bordering on the sacred is a landmine-sensitive subject. Whatever the position, most find the nearly unavoidable undoing of purse strings at the start or finale of a reading awkwardly disruptive. This is largely so following a particularly meaningful session, almost compelling the reader to query: “Did you want fries with that?”





Nevertheless, and quite bluntly, the ability to earn money through Tarot is ultimately beneficial to both reader and seeker alike. This is especially true for the majority of us who are not financially carefree, thus fully employed—and therefore often forced to utilize the ever-fleeting commodity of time with absolute discretion. The seemingly futile hunt for the illusive hour in which a new spread can be learned or a new Tarot book delved into rages on.

Compounding this time-crunch dilemma is the sobering adage “it takes money to make money.” For if not reading in our homes, we must typically pay out round-trip petrol, tube, or train costs to reach reading destinations, not to mention lunch money. And for any performing our art in a shop or centre dependent largely on a walk-in clientele, we surely share the experience of spending a day either just barely recouping or not even meeting such requisite initial outlay. So overall, being compensated for our services more easily allows us the capacity to devote these hours to the cards. And as experience is the best instructor of all, this enables us to grow in proficiency as readers, thus giving our clients the quality they deserve. Some may brand this approach as mercenary. Wrong—it is simple economics coupled with common sense.

At the risk of using Wonderland-worthy logic in contradiction of the preceding, I further propose that we donate our skills. Now I hasten to add here that this be done selectively and only on occasion. In the least, I firmly consider our Tarot work in service of the spirit. For through this process, the seeker may gain a better perspective of the soul’s journey, and to identifying and overcoming impediments to its progress. Surely, the world at large would benefit from any form of awareness elevation.

“Great! So where do I sign up?”

Not to worry! For if we choose to do our magnanimous bit, opportunities will indeed arise. These might take the form of reading at a charity event in benefit of a worthwhile cause. Or instead, be catalytic in suggesting the same for an organization that might be receptive to such a prospect, but not having considered the idea on their own. Alternatively and more privately, one might donate a portion of even just a single reading to where it is needed.

And finally to complicate matters further, there exists an irritating quirk of human nature by which oftentimes a service received for free is undervalued.

So for those readers out there still requiring a genuine justification for receiving monetary compensation, I humbly lay this before you.

Do good work. Keep your rates sensible. And while we should temper our childhood dreams, never loose the capacity for bedazzlement as we sail on to the sun.



### Author Biography

Michael Orlando Yaccarino is a Professional Tarot Reader and instructor whose practice serves numerous private clients and groups. A bestselling author, Michael's varied work is published internationally.

Visit [www.orlandotarot.com](http://www.orlandotarot.com) to learn more.

Michael has written the original core manual material for Tarosophy's intermediate course *The Journey Begins*. Among the world's leading Tarot authorities who have offered their praise, Donald Michael Kraig, author of *Tarot & Magic*, describes it as "an informative introduction to the Tarot that is ideal for adult seekers looking for a lucid and complete approach to the subject without being overwhelming or simplistically childish."

Visit [www.marchesacasati.com](http://www.marchesacasati.com) to read about Michael's new book *The Marchesa Casati: Portraits of a Muse*, as well as *Infinite Variety: The Life and Legend of the Marchesa Casati*, *Portrait of a Muse*, and *The Princess of Wax: A Cruel Tale*—all co-written with Scot D. Ryersson.

Visit [www.marchesacasati.com](http://www.marchesacasati.com) for more details.

### Illustrator Biography (Common Reader Logo)

Scot D. Ryersson is a renowned illustrator, graphic artist, and bestselling author who has lived and worked in London, Toronto, Sydney, and New York City. He is the recipient of two Art Directors of London Awards and is responsible for acclaimed advertising campaigns for many Academy Award®-winning films.

In addition, Ryersson receives many private commissions to create one-of-a-kind, mixed-media art objects. Visit <http://arcanifacts.blogspot.com/> for more details.

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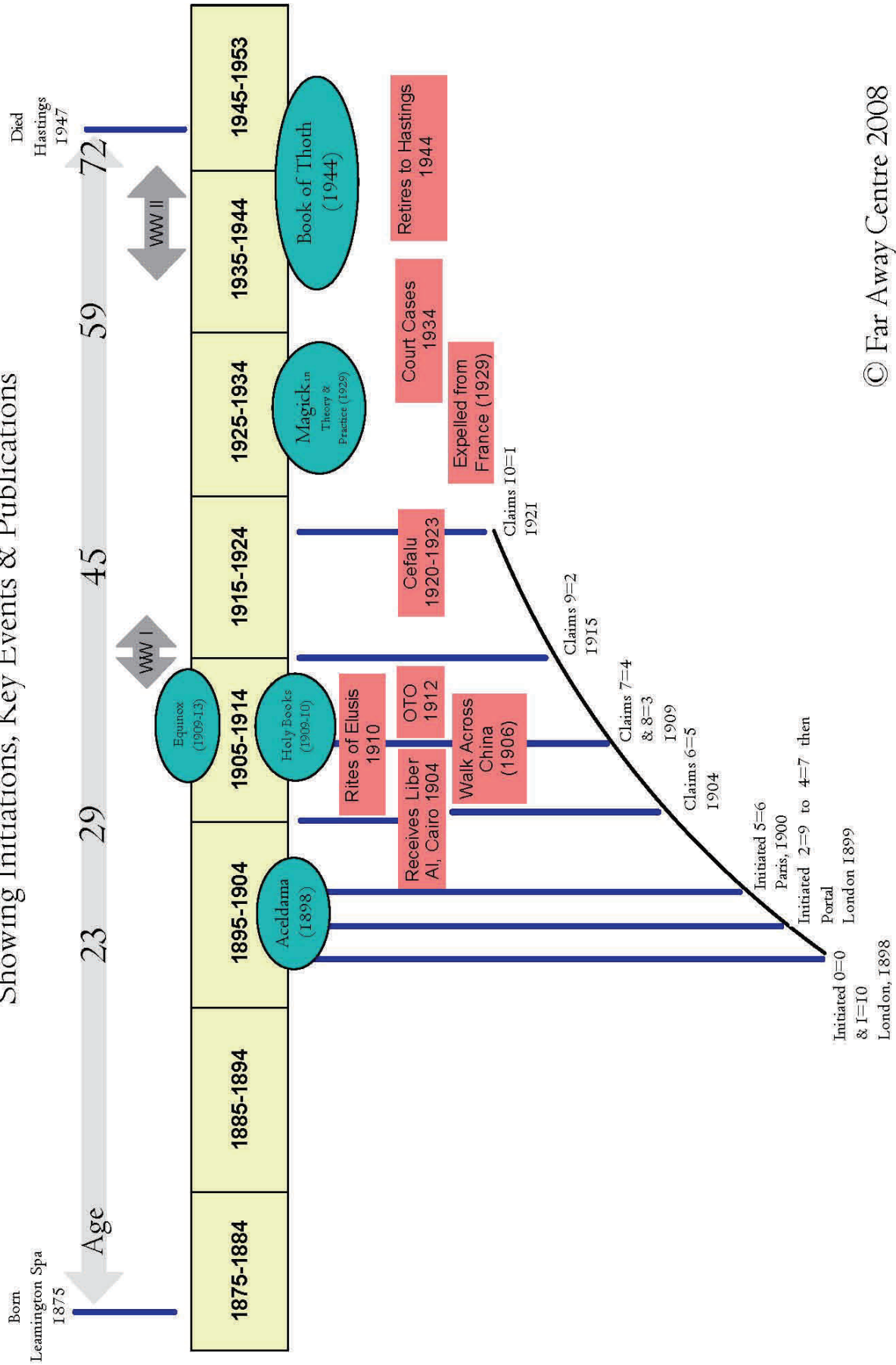
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Michael's unique gift combines decades of spiritual exploration, study with internationally renowned Tarot specialists, and intuitive knowing. A member of the world's leading Tarot organizations, he frequently performs private readings, as well as training workshops for individuals and groups in the art of Tarot reading. *The Common Reader*, Michael's column for *Tarosophist International*, offers practical, ethical, and mystical advice for the professional Tarot reader.

Visit Michael at: <http://www.orlandotarot.com>

# An Aleister Crowley Timeline

Showing Initiations, Key Events & Publications





# ALEISTER CROWLEY TIMELINE

**Marcus Katz**, Director of *Tarot Professionals* & PhD Researcher in *Western Esotericism*

It is entirely impossible to neatly summarise Aleister Crowley's life, attitude or world-view. His mercurial figure - poet, mountaineer, games-player, hunter, sportsman, chef, magician - was post-modern even prior to the modern. His single-minded lust for life in any form; thrilling, sexual, intellectual, cultural (he left his *Ragged Rag-Time Girls* to fend for themselves in Moscow as he raced off on yet another adventure) spanned two world-wars and bridged the late Victorian era to the pre-dawn of the swinging sixties.

The timeline on the previous page (taken from my *Thelema Intensive* weekend courses at Treadwells bookshop) illustrates Crowley's life in terms of selected key publications, his age, and his magical initiations. It also includes several geographical reference points, such as his walk across China, commune activity at Cefalu, and being expelled from both there and France in later years. It also pinpoints the key mystical experience which Crowley received in Cairo, 1904, in terms of the *Book of Thoth* and his overall cosmology or world-view. This was the reception of the inspired text, the *Book of the Law*.

One thing you may notice on this timeline is the length of time between the *Book of the Law* and the *Book of Thoth*. Also, the comparatively late date in Crowley's life and magical career in which the *Book of Thoth* deck was conceived and executed. It is no wonder that it contains such a heady dose of materials from the whole of Crowley's life and learning. It perhaps also represents a final attempt by Crowley to synthesise and promulgate the teachings he received.

As such, we must be forced to re-capture much of Crowley's life and teachings in order to fully comprehend (if such can be done) the art and magic of the deck. We should also be fully aware of the artistic and magical knowledge of Lady Frieda Harris, whom as *Tzaba* - her magical name enumerating to 93, the number of Crowley's *Thelemic* current - produced the deck with what Crowley admirably called "incredible rapidity" and "inexhaustible patience". According to Crowley, in some cases she painted the same card up to eight times to meet their joint vision.

Whilst acknowledging the undeniable debt of the teachings of the Golden Dawn, the work of A.E. Waite and Pamela Colman Smith in producing a 'popular' Tarot deck, the scale of ambition of Crowley & Harris's *Thoth* deck and its own unique legacy should not be underestimated. It is a rich and sprawling collation of magical teachings, myth, mystical vision and insight, and in the Court cards alone a precise examination of the human condition, which repays repeated reading. It represents a huge jump in the development of Tarot and opened the potential for all "art decks" to follow.

Having said it is impossible to summarise Crowley's life, for a through perspective of it, I can do no better than recommend his own autobiography, which is hilarious and wild, *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley*, and the best of recent biographies, *Perdurabo: The Life of Aleister Crowley*, by Dr. Richard Kaczynski.



Alternate Magician Card from the cover of  
the Exhibition Catalogue

[Katz Collection]





# TEACHING THE THOTH DECK

**Emma Sunerton-Burl**, Intuitive Psychic and Teacher of the Thoth Deck.

Why read with the Thoth deck? Often the deck we chose to read with is just a personal choice of what we are drawn to and this is reason enough, if you are drawn to the Thoth then it can work for you as a deck. It may be it is the beautiful imagery, the knowledge that it has been designed with many layers of correspondences or the reputation that this deck will give you very direct readings that appeals to you, or perhaps it is just a feeling it wants to work with you that has brought you to consider owning this wonderful deck.

I feel this deck is indeed a very powerful tool, there are so many systems of thought represented in the deck in so many ways that it can tap into our collective unconscious very easily and bring us to intuitive meanings easily particularly if you are focused on your inner world and how we can better manifest our potential in this lifetime. The deck is balanced with its depictions of the happiest times of our lives and also the hardest times of our lives. So you can build a trust in this deck that it will tell you the truth of a situation. When it is difficult it won't pull the punches however it also shows the way to work through and overcome the difficulties through working on ourselves. Every situation we experience externally brings with it a lesson we can learn from and by using the Thoth tarot to help us work through these lessons it opens the doors to our inner wisdom and healing.

So it is balanced, beautiful, multi-layered, direct and has no taboos - all topics can be expressed through this powerful deck.

Many people however, despite the attraction of the Thoth - find that they don't know where to start once they have the deck in their hands, that somehow there is a resistance to working with it. It might be you have tried to read with it and have been put off by the direct keywords on some of the cards and the feeling of darkness that may be alongside these words. It might be you have read some of the books about the deck and have found the information from so many systems of thought coming together in one deck just seems overwhelming, how will you learn all these things and be able to use the deck.

Perhaps you have heard of the reputation of Crowley and are nervous to be associated with some of the darker sides of his life. So the first place to start with reading with this deck is to look at your associations with it in the beginning and see which of these are really true for you and which are just getting in the way from someone else's viewpoints that you have taken on as true.

Once you have acknowledged your misgivings and possible blocks to using the deck you can then move forward. You can start working with the Thoth from wherever you are at the time. You bring to it your current knowledge even if incomplete and allow your intuition to fill in the gaps.



You may know some Astrology, or be familiar with the Kabbalah and these can help you access the cards intuitively as well as your own life experience. When you see an image on a card you can allow yourself to free associate with it and very often attain something close to an intended meaning for the card. Another method of accessing your intuition is to journey into the card using a guided visualisation technique and to meet and converse with the characters and elements depicted in the card. People often experience the card landscape changing as they do this and additional images and messages come to them through the cards journey. This technique is good to open out your intuition in a general sense as well as when connected to a specific card image.

Often when we are using our intuition we are tapping into what Jung called the collective unconscious and here lies the archetypal energies that the Tarot embodies in itself. These energies are also represented by astrology and also the Kabbalah and consequently when the images on the Thoth were created the symbols associated with these archetypes were represented on the cards.

This is the case to a greater and lesser extent with all Tarot as each card can be said to be an archetypal energy - however with the Thoth the correspondences are well worked out and can be seen in so many different systems that there are many different access points to the cards energies. We just have to allow our thinking minds to step back enough to access the collective and so be shown the meanings needed.

When I work with the Thoth I start from the Jungian approach suggested by Gerd Zeigler in his books on the Thoth, this gives a good starting point to understanding the depth of process that goes on within us and also how the Tarot relates to this - it also shows us how to gain the healing potential from the most difficult of the cards. Sometimes if we work with the Tarot for ourselves it is very hard to see how a card which on the surface is very negative is not actually gloom and doom for us - whilst it is telling the truth of a difficult time it is also pointing the way to work with this within ourselves to create healing and thereby bring peace within us.

I feel to work with the Thoth in this way on your own personal journey also adds to the ability to have to work with others in their lives and be able to stand alongside another and indicate the way forward when you have covered the terrain yourself - for you to 'know' the card on a deep level and how it acted within your own life you are then able to have a deeper knowledge of it when it is active for another in a reading you may be doing.

Using all these techniques you can then form a truly personal relationship with the deck, no longer based upon someone else's meaning or an accepted meaning of a card you have your own library of experience to draw upon as well as your intuitive access to the card. From this stage of development you can then gather your own associations for cards from others use of them and how they work for them in their lives - you can add to your system of knowledge information from traditional sources - taking a deeper looking into the astrological correspondences and understanding how the astrology on a card can add another layer of meaning to it. Here too additional practical situations, issues, people, places, careers etc can be linked to cards through the astrological association.

Similarly with the Kabbalah, Hebrew etc. Each system you are drawn to learn and use adds yet more information you can intuitively draw upon in a reading. By coming from this intuitive approach you can prevent yourself being blocked by the intellectual systems as you approach a reading, allowing the things you have learned intellectually to spring up from within you when they are needed rather than feeling overwhelmed about what a card could possibly mean from your intellectual mind.

So get out your decks and have a go, ask yourself about your blocks to the deck (perhaps even ask the Thoth itself too through a reading) and allow yourself to get to know your deck intuitively.



## Thoth Tarot Training Intuitive & Psychological Perspectives

- Develop your relationship with your Thoth deck in this supportive and personal environment
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*This course has been transformational. The techniques provided by Emma and Semele for intuition development are phenomenal. In 16 weeks I managed to achieve something which I have been working on for the past 15 years. I have no hesitation in recommending this course. It is fantastic.*

*Colleen Tucker, Berkshire*

**Emma Sunerton-Burl** – Intuitive Psychic has been working with the Thoth Tarot for 20 years. She lives with her husband and son in Snowdonia, North Wales. 01690 750204

# CARE & FEEDING OF YOUR THOTH DECK

**Jonathan Kaneko-James**, London-based Tarosophist and Ritual Magician.

It's all too common in the Thoth tarotist's life – you meet someone, they say “Oh yes, I've got one of those...” and then introduce you to shocking scenes of cruelty: 78 cards crammed into a small, dark enclosure. Never cleaned, sharing the tiny space with a still pristine copy of James Wasserman's instructions for using the Thoth Tarot Deck.

Yes, they've done all the things that people do when they buy a copy of the Thoth Tarot: they read the *Book of Thoth*, maybe bought a copy of Lon Milo DuQuette's book, and then gave up. Perhaps they'd scoured the life of Aleister Crowley in the vain hope of getting some closure, or understanding what they'd gotten themselves into. Poor fools, walk this way.

Here's how I did it, possibly how you could do it. Read on:

- **Show me the money:** buy a copy of the *Thoth Tarot Deck*. I recommend that you get the nice, hand sized version as it's just a more practical deck for shuffling and so on.
- **Go free-range:** get a little wooden box and a cloth of some kind. Take the cards out of the paper carton, wrap them in the cloth and put them inside the wooden box. It's more pleasant for the cards and looks more professional.
- **Free your mind:** get the cards out of the box and take a good look at them, all of them. Get used to looking at them and handling them. Don't form any opinions about them yet, just get used to the idea that seeing your own Tarot Cards isn't the same as looking at your Mum naked.
- **Notice that he's changed the Court Cards:** Knights, not Kings; Princes, not Knights, Princesses not Pages, but a Queen is always a Queen. Recite that, make it your mantra. It's the most picky thing about the *Thoth Tarot*, and still trips me up from time to time.
- **Book of Thoth, first contact:** buy a copy of the *Book of Thoth*, then read Part One. If you're already experienced with the Tarot compare that *Thoth Deck* to your other deck (then tell it 3.5” is the national average) and read up on the different cards and numbering. Don't worry too much if you come away knowing less than before you picked up the book. It's just Crowley's writing style.
- **Regain your dignity:** *Thoth Tarot*, being not unrelated to Golden Dawn Tarot, uses a system of Elemental Dignities rather than reversing cards. The best book I have ever found for explaining this system, as well as all the rules of Astrological Correspondence as used in the *Thoth Tarot*, is *Tarot Decoded* by Liz Hazel.



- **Learn the Astrological Correspondences:** as I just mentioned, Liz Hazel's book will give you a good start. One of the problems with *Thoth Tarot* is that a lot of the happy-clappy notions of modern astrology we're all used to came along after Crowley and Harris were trained in Astrology, and therefore probably weren't really in their minds when they created the *Thoth Tarot*. I recommend *Real Astrology* by John Frawley and *Real Astrology Applied* by John Frawley for getting a grip on traditional astrology without all the later new-agey additions.
- **Don't forget to keep reading:** Tarot Cards, that is. Even if you're feeling all at sea, keep reading those Thoth Cards at every stage of this process. You might not be any good at first, but it'll help you get used to the changes in the deck and you'll be able to see your expanding knowledge taking root, which is heartening.
- **Incorporate Kabbalistics:** with elemental dignities and Astrological correspondences under your belt, you've got the Thoth system in a fairly tight headlock – now time to go in for the kill. Go to [www.digital-brilliance.com/kab/](http://www.digital-brilliance.com/kab/), it's the home of *Notes on Kabbalah* by Colin Low a free, and very good, book about the Kabbalah. Also check out Magicka School's on-line self-study Kabbalah course [www.magickaschool.com](http://www.magickaschool.com) or Marcus Katz's [www.kabbalahcourse.com](http://www.kabbalahcourse.com).
- **Check out the Hebrew letters:** they're a prominent feature on the cards, and give subtle changes to the meanings. In hindsight I'd say the best place to start would be *The Mystical Qabalah* by Dion Fortune, for it's excerpts from the Zohar about the properties of the Hebrew letters, followed up by *A Garden of Pomegranates* by Israel Regardie. Once you're confident you've got a handle on those two have a look at *Rhapsodies of the Bizarre* by J. Karlin, this is a translation of the essays that kicked off the whole Tarot divination thing, and had a huge influence on Crowley's *Thoth Tarot*.
- **Book of Thoth, second contact:** this time, surprisingly, you'll find yourself actually understanding it. Things that confused you before will start to really make sense. Now is the time to lock down the new cards and really kick the hell out of them: learn the Alchemical meanings of cards like **Art**, **Lust** and the **Aeon**. Take a good look at **Adjustment**. Learn everything there is to learn on them.
- **Read up on Egyptian Mythology:** Crowley and Co. were big fans of Egyptian Mythology and there is a lot of Egyptian imagery in the Thoth deck. My favourite site for Egyptian Mythology and imagery would be [www.egyptianmyths.net](http://www.egyptianmyths.net), a fantastic resource. Also, try *Symbol and Magic in Egyptian Art* by Richard H. Wilkinson.
- **Take a breather:** your readings should be starting to take shape by now. Keep reading, there are plenty of things in the *Thoth Tarot* to keep you going for a while, but you've definitely nailed the basics. Keep doing readings with your *Thoth deck*, knowledge is like a muscle and if you don't work it, it'll start to atrophy.

Congratulations! Learning the *Thoth Tarot* can feel daunting, but it's worth it. There's quite a book list in this article, but each and every piece of knowledge here is really worth while. Maybe one day someone will collect it all in one place... but who'd ever get around to that?



Aleister Says ...

**The Lovers (VI)** and **Art (Temperance, XIV)** are “so complementary they cannot be studied separately” (p. 84, *Book of Thoth*).

**Jonathan Kaneko-James** has been a ritual magician and student of the Kabbalah for 15 years. He has published numerous articles of fiction and non-fiction for small press magazines in England and Wales, and is looking to move into a professional Tarot reading practice. His esoteric science-fiction novel, *A Dark Neon Dying*, will be available as an e-book in the next year, with all profits going to *Shelter* -- a UK-based homeless charity. He is a massive fan and promoter of the *Thoth Tarot* and is looking to start *Tarot Café*, a monthly meeting where student Tarosophists and those who wish to enter professional Tarot practice can each bring a guinea pig and spend a few hours just perfecting their Tarot skills. Jon Kaneko-James has RSI, and dictates all of his work using Dragon NaturallySpeaking voice recognition software.

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# ICONIC OR ICONOCLASTIC?

**Richard Kaczynski, Ph.D.**, writes on *The Thoth Deck and the Western Esoteric Tradition*.<sup>1</sup>

In creating the *Thoth Tarot*, magician Aleister Crowley (1875–1947) and artist executant Frieda Lady Harris (1877–1962) made the most significant contribution in generations to what Decker, Dummett, and Depaulis calls “the occult Tarot.”<sup>2</sup> Second in popularity only to the Rider-Waite deck—which pretty much set the standard for all decks to follow—the Thoth Tarot extended that deck’s Hermetic influences to an unprecedented level. Its impact certainly has not been equaled since. Whether approaching the *Thoth Tarot* for the first time or as a seasoned student, understanding this deck’s place in the Western Hermetic tradition will highlight its many innovations.<sup>3</sup>

Beginning with Etteilla (pseudonym of Jean-Baptiste Alliette, 1738–1791) and Court de Gébelin (pseudonym of Antoine Court, c. 1719–1784), Continental occultists developed the foundation of the “occult Tarot.” Alliette popularized the Tarot as a divinatory tool, and was the first to apply the principle of correspondence to the cards. Meanwhile, de Gébelin’s *Le Monde primitif* (1781)<sup>4</sup> claimed an Egyptian origin for the Tarot; although discredited by modern scholarship,<sup>5</sup> this theory influenced generations of occultists. Crowley, for example, followed this tradition when he entitled his Tarot volume *The Book of Thoth* (1944).<sup>6</sup>

With their study of Kabbalah and other ancient mystical traditions, 19th century occultists naturally sought to reconcile the twenty-two cards of the Major Arcana with the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This was fairly straightforward, with the cards of the Major Arcana matched, beginning with the first numbered card (I, “The Magician”), sequentially with the Hebrew letters (the unnumbered card “The Fool” was placed at the end). While no formal teachings from any continental occult group of this period have hitherto been discovered, the traces of this teaching are clear.

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1. This article draws upon two earlier works I’ve done on the Thoth Tarot: “Examining the Collaboration and Innovation of the Crowley-Harris *Thoth Tarot*,” presented at the annual meetings of the Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association, New Orleans, April, 2009, and “The Crowley-Harris *Thoth Tarot*: Collaboration and Innovation” in Emily Auger (ed.), *Tarot in Culture* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, in development). Readers are referred to both, particularly the latter (potential publication, 2010), for additional details which are beyond the scope of the present paper.

2. Ronald Decker, Thierry Depaulis, and Michael Dummett, *A Wicked Pack of Cards: The Origins of the Occult Tarot* (New York: St. Martin’s, 1996); Michael Dummett, and Ronald Decker, *A History of the Occult Tarot 1870–1970* (London: Gerald Duckworth, 2002).

3. For a thorough examination of this topic, see Dummett and Decker, *History of the Occult Tarot*.

4. Antoine Court de Gébelin, *Le Monde primitif: analysé et comparé avec le monde moderne, considéré dans divers objets concernant l’Histoire, le blason, les monnoies, les jeux, les voyages de phéniciens autour du monde, les langues Américaines, &c.: Ou dissertations mêlées Tome I. Remplies de découvertes intéressantes; avec une carte, des planches, & un monument d’Amérique* (Paris: the author, 1781).

5. See Decker, Depaulis, and Dummett, *A Wicked Pack of Cards*.

6. The Master Therion [Aleister Crowley], *The Book of Thoth ; A Short Essay on the Tarot of the Egyptians, Being the Equinox, Volume III, No. V* (London: O.T.O., 1944).



Take, for instance, Éliphas Lévi (pseudonym of Alphonse Louis Constant, 1810–1875), who not only spearheaded the French occult revival<sup>7</sup> but also influenced British groups like the Theosophical Society and the Golden Dawn (G.D.). In a series of posthumously published letters, he transmits this doctrine of correspondence to the Hebrew aleph-bet to his pupil, Baron Spedalieri: “The numerical unity, or the letter aleph, which relates to the eleventh path of the Sepher Jezirah is figured in the Tarot by the bateleur. The figure of this bateleur [i.e., juggler or magician] is the very same as that of the letter aleph.”<sup>8</sup>

**Figure 1.** Two versions of “Le Bateleur” (Oswald Wirth Tarot and Marseilles Tarot from Papus, *Tarot of the Bohemians*, p. 105) demonstrate Lévi’s point that the Magician stands in the shape of the Hebrew letter *aleph* (right).



Later, Papus (pseudonym of Gérard Encausse, 1865–1916) outlined this same sequence in his *Tarot of the Bohemians* (1889).<sup>9</sup> As a founder of both the Martinist movement and L'Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix, a bishop of l'Église Gnostique de France, and a member of groups like the G.D., Hermetic Brotherhood of Light, and the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Memphis-Misraim, his influence was widespread. One of his four collaborators in L'Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix, Oswald Wirth (1860–1943) likewise followed this set of correspondences in his Tarot books and deck.<sup>10</sup>

7. Christopher McIntosh, *Eliphas Lévi and the French Occult Revival* (London: Rider, 1972).

8. Originally serialized in *The Theosophist*, these letters were collected and published in Éliphas Lévi, *Letters to a Disciple: Letters from Eliphas Lévi Zahed to Baron Spedalieri on Magic, Numerology and the Tarot, Now Collected Together for the First Time in Volume Form* (Wellingborough, Northamptonshire: Aquarian Press, 1980), 21.

9. Papus, *Clef absolue de la science occulte; Le Tarot des Bohémiens: le plus ancien livre du monde. A l'usage exclusif des initiés* (Paris: G. Carré, 1889). The first English language translation by A. P. Morton appeared three years later as Papus, *Absolute Key to Occult Science: The Tarot of the Bohemians, the Most Ancient Book in the World, for the Exclusive Use of Initiates* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1892).

10. Although he completed his Tarot as early as 1889—it is reproduced that same year in Papus' *Le Tarot des Bohémiens*—Wirth's book on the Tarot appeared nearly 40 years later: Oswald Wirth, *Le tarot des imagiers du moyen âge* (Paris: Le Symbolisme; E. Nourry, 1927).

## The Golden Dawn

Founded in 1887, the Order of the Golden Dawn is commonly credited for pulling together various correspondences to the Tarot into a comprehensive system presented in an instructional text known within the order as “Book T.”<sup>11</sup> To synthesize various traditions together into a workable whole, however, required several innovations. Although obvious in retrospect, the G.D.’s departures from the continental school brought a new-found logic and coherence to the Tarot.

One of these innovations was to resequence the attributions between the Major Arcana and the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Rather than placing “The Fool” at the end of the sequence, the G.D. numbered it zero and placed it at the beginning, ahead of I, “The Magician.” The effect of this change became immediately clear with the next addition: the astrological and elemental attributions from the 2nd century Kabbalistic text *Sefer Yetzirah*.

The *Sefer Yetzirah* described how God created the universe through permutations of the twenty-two letters of the alphabet; but it also laid out a set of correspondences between these letters and the elements, the planets, and the zodiac. This system capitalized on the fact that the Hebrew alphabet is divided into three groups: Three Mother Letters; seven Double Letters (so-called because they can make two different sounds depending on their usage); and twelve Single Letters. Thus, the author of *Sefer Yetzirah* attributed the three traditional elements to the Mother Letters,<sup>12</sup> the seven planets of astrology to the Double Letters, and the signs of the Zodiac to the Single Letters.

This system is illustrated in Figure 2 on the following page.

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11. This text was never intended for, or circulated to, the public, but became available for the first time when published in lightly edited form as Aleister Crowley, “A Description of the Cards of the Tarot,” *The Equinox* i.8 (1912): 143–210.

12. In contrast with Western Hermeticists, the Kabbalah recognized only three elements: water, air and fire. The fourth Hermetic element, earth, was viewed by the Kabbalists as a combination of the other three elements.

Figure 2. The Hebrew Alphabet and Its Attributions according to the text *Sefer Yetzirah*

Hebrew Alphabet	Elements	Planets	Zodiac
א	א △ air		
ב		ב ☿ Mercury	
ג		ג ☾ Moon	
ד		ד ♀ Venus	
ה			ה ♈ Aries
ו			ו ♉ Taurus
ז			ז ♊ Gemini
ח			ח ♋ Cancer
ט			ט ♌ Leo
י			י ♍ Virgo
כ		כ ♃ Jupiter	
ל			ל ♎ Libra
מ	מ ▽ water		מ ♏ Scorpio
נ			נ ♐ Sagittarius
ס			ס ♑ Capricorn
ע		ע ♂ Mars	
פ			פ ♒ Aquarius
צ			צ ♓ Pisces
ק		ק ☼ Sun	
ר	ר △ fire		
ש		ש ♄ Saturn	

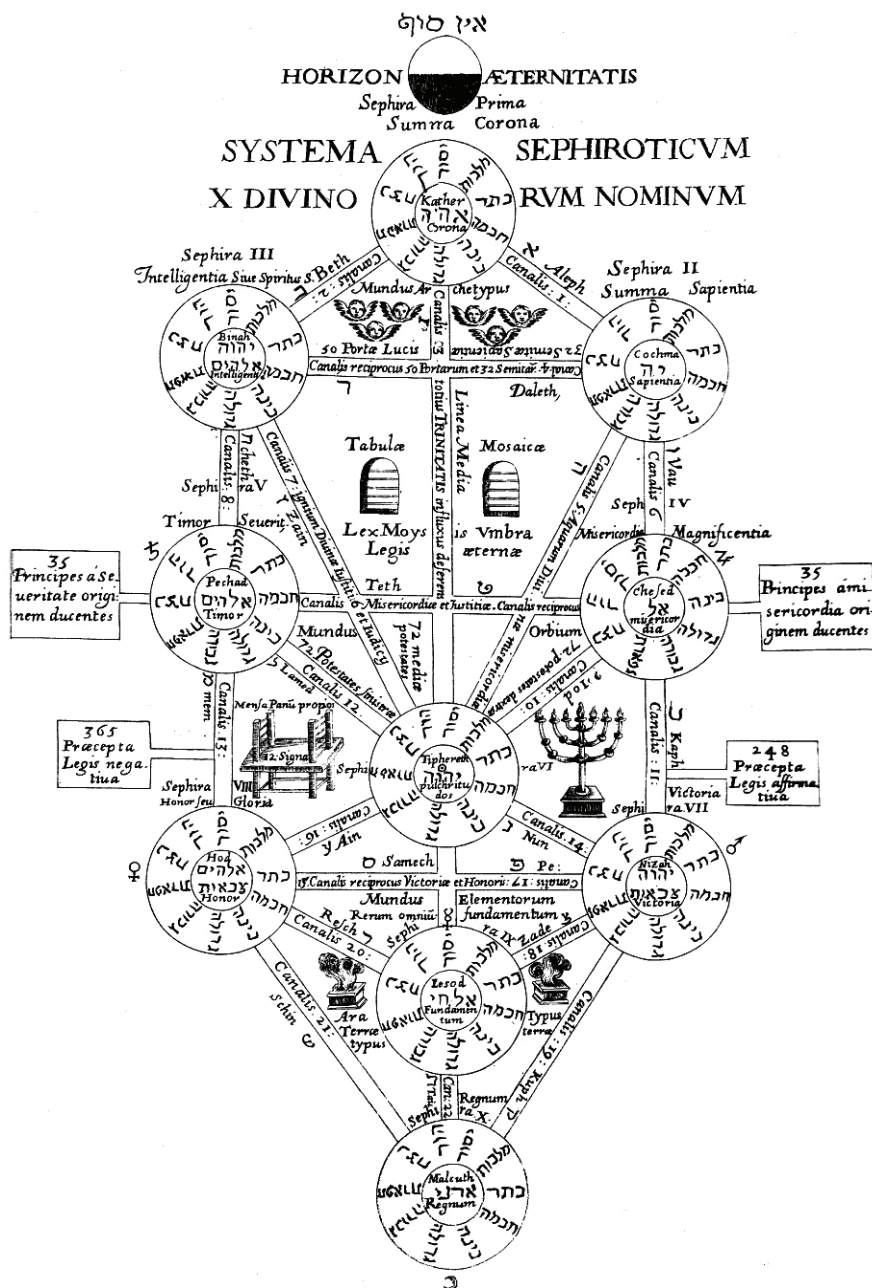


With this system in place, the Tarot symbolism cohered in ways that one would not expect by chance: “The Magician” corresponded to Mercury, god of science and magic; “The High Priestess” corresponded to the Moon; “The Sun” corresponded to the Sun; and “The Tower” was assigned to Mars. This also worked out pretty well with the signs of the Zodiac (see Figure 3). There were two exceptions, however: Logically, “Justice” should correspond to the sign Libra, the balance. Likewise, “Strength”—traditionally depicted as a woman holding open a lion’s mouth—made more sense corresponding with Leo, the lion. Thus, the G.D. changed the position of these two cards, making “Strength” number eight and “Justice” number eleven.

**Figure 3. Zodiacal and (Uncorrected) Tarot Attributions for the Twelve Single Letters**

Zodiac	Major Arcana
♈ ♀ Aries	The Emperor
♉ ♂ Taurus	The Hierophant
♊ □ Gemini	The Lovers
♊ ☊ Cancer	The Chariot
♌ ♂ Leo	Justice
♍ ♀ Virgo	The Hermit
♎ ♀ Libra	Strength
♏ ♂ Scorpio	Death
♐ ♂ Sagittarius	Temperance
♑ ♀ Capricorn	The Devil
♒ ♀ Aquarius	The Star
♓ ♀ Pisces	The Moon

With the Hebrew alphabet, Zodiac, planets, elements and Tarot all matched up, a slew of other traditional correspondences from Western Hermeticism fell into place, such as color symbolism, metals, and Greek and Egyptian gods and goddesses. One of these correspondences was between the twenty-two Major Arcana cards and the twenty-two paths of the Tree of Life. Fortunately, Athanasius Kircher (c. 1601–1680) had already provided a map onto which one only needed to overlay the Tarot based on its Hebrew letter attributions (see figure 4, following page).



Although this configuration of the Tree of Life differed substantially from that taught by Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534–1572) and other Kabbalists, the G.D. acknowledged its Western Hermetic heritage by relying upon the system given in Kircher's *Oedipus Aegyptiacus* (1652–1654).<sup>13</sup>

### Aleister Crowley

Crowley was an active member of the G.D. from 1898 to 1900, after which time—depending on the storyteller—either the Order collapsed, he quit, he was refused further advancement, or he was expelled. Regardless, the G.D. system of correspondences greatly impressed him, and in his subsequent career as an occultist he significantly expanded what they had begun into a unique system of his own. Crowley's book 777 (1909) was a much enlarged edition of the G.D. tables of correspondences, incorporating additional material added by both his G.D. mentor Allan Bennett (1872–1923) and himself. Very many of Crowley's works—both fictional and practical—use this extended symbolic code language, with which familiarity is necessary for full comprehension.

By his own account, Crowley had “contemplated the construction and publication of a properly designed and executed pack, based on the Equinox information ever since the issue of the grotesque and falsified parody which appeared under the auspices of the late A.E. Waite.”<sup>14</sup>

However, this work did not begin until he met Frieda Harris in 1937. What began as a quick project to execute a deck as specified in “Book T”—using traditional designs for the Major Arcana, for which “Book T” lacked details—it quickly turned into a five-year collaboration wherein Crowley completely redesigned the Tarot incorporating his lifetime of magical study and practice, and Harris executed the designs to his demanding specifications (incorporating along the way some of her own studies in the mathematical advances of synthetic projective geometry).<sup>15</sup> The result was a stunningly modern deck, incorporating hitherto unseen layers of symbolic meaning skillfully executed with attention to numerous modern artistic movements.

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13. In according credit to the Golden Dawn for these innovations, it must be recognized that Lévi refers to the *Sefer Yetzirah* in his writings, and Papus, contemporaneously with the G.D., reproduces Kircher's Tree of Life in his *La kabbale: tradition secrète de l'occident: résumé méthodique* (Paris: Georges Carré, 1892). However, it appears that the Golden Dawn's founders, W. Wynn Westcott (1848–1925) and S. L. MacGregor Mathers (1854–1918) were the first to piece together the Tarot system in this way.

14. Society of Hidden Masters [Aleister Crowley], “An Open Letter to Alestair Crowley” (Aleister Crowley Papers, 1911–1944, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library). Although Arthur Edward Waite (1857–1942) was a G.D. member, and his Tarot deck was clearly influenced thereby, Crowley felt that the Rider-Waite deck failed to incorporate the majority of the G.D.'s knowledge.

15. For a detailed history of their collaboration, see Kaczynski, “The Crowley-Harris Thoth Tarot,” *Tarot in Culture*, *op. cit.*, and Hymenaeus Beta, “Editor's Foreword” in Aleister Crowley, *The Thoth Tarot: A Descriptive Essay*, ed. Frieda Harris (Neuhausen, Switzerland: AGMüller, forthcoming).



In order to bring his new deck into line with his understanding of the modern Western mystery tradition—including personal revelatory experiences he had in receiving inspired texts such as *The Book of the Law* and working with magical systems like the Enochian magic of John Dee (1527–c. 1608) and Edward Kelley (1555–1597)—Crowley introduced several changes of his own. Some of these involved simple name changes. For instance, “The Magician” became “The Magus,” as this was a title of extraordinary attainment in his magical system the A.’A.’.<sup>16</sup> In his deck, the Magus became more overtly Mercurial, and his illusory counterpart, the Ape of Thoth, is depicted in the card’s shadows. Similarly, “Justice” is renamed “Adjustment” to favor a natural, rather than man-made, conceptualization. Crowley shed lights on this when he wrote to Harris that the card needs to be dynamic: “Nature is not the grocer weighing out a pound of sugar; it is the compensation of complicated rhythms.”<sup>17</sup> Similar name changes occurred with “Temperance” being dubbed “Art,” and “The World” expanding to become “The Universe.”

Likewise, the court cards were renamed to reflect the magical formula of Yod-Heh-Vau-Heh, which is not only the unpronounceable Hebrew name of God, but also an expression of the symbolic progression from Father-Mother-Son-Daughter/Wife. Thus, the King, Queen, Knight and Page of old became the King, Queen, Prince and Princess.

While Crowley and Harris significantly transformed the traditional images of all the Tarot cards, a few of the changes were so dramatic as to require a new name. The best example of this is “The Aeon,” Crowley’s replacement for “Judgement.” The traditional concept—the Archangel Gabriel blowing his horn and the souls of the dead rising from their graves to ascend to Heaven—simply did not fit Crowley’s New Aeon worldview, which purported to supersede Christianity with a new spiritual philosophy. Thus, Crowley replaced this card with a stylized rendition of the Stele of Revealing, a XXVIth Dynasty funerary stele of Theban priest Ankhefenkhons I<sup>18</sup> which signaled to Crowley his impending reception of *The Book of the Law* and thus has become a central icon in Thelemic philosophy. Arguably, the Stele of Revealing was not only a symbol of the New Aeon, but it was also therefore a symbol of the “end times,” making it an appropriate substitute for “Judgement.” (See figure 5, following page).

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16. See “One Star in Sight” in Aleister Crowley, *Magick in Theory and Practice* (Paris: Lecram, 1929), 229–44. Although Crowley attached a great deal of original meaning to these grade titles, their names originate with earlier systems like the G.D., Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, and Fratres Lucis.

17. Crowley to Harris, 19 Dec. 1939 (Aleister Crowley Papers, 1911–1944, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library).

18. In *The Book of the Law*—as in Crowley’s time—the name was spelled Ankh-f-n-khonsu, which is thus the canonical Thelemic spelling.

Figure 5. Waite's "Judgement" card (right), the Stele of Revealing (center), and its stylized version as Crowley's replacement for card number XX.<sup>19</sup>



A similar reimagining occurred with the transformation of "Strength" into "Lust." Influenced as he was by Revelation, Crowley found it more consistent to replace the traditional woman subduing a lion with an image of Babalon "and the beast on which she rideth."<sup>20</sup>

Figure 6 (following page) compares the Rider-Waite and Crowley-Harris names for the Major Arcana.

19. Note that this version of "The Aeon," taken from *The Book of Thoth* (1944), plate X, does not contain the semi-transparent figure of the child Horus, which was added to the card after it was photographed for the book.

20. Aleister Crowley, "The Vision and the Voice," (3<sup>rd</sup> Aethyr), *The Equinox* 1912, i.5 supplement, 143.

**Figure 6. Differences in Major Arcana Card Titles between Waite and Crowley [Differences are indicated in italics]**

Waite	Crowley
0 The Fool	0 The Fool
<i>I The Magician</i>	<i>I The Magus</i>
II The High Priestess	II The High Priestess
III The Empress	III The Empress
<i>IV The Emperor</i>	<i>XVII The Star</i>
V The Hierophant	V The Hierophant
VI The Lovers	VI The Lovers
VII The Chariot	VII The Chariot
<i>VIII Strength</i>	<i>VIII Adjustment</i>
IX The Hermit	IX The Hermit
<i>X Wheel of Fortune</i>	<i>X Fortune</i>
<i>XI Justice</i>	<i>XI Lust</i>
XII The Hanged Man	XII The Hanged Man
XIII Death	XIII Death
<i>XIV Temperance</i>	<i>XIV Art</i>
XV The Devil	XV The Devil
XVI The Tower	XVI The Tower
<i>XVII The Star</i>	<i>IV The Emperor</i>
XVIII The Moon	XVIII The Moon
XIX The Sun	XIX The Sun
<i>XX Judgement</i>	<i>XX The Aeon</i>
<i>XXI The World</i>	<i>XXI The Universe</i>



## The Double Loop in the Zodiac

A most puzzling topic in Crowley's *Book of Thoth* for newcomers and initiates alike is the so-called double loop in the Zodiac. It was Crowley's way of reconciling two further changes in his Tarot. Firstly, for numerological reasons, he wanted to restore the Lust/Strength and Adjustment/Justice cards to their original positions at numbers eleven and eight, respectively, while retaining their new Zodiacal correspondences (Leo for "Lust" and Libra for "Adjustment"). The second conundrum was a passage in *The Book of the Law* that advised him, "All these old letters of my Book are aright; but ♁ is not the Star. This also is secret: my prophet shall reveal it to the wise."<sup>21</sup> Thus, if the Hebrew letter *tzaddi* did not correspond to "The Star," then he needed to figure out how to correct this error in the G.D. system.

His solution involved recognizing that the Old Aeon revolved around the Zodiacal signs of Pisces (Jesus often being identified with a fish) and its 180° opposite in the Zodiacal belt, Virgo (represented by the Virgin Mary). Given this, he concluded that the signs to either side of this polarity switched places in the New Aeon. The sign preceding Pisces was Aquarius (attributed to "The Star"), while the sign after it was Aries ("The Emperor"); if he swapped the letters *tzaddi* and *heh* with "The Star" and "The Emperor," that would satisfy *The Book of the Law*. Looking at the opposite polarity, the signs to either side of Virgo were Leo ("Lust") and Libra ("Adjustment"). Thus, swapping their sequential order brought, for Crowley, a pleasing sense of symmetry to the switch.<sup>22</sup> This solution was illustrated in *The Book of Thoth* by a diagram called "The Double Loop in the Zodiac":

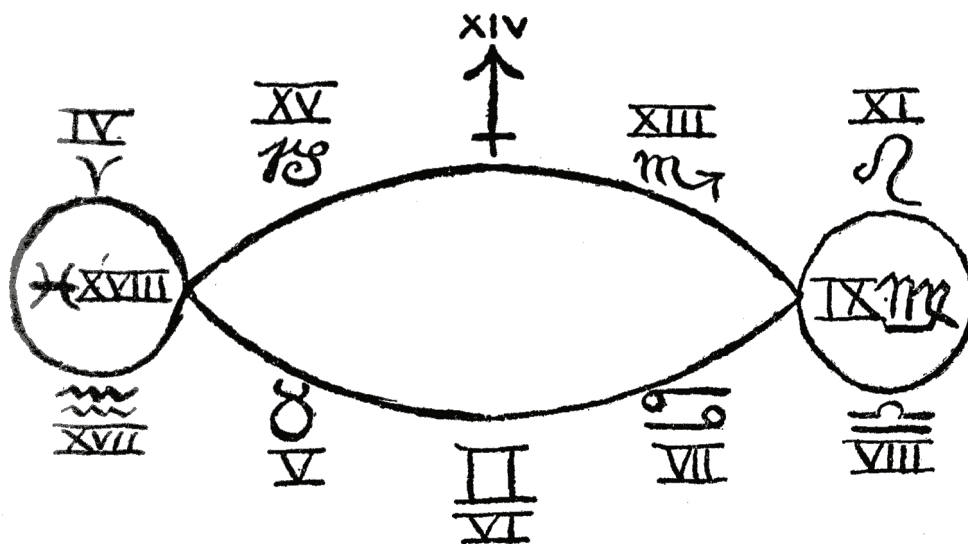


Figure 7. "The Double Loop in the Zodiac" from *The Book of Thoth* (1944), p. 11.

21. *AL* i.57.

22. Given that Crowley arrived at this solution in the midst of writing *The Book of Thoth* between 1938 and 1944, his earlier publications—the majority of his corpus—do not reflect these switched attributions, nor is the text of *The Book of Thoth* itself entirely consistent in this regard (as pointed out to the author by Frater eaoa//77).

## Conclusion

This concludes our survey of the largest changes made by Crowley to what Dummett and colleagues call the “occult Tarot.” It is impossible in a few pages to describe all the innovations that Crowley and Harris brought to the Thoth Tarot. Crowley’s friend Gerald Yorke perhaps put it best when he wrote,

The Pack of Thoth as taught by the late Aleister Crowley and drawn by Frieda Harris is unique. It incorporates the traditional symbols and correspondences of the tarot as taught secretly by the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. At the same time it has been turned into a twentieth century pack by the addition of modern mathematical, geometric and scientific forms. [...] In the Pack of Thoth the secret canon of correspondences between name, form and colour has been followed scrupulously, so that for the first time each card is in fact a talisman of the force that by tradition it represents. As a result, the pack is a work of art, and can be appreciated as such by anyone without knowledge of the traditional teaching of the Tarot.<sup>23</sup>

By examining the obvious innovations of the *Thoth Tarot*, we see how it is firmly rooted in the Western Hermetic tradition; however, its expansion and revision of those traditions resulted in a deck that has remained compelling and popular for generations, a true magical landmark.

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23. From a prospectus by Neptune Press to publish the Thoth Tarot, ca. 1955. See Gerald Yorke, "The Pack of Thoth" (Yorke Collection, NS91.8, Warburg Institute Archives, University of London).

# THE BOOKS BEHIND THOTH

**Marcus Katz**, Director of *Tarot Professionals* & PhD Researcher in *Western Esotericism*

*Understanding the Introduction to the Book of Thoth through the Background Reading suggested by Crowley in Magick in Theory and Practice.*

## 1. The Introduction of the Book of Thoth considered as a Golf course.

When Crowley came to dictate the bulk of his magnum opus, *Magick* (Book 4), in particularly part 3, *Magick in Theory and Practice*, he was already steeped in a heady morass of philosophy, religion, mathematics, chemistry, and a bewildering blend of eastern and western systems of spirituality and esotericism. It is this same melange of magick and mysticism that also informs the *Book of Thoth*, in particular part 1, an 'introduction' entitled *The Theory of the Tarot*.

Although only running to some 48 pages, this 'introduction' takes a direct drive into the far reaches of the golf-course of the mind, veering insensibly from bunker to bunker, digging in, putting, driving, beating the caddy, pausing for tea, and then charging across the next hole leaving a wake of the corpses of weekend hobbyists, and the esteemed members of the golf club still holding their putting tees and wondering what the hell just hit them. I suspect Crowley played his golf as he wrote and as he lived – with a singular, almost animistic drive which had no concept – never mind empathy – of the fragility of other people's minds or lives.

So it is no surprise that we reach the end of the 48-page introduction feeling as if we have been snuck upon by a large man with a small hammer, rapidly raining blows on us with every sentence, and not letting up for an hour or so, or sooner, when - reeling, and grasping our head - we stop reading, escape the blundering assailant, and go for a quiet lie down.

The solution to approaching this work is as simple as it is demanding; as Francis Bacon (1561-1626) observed, we must "let the mind be enlarged ... to the grandeur of the mysteries, and not the mysteries contracted to the narrowness of the mind". That is to say, we must try and get the measure of the entire course on which Crowley played, by recapitulating for ourselves his extensive learning and reading. The folly of doing so is not without some irony; Crowley himself likely suggested works he had never read, and read or learnt much he never listed, as is the case with any journalist, no matter how extensive one sets out to be.

However, we do have a starting point – in *Magick*, part 3, Crowley provides us a suggested reading list, a bibliography for aspirant students to his organisation, the A.'A.'. It is from the wide and deep shores this list, albeit now dated, that we can at least begin to build a bridgehead for a more effective assault upon the Book of Thoth itself. It is intended in a later publication from Tarosophy® to update this list somewhat, but for now, we shall retain the original as Crowley presented it.

## 2. A Guide to the Perplexed: Working through the Reading List

Crowley lists two sections in his reading list; books for “serious study” and “other books, principally fiction, of a generally suggestive and helpful kind”. In this way, we encounter in the list of some 75 items works ranging from Crowley’s entire opus to *Alice in Wonderland*, from the Bible to works on Alchemy, and from the *Tao The King* to the *Bhagavid-Gita*. But before we reach for the Gin, let’s see if we can break this down a little into a more gentle putting green and even provide a playful crazy golf before we step onto the main driving range!

### 2a. Crazy Golf

As with learning anything, golf or Thoth deck, we could do with a score-card, to measure our progress. The score-card for the Thoth deck is “The Wake-World”, which is a part of Crowley’s strange work, *Konx om Pax*. This has also been described as a “barrage of syncretic materials”, but we’ll sneak in and simply take the one piece, “Wake World”, which Crowley might well have written as a fairy-tale for his daughter, Lola Zaza. It is a beautiful allegorical tale of the mystical ascent up the Tree of Life, and one of my personal favourites. It is also under-rated especially when giving reading to students new to Crowley. I give this piece of writing **first**, before anything else – it then provides a check-list or score-card of understanding as the student begins to see more and more in the story as they make their own spiritual progress through the Thelemic system.

So, from the Reading List of *Magick*, which self-referentially includes all of Crowley’s works, first read ‘Wake World’ from *Konx om Pax*. This can be found, as most of Crowley’s writings, on-line, although I’d always recommend getting a printed and properly edited version. If you have any difficulties locating any of these works cited, contact me or raise it on the Tarot Professionals forum and we’ll be glad to assist.

Read through ‘Wake World’ taking a particular note of the Latin inscriptions which provide a key to the course – where you read “Domus”, this means ‘house’ and refers to each of the Sephiroth on the Tree of Life in order as they are ascended. More specifically to our present study, where you read “via” this means ‘way’ or ‘path’ and refers to the path – and corresponding Tarot card – on the Tree of Life through which the journey is passing.

In each of the Houses a spiritual attainment is described, and on each of the Paths a spiritual challenge or test is described. These are the ten holes of our Kabbalistic crazy-golf course, and good practice for all that follows.



Aleister Says ...

One must constantly keep in mind the bivalence of every symbol ... it is the simplest test of initiation. (p. 63, *Book of Thoth*).



## 2b. Putting Green

So, next to the Putting Green, where we take a few titles that are practices in themselves, and ready us for the range! On the putting green, I'd place the following works from Crowley's original reading list:

*The Yi King* – also nowadays referred to as the I-Ching. My contemporary suggestion on this would be Stephen Karcher's translation. Although a form of divination entirely different to Tarot, as Crowley referred to it even more than Tarot, and often worked at synthesising the two, it is inevitable that to understand his Tarot, you have to practice driving at his I-Ching. A lot of the 48 pages of introduction of the Book of Thoth will make more sense after reading the I-Ching, particularly its philosophical underpinnings in contrast to western thought. It's also a wonderful form of divination in its own right, particularly if you spend time practising the version with scattering Yarrow sticks.

*The Kabbalah Unveiled* – which was translated by Mathers from von Rosenroth's *Kabbalah Denudata*. Yes, you'll have to learn some Kabbalah to make any sense of the Thoth deck, specifically Crowley's writings on it - one can argue for a purely intuitive approach to just the art-work, without any Kabbalistic knowledge, or any knowledge at all, but that discussion can be left for another day! So this is the Kabbalah text to which Crowley referred, the *Kabbalah Unveiled*. However, for a standard work which may be less taxing and still relevant to the Western esoteric system, try Dion Fortune's *Mystical Qabalah*, and a favourite coffee-table book which is both readable, authentic to Jewish sources and yet relevant to Magick, (and which I recommend to my Kabbalah students), try *The Kabbalah Decoder* by Janet Bereson-Perkins. Don't confuse that with the *Kabbalah Decoded* book which is entirely different!

## 2c. The Driving Range

Our last stop then before the real thing is the driving range. Here I'm afraid it's more up to you. The areas you'll need to drive at are the following, using Crowley's original list or your own research on-line or in print:

- i. Western Philosophy, particularly Kant & Hume.
- ii. Hinduism, particularly the works referenced by Crowley
- iii. Alchemy, for which Crowley used a lot of A. E. Waite
- iv. Hermeticism, I'd suggest the *Emerald Tablet* at least

Other than the ancient Egyptian mythos, which is covered in brief in another article in this magazine, and Crowley's own material, particularly on the Aeons and his *Book of the Law*, which informs the whole of the *Book of the Thoth*, that's enough driving practice for any one lifetime! The remaining titles in the Reading List are less visible in the *Book of Thoth*, but of course form the boundaries of Crowley's extensive and syncretic approach.

### 3. Back onto the Golf Course

So, having progressed from the practice areas and gained a good swing, accurate eye for distance, and control in the final hole – even knowing what to do in a bunker (return to the reading list and read some more) – we can now grab our caddy and head back into the introduction!

There's now really only two ways of playing. Either you stay out of the book whilst reading background, then re-read the whole 48 pages to see what now makes more sense, or you read progressively through the 48 pages, stopping to read background material at every point which perplexes. Alternatively, you can go through phases of working with either method.

To conclude, we'll look together at one particular later hole, going beyond the introduction, and discuss how we'd prepare for it – in this case, p. 71 of the main section of the *Book of Thoth*, where Crowley is discussing the Magician (Magus) card. I'll extract several key sentences and demonstrate how we'd fit these into our background reading.

“The present card has been designed principally upon the Graeco-Egyptian tradition [so, we should take a note of that although it is unclear as yet what Crowley means by Graeco-Egyptian] ... The Hindu conception of Mercury, Hanuman, the monkey god, is abominably degraded. [So, we look up Mercury, and the attributes of Mercury, first. We then research Hanuman, first in the Hindu works cited by Crowley. We then compare the two and see if we understand and agree or disagree with Crowley's statement and his following explanation] ... Hanuman is certainly little more than the Ape of Thoth.” [So we also refer to ancient Egyptian concepts of Thoth, and again, correspond the attributes of Thoth to those of Hanuman – is Crowley right to suggest there is only the “ape” as a similarity?]

This single page goes on to reference the Ibis [look up attributes in works on ancient Egypt], the Phoenix Wand [look up in works on the Golden Dawn], the Aeon of Osiris [refer to Crowley's writings on the Aeons], the Ankh [ancient Egyptian] and the Rose-Cross [refer to writings on Rosicrucianism in Crowley's list, citing Jennings and Waite, but also recent works].

It is obvious that when dealing with Tarot, particularly esoteric Tarot and specifically the Thoth deck, we must indeed “enlarge our minds”, as Francis Bacon suggested! That we come to learn contemporary philosophy, mathematics, ancient Egyptian mythology, appreciate the religions of the world, and take our place in that schema of learning, development and teaching, is one of the most wonderful things about Tarot. To simply ignore these challenges is to rather narrow our mind – so get out on the golf course or put your irons away!



Aleister Says ...

**The High Priestess** ... is, in short, a symbol of the highest Initiation. (p. 84, *Book of Thoth*).

**Appendix: The Reading List**

From Aleister Crowley, *Magick* (Book 4), pt. 3 *Magick in Theory and Practice*.

The Equinox. The standard Work of Reference in all occult matters. The Encyclopaedia of Initiation.

Collected Works of A. Crowley. These works contain many mystical and magical secrets, both stated clearly in prose, and woven into the robe of sublimest poesy.

The Yi King. (S.B.E. Series, Oxford University Press.) The "Classic of Changes"; gives the initiated Chinese system of Magick.

The Tao Teh King. (S.B.E. Series.) gives the initiated Chinese system of Mysticism.

Tannhauser, by A. Crowley. An allegorical drama concerning the Progress of the soul; the Tannhauser story slightly remodelled.

The Upanishads. (S.B.E. Series.) The Classical Basis of Vedantism, the best-known form of Hindu Mysticism.

The Bhagavad-Gita. A dialogue in which Krishna, the Hindu "Christ", expounds a system of Attainment.

The Voice of the Silence, by H. P. Blavatsky, with an elaborate commentary by Frater O. M.

The Goetia. The most intelligible of the mediaeval rituals of Evocation. Contains also the favorite Invocation of the Master Therion.

The Shiva Sanhita. A famous Hindu treatise on certain physical practices.

The Hathayoga Pradipika. Similar to The Shiva Sanhita.

Erdmann's "History of Philosophy". A compendious account of philosophy from the earliest times. Most valuable as a general education of the mind.

The Spiritual Guide of Molinos. A simple manual of Christian mysticism.

The Star of the West. (Captain Fuller.) An introduction to the study of the Works of Aleister Crowley.

The Dhammapada. (S.B.E. Series, Oxford University Press.) The best of the Buddhist classics.

The Questions of King Milinda. (S.B.E. Series.) Technical points of Buddhist dogma, illustrated by dialogues.

Varieties of Religious Experience. (James.) Valuable as showing the uniformity of mystical attainment.

Kabbala Denudata, von Rosenroth: also the Kabbalah Unveiled, by S. L. Mathers. The text of the Kabbalah, with commentary. A good elementary introduction to the subject.

Konx om Pax. Four invaluable treatises and a preface on Mysticism and Magick.

The Pistis Sophia. An admirable introduction to the study of Gnosticism.

The Oracles of Zoroaster. An invaluable collection of precepts mystical and magical.

The Dream of Scipio, by Cicero. Excellent for its Vision and its Philosophy.

The Golden Verses of Pythagoras, by Fabre d'Olivet. An interesting study of the exoteric doctrines of this Master.

The Divine Pymander, by Hermes Trismegistus. Invaluable as bearing on the Gnostic Philosophy.

The Secret Symbols of the Rosicrucians, reprint of Franz Hartmann. An invaluable compendium.

Scrutinium Chymicum, by Michael Maier. One of the best treatises on alchemy.

Science and the Infinite, by Sidney Klein. One of the best essays written in recent years.

Two Essays of the Worship of Priapus, by Richard Payne Knight. Invaluable to all students.

The Golden Bough, by J. G. Frazer. The Text-Book of folk Lore. Invaluable to all students.

The Age of Reason, by Thomas Paine. Excellent, though elementary, as a corrective to superstition.

Rivers of Life, by General Forlong. An invaluable text-book of old systems of initiation.

Three Dialogues, by Bishop Berkeley. The Classic of subjective idealism.

Essays of David Hume. The Classic of Academic Scepticism.

First Principles, by Herbert Spencer. The Classic of Agnosticism.

Prolegomena, by Emanuel Kant. The best introduction to Metaphysics.

The Canon. The best text-book of Applied Qabalah.

The Fourth Dimension, by H. Hinton. The text-book on this subject.

The Essays of Thomas Henry Huxley. Masterpieces of philosophy, as of prose.



Zanoni, by Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. Valuable for its facts and suggestions about Mysticism.

A Strange Story, by Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton. Valuable for its facts and suggestions about Magick.

The Blossom and the Fruit, by Mabel Collins. Valuable for its account of the Path.

Petronius Arbiter. Valuable for those who have wit to understand it.

The Golden Ass, by Apuleius. Valuable for those who have wit to understand it.

Le Comte de Gabalis. Valuable for its hints of those things which it mocks.

The Rape of the Lock, by Alexander Pope. Valuable for its account of elementals.

Undine, by de la Motte Fouque. Valuable as an account of elementals.

Black Magic, by Marjorie Bowen. An intensely interesting story of sorcery.

Le Peau de Chagrin, by Honore de Balzac. A magnificent magical allegory.

Number Nineteen, by Edgar Jepson. An excellent tale of modern magic.

Dracula, by Bram Stoker. Valuable for its account of legends concerning vampires.

Scientific Romances, by H. Hinton. Valuable as an introduction to the study of the Fourth Dimension.

Alice in Wonderland, by Lewis Carroll. Valuable to those who understand the Qabalah.

Alice Through the Looking Glass, by Lewis Carroll. Valuable to those who understand the Qabalah.

The Hunting of the Snark, by Lewis Carroll. Valuable to those who understand the Qabalah.

The Arabian Nights, translated by either Sir Richard Burton or John Payne. Valuable as a storehouse of oriental magick-lore.

Morte d'Arthur, by Sir Thomas Mallory. Valuable as a storehouse of occidental Magick-lore.

The Works of Francois Rabelais. Invaluable for Wisdom.

The Kasidah, by Sir Richard Burton. Valuable as a summary of philosophy.

The Song Celestial, by Sir Edwin Arnold. "The Bhagavad-Gita" in verse.

The Light of Asia, by Sir Edwin Arnold. An account of the attainment of Gotama Buddha.

The Rosicrucians, by Hargrave Jennings. Valuable to those who can read between the lines.

The Real History of the Rosicrucians, by A. E. Waite. A good vulgar piece of journalism on the subject.

The Works of Arthur Machen. Most of these stories are of great magical interest.

The Writings of William O'Neill (Blake). Invaluable to all students.

The Shaving of Shagpat, by George Meredith. An excellent allegory.

Lilith, by George MacDonald. A good introduction to the Astral.

La-Bas, by J. K. Huysmans. An account of the extravagances caused by the Sin-complex.

The Lore of Proserpine, by Maurice Hewlett. A suggestive enquiry into the Hermetic Arcanum.

En Route, by J. K. Huysmans. An account of the follies of Christian mysticism.

Sidonia the Sorceress, by Wilhelm Meinhold.

The Amber Witch, by Wilhelm Meinhold.

These two tales are highly informative.

Macbeth; Midsummer Night's Dream; The Tempest, by W. Shakespeare. Interesting for traditions treated.

Redgauntlet, by Sir Walter Scott. Also one or two other novels. Interesting for traditions treated.

Rob Roy, by James Grant. Interesting for traditions treated.

The Magician, by W. Somerset Maugham. An amusing hotchpot of stolen goods.

The Bible, by various authors unknown. The Hebrew and Greek Originals are of Qabalistic value. It contains also many magical apologues, and recounts many tales of folklore and magical rites.

Kim, by Rudyard Kipling. An admirable study of Eastern thought and life. Many other stories by this author are highly suggestive and informative.

For Mythology, as teaching Correspondences:

Books of Fairy Tales generally.

Oriental Classics generally.

Sufi Poetry generally.

Scandinavian and Teutonic Sagas generally.

Celtic Folk-Lore generally.



Original Printing Plate for the LOVERS card  
(Tero Hynynen Collection)

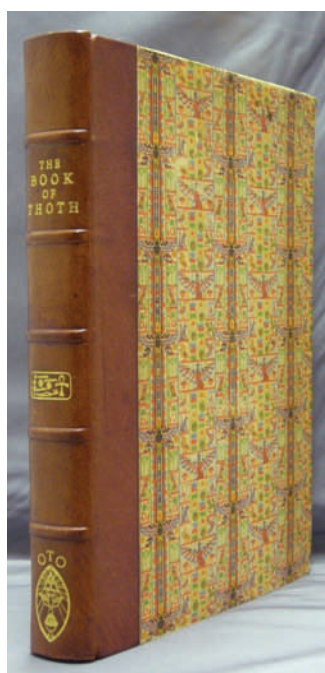
# THE (PRINTER'S) DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

R. Leo Gillis, Magician, Musician, Scholar, Gentleman & Alchemist.

## *A Printing History of the Book of Thoth Tarot Deck*

This article is a study of the various printed versions of the tarot deck known as *The Book of Thoth*, designed by Aleister Crowley and executed by the artist Frieda Lady Harris. The content of this article deals only with the printed decks, and not the origins and creation of the paintings themselves which form the basis of this deck.

The *Book of Thoth* is also the name of the book written by Aleister Crowley as a companion text for this tarot deck. The *Book of Thoth* was originally printed in 1944 in a limited edition of 200 copies. Seven cards from the deck were illustrated with colour plates in the original publication of this book. An example of this is the **Hierophant** card.



The plates were not only used for the colour printing of the cards in *The Book of Thoth*, they were also used to print a small test run of these cards, which Crowley handed out to people he thought might be interested in financing the printing of the entire deck.

On the next page is **The Lovers**, from the first test printing of the *Thoth Tarot Deck*.





### The Sangreal Thoth Deck

The **first** printing of the entire deck was done in **1968**, (*Encyclopedia of Tarot* claims the early 1960s), in a monochrome version that is known as the Sangreal One-color Tarot.

Below is the **Fool** card from that deck, as well as an example of the card-back:



The size of these cards was 140 x 95 mm, which became the de facto standard for all large size Thoth decks.

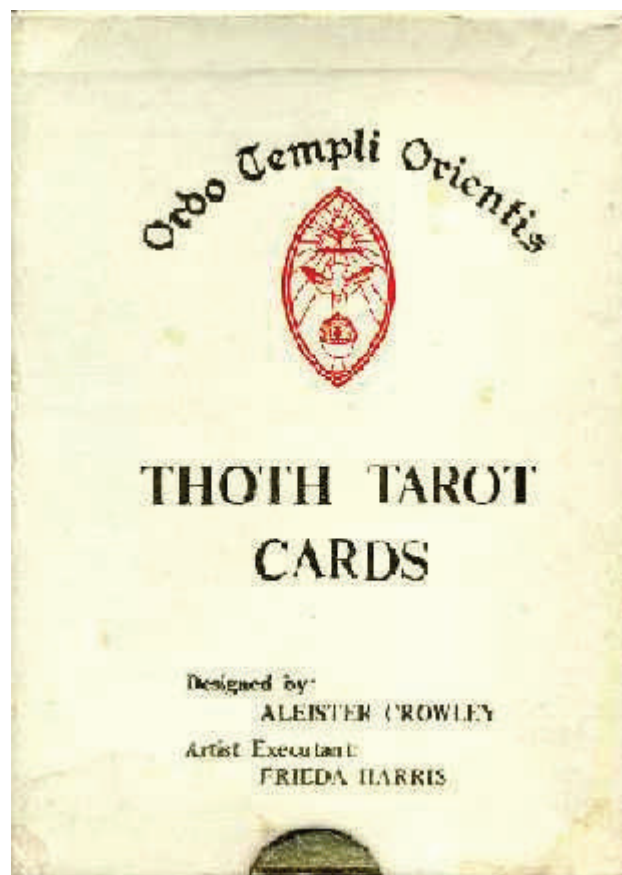
This deck was created by photographing the black and white illustrations in the original *Book of Thoth*, (copy 105 of 200, published in 1944), and then printing these photographs in monochrome colors. The edition was limited to about 250 decks, published by the Simpson Printing Company of Dallas, Texas USA.

[The following page gives several examples from this deck kindly scanned by Frank K. Jensen, Ed.]

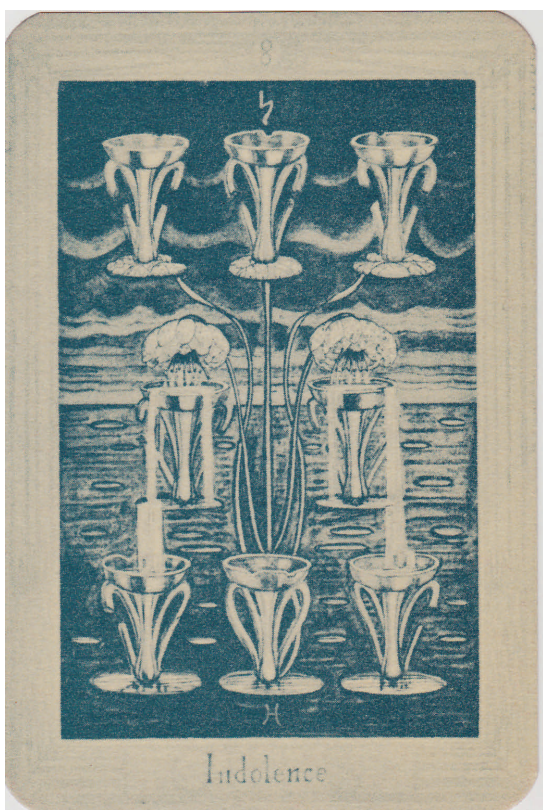
It is also claimed that in 1968 there was a deck in green monochrome published by Shambhala in Berkeley, CA USA.

### **The First Color Printing – 1969**

The first time the entire deck was printed in color was at the end of the 1960s. Facilitated by Grady McMurtry, Caliph of the OTO, (who had bought the rights to the deck), with the assistance of Llee Heflin, this first edition was printed by Llewellyn, and also distributed by Weiser.







*Images from the Simpson-Dallas Deck (1968), limited edition 250 decks.  
[K. Frank Jensen Collection]*



There were three versions of this printing, all packaged in an attractive slip-case with an inner gold box and an outer white box. The first is known as “White Box A”, and was printed by Dai Nippon in Hong Kong. The other two versions were essentially identical and are known as “White Box B”. These were printed in New York USA by Morgan Press. The only difference in these two later versions is that one is published by Llewellyn and the other is distributed by Weiser. The cards are identical.

But the cards from Hong Kong were different from the later printing in the USA. Not only were they on un-laminated stock, there were two major errors; the 8 of Cups had no numeral ‘8’ at the top of the card, and the Ace of Disks was printed ‘upside-down’.

The USA printing eventually corrected the two errors found on the 8 of Cups and the Ace of Disks, but early copies still contained the errors, both in the Weiser and Llewellyn versions.

The USA printing was done on better, laminated card-stock, but also had some cards that were washed out, and poorly printed, particularly the 6 of Disks.

In both printings, the borders on the face of the cards was plain, and colored a variable powder-blue, while the back of the cards had no border. The face of the cards also included the name of the card, but no alchemical glyphs or Hebrew letters on the Majors.

Aside from the deck itself, this edition also included an advertisement card for the copyright holder, Ordo Templi Orientis. Inclusion of this card became standard on every Thoth deck released from that point forward, (with two exceptions).

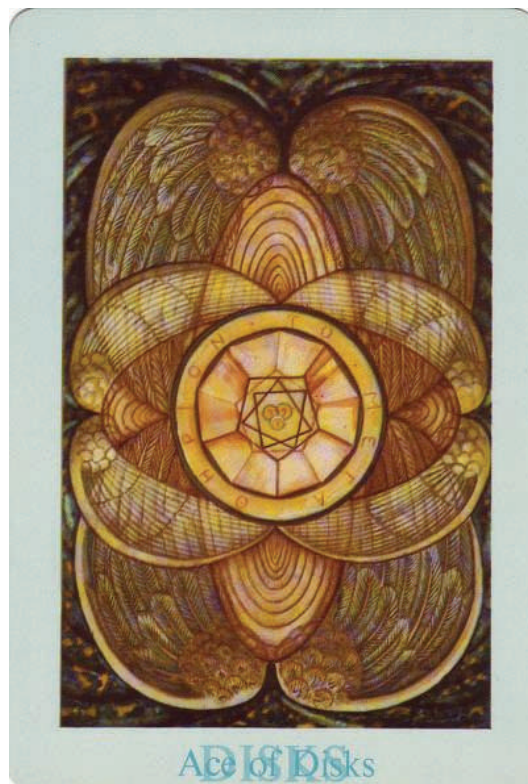
According to Carl Llewellyn Weschke, the first publisher of the deck, Grady McMurtry paid Aleister Crowley \$250 for the rights to the deck, and photographed the art with his 35mm camera. Llewellyn purchased these negatives and made plans to publish the deck. Since Weiser had published the companion Book of Thoth by Crowley, which they asserted was in the public domain, they were also planning to publish the cards, (which were also allegedly in the public domain). Instead, Weiser shared the printing with Llewellyn until the next version of the cards came out. When Llewellyn stopped being involved, they had sold over **50,000** copies of this first color printing of the deck.







The misprinted 8 of Cups from the Hong Kong printing of the Thoth.



The misprinted Ace of Disks from the Hong Kong printing of the Thoth.

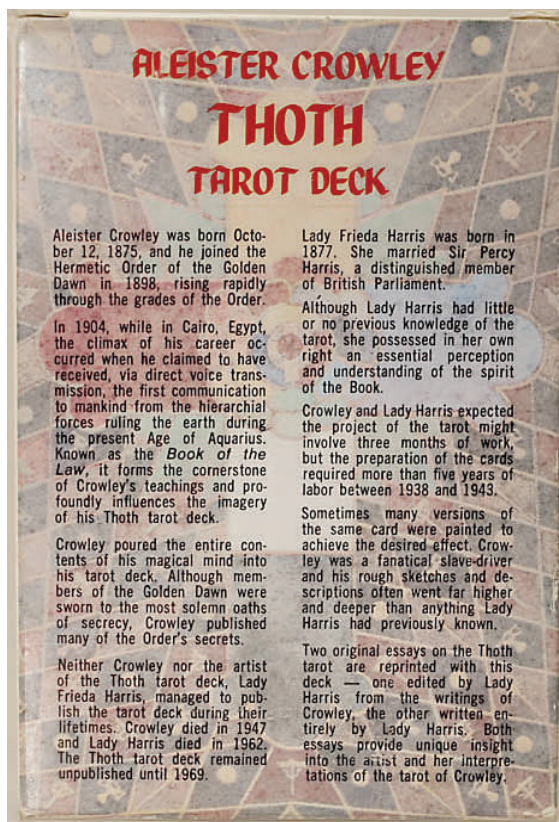
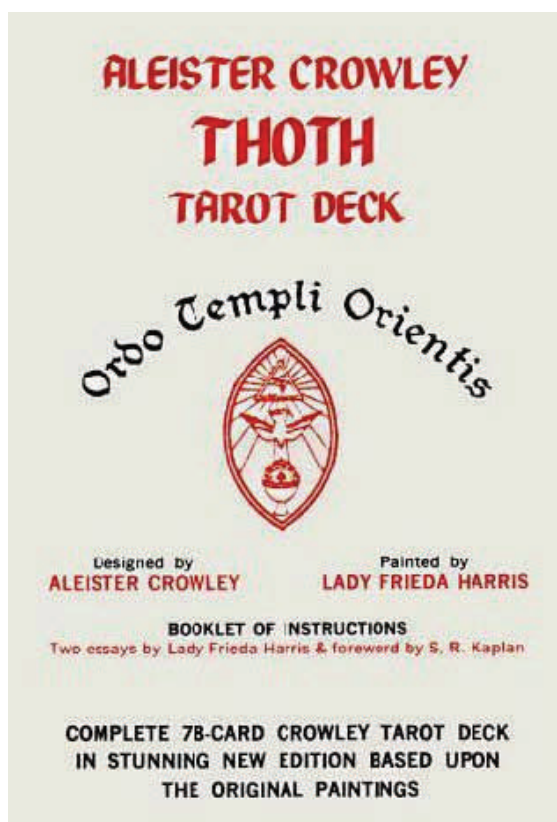
## The Second Color Printing - 1978

The original color printing left a lot to be desired, and eventually it was decided to do a completely new printing starting with new photographs of the original paintings. This is when Stuart Kaplan and his company U.S. Games entered the picture.

The original artwork was re-photographed for this new printing of the deck. The borders were changed from plain to a wavy-line design that appeared in the original printing of the Book of Thoth in 1944. The typeface was changed for the card-names, and the Hebrew letters and astrological symbols were added to the bottom of the Major Arcana. This re-issue was facilitated by Gerald Yorke, (who had donated the original paintings to the Warburg Institute in London), and Stephen Skinner.

This printing is the infamous 'greenie,' a deck with green borders and a decidedly green cast to many, (but not all) of the cards. The history of the greenie, or the 'icky green Thoth' is a bit convoluted.

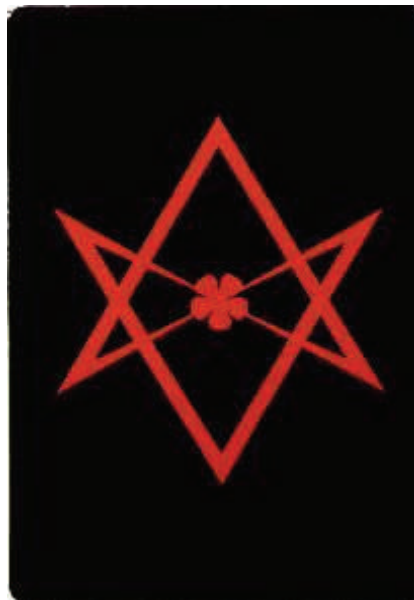
The large size Thoth deck in the white flip-top box, known as "White Box C" was printed with green borders. These borders were apparently darker in some versions, possibly the 1983 version by Weiser. There is also variation of color quality within the deck itself, from card to card.



Later versions of the large white box corrected the green-ness to a limited degree, and the colors were uniform within the deck itself. What is confusing is that these decks continued to be printed and sold until about the year 2000, even after the later re-printings of the deck, and a new box design, (unfortunately this box is also green, making things even more confusing. Referring to a 'green Thoth' does not necessarily mean the color of the box).

One important change for this printing is the inclusion of a Little White Booklet (LWB) for the first time, with essays by James Wasserman and Frieda Lady Harris, as well as commentary by Stuart Kaplan, the Tarot historian and owner of U.S. Games, Inc.

Another memorable feature of this deck was the inclusion of the *Unicursal Hexagram* card, featuring a red hexagram on a black background. Along with the OTO card, a version of this hexagram card has been issued with the deck ever since.



In 1983, a slight update of this deck was published. The major difference was the addition of an ISBN number 0913866156 on the side of the box, (while the ISBN for the Weiser version was 0877284520). The 1983 update also contains a red Unicursal Hexagram that is upside-down on the black card; this can be determined by the direction of the five-petaled rose in the center.

As with the earlier Llewellyn version of the deck, both the U.S. Games and Weiser versions of the 1978 printing contained identical cards, now printed in Belgium by Carta-Mundi. The size of the cards remained at 140 x 95mm.

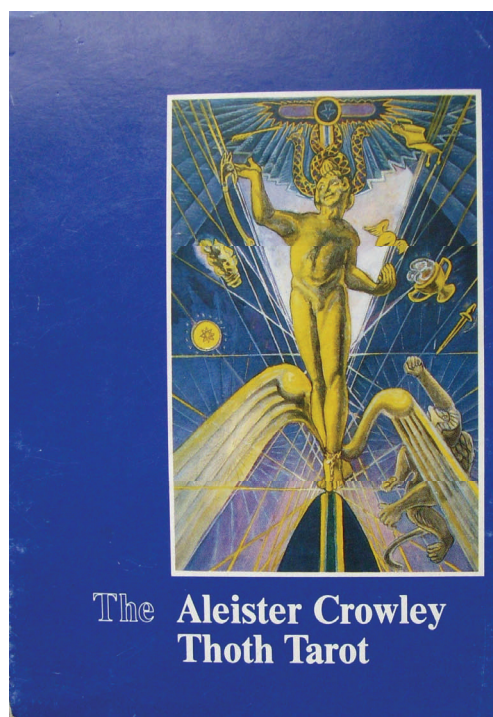


### **The Third Color Printing (the Swiss deck 'A') – 1986**

The third color printing saw the introduction of the famous 'Swiss' deck, printed by AG-Muller in Switzerland. This is known as "Blue Box A". The original paintings were again re-photographed, and a vibrant new printing was done. The cards were printed with very rich and saturated colors, having a very slight 'out of focus' look to them. Some tarot enthusiasts consider this to be the best version of the Thoth deck ever printed.

The first appearance of the 'Swiss' Thoth deck was cause for some major changes to the appearance of the cards and the contents of the deck. This dramatic new printing brought out the dynamic colors of the Frieda Harris paintings, while simultaneously eliminating the 'icky green' borders for a sedate gray, and black card names. The large blue box contained the two extra Magician cards for the first time. To date, this has been the only edition in large size that contains the extra Magi. The ISBN for this printing is 0-88079-469-0.

When the typeface on the cards was changed, a couple of other changes were also made: the Aces carried the numeral '1' for the first time, and the position of the glyphs used by Lady Harris on the paintings of the Trumps were faithfully reproduced, including her 'errors', (these can be seen in the black-and-white plates at the back of The Book of Thoth).



On most of the Trumps, the Hebrew letter is on the left of the title, and the astrological glyph is on the right. In the large Swiss deck, this is reversed on four cards, just as Lady Harris had them: The Universe, The Moon, and both versions of The Magus. The extra Magician card had the glyphs the 'right' way.



Some have speculated that this marked the Magician card as the correct one for the deck, but this is spurious. The fact is that Crowley did not approve of either of the Magician card variants. They were included in this printing simply because these paintings were found in the Warburg along with the other 78 original paintings when they were brought out to be re-photographed for this edition. Since, like most Tarot decks, the Thoth deck had always had two additional cards added, (the Unicursal Hexagram and the OTO card), it was decided to replace these with the Magician variants. Later this decision was rescinded, and the large size Thoth reverted to having no extra Magician cards in the deck.

The 1986 printing also suffered from having some of the images cropped closely, cutting off portions of the original painting. This is generally not too noticeable except in the Court Cards, and can be easily seen when compared to the 1996 printing, in which the cropping issues were corrected. In the 1986 printing, the image size was 114 by 72 mm, while the later image size was about 3mm wider.

Another notable feature of the new edition was that the backs of the cards had a thin gray border for the first time, a feature not necessarily embraced by many Tarot enthusiasts. But the edition did include a LWB with actual excerpts from Crowley's Book of Thoth for the first time.

Also in 1986, for the first time the Thoth deck appeared in a smaller size, 110 x 70mm, that was similar to most other Tarot decks. This was marketed by U.S. Games in the package known as "White Box D". The deck was also printed in Switzerland by AG-Muller, and is simply a scaled-down version of "Blue Box A".



In the U.S. Games LWB (ISBN 0-88079-308-2) the following is written:

"Neither Crowley nor Lady Harris managed to publish the deck during their lifetimes. It remained unpublished until 1969, when Major Grady L. McMurtry of Crowley's order, Ordo Templi Orientis, arranged for the photography and publication of the deck. McMurtry had been instrumental in helping Crowley to publish the first edition of the Book Of Thoth in 1944.

The quality of McMurtry's reproduction of the Thoth deck was rather poor, far short of the excellence of clarity and detail envisioned by Lady Harris, who believed that no one but the official British government stamp mint could do justice to the printing of the deck.

In 1977, through the gracious help of Mr. Gerald Yorke and the able assistance of Mr. Stephen Skinner, the original paintings, which measure 10.5" x 16.5" were rephotographed. The present edition of the printing of the Thoth Tarot deck is based on new photographs and color separations made in 1986."

#### **The Fourth Color Printing (the 'Swiss' deck B) - 1996**

In 1996 yet another overhaul of the Thoth deck was made, again released by AGMuller. This 1996 printing, known as "Blue Box B", was still printed in Switzerland at first, but later moved to Belgium, where it remains to this day. New photographs were made and a definitive version of the deck was created, now available in three sizes: 140 x 95mm; 110 x 70mm, and a 'pocket size' of 89 x 58mm.

Several changes took place with this version. The extra Magician cards have disappeared and been replaced by the usual OTO and hexagram cards, although now the hexagram is in rainbow colors instead of a solid red.



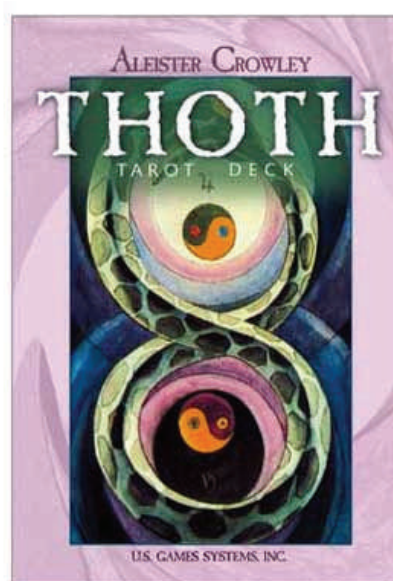
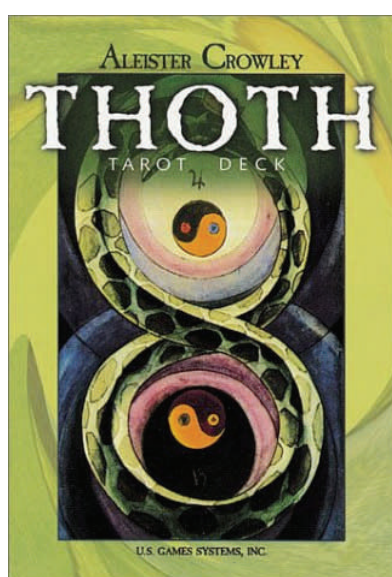
Also, the cropping issues from the 1986 edition have been resolved, and the image size is 3mm wider in this version. Additionally, the border on the back of the cards was changed from gray to white. Fortunately the boxes are different for the two versions; the earlier version has the Magician card on the cover set off-center, and the later version has the Magician centered on the cover. This later box is ISBN 978-0-88079-469-5.

However, some confusion was caused by using the 1986 printing of the Blue Box A, which stated that there were two extra Magician cards included, for the later 1996 printing, which had no extra Magi. These were presumably leftover boxes that were being used up, but they were misleading, insofar as there were NOT two extra Magician cards in the large size deck.

For the 1996 version the Universe, Moon and Magus cards still have the Hebrew letters and astrological glyphs on the 'wrong' side. The typeface has changed for the names on the cards, and is now in a darker black ink. This typeface looks much like a 'bold' version of the one used for the 1986 printing.

But the most important change was that the 1996 printing reproduced the cards in sharper focus than the third color edition of 1986. Yet at the same time there was another problem; the original paintings appear to have gotten a yellowish tinge on many of them, as if they were degrading over time. A number of cards appear darker than their counterparts from the 1986 printing, but this is presumably due to the state of the paintings themselves, and has nothing to do with the print quality, which was excellent.

The 1996 printing was also distributed by U.S. Games in both sizes, with the large size in a green box and the 'standard' size in a purple box. Initially, the green box contained the older printings of the large 'icky green' Thoth deck, but this was later changed ca. 2000, so that the box contained the more current, 1996 printing made in Belgium. A version of the green box was also distributed by Weiser in the USA.





The smaller size cards that came in the lavender/purple box continued to have the two extra Magus cards in them. This remains the only printing to include them. These cards never suffered from the 'icky green' border problem. They always had gray borders. However, they did contain some major typographical errors.

This later printing revised the name on one of the extra Magician cards, changing it from 'Magician' to 'Magus,' so that now all three cards are called the Magus. Nevertheless, the Magus that comes standard in all Thoth decks still has the astrological glyph on the left, and the Hebrew letter on the right, while the other two have this reversed. The Moon card also has the astrological glyph on the left and the letter on the right. But unlike the large size deck, the Universe, the Aeon and the Lust cards have no glyph or letter at all!



### **The Fifth Color Printing (the Gold deck) - 2008**

In 2008, the newest version of the *Thoth* deck appeared, but only in a German edition. Combining the lighter color of the 1996 US Games printing with the softer focus of the 1986 AGM printing, these cards have little vibrancy except for the reds. Great care and expense went into making these cards the most accurate depiction of the original paintings ever made. After a thorough restoration of the paintings themselves, (which involved primarily the glues and mountings rather than the actual paintings), new high-resolution photographs were taken, and extensive color-matching was done to achieve the highest visual fidelity.

This deck has its own distinct look, as the bolder and more saturated colors of past printings have been replaced by a tonal palette that is subdued, almost eerie.



The cards are slightly smaller than the previous standard size, and have been 'resized' to finally show the true proportions of the paintings. The backs of the cards are considerably brighter than before: the green diamonds for the circles, (representing the suit of disks), are truly green for the first time, and a new gold border replaces the distracting gray/white ones of the past. Also, the rainbow Unicursal Hexagram has been replaced by a gold one.

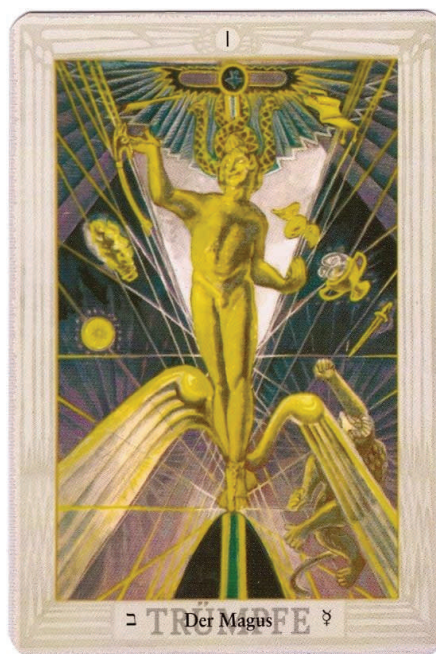
The packaging is gorgeous, with a two-piece gold foil box with an image of the Priestess card, surrounded by a royal blue sleeve. Inside the box is a brand new LWB which, at 152 pages, is actually more of a mini book. It contains a foreword by Hymenaeus Beta, two previously unpublished essays by Frieda Lady Harris, and excerpts from Crowley's writings, with all the text in German. The ISBN is 978-3-86826-504-0 for the standard size deck, and 978-3-86826-503-3 for the 'pocket size'.



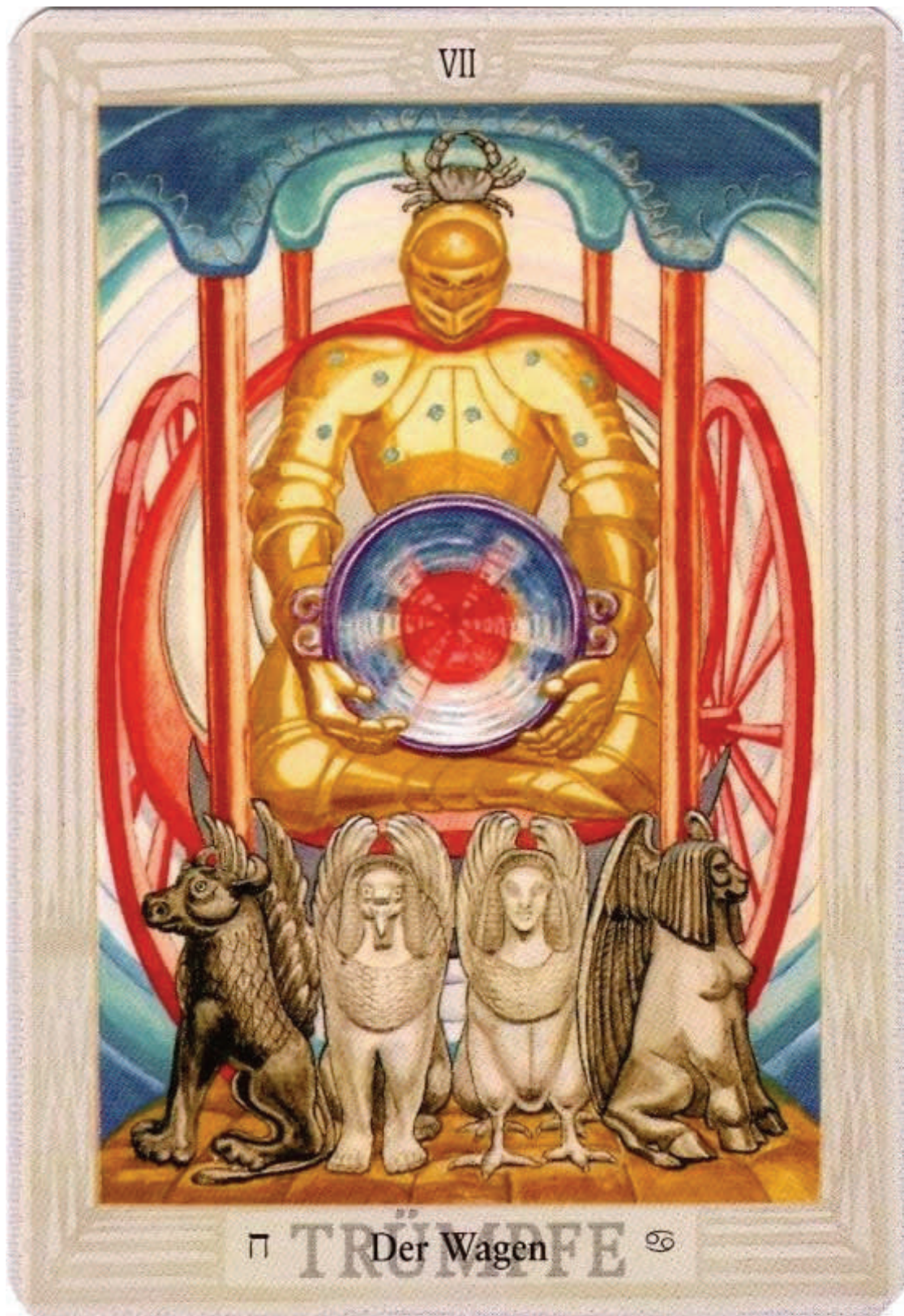


The scans below do justice to the new printing. The Chariot still has a vibrant red, though its other colors are more faded. The Princess of Cups is much more aquamarine/teal than previous printings, while the Ace of Disks is more subdued than before. But the Magus card, (of which there is only one) is truly a disappointment. It looks very dull in color, and slightly out of focus — not a very compelling image at all. Fortunately, this is the only dismal-looking card in the deck.

Most of the other cards show off their subtleties much better, and of course it's an aesthetic choice as to whether this printing is preferable to the earlier ones. But if the original paintings truly look this way today, then some have clearly not fared well over time. Perhaps it would have been better to include a different Magus than this one, although Crowley himself never approved the other versions.







*The Chariot, from the "Gold Thoth Deck" (2008)*



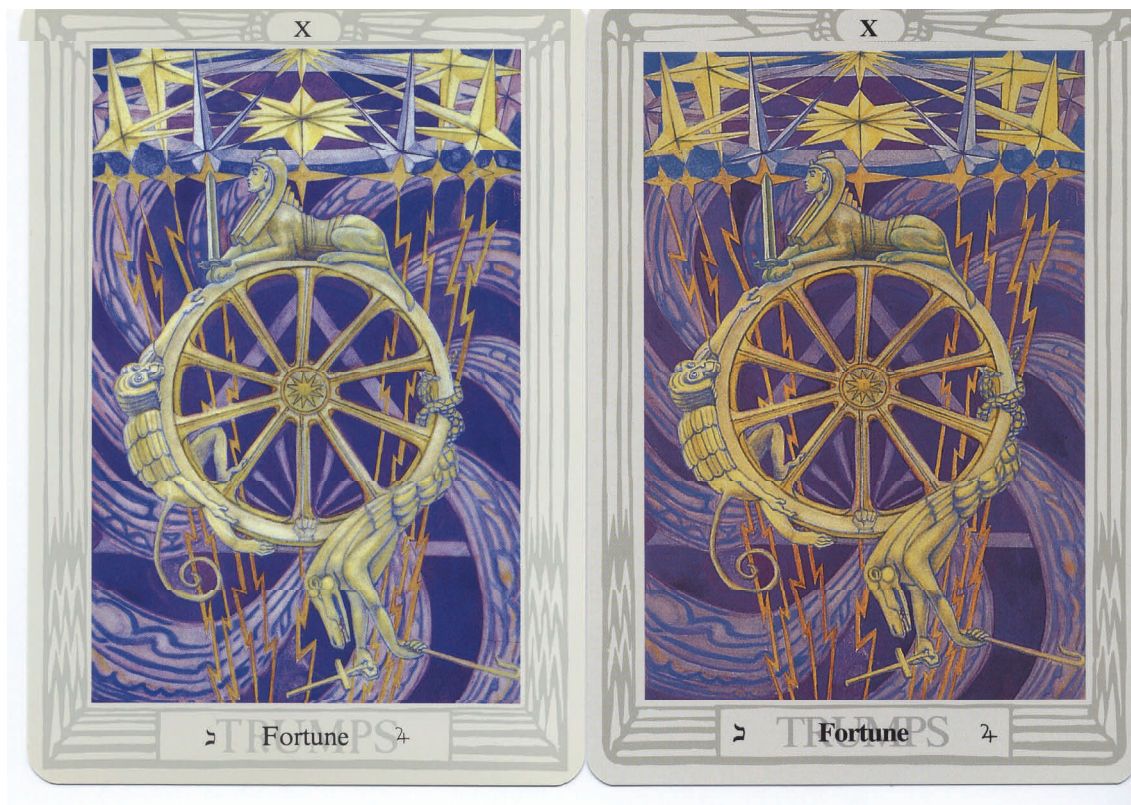


*The Princess of Cups, from the "Gold Thoth Deck" (2008)*



### Comparisons of Various Printings

The 1986 Swiss printing is on the left, from the Swiss Blue Box A.  
The 1996 Belgian printing is on the right, from the US Games Green box.



Colors may not appear accurately, as cameras and monitors vary, but they are correct relative to each other.

Note the differences in typeface for the card names, as well as the sharper detail and less saturation on the 1996 printing. The '96 card looks like it has a yellowish tinge overall, as if the original painting had been left in a room full of smokers for a long time. If this is an accurate replication of the paintings at that time, then they have clearly deteriorated since 1986. Conversely, the '86 printing can appear to have too much brightness overall on many of the cards, which accounts for part of the discrepancy between the two printings.

In general, the difference between the two printings is that '86 is slightly less focused, with brighter yellows and blues, while '96 appears sharper, with slightly brighter reds. One must also keep in mind that there can be color variations even within the same print run.



A really deep 'greenie' on the left, and a 1986 printing on the right.

The green decks differ greatly in how pronounced the green color is, as seen in the pair at the bottom, with a greenie from a different deck on the left, and a 1996 Belgium printing on the right.

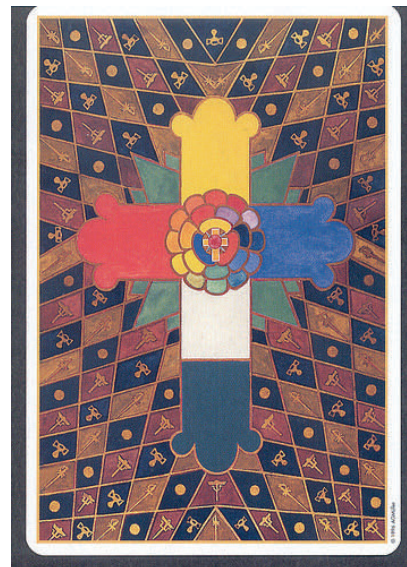




The card-backs show a corresponding change through the various printings. On the left below is one from the very first test run in 1944, and on the right, from the very first full color printing of the deck in 1969 (photos courtesy of Gary Oppenhuis):



On the left is a US Games 1978 edition. On the right is the large AGMuller printing of 1996, otherwise known as Swiss Blue Box 'B.'



## Summary of the various versions

Below is a chart summarizing the main characteristics of the five major color printings of the English-language version of the Thoth Tarot deck.

The 1969 printing came in two varieties, one printed in Hong Kong and the other in New York, (distributed by two different companies). Thus there are three boxes, but only two decks, that represent this printing.

The 1996 Blue Box printing came in three sizes, only two of which are listed below. The 'standard' size Blue Box has the same characteristics as the 'deluxe' size. Note the switch from Switzerland to Belgium on later printings of the 1996 Blue Box B.

The pocket sizes of the purple and gold boxes have basically the same characteristics, and so they are not listed separately.

	1969 White Box A	1969 White Box B	1978 White Box C	1986 Blue Box A	1986 White Box D
Back Borders	None	None	None	Gray	Gray
Front Borders	Pale Blue	Pale Blue	Green	Light Gray	Light Gray
OTO Card	Dublin, CA address	Dublin, CA address	No address	None	None
Unicursal Hexagram	None	None	Red on black	None	None
Extra Magi	None	None	None	Two extras	Two extras
Little White Booklet	None	None	Wasserman/Harris	Aleister Crowley	Wasserman/Harris
Card Size	140 x 95mm	140 x 95mm	140 x 95mm	140 x 95mm	110 x 70mm
Printed In	Hong Kong	New York, USA	Belgium	Switzerland	Switzerland
Published By	Llewellyn	Llewellyn/Weiser	U.S.Games/Weiser	AGMuller	U.S.Games, Inc.

	1996 Blue Box B	1997 Pocket size	1996 Green Box	1996 Purple Box	2008 Gold Box
Back Borders	White	White	None/White	White	Gold
Front Borders	Light Gray	Light Gray	Green/Light Gray	Light Gray	Dark Gray
OTO Card	Austin address	Austin address	Austin address	None	New York address
Unicursal Hexagram	Rainbow on black	Rainbow on black	Various	None	Gold on Black
Extra Magi	None	None	None	Two extras	None
Little White Booklet	Aleister Crowley	Crowley/ed. by Harris	Wasserman/Harris	Wasserman/Harris	Harris/Crowley
Card Size	140 x 95mm	89 x 58mm	140 x 95mm	110 x 70mm	102 x 70mm
Printed In	Switzerland/Belgium	Belgium	Belgium	Belgium	Switzerland(?)
Published By	AGMuller	AGMuller	U.S.Games/Weiser	U.S.Games, Inc.	AGMuller/Urania



## Afterword

In the past 40 years, the Crowley/Harris Thoth Tarot has gone through five major color printings. Each printing was an attempt to improve on the one before it, and each has its own peculiarities. The relative benefits of each are a matter of aesthetic opinion, but each printing attempted to reproduce a set of original paintings. This is the key issue. How faithful are these various reproductions to the originals whence they derive?

One thing to keep in mind is that the paintings themselves have most likely degraded over time, having been painted in watercolors using many pigments that were hand-made by Lady Harris during difficult wartime circumstances. So it is entirely possible that one or more of the decks faithfully reproduced the paintings at the time they were photographed.

The initial printing by Llewellyn was poorly produced. Undoubtedly, the paintings were not photographed under the best of conditions in the mid-1960s, nor was a very high-quality printing method employed to produce those photographs. In part, this has to do with the economics of mass-producing a deck, and in part with the technological capabilities of the time.

The second printing, in 1978, was supposed to remedy that situation. And yet, despite new photographs and a new printer, the result was the infamous ‘icky green Thoth’ deck. One would be hard-pressed to claim that this version was actually a serious improvement over the first one.

The third printing was supposed to change all that, (again), and it succeeded to a remarkable degree. The famous ‘Swiss’ deck by AGMuller was dramatically vibrant and rich in color, due to the new photography, (again), and much higher quality printing methods. It would seem that finally Lady Harris and Aleister Crowley could be proud of the fruits of their work.

And then a decade went by, and there was a second printing by AGMuller, (the fourth overall), which was supposed to accomplish yet another improvement of the reproduction. There is certainly more detail in the 1996 printing, and the issue of cropping the images has been resolved, but some of the color vibrancy has been sacrificed, to say nothing of the small errors that crept in regarding the names on the cards — names in a new, darker typeface that lent a different look to the cards.

Originally printed in Switzerland like its predecessor, the ‘96 version was later printed in Belgium when the company merged with CartaMundi. Yet despite its detractions, this printing was still far and away better than the first two attempts, and it did provide U.S. Games with the stock to finally replace the old ‘icky green’ decks it had been selling for two decades, (though it should be noted that the ‘greenie’ does have many admirers).

Yet even this printing was not to be the last word on the subject. After an expensive restoration of the original paintings, the fifth color edition appeared in 2008. This was based on yet another new set of high-resolution photographs and precise color-matching, which claimed (yet again) to faithfully and accurately reproduce the subtle colors of the original paintings. But if the paintings look this way today, then some of them must have faded over the years, as they definitely do not look as explosively colorful as the 1986 printing. Although the reds are very much present, the blues are much paler, and the overall tone of the images is much more subdued.

The appeal of these changes is naturally a matter of aesthetics, but the cards are very different in this edition. They are definitely more somber, one might even say more 'war-like' in the sense that they show signs of the great trials engulfing the world during the years from 1939 to 1944 when they were painted. They have a stately elegance to them that befits their creation during a time when a stiff upper lip was a pre-requisite for survival.

And so it seems that each decade must have its own Thoth deck. Five times in the last five decades, a new version has been unveiled, and each of them channels their zeitgeist in their own particular way.

The '60s saw the emergence of the first attempt to fulfill the visions of Crowley and Harris, with the publication of a deck whose psychedelia, and indeed violence, would have seemed a natural product of that decade. And yet these images had lain dormant for over a quarter century, waiting for their moment to arrive. Perhaps a Saturn return had to occur before the birth of this Beast?

The '70s had their Thoth too. Yet it was a washed-out cousin of its psychedelic counterpart, having many cards smeared with a green glaze in much the same way that the users of the 70's had replaced psychedelics with harder drugs. Here was a deck for the hangover from the Summer of Love.

In the '80s, the digital revolution began, and the advent of the audio CD promised the perfect replication of the artist's intentions. So too did the newest Thoth deck, with amazing detail and brilliant color seen for the very first time. The Tarot enthusiast could finally feel like they had a miniature replica of Lady Harris' original paintings.

The Thoth deck of the '90s was a further refinement, bringing the images into sharper focus, and making things uniform on both sides of the Atlantic. Along with the economic boom of the decade came the explosion of the Internet, providing for the worldwide dissemination of the images, as well as the actual cards. Now Lady Harris' tarot could be bought at the local Border's or from a hundred different e-tailers.

As for the turn of the century, yet another new Thoth deck arrives. This one bears the scars of a war whose conflagration was prophesied decades earlier in *The Book of the Law*, the very book whose principles the deck seeks to illustrate. It is grayer skies and petrol rationing, a life of pallid enjoyments amidst an uncertain future.

In much the same way, our present decade has seen the threats of terrorism and ecological collapse, the global economy in free fall, and the necessity of laying the groundwork for a future far different than the past we have managed to survive. Out of this decade comes the sternly bright palette of Lady Harris, offering solace that although the sheen of our society may have faded over the years, there are still some enduring truths that we can draw on for inspiration, as we seek to remake the world — yet again.



Aleister Says ...

**Of the Sun (XIX)** ... “this is one of the simplest of the cards” (p. 113, *Book of Thoth*).

**R. Leo Gillis** lives in Detroit’s only residential geodesic dome, built by his wife and himself and a couple of friends. When not studying Qabalah, he plays Chinese Checkers with his son, who wins with unnerving regularity.

Besides being the author of the *Book of Mutations*, he’s also a musician, and he and his brother have recorded spoken-word versions of Libri LXV, VII, and DCCCXIII by Aleister Crowley, under the name **Seven Ravens**. [Ed. note, I use these in my Thelemic workshops and highly recommend them].

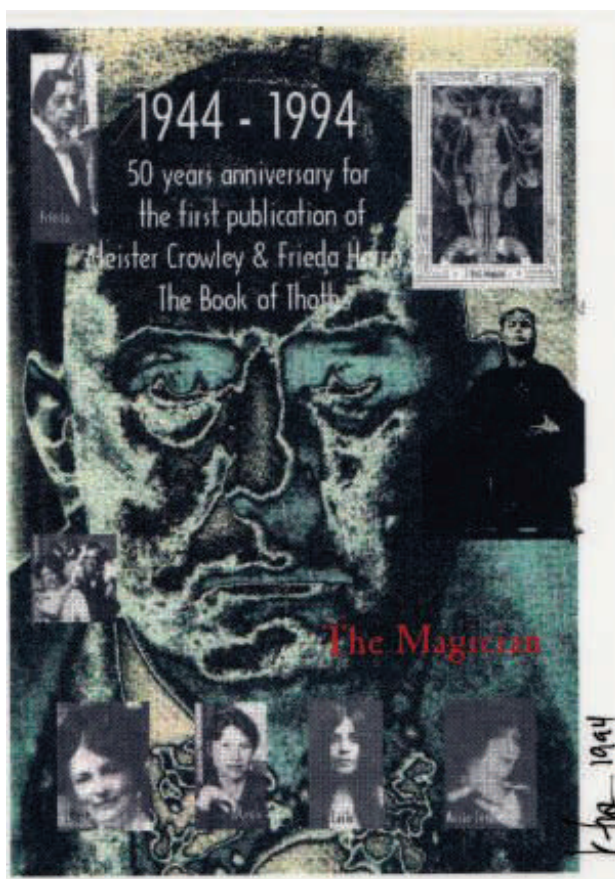
<http://www.trigrammaton.net>

<http://www.myspace.com/sevenravens>



# 50 YEARS WITH CROWLY AND HARRIS

K. Frank Jensen provides this article from 1994 celebrating 50 years of the Thoth deck.



Right now we can celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> years anniversary for the publication of the *Thoth Tarot Deck*, the masterpiece which into being by the joint efforts of Aleister Alexander Crowley and Lady Frieda Harris. The *Thoth Tarot* is, along with Arthur Edward Waite's and Pamela Coleman Smith's Tarot deck, the first true esoteric Tarot deck. All decks published after that, owe their due to these pioneers, whose popularity and spreading has never been surpassed.

Urania Verlag, Switzerland, has, to my knowledge, as the only Tarot publisher celebrated this particular event by issuing a special limited and numbered edition (1994 sets) which contain not only the deck, but also the German translation of Crowley's book, a poster depicting the *Eight of Wands* and most remarkable, a compact-disc with rituals, calls and poems performed by Crowley himself.

Most of this sound material, if not all, has been made available earlier on tapes in more or less pirated editions; now it is collected on one CD in a better, even though still primitive quality, due to the original primitive wax cylinder recordings. I can find one flaw with this edition: the accompanying deck is exactly the same as the generally available one (the smaller size). It would have been a nice gesture if, for example, the cards had golden edges, a different back pattern, including the fourth Magician or something else just to mark this special occasion. Anyway, we have to be grateful, that the publisher marked this event by making this set available; I have not noticed anyone else to care about it.

Among Crowley's Golden Dawn papers was a hand-coloured pack of Oswald Wirth's Tarot, which probably was the deck he used for his own early work on Tarot. Despite Crowley's own aspiration to be an artist - several paintings are known from his hand - he never took it upon his self to create a Tarot deck, which, as it is commonly said, was one the obligations of the Golden Dawn members to ascend the degrees. Instead he did, in this respect, realize his own limitations and entered an alliance with Frieda Harris, the wife of the Member of Parliament Sir Percy Harris.

Frieda Harris was an accomplished artist and one of Crowley's multitudinous financial supporters. The co-operation on the deck began in 1938, and Crowley calculated in detail that the entire process would take half a year. Instead it took four years before the deck was finished in 1942. Due partly to the war conditions, most of the contact between the two happened by letter, Frieda Harris living in the countryside and Crowley in London. A great part of Frieda Harris's correspondence to Crowley is preserved, so we are able to get a view of the progression and the many disagreements that arose along the way. Many of the cards were redrawn as many as five or six times, before Crowley found them satisfying and up to his intentions.

Meanwhile Crowley had worked on the book connected to his deck, the *Book of Thoth*, in which he expanded on the ideas that lay behind the design of the cards.

Finished with the work on the deck in 1942, a new trial arose: the problem of having it published despite the wartime shortage of paper and other necessities. Another problem being that Frieda Harris made arrangements for having her work exhibited, partly for the purpose of financing the printing of them. She did feel that the connection with Crowley and the bad reputation that he generally had, would not exactly be furthering her cause so she advised him to stay away from the exhibitions, which he did not; this did of course strain the relationship of the two to a great degree.

The first printed edition came finally into being in 1944 by the publication of a limited edition of 200 copies only of Master Therion's alias Aleister Crowley's *The Book of Thoth*\*) with reproductions of the cards, but only eight (or nine) of them in colour. This first publication was financed by Crowley's order, O.T.O (Ordo Templi Orientis).

Like Pamela Colman Smith, neither Frieda Harris nor Aleister Crowley should see the results of their common efforts published in their final form; Aleister Crowley died in 1947 and Frieda Harris in 1962; the full colour edition of the deck was published by Llewellyn in co-operation with the O.T.O in 1969-70. The original artwork passed, after Frieda Harris's death into the collection of the English scholar Gerald J Yorke, and is now deposited in the Warburg collection at the University of London. The first printed edition of the deck left much to be desired regarding quality\*\*), but a far better edition was made in 1977 in co-operation with Samuel Weiser Inc. and US Games Systems Inc.

In 1987 the deck was re-edited and two extra outcasts of Frieda Harris's Magicians were added. AGMuller/Urania Verlag is currently responsible for the production.

### **Notes**

\*) Tony Hutchins, New Zealand has pointed out to me, that the Ace of Cups, as described in Crowley's book, does not correspond with the actual card published, but refers to one of the earlier drafts for this card,

\*\*) Anpu's article in *Magical Blend* States, that Jerry Kay had access to the slides this edition was based on, and that he used them for a basis for the line drawings for his "Book of Thoth" deck, published by Xeno Publications 1968. This deck was intended to be coloured by the students, but actually, Jerry Kay also published a coloured version.

**Aleister Crowley Thoth Tarot**

**Jubilaums-set**

Switzerland 1994, Urania Verlag.

Limited edition of 1994 sets.

ISBN 3-908646-43-x

**Sources:**

**Aleister Crowley: The Book of Thoth**

(Various editions)

**Caliph Hymenaeus Beta:**

**A brief history of the Thoth Tarot**

(In *The Magical Link* no.2-3/1988)

**Sheila Wilding: private correspondence**

Including also information from the APA-Tarot.

**Eboni Anpu, Lotte Leib & Bill Heindrick**

**Talking Tarot.** (Article in *Magical Blend*)

**Stuart R. Kaplan: Encyclopedia of Tarot, vol.III**

**Crowley decks in SPILKAMMERET'S Collection**



Aleister Says ...

“She [**Queen of Cups**] is the perfect agent and patient, able to receive and transmit everything without herself being affected thereby.” (p. 157, *Book of Thoth*).



# PRINTING HISTORY AT 50 YEARS

**K. Frank Jensen** provides this summary from his 1994 article in *Manteia*.

**1944(21 March)**

First edition of Crowley/ Master Therion's Book of Thoth, (=Equinox, vol. 111, no.5) was published by O.T.O. in a limited edition of 200. The book, which illustrates the entire set, including 8 cards in colour became commonly available, when it was reprinted by Samuel Weiser in 1969. I have recently seen the limited 1944-edition offered for sale for US\$5000.

## **Two monochrome editions**

In the early 1960's, according to the Encyclopedia of Tarot, the Simpson Printing Company of Dallas, Texas reprinted the illustrations from the first edition of the Book of Thoth as a monochrome deck. The Encyclopedia states that these cards are blue-tinted, with a red coloured back. About 250 decks were made.

An article in Magical Blend refers to a deck tinted in green and published by Shambala in 1968, which the article claims to be the first edition ever of the deck.

**1970**

Edition by Llewellyn in co-operation with O.T.O.: This edition has plain borders (no pattern). Majors are numbered with Roman numbers at the top of the cards, minors with Arabic numerals. No white edge around the Rosicrucian back – pattern. The 8 of Cups is missing the Arabic number at top edge. There is no booklet but a text card. The first Llewellyn-edition is reported to be identifiable by a printing mistake: the *Ace of Discs* having been turned upside down, which obvious from the number 999 rendered in the small center circled, instead of showing as 666. However, both packs, version **A&B** (see below) in my collection have this misprint.

There are at least two variations of this edition:

**A:** Slip case text in black ink with O.T.O.-logo in red, inner case: matte gold/metallic, shiny surface on cards. Printed in USA.

**B:** Text on slip-case in metallic gold. O.T.O. logo in red. Inner slipcase: bright brassy gold, matte surface on cards. Printed in Hong Kong.

## **Weiser edition**

The next edition appears some time between **1970** and **1978**. The white slip case with text in black and the O.T.O. logo is the same as the Llewellyn/version A, as also the cards are, except that *the 8 of Cups now has the Arabic number added and that the 999 on 8 of*

*Discs is now 666.* The box says now: Distributed by Samuel Weiser, 734 Broadway N.Y. 10003, Printed in USA. No booklet but same text card type as the preceding decks.

### 1977/1978

A new edition was published by Samuel Weiser Inc, in co-operation with US games Systems Inc. The artwork was re-photographed and Hebrew letters and astrological symbols were added to the left and right of the titles. The borders of the cards had a pattern added and the typography of the card names and numbers were changed. For the first time, the printing quality appeared to be up to the artistic standard of the artwork.

The cardboard box not a (slip-case) doesn't have the name *Weiser* printed but only *Published* and *distributed by US games Systems Inc.* The box is white with printing in black and red, and the O.T.O logo is still there. There is still no white border around the back pattern, which will be the case later. A booklet accompanies the deck stating *Copyright 1978 Stuart R. Kaplan and Donald Weiser.* The cards are printed in Belgium by Carti Mundi.

### 1983

In 1983 an ISBN-no. Was added to the side panel of the box and the inside cover of the accompanying booklet has *1978 & 1983 Copyright US Games System Inc...and D. Weiser.*

### 1986

From 1986 onwards the decks were printed by AGMuller, Switzerland. The back pattern is now surrounded by a white border, on which is stated the copyright notice. Two extra *Magicians* (called *Magus*) were added to the deck. The names and numbers on the cards area now printed in black instead of the earlier grey. The deck is available in two different sizes, the normal one and a smaller one. I have three different packs of the smaller size, one in a mauve box, one in a white box, and one in blue, all of them in English versions.

On the Mauve boxed pack, which depicts X1, Lust, it is stated that the deck is *distributed by Urania GMBH, Germany* (which is now the publishing arm of AGMuller). The box also says *New Edition. 1986 copyright by AGMuller* (stated on cards and box). No booklet is included.

The small size deck in the white box is similar to the US Games /Weiser edition box, still showing the O.T.O logo in red. On the back of the box is the Universe Illustrated. Text on the box says *published and distributed by US Games Systems incorporated and AG-Muller&Cie, Switzerland.* On the cards it said *Copyright 1986AGmuller.* Booklet said *Copyright 1978.1983.1987 by Stuart R Kaplan & Donald Weiser.* Confusing?

The last and blue pack of the smaller size cards has one of the new Magus on the front. The box and cards themselves now state *Copywrite 1986 by AGMuller, Switzerland.* The booklet is different from the US Games version, being an extract from Crowley's text. There is no mention of US Games, Kaplan, or Weiser or whatsoever on this deck.

The last English texted pack is exactly the same as the preceding, except for being the larger size.

I have not gone into great detail with the various language editions, that AGMuller also printed of this deck, I am aware of editions in English, German, French, Spanish, even in Danish plus a multiple language edition (German/Spanish/French/English) Crowley's Thoth Deck is surely a subject for specialist collectors.



### Aleister Says ...

“In the psychopathology of The Path, this card [**8 of Cups**] is the German Measles of Christian Mysticism” (p. 200, *Book of Thoth*).

**K. Frank Jensen**, born 1933, residing in Denmark, published his first book on Tarot in 1975, and has an astonishing list of publications and projects, many related to Tarot, to his name. His previous Tarot magazine, *Manteia*, has always been the inspiration of the drive to create *Tarosophist International*. He describes himself as a “folklorist with Tarot as a speciality” and more can be found at his website:

<http://www.manteia-online.dk/>



# LIFE IS NO BRIEF CANDLE TO ME

**Vivienne Rush**, Creative Consultant, Writer, Broadcaster & Multi-Media Editor.

I want to tell you a story about death, a story about a journey towards understanding. A story without an ending.

First I need to tell you about life.

The life that took me to the shores of Derwentwater Lake in Keswick one damp July.

Under the banner *Life, Death and the Deck We Play In Between*, I entered the Tarosophy® theatre for a very special weekend Tarot workshop.

The first deck was played by Rachel Pollack, the prolific Tarot author, as she described an epic journey of the major Arcana passing human life from one set of strong hands to the other through the phases of life, death and rebirth.

That evening in my bedroom I retraced the questions of death in my mind. The question what is death? What will come after? As I read, my hand drifted towards the Thoth deck left with me by its owner just for one night.

As a Tarot and a Thoth novice with *Foolish* innocence I set off for the journey into my death.

Aleister Crowley's *Book of Thoth* came with a health warning: the answers will be brutally direct. Running my eyes over the thickly layered symbols I needed a guiding light in my own understanding of what is life?

A beautiful image from the poet George Bernard Shaw came to mind: "Life is no brief candle to me...but a splendid torch." I had my guiding light but what about purpose? GBS goes on to say "I may be a feverish selfish clod of ailments but my true joy of life is being used for a purpose recognised by myself as a mighty one."

So taking this as my starting point. What do I recognise as the mighty purpose of my life and how can this selfish clod fuel a splendid torch of a life? How can this clod be used? Lady Frieda Harris painted the Thoth cards between 1938 and 1943 under Crowley's direction to 'update' it to include the truths he unearthed from the ancient traditions. According to Lady Harris the Tarot was a celestial game of chess. The lamp flickers in my bedroom. Her description feels eerie, evoking Bergman's cinematic masterpiece *The Seventh Seal* where an old crusader knight plays a game of chess with death. This has become one of the most resonant images of my generation, lodging a flickering fated hopelessness in my mind.

Appropriately themed, the first card I draw in answer to the question what is Death is the **Ace of Swords**, a shining sword thrusts upwards piercing the crown – ouch yes I felt that yes I am waking up to the question.

The second, where does it come from? The card I pick is the **Princess of Cups**. A young girl protected by magical animals is dissolving in the waters of the common unconscious indicating death comes from my perceived need to be rescued and have the truth revealed.

So what causes death? The **Prince of Disks** is a muscular farm worker, his limbs as strong as the beast of burden that pulls his cart. The yield of the earth may be plentiful but my stay here is too short so I am being used up by labour as I grapple for control. When I come to fruition I have to die to nourish the earth.

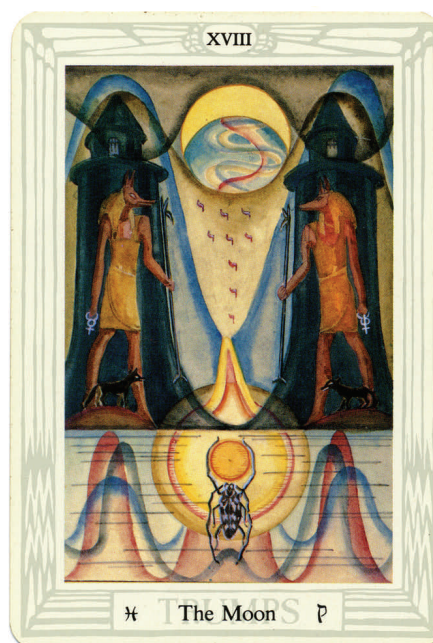
Why do we have to die? As we go through life we are working towards an unknown end which we hope will be victorious, the **Six of Wands** tells me. But death always wins. It limits me through fear of death If it didn't perhaps I would never stir from my bed.

What comes from death? The **Moon** card shows red, green and blue lines tracking up and down like the traces on the monitor of a life support system, I see the personality that has to die, the illusion of me streaming upwards in coloured bands. But the heart monitor beats on, so does life come from death? An illusory double bind?

What will come after death? Fulfilment, bliss, a fuller appreciation of life? The ever flowing **Ten of Cups** depicts each cup feeding another. Connected completely within a tree of life.

This card points the way towards another paradox, with life abundant life coming after death.

The final question, in which 'Wisdom' is sought, is what does the Death card mean in a reading? I draw the **Death** card. You can't be more direct than that. I stare for a long time at this card – my old friend the grim reaper.



Crowley says of the Death card “An apparent death or destruction that is illusory when viewed from a higher perspective.” So I am not going to die, I just need to get higher so I can see the illusion. The poet John Donne agreed and said death meant freedom: “die not poor death not yet canst thou kill me accept from pleasure after thee more must flow...in human life thou art slave to fate kings and men after, death you are free!”

I summarise the wisdom cards: I need to wake up, have the truth revealed, nourish the earth with my physical death, let the personality die as a result and see through the illusion. To quote Shaw again:” I want to be thoroughly used up when I die.“

I move on to Rachel’s second set of Death questions. The first of the personal questions is what is my attitude to death? I draw the **Six of Disks**. Success is the key word. My attitude to Death is that I cannot die until I have been a success? I need to be a success in my earthly labours thoroughly used up and then return my body to the earth.

How am I ok with it? **The Princess of Wands**. A young woman individualistic, brilliant and daring with great energy. Metamorphosing and partying on down. I am definitely ok with that.

How do I have trouble with it? The **Universe** card shows a young woman dancing with a great spiral serpent. I am not happy because it is the physical end of me. The part is over. A great eye looks down upon me in the throes of the final dance. Is that eye I?

What needs to die in my life? **Four of Disks**. I see an ordered and balanced fortress, the Escher like drawing shows an arrangement of four short towers connected by bridges. Each tower has a symbol of the four elements. This ordered power base unlike the Universe card is static and sterile. What needs to die in my life? Order to allow assent to the fifth element perhaps?



How do I let it die? The **Emperor**. The goats at the knee and above the Emperor symbolise Aries’ creative force. (Astrological note: the moon is in Aries in my natal chart). My creative vision and idealism is compromised by my need for everything to be ordered. The fiery element of the Universe Sulphur gives a clue to something else that should die – the medieval rotten egg stink of Hell in my memory banks. Bye bye grim reaper bye bye!

What needs to live? The power of reflection and reception in the **Queen of Cups** needs to live. Enthroned on still water she is patient and understanding enclosed by shadowy reflections almost invisible, living comfortably in death’s shadows.



How do I help death live? Remove the boundaries and allow freedom to flow. The **Ace of Cups**. I started with an Ace and I finish with an Ace; thought to inspiration. From waking up to Death to feeding Death with love. The single cup explodes with pulsing waves representing emotional and spiritual power to nourish and renew beyond death.



To summarise the personal cards: I need to be successful before I die, there is an inspired energetic woman who does not want to stop dancing but she needs to let go of her ordered life, allow her original vision to come through by receiving wisdom and understanding from the shadows of death's form and allow the free flow of spiritual renewal when Death calls.

When I add together the two sets I see a need to tear down the veil of illusion, let go of the ordered and fixed personality, become original and pass through Death's door in order to understand. I never thought Death's door would sound so appealing.

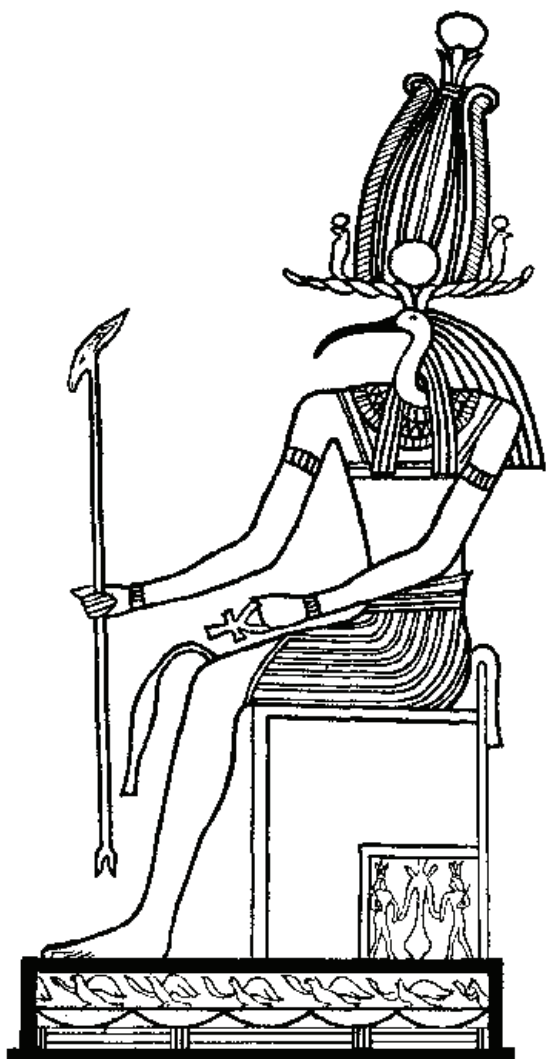
**Vivienne Rush** is a broadcaster, writer, journalist and Tarot beginner. She is interested in human potential which she believes to be limitless. She has studied many belief systems: world religions, Jungian psychology, Greek philosophy, European politics, Astrology, Non Violent Communication, Neuro-Linguistic Programming, Poetry and Literature, Acting, Financial and Business Management, Alexander technique, Reiki and Yoga. She uses Tarot and the Astrological Oracle to observe her own thinking and feeling and as a core activity for her woman's group. She has been a single mother and has one teenage daughter. She likes to originate web and TV Formats and is currently working on new projects for Eastern Europe and the Middle East. She is an experienced TV and documentary producer and seeks inspired story-telling through innovative presentation, filming and picture editing. Until 2008, she ran a multi-media department in a large media organisation where she also launched 24 hour news channels. She is concerned about freedom of speech and the balance of rights and responsibilities on the World Wide Web. She is a change innovator, facilitator and coach. She has launched a Media Group for the social justice, spiritual and environmental group **Be The Change** where she works pro bono.

# TALKING THOTH

Marcus Katz on how to really pronounce *Thoth* - or just call it the *Deck of the Ibis*.

“This is how it goes, (from) its beginning to its end, like that found in writing”.

From a text referring to Thoth, used in an example within *Middle Egyptian: An introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs* (James P. Allen, 2000).



Let's get this absolutely clear: there is **no** known accurate pronunciation of ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs. And it's hieroglyphs and/or hieroglyphic, never “hieroglyphics”! We have **no** recordings, commentary or guides to the spoken language of Ancient Egypt. It was only comparatively recently that Champollion, in about 1822, started the first translations of the hieroglyphs in written form.

Even when Crowley was in Egypt, or later writing the *Book of Thoth*, the study of the hieroglyphs and all related understanding of the ancient Egyptian culture was in its infancy. Although Crowley did use local experts and didn't entirely rely on Wallis Budge's work – which is now seen as extremely dated and in some places obsolete – many of the names he used are no longer in scholarly usage, having been replaced by later forms. This is a process that is still ongoing.

So, with that in mind, we can look at the “most current and standard” pronunciation, so we are at least in the majority of the best company. It is unfortunate also that we don't have any record of Crowley's pronunciation of this word.

By looking at the academic literature and another more original - but unusual source - we might also avoid the potential embarrassment of being in a public place and having to apologise for our confusing of people with “I thought everybody said ‘Book of F'Froth’”!

We will also give a brief reading list for those who are interested in pursuing the study of Hieroglyphs further, which is a fascinating area of research.

The god depicted most often with an Ibis head was identified by a few variant hieroglyphs. One of the common sets was:



These symbols are transliterated individually into the form, *dhwtj* which would be pronounced jay-hoo-oo-t-ee, or more commonly “Tehuti”. It is suggested that the symbols themselves come from the oldest word for ‘Ibis’. So the name simply means “He who is like an Ibis”.

It is actually from the Greek form of this same word, that we then get Thoth – also *Thot* or *Thout* depending on the Greek letters used in the translation. The most common spelling, and that adopted by Crowley is:

Θωθ

This gives us T(hard)-O-Th(soft), so the ‘best’ pronunciation of this version would indeed be akin to “**Toff**”. Which is very difficult for those of us who spent many years without having to say it to anyone, and calling it inside our own heads, “**Photh**”.

In conclusion though, we also might refer to the *Corpus Hermeticum*, which suggested in Book XVI that “the very quality of the speech and the (sound) of Egyptian words have in themselves the energy of the objects they speak of”. So if you **really** want to know how to pronounce Thoth, go listen to an Ibis:

<http://www.aultimaarcadenoe.com.br/curicaca.wav>

Tuh-off, Tuh-off.

### **References**

Brian B. Copenhaver, ed., *Hermetica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) p. 58

James P. Allen, 2000, *Middle Egyptian: An introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p. 366

### **Further Reading**

Mark Collier & Bill Manley, *How to Read Egyptian Hieroglyphs* (London: British Museum Press, 2000)

Hilary Wilson, *Understanding Egyptian Hieroglyphs* (Lincolnwood: Passport Books, 1996)



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Telegram from Harris to Crowley to state that the Magician card was complete.  
19th December 1941

[Katz Collection]

# THE JOURNEY BEGINS ...

Reviews of the course material provided by **Michael Orlando Yaccarino** for our intermediate course on Tarot Professionals, *The Journey Begins*.

Michael describes Tarot readings as an “art form.” No matter how many interpretations or symbolic systems we learn, it is all theory until the cards come up in a reading. It is just because reading is a kind of art, akin perhaps most of all to story-telling, that new meanings can appear to us at any moment. Michael demonstrates how he works with the pictures to create a story of a person’s life in a particular moment. The freshness of Michael’s approach exhibits the dedication and sensitivity of his training. What is the mark of a good beginner’s course? Simple, that people who are not beginners can learn from it. And this we find again and again in Michael’s work of distilled simplicity.—**Rachel Pollack, author of *Seventy-Eight Degrees of Wisdom* and *Rachel Pollack’s Tarot Wisdom: Spiritual Teachings and Deeper Meanings***

By viewing a reading as an art form and emphasizing “good taste” as the mark of a good reader, Michael elevates the Tarot consultation into the soul’s story. Learn how to transform your spreads and readings into detailed examinations of the direction life’s conflicts are taking you.—**Mary K. Greer, author of *Tarot For Yourself* and *21 Ways to Read a Tarot Card***

Michael’s approach to the Tarot literally transforms the journey of the Fool into what it was always meant to be: A glorious voyage upon the seas of personal spirituality.—**Dorothy Morrison, author of *Everyday Tarot Magic*, and creator of *The Whimsical Tarot***

Michael’s solidly-researched teachings on the Tarot will set the beginner on the proper path to enlightenment.—**David Palladini, creator of *The Aquarian Tarot* and *The New Palladini Tarot***

Michael’s texts, upon which the training materials are based, are an informative introduction to the Tarot that is ideal for adult seekers looking for a lucid and complete approach to the subject without being overwhelming or simplistically childish.—**Donald Michael Kraig, author of *Tarot & Magic***

Michael has created a wonderful course on Tarot for the beginning or more advanced practitioner. It delves into the most important aspect of Tarot—that is, its use as a life-guide tool. Michael draws on the archetypes found in the cards as a learning device for spiritual and personal growth.—**Edain McCoy, author of *Past-Life and Karmic Tarot***

Michael’s concise approach is of use to both those new to the Tarot and experts who desire to refresh their knowledge of the cards. Accordingly, the Fool becomes the protagonist in the story of the soul’s destined evolutionary progress from the physical world through the mystical. The great deal of effort he puts into his work is obvious.—**Tracy Porter, author of *Tarot Companion: An Essential Reference Guide* and *Tarot: The Definitive Guide***

**The Journey Begins** is a charged intermediate course available to all members. It is a six-month course supported by a 300+ page manual (as reviewed above), monthly video lessons to improve your reading ability and confidence, our innovative exercises and unique tarot learning games. You will require a minimum of only 2-3 hours a week over each month to follow the course and practice your new-found skills.

All students work in small groups, and are individually mentored using Skype video conferencing for 1:1 discussion. A Forum area is made available for each group to share discoveries and insights.

If you enjoyed our free Courtyard Course, and want to advance your tarot to a whole new level, please register your interest through [enquiries@tarotprofessionals.com](mailto:enquiries@tarotprofessionals.com) to be placed in the Audience Hall whilst the next group forms for entry!

# POLLACK TALKS THOTH

**Rachel Pollack**, author of *78 Degrees of Wisdom* and *Tarot Wisdom*, Talks Thoth.

*An abridged and edited transcript from a recorded discussion at the Far Away Centre between Marcus Katz and Rachel Pollack, following the Tarosophy Conference in July 2009.*

Marcus: Rachel, to start this brief discussion about the Thoth deck, earlier today we were talking about the “one thing we’d change with a deck” if we got given chance to go back in time and talk with the designer and/or artist. Is there something that you’d want to change with Crowley himself or the Thoth deck?! Something perhaps that needs re-dressing in his life and work as a legacy to contemporary Tarot readers?

Rachel: I would most like to see that it became more accessible to outsiders. You know, leaving nothing that you cannot find out. Because I find that when I’ve looked at his writings and the Thoth deck itself that it always feels that I have to know a great deal to get into it all.

Marcus: So, do you use the Thoth deck for readings?

Rachel: Actually, rarely - pretty much only if somebody has asked for the Deck to be used for their reading - because I feel that I don’t really know it well enough to really get into it. I’m always really impressed by people who do! I recently attended something delivered by Lon Milo DuQuette who demonstrated a sexual/magical story-line through the deck, which was very impressive!

Marcus: OK, and when you have used the Thoth deck, have you had any particular experiences with this deck in particular? I think a lot of people seem to say it is a deck that seems to shout out the answer and doesn’t seem to care about your feelings about it?

Rachel: Well, Funnily enough I don’t use it enough because I don’t feel that the answer leaps out at me ... with the Minor cards lots of people say that they hate the Key Words on those cards - well - I actually like them because often the picture does not actually stand out much for me, whereas the words really say something quite powerful - on the other hand some of the words, such as “Ruin” and certain other words really do box you in a little bit.

Marcus: Is there anything - just in terms of the artwork then - if you said the Minors cards did not necessarily shout out to you - is there anything with the Majors where particular cards catch your eye?

Rachel: The Majors that I love ...? I like a lot of them! Because it is art but I am not quite as wild on them as many people are - I don’t necessarily feel that Frieda Harris was THE great Artist of the Tarot - I respect what she did but I don’t connect with all of them somehow.



[Rachel cont ...]

And again it's like with some modern decks, perhaps those that are influenced by the Thoth, it is clear to me they are loaded with all the meaningful symbolism that I have not studied. So I always have this feeling that I'm really mixing with serious stuff on these kinds of decks.

Marcus: I think many people would agree! Do you think that it actually changed anything with Tarot – when it was eventually published because obviously there was a big gap between the Rider-Waite-Smith deck and any other innovative, unique and esoteric deck being published?

Rachel: Yes - I think it raised the esoteric consciousness of Tarot a great deal. It did to a large extent raise the artistic level - you know people felt that the art had been done to a much higher level than any previous deck.

Marcus: It does seem evident in Crowley's and Harris's correspondence that Frieda Harris was well aware of the esoteric nature of it and contributed highly towards it. But on the other hand she was painting paintings and she knew that they were going to be cards. But I think Crowley was far more excited by their use as cards. Even though he wanted to attend the Gallery, when Frieda Harris kindly said that that the world was not quite ready for him!

So when you were teaching about death in your first session of the Tarosophy conference - **do you see in the Death card how Crowley himself might have seen death?**

Rachel: That's an interesting question! So here's a good example of what I'm talking about with my response to the cards. I look at the Death card - I ask what does it say to me? Not having studied the text ... Well I look at the main symbol of the skeleton with the scythe and that's taken from the Marseilles deck which is in turn from medieval tradition. Then I see various symbols which I **do** know something about - such as the Bishop's hat. It could be Egyptian perhaps. It being suggestive of the shape of a fish perhaps connects Christianity to the age of Pisces.

Then there are the Spirals, and the lines that are generating them. There's a Phoenix bird behind them, which is a symbol of resurrection. There is a lot going on, so if you say "what is Crowley trying to say about death"? Well, I'm not sure! Whereas with the Waite Deck, there is a lot that is not being said in the picture - but the picture is making a statement. You know you can "get" the King; the great white haired king and the weighty ego, whereas the child is the spirit which is not confined to the ego and so on.

In terms of meaning, the spiral images in the Thoth card for Death have a sense of *becoming*, a sense of *transformation* to me. But I feel like there is so much that I am not getting because I have not studied Crowley's text so much - which is fine, that there are decks where you are required to study the text. Whereas with the Rider-Waite-Smith Deck I feel I can interpret it even though I'm sure there is plenty of stuff that I don't know about it!

Marcus: So looking back to the Death card in the Thoth deck, we see an example of such esoteric symbolism in that the Hebrew letter *nun*, corresponding to the card, actually means “fish” in English.

Rachel: Yes, and of course there are the astrological symbols which are on the cards themselves. They are explicit – and anyone who knows these symbols can access them. So what I feel in this deck is that there are blatant symbols but they are not necessarily working together as a picture outside of these symbols, so I see that there are all these things, these spirals and circles, and unless I know what they mean they are not going to say much to me other than the symbolism of spirals and circles.

Marcus: Whereas with the Rider-Waite-Smith Deck the picture tells the story ...?

Rachel: Yes, with the picture you are not necessarily going to get the symbolic stuff. But you don't feel as alienated, you don't feel that this symbolic stuff is the *primary* content. You feel that here is a dramatic image that is the primary content and you can go off beyond that. Whereas with some of the Thoth deck, in the pictures I do tend to feel that the primary content is the symbols. There is a certain beauty - certainly a dramatic energy - as a piece of art, but in terms of content the primary content is one of symbols, which you have to know about. And that is a little bit limiting to an outsider.

Marcus: I think that it reminds me of Crowley's text in *Magick*, where he said that “magick is for all”, it is for the bank manager, it is for the accountant, it is for the farmer, and then he proceeds to discuss all these Greek, Latin and Kabbalistic references.

Rachel: Yes, for all these people it would require even more study. Which is fair enough - there is no reason why Crowley shouldn't demand that you do the study - he was contemporaneous with the authors James Joyce and Ezra Pound and they certainly demanded huge levels of knowledge and scholarship to read their work with full appreciation. And with Joyce, for example, it is like Crowley, in a sense, for if you are reading *Ulysses* or *Finnegan's Wake* you have a feeling that there is no level at which you can approach him without making a big effort! Whereas with other more traditional writers who were also very deep and had many layers, you can just have a story - and then you are drawn to see what else is there! Whereas with *Ulysses* - which I actually think is more approachable than people realise once you actually get a lot of his parodies are of classic genres of English Literature - but nevertheless many people find that the surface is off-putting, like the Thoth deck!

Marcus: So there is really no way in or no easy guide to this from the surface, in a layered way? All of the symbols are on the surface so...

Rachel: I think what I feel that is most powerful about this Deck is that it has a dynamic art that excites people on the level of a beautiful composition - there is lots and lots of energy, so people are confronted by something (as with James Joyce) that they know they are required to put the effort in to learn about it! And they do, because they are excited by it and the fact that there is a tremendous amount of knowledge here.

Marcus: Just a final thought then, back where we started in terms of *re-visioning* the cards, obviously Crowley has the **Aeon** instead of the Last Judgement, he has **Art** for Temperance, **Lust** for Strength and so forth. Does that appeal to you in anyway?

Rachel: Yeah, I like that idea, people should do that I think - you know certainly it is one of the main Golden Dawn contributions. When I was writing my latest book, *Tarot Wisdom* and looking up all the old meanings of cards, I was over and over again struck by the wonderful poetry and mythological phrasing of the Golden Dawn headings for the cards. I just love those phrasings!

And you know that Crowley was following in their footsteps to a large extent. I think that possibly one reason why I have not got so deeply into it is because I am not as impressed with Frieda Harris's art as a lot of people are. But - I look at the **Aeon** card - and I love this picture. I think that the art is beautiful and I think the composition is wonderful. But I would really like to know what this *means*. I guess I do have a sense of what it means actually because, well, let's compare it to the **Death** card. It is certainly symbolic - you see the pharaoh on the throne which people know, you see the child behind it, you see in the night-sky the Goddess. I happen to know who that is! You also see the Hebrew letter *Shin*, beautifully rendered.

But I don't find it as filled with as many *specific* symbols that I could look up and reference, compared to **Death** - that has so many detailed little things in it, or perhaps it is because I just know a bit more about Egyptian background and so I don't feel quite as much at sea!

But it does seem to me that this card is much more approachable. You know it is the same with **Art** - I do know that to some extent it is relating to alchemy and I know a little bit about those symbols. And I know the stuff that I don't know - I don't particularly know the symbolism of the White Lion, for example. Nevertheless there is a basic image - a fundamental image - this two-faced figure of a woman seemingly pointing into a cauldron. And these two beasts coming to it. And there's this writing behind, that I don't feel I have to worry too much about! So that's plenty to work with to understand the basics of the card.

The same can be seen in the **Devil**. There are things that you can easily get, like the clock, well - that is not hard to interpret! The spiral horns, you can work on the spiral thing, there is the Egyptian winged image which you might or might not know, then there are the figures in the globes, and you can see them perhaps as tormented humans trapped in circles. To me it is obviously important that you be able to approach it with the things that you do know.

I like the **Tower** a lot - it is one of my favorite pictures because of the energy of it. I tend to find that Harris's pictures are best where there is fire and earth - I find that her pictures tending to emphasise the water element never work for me quite so well.

Marcus: They tend to be a bit - with due respect- bland compared to the others?

Rachel: Yes, washed out compared to the red tones that we see clearly in the **Tower**. The **Ace of Wands** is incredibly dynamic!

But then you get to some of the minor cards and where they are certainly more symbolic than the Marseilles deck - it is still the same sort of concept of nothing going on, of no action, you have just the symbols. The symbols are of course interesting - so in the **Three of Wands**, here, there are the three wands, the lotus on top of each, and a compass-point kind of image. So that when you come down to it, it's three crossed wands! So then you have the word, which is the word "virtue", which is a useful addition to reading the card.

Now, not having astrology as my main focus in life, it doesn't matter to me that the card also shows this corresponds to the Sun in Aries! Well, okay, those are probably symbols that I may have to look up in a table of astrological symbols but even so if I study it and I find out that it is 10 degrees of the decans and all that stuff, and that is interesting - and I can see that it is very meaningful to some people - but it is not how I tend to approach Tarot which is a more flowing exchange of energy between me and the pictures.



Here the discussion turned to the sexual symbolism of the deck, the ground of symbolism, and various other subjects out-with the deck ... so not included in this transcript. My thanks to Rachel who provided the living voice of the Tarot at our conference and the time to discuss the Thoth deck in the midst of a demanding schedule.

**Rachel Pollack** is the author of 31 books, published all over the world in 14 languages. Her Tarot books include *78 Degrees of Wisdom*, often called "the Bible of Tarot readers," and the recently published *Tarot Wisdom*. Her novels include the prize-winning "Unquenchable Fire" and "Godmother Night." Her book *Seeker* won the COVR Award for best book on divination. Rachel is a visual artist, the designer and creator of *Shining Tribe Tarot*. Her most recent books include *The Tarot of Perfection*, a collection of short stories, and *Fortune's Lover*, a book of Tarot poems.



# THE HIEROLOGY OF THE THOTH DECK

**Marcus Katz**, Director of *Tarot Professionals* & PhD Researcher in *Western Esotericism*

*Or ... What's that Ancient Egyptian Crocodile-thingie and Monkey doing on my Card?!*

## Introduction

One of the things with ancient Egypt is that they weren't short on Gods. They had Gods for childbirth and Gods for death, Goddesses for scorpions and Goddesses for bandages, they had Gods of the Sky and of the Land, and Gods and Goddesses for you at every stage of your present life and the lives before and afterwards. At every wall you would meet the Gods, around each and every pillar there was a Goddess, until there was only the sky and the desert and the deeps of the Nile which were not so adorned, and even these teemed with the unseen presence of the Gods. The world was magical and mystical, and religion was no different to life and breath. It is therefore no wonder that magicians hark back to this period for inspiration away from our gradually disenchanted world.

In this article we will look at a selection of the Egyptian Gods and Goddesses that permeate Aleister Crowley & Frieda Harris's Thoth deck, explore a few of Crowley's appropriations of these deities within this own world-view, and present a unique and novel Tarosophy® method of working with Tarot – called a gated spread, here presented for the first time. This particular gated spread, the Entering the Temple of Thoth is themed on the ancient Egyptian temple structure and is for use specifically with the Thoth deck.

## The Thoth Deck as Egyptian Tarot

Crowley - for once - sets out his intent very clearly, in the very title of his work. The Thoth deck is entitled "The Book of Thoth", and subtitled "Egyptian Tarot". We need seek no further for evidence of Crowley's immersion in ancient Egyptian lore and his intent to revivify this lore within Tarot, which was then so gracefully executed with magical understanding and prowess by Frieda Harris.

So the deck is suffused – a word particularly appropriate given Harris's lighting work and projective geometry invoking them into the cards - with Egyptian Gods and Goddesses. They are both evident in their immediate presence on the cards, or implied in the hierology – the sacred structure – of the deck itself. Although Crowley mutated the concepts of the Gods to his own world-view, particularly in his appropriation of certain of them as his tutelary deities, or guardians under whose aegis he performed his Great Work, we would do well to study their attributes to further appreciate the cards in our divinations.

In practice, we might also consider that using the Thoth deck is like having a portable ancient Egyptian temple. We enter the deck and make contact with the deities therein.

Albeit this is a specialised temple – Crowley was not an Equal Rights Occultist in his usage of the Gods, we will encounter most of the powerful energies of the ancient Egyptian pantheon in our readings of the cards.

### **The Houses of the Gods**

We will first look at some of the main deities we encounter in the Thoth deck, catalogued in order from their appearance in the accompanying text written by Crowley, the Book of Thoth. It is fitting our first deity is of course none other than Thoth himself, in the very title of the work. As the Egyptian god of the creative act and of writing, a true magician-priests god, he is of course the most suitable to take this position. His nature, as the voice of the very Word of creation, and its recorder in eternity, gives us an immediate indication of the nature of this deck.

It is a deck of the writing of the world itself, in all its times, places and peoples. The patterns that swirl within it, and are projected through it, take us into the very nature of creation considered from a highly technical perspective. This is a deck of dense and interwoven symbolism, drawn from the every blood of the primal word itself. It is truly Thoth's deck.

### **The Presences in the Majors**

It is even more fitting and interesting that the very next deity we meet is Ma'at, the goddess of Truth, or 'straightness', who is sometimes seen as a counterpart to Thoth. She is introduced on page 25 of the introduction, along with many other ideas from Crowley's cosmology - the Stele of Revealing, Aeons, and Hieroglyphs – all stemming from Crowley's key mystical experience, the reception of the Book of the Law in Cairo, 1904.

The Stele of Revealing is a funerary plaque made of wood which is presently housed in the Cairo museum and is a striking object. It was even more so to Crowley as his wife Rose had told him that "He [Horus] is waiting" whilst they were in Cairo, and when Crowley was visiting the museum (at Boulak at the time) he saw this Stele was numbered 666 and contained many images relating to his esoteric preoccupations.

The concept of the Aeons is fundamental and an important thread in the Thoth deck – one card (Judgement) was even renamed the Aeon by Crowley. It is roughly the same concept as the astrological ages, i.e. the age of Aquarius, the Age of Pisces, etc. In esoteric terms, it derives from Crowley but he likely formed the idea from both the Golden Dawn whom placed import on the "precession of the Equinoxes" (a common astrological and astronomical concept) and the work of Eliphas Levi, whose ideas on the "Ages" through which mankind was passing is rooted in the model proposed by Joachim of Fiore.

In Crowley's view, 1904 heralded the start of the Aeon of Horus, a time of war, conflict and the death-pangs of the Aeon of Osiris, the previous two thousand years of the "dying God". As his revelation of the Book of the Law was soon followed by the two World Wars, one can imagine him having some pause to consider the veracity of its prophecies and model of the Aeons.

One might imagine Crowley was also taking the opportunity to alchemically decant his mystical insight into a project which would be widely distributed. In this plan, at least, Crowley was successful (unlike many of his aborted schemes) as anyone now using the Thoth deck is illustrating Crowley's vision to all those for whom they read.

Ma'at is equated by Crowley in the text to Themis, the Greek goddess of Justice, whom we will meet later on the card of **Adjustment**, which is one of the cards renamed in this deck.

So at the outset of the Book, we are introduced to these two deities; Thoth and Ma'at, the creative word and the truth, the scribe and the measure. This pair is fitting as the two pillars between which the cards vibrate. They were the deities at either end of the solar Barque or boat which carried the Sun-god across the heavens. There is also a mystery here of the Aeons, but it is beyond the scope of this present article.

Still within the introduction, we again meet Thoth, this time also called *Tahuti*, on page 34 and the footnote to page 35. See the article in this present issue to discover more about the variant names of the god Thoth and his pronunciation!

Finally in the introduction we are introduced to a very significant figure in Crowley's own cosmological schema constructed from the ancient Egyptian pantheon; **Nuit**, sometimes *Nu*, *Nut* or *Nuith*, the goddess depicted as the arching night sky with the stars upon her body. It is not surprising that Crowley mentions this goddess when touching upon the **Star** card, but of course, as with many other things in the Book, there is a deeper matter at hand.

Crowley switched the correspondences of the Hebrew letters between two cards; the **Star** and the **Emporer**. This was based on a line in his *Book of the Law*, "Tzaddi is not the star". There is no scope to further explore this matter here, but suffice it to say, the goddess Nuit is an overarching concept in the Thelemic schema and of great import to the cards of the Book of Thoth.

Moving out of the introduction and into the main text, part two on the Atu or Majors, we begin to see the diversity of Crowley's appropriation of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses and his incorporation of them into his own cosmology. The additional deities we meet between Atu 0 (Fool) and Atu V (Hierophant) are:

- **Mat (Maut)**
- **Sebek**
- **Hoor-pa-Kraat**
- **Horus**
- **Set**
- **Osiris**
- **Isis**
- **Nephthys**

These eight above and the prior three (**Thoth**, **Ma'at** and **Nuit**) are the bulk of the deities in the deck and book, so worth using as a basic checklist for research before returning to the text – see also below for a comprehensive research list grouped into families.

The additional deities, Egyptian forms and variations from Atu VI (Lovers) to Atu XXI (Universe) are:

- **Sphinx**
- **Hermanubis**
- **Khephra**
- **Heru-Ra-Ha**
- **Hadit**
- **Ra-Hoor-Khuit**
- **Hrumachis**

In these we see a perennial problem with approaching ancient Egyptian deities, which is that they are syncretic and variant; not only are some deities combinations of other deities, but they change their form, function and name according to their role and even the time of day or night. Thus, Horus has a form as the hawk-headed god, but also as the child, Har-pa-Khered, which the Greeks knew as Harpocrates. Horus could also be combined with the Sun-god, Ra, in the form of Re-Harakhty.

This is somewhat bewildering, and made more confusing by variant modern spellings! The sun-god also has different names for his form at different times of the day, i.e. Kheph-Ra is “Ra at midnight”.

### **The Presences in the Court Cards and Minors**

In the remaining chapters of the *Book of Thoth*, the Court cards are treated with reference to their zodiacal and elemental qualities, and relationship to the I-Ching, and the Minor cards are treated likewise. There is barely any further mention of the Egyptian mythos in these cards, in comparison to a slew of Kabbalistic and Zodiacal references. Crowley was very glad to have written about the Majors, but perhaps less enthusiastic about the Court cards and Minors.

### **The Presences in the first Appendix**

For completion, there are actually three other deities we need to catalogue, which have a more fleeting presence in the visions included by Crowley as an appendix to the Majors. These are:

- **Phtah**
- **Seb**
- **AMOUN**

This first appendix that Crowley offers us, confusingly in the middle of the *Book of Thoth* after the Majors (there are two further appendices A & B at the end, after the Minors) is a small collection of “certain essays” germane to the Major Arcana. These six essays are mainly visionary experiences, resulting in writings on Silence (Fool), De Merurio (Magus/Magician), R.O.T.A. – The Wheel (Fortune/Wheel), Babalon (Lust/Strength), The Arrow (Art/Temperance) and the Virgin Universe (Universe).



## Approaching the Gods

Having catalogued **12 deities** mainly used by Crowley (and ignoring for more advanced consideration in perhaps another publication the combination/variant forms) we can then group these into families. These are related deities whose functions, myths, stories or relationships are somehow connected.

- **Thoth & Ma'at**
- **Nuit**
- **Osiris, Isis & Nephthys and Horus & Set**
- **Maut & Sebek**
- **Khephra & Anubis**

We can now use our reading list (given at the foot of this article) to research the nature of these deities and gain deeper insight into Crowley's reasoning behind their incorporation on specific cards. I would also recommend a thorough reading of Crowley's *Book of the Law* to encounter the three key deities, **Nuit**, **Hadit** and **Horus** in the raw – as Crowley himself encountered them in this seminal visionary experience. It is these three that Crowley truly appropriated – and, arguably, mutated - as an intrinsic part of his Thelmic cosmology.

I here offer a brief account of the attributes and nature of each of these deities.

## The Nature of the Gods

### Thoth & Ma'at

We have already met Thoth as the god of Scribes, and Ma'at as the goddess of truth, justice and cosmic order. Ma'at also represented the concept of judgement, and carried out the weighing of the heart of the deceased against the feather of truth. She is thus an order to which even the gods themselves must adhere. Her representation was usually a woman crowned with the Ostrich feather.

### Nuit

Nuit, Nuith or Nut, represents the stellar firmament, possibly the Milky Way. Hers is the body through which the Sun and Stars travel. She is the great mother and the firmament, and the body in which the deceased would be reborn, as was the sun each day. Her figure was often painted on the ceiling of tombs and chapels or on the under-face of coffin lids, so that the worshipper or the deceased achieved union with her.

Her role in the *Book of the Law* and in the *Book of Thoth* is ubiquitous. She is seen by Crowley on the High Priestess card as the “menstruum of manifestation” and the “possibility of Form”. She is ultimately the “Naught beyond Bliss” into whom the initiate finally unites and is wholly undone and remade as All.

## Osiris & Isis and Horus & Set

Osiris is the most universal of the ancient Egyptian gods and the main god of death and rebirth. His story is one of betrayal by Set(h) and dismemberment – only to be reconstituted and brought back to life by Isis, his wife. Horus is their vengeful son.

He is thus the dying and reborn King – a myth that Crowley connected to the Aeon of Osiris, stating that the previous 2,000 years had been the time of the dying and reborn gods. Crowley saw the events of the early twentieth century, in agreement with the doctrines of his *Book of the Law*, as heralding a new Aeon of Horus. This scenario is primarily depicted in the card which Crowley renamed as **Aeon** (rather than the Last Judgement) and which may be taken more than any other card as part of the “series of illustrations to the *Book of the Law*” (p. 116, *BoT*).

Despite this complex cosmological schema, we can apply this card simply in a reading; it is always useful to refer to Crowley’s own poetic summaries of the Majors (pp. 253-260) to arrive at divinatory meanings. Here we read for this card:

### XX

Be every Act an Act of Love and Worship  
 Be every Act the Fiat of a God  
 Be every Act a Source of Radiant Glory.

Final decision in respect of the past, new current in respect of the future; always represents the taking of a definite step.

Notice the three-fold nature of both the poem and the divinatory meaning? Always notice this with Crowley – most of his work is structured on precise Kabbalistic or numerological models. Here we can quickly see that the three-fold nature of the wording references the three deities on the card itself; Nuit, Hadit and Horus (as Heru-ra-ha and Ra-Hoor-Khuit). The three lines of the poem correspond to these three deities and therefore also incidentally provide a summary of the three chapters of the *Book of the Law*:

Nuit	Love & Worship	Chapter 1
Hadit	Fiat [Word/Command] of a God	Chapter 2
Ra-Hoor-Khuit	Radiant Glory	Chapter 3

The three parts of the divinatory meaning also refer to the three deities as aspects of Time (it is after all the Aeon card). In gnostic texts and earlier, the Aeons were not just phases of time, but divine forms in themselves. Here we see Nuit as the past, Hadit as the new current of the future, and Horus as the taking of a definite step. This latter relates to the Golden Dawn practice of taking a step forward in the sign of the “enterer” and a step backwards in the sign of silence, Harpocrates.

There are other three-fold divisions on the card itself; the three tongues of the Hebrew letter Shin; the three foetal babes of possibility awaiting a definite decision to be made; the three points of the triangle of Fire which corresponds also to the card.

So in a reading we can point out to the Querent (dependent on the position and dignity of the card, etc. of course):

“There’s three aspects of this decision – this figure here [pointing to the arching Nuit] represents the overarching past, everything that has led you to here. Of course, this is what has been important to you. But this is a card of decision – of judgement – both the action-orientated Hawk closing in for the kill [pointing to the seated Horus as Ra-hoor-Khuit] and the child knowing when to keep silent [pointing to the standing Horus as Hoor-pa-Kraat]. But all this comes from the central Will that you have [point to Hadit, the Winged Globe] and what grows from it like an egg [point to egg-shape within Nuit, coming from Hadit] and manifests itself in the world. Every decision is final – it is time to take a definite step with these aspects in mind...a new age awaits you.”

### **Nephthys**

Nephthys was a funerary goddess who was sister to Isis. Her name means “mistress of the Mansion” and she was the daughter of Geb and Nut. Sometimes she was seen as the wife of Seth as Isis was the wife of Osiris. She was foremost seen as a guardian of the dead and companion to her sister. For an unusual aside and in particular for progrock fans, there is an excellent track on the Nick Turner Sphinx album, *Xitintoday*, ‘Isis and Nephthys’ which captures the relationship of these two goddesses.

Crowley refers to Nephthys when discussing the Empress card (p. 77, *BoT*). He is making the point that the higher cards on the Tree of Life, i.e. the Emperor and Empress in this case, are aspects of perfection. The Empress, he suggests, embodies not only the initial perfection of Nature (which he corresponds to Isis) but the final perfection of Art (Nephthys). As an aside, he goes on to suggest this pertains particularly to VI (Lovers) and XIV (Art). So we might compare those two cards as manifestations of the Emperor and Empress; both are highly alchemical in imagery, and feature paired figures in various states. We could perhaps even be forgiven for sensing the presence of Isis and Nephthys in the two white female figures (statues, maybe) at the top of the Lovers card and as the dual figure then combined in the Art card.

### **Maut & Sebek**

We will return to these two deities in a short while, looking at the Wheel card. Maut, or Mut was a goddess originally represented by a Vulture and later a Lion, whilst Sebek was a Crocodile deity.

### **Khephra & Anubis**

Khephra is the Sun at midnight but was also a primeval god. He is represented by the Scarab beetle and depicted on the Moon card, albeit somewhat differently to a standard hieroglyph or representation of a beetle. Nonetheless, it carries the Sun at midnight, and the card is suffused with menstrual images – I differ here from duQuette who suggests “poison blood”, in favour of Crowley’s original wording, “impure blood”.

The usage of the word Witchcraft is also very specific in this card, and again I vary from DuQuette, referring to Crowley's own definition of Witchcraft as it relates to this card in *Magick*, p.164.

Anubis is the jackal-headed guardian and guide in the underworld, so a suitable God of the thresholds depicted in this card. On the Tree of Life, the "mental echo" of this card is directly opposite the "definite step" of the Aeon card. One can either go round in circles and cycles, fearing the future and watching the Moon go round (merely rearrangement, not change – Crowley's definition of Witchcraft as differing from *Magick*) or one can take definite action, make change and embrace the Aeon!

We will now look at a few more examples of how the nature of these deities plays an active role within the Thoth deck itself.

### **The Writhing of the Fool**

I will refer first to one example, looking at two specific deities referenced in the text for the **Fool** Atu, to open this research for you. Within the 16 pages – more so I think than any other card - dealing with the Fool, Crowley references 7 ancient Egyptian Gods & Goddesses! The card was obviously troublesome - he himself rejected several drafts of the card, and Harris said "I shall struggle with the Fool. He does writhe about". So it is impressive we have a card at all for this most enigmatic figure, never mind one which includes such a varied cast of energies!

Here I will also try and demonstrate how these meanings – some of which would have been known by Crowley, some of which we suppose where appropriate after the event – can be utilised in an actual reading of the card.

Crowley defines the Fool with the wonderfully evocative phrase, the "Gold of Air". In this alchemical metaphor, startling in its simplicity and depth, we gain a measure of the Fool – both simple, like the three words "Gold of Air" and profound in that same simplicity, for gold is the alchemical purity and aim of the entire *magnum opus* or Great Work, and Air is a symbol of the *Ruach*, or Spirit. Thus the Fool is considered here as nothing less than the simple spiritual truth.

However, in the manifold writhing of the symbolism on the card itself, we see some of the challenges for an initiate to gain that simple truth. Crowley remarks that the understanding of the "bivalence of symbols" is the mark of such an initiate – we must aim then to see in each symbol on this card both its meaning and its counter-meaning, for on this card of most, all things cancel out to Zero.

This is a good way of putting this card in a reading; "It really doesn't matter. You are free. Whatever you do will cancel itself out in the end. So choose what gives you joy." It is perhaps an interesting thing to be teaching the mystical doctrine of  $0=2$  to the lady who has only come to you to find out if her son is going to pass his exams!

In this same context, we will take a look at the deities Mat (which is Maut, not Ma'at) and Sebek. These are represented on the card by the Vulture and the Crocodile. The crocodile appears to have a rose as an eye.



The Vulture can be taken to be a symbol of the female principle, and a devourer, as is the Crocodile. The yawning mouth of the crocodile, according to Lurker (1984) symbolises the Abyss – perhaps here the cliff over which the Fool is eternally poised. Both Crocodile and Vulture were painted on the edges and underside of the ceiling blocks of temples to guard the way to the sanctuary.

So Maut and Sebek here are being utilised as both sacred and profane symbols – they are both the eaters of the dead and the guardians of the hidden temple. The Fool card then is both the exit and the entrance, and neither – as Philip K. Dick wrote as a title for one of his many Gnostic Science-Fiction stories, “The Exit Door Leads In”.

In a reading these two elements may prompt the reader to say “What is being destroyed needs to be lost to cross the threshold into the next phase of your life. Your decisions are irreverent, the drop into the abyss is already being enacted – you can writhe but the crocodile and the vulture are already waiting for you. The Fool is your new beginning. Deal with it.” **The Fool should be the most terrifying and liberating card of the whole deck**, and here in the Thoth deck it is.

Interestingly, the counterpart of the Vulture as female is more commonly the Beetle as the male principle. If we turn to our Thoth deck and find the Scarab Beetle on the Moon card, then superimpose the Fool (as female) and the Moon (here, male) we might like to see Crowley and Harris’s bivalence of symbols in action.



*Illus. The Fool and The Moon superimposed*

Having researched these deities, we can look at many further ways of interpreting their presence on a card. I will draw our research together by now looking at the Fortune card which features a revolving medley of three entities.

### **The Ancient Egyptian Crocodile-thingy & the Monkey**

It is on the **Fortune** card (Wheel) that we encounter these creatures, along with a Sphinx of obviously ancient Egyptian heritage. Crowley, in his vision given in the first/middle appendix, says

Now I see the figures on the wheel, which have been interpreted as the sworded Sphinx, Hermanubis and Typhon. But that is wrong ... at the top seems to be the Lamb and the Flag, such as one sees on some Christian medals, and one of the lower things is a wolf, and the other a raven.

Crowley makes a correspondence of these three to the alchemical elements of Salt (the Lamb), Mercury (the Wolf) and Sulphur (the Raven) which is somewhat intriguing but impossible to pursue in the space we have available!

On the card then, we have the Sphinx, which Crowley subdivides into the four elements, corresponding to the magical virtues of “to Know, to Will, to Dare and to Keep Silence” (and the fifth, Crowley suggests in a footnote, “to Go”). We also have the composite God of Hermanubis, the Ape, and the strange figure of Typhon, who appears to be some form of crocodile with a snakes tail.

The important thing about these three figures is that they are composite – perhaps even manifesting from one creature to another. This is the main message of the Fortune card – Life in constant motion. Change. A revolution of Form.

From a Kabbalistic point of view, using the Golden Dawn system of correspondences between the Tree of Life and the Tarot, and in this case the same system Crowley was also using, the Fortune card corresponds to the path between Chesed and Netzach on the Tree. These are often translated as “Mercy” and “Victory” but there are deeper meanings; Chesed is a “loving kindness” and also means ‘good will’, ‘grace’ and ‘favour’ (thereby being eminently suitable for a card embodying Fate & Fortune, but implying this ‘good luck’ or ‘fortune’ is given by Grace and Favour, not by chance) and Netzach also carries meanings such as ‘perpetuity’ and ‘eternity’. The card thus illustrates Fortune and the revolution of these three entities of change as the Grace of creation throughout Eternity – an idea Crowley taps into in his vision of the card.

Similarly, from a Kabbalistic perspective, the card corresponds to a path which crosses the Veil on the pillar of Force. It is thus a creative card which meditates upon the process of the creation of Time itself. This is useful background in a reading of the card, for we should describe to the client how important the concept of Time is within their life when this card comes up. It also challenges us as a Tarosophist to understand our own model of Time; for example, researching “granular time” in Quantum Physics.

Crowley goes on to discuss the images of the card with reference to the three “Gunās” of the “Hindu system”:

- **Sattvas – calm, intelligence, lucidity, balance**
- **Rajas – energy, excitement, fire, brilliance, restlessness**
- **Tamas – darkness, inertia, sloth, ignorance, death**

By correspondence these are:

Sattvas	Sulphur	Sphinx	<i>Raven</i>	IV Emporer
Rajas	Mercury	Hermanubis	<i>Wolf</i>	II High Priestess [I Magus]
Tamas	Salt	Typhon	<i>Lamb</i>	III Empress

Crowley (or the transcriber or the printer or the editor) actually confuses the issue of the three alchemical correspondences in the Book of Thoth and I offer above my own version based on Crowley’s sketches and notes, although duQuette’s version can be used with alchemical Mercury (not the planet) corresponding to card I: Magus. Given the shape of these three alchemical components is taken by the figures of the three cards, I think it is the High Priestess who is in the form of the alchemical symbol for Mercury.

### **But what does it all mean?**

But what does all this mean for a reading? How can we use these strange Gods when all the client wants to know is “when will Dwayne come back to me”? Well, we have to devolve these lofty concepts down to practical considerations. In doing so, we raise the clients life into the mythic realm and then draw deeper learning and lessons before applying these back to everyday life. As the Golden Dawn suggested, one should always appeal to the highest name of God one knows.

Here’s how we can do this with the Fortune card. Suppose we had it in the “future” position of a spread which had asked about the success of a new project. We are given the presence of three ancient god-forms (using the term loosely for the three forms); the Sphinx, the Hermanubis and Typhon.

As we have seen already, the Fortune card embodies the constant change of the Universe, in all its forms – but particularly in these three – growing, balancing and dying; or going up; staying; and coming down. So we can talk to the client of their project as about to undergo a period of constant change, and in three ways at the same time.

These are all part of the inevitable development of the project. They will see the Sphinx in the context of the riddles they must resolve to keep “on top of things”. They will encounter Typhon in the constant undoings of the project - Crowley likens this card also to XVI: The Tower in its capacity to completely bring a perfection at the same time as a total destruction, in a moment of unity or insight. They will also benefit from their meeting of Hermanubis, both messenger and guide, one who teaches and brings insight from the motions of the other two forces.

We can provide this model so they will be able to derive the best of the changes ahead, rather than be simply strapped to the rim of the Wheel as it revolves. If they see the interplay of these three forces, they will achieve the unity at the axle of the Wheel, and more likely success.

The more we come to learn and appreciate the nature of these ancient Egyptian entities on the cards, the more precise will be our understanding of the lessons of the card within a reading. Eventually, even the very Gods themselves may speak to us from the deck!

### **Conclusion: Drawing a Veil before the Temple**

In this article, I hope to have provided some starting-points to understand the complex usage of ancient Egyptian deities and concepts within the Thoth deck. I hope to have extracted and presented more plainly the deities themselves as a catalogue for your own research. The booklist provided at the foot of this article may also be useful as a starting-point.

There are many practical and magical methods to which the Thoth deck is suited, given that it is enmeshed within a profound, dense and esoteric system. In the reading list you will also find many avenues of further exploration, but I would like to conclude with a method of using the Thoth deck which is entirely magical. Please do use this method with consideration as you would any other practice which may cause changes in your life.

### **READING LIST**

Jeremy Naydler, *Temple of the Cosmos: The Ancient Egyptian Experience of the Sacred* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 1996)

Erik Hornung, *The Secret Lore of Egypt: Its Impact on the West* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2001)

Richard H. Wilkinson, *The Complete Gods and Goddesses of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1993)

Manfred Lurker, *The Gods and Symbols of Ancient Egypt* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1984)

George Hart, *A Dictionary of Egyptian Gods and Goddesses* (London: RKP, n.d.)

James P. Allen, *Middle Egyptian: An Introduction to the Language and Culture of Hieroglyphs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

Alan Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar* (Cambridge: University Press, 2001)



## The Temple of Thoth – a *Gated Spread*

To conclude this article with a practical application of the ideas presented, we here give for the first time in print a unique method of using Tarot. I do not believe I have seen such a method before, although I would be interested if readers have encountered an identical approach elsewhere [using our Forum within Tarot Professionals or reply via. *Letters to the Editor*]. This method is a combination of the “Talisman of Self” walking meditation I teach Spell-crafting students, Shamanic journeying techniques, and the concepts of the ancient Egyptian afterlife, structured along the lines of a typical ancient Egyptian temple.

This approach to Tarot is called a *gated spread*, of which there are many varieties. I will be covering more of these in my forthcoming book, *Tarosophy®: Tarot to Engage Life, not Escape it* to be published Spring 2010. A *gated spread* is one which cannot be done in one reading. It requires the *Tarosophist* to perform an initial reading to divine the present situation and the manner in which the local environment (inner and outer) is to be changed as a pre-requisite to any further progress or divination. We therefore go beyond **dialogue** with the cards to a **living contract**, taking our utilisation of Tarot to whole new levels.

This is particularly suited to the Thoth deck, which swims with the very presence of the ancient Gods. We therefore look to the deck as a Temple through which we pass – if we are able – to meet at last the living Voice of the deck, Thoth himself. In this particular context, the initial reading corresponds to the **Hypostyle Hall** of the ancient Egyptian temple and is called the *measure of Ma’at* and the *heart’s sacrifice*.

The *Tarosophist* must then engage with life and enact the required change before returning to the next level of the spread. Without doing so, the next reading will be meaningless. The conditions of each gate must be met, as was the case for the ancient Egyptian soul passing through the gates of the underworld, making a negative confession at each, before being allowed to pass.

The second level of the gated spread corresponds to the **Inner Sanctum** of the temple, and here we divine for the requirements that must be met to meet our own true Will and the manner in which we must enact that Will. This is called *honouring the Living King* and *passing the fields of Iaru*. It is particularly appropriate for Crowley’s system of *Thelema*, a Greek word meaning “Will”.

However, this is not the end of the spread and our journey into the divine otherworld. Behind a false door, we discover that there are three Holy Barques (boats) presented to us, over which each presides a particular God. We must choose one of these Barques in which to then pass beyond our current expectations and into a wholly new realm. This third divination is called *opening the gates of heaven*. Again, we must fulfil the journey and meet the wishes of the God or Goddess chosen before we can enter the last gate.

This last gate is called *Entering the Naos*, the inner shrine or chapel of the god, in this case, the great tutelary deity of our deck, **Thoth**. It is here at last we can meet the God himself and hear his word – if we dare – and learn how we must utter it in our life. Again, this is a sacred contract and not to be taken in anything other than this manner.

## The Temple of Thoth

The *Tarosophist* will prepare for this journey, treating it as a sacred moment. They will thus be bathed, cleansed and free of distraction for each reading. They may choose to burn *Kyphi* incense (I recommend Katlyn's incense from Mermade Magical Arts: <http://www.mermadearts.com>) and play suitably evocative music, such as 'Hymn for the Sunrise' by Ali Jihad Racy from his album, *Ancient Egypt*. The practitioner of this particular journey must allow a week across which this spread is gated. The deck utilised is the Thoth deck. It may assist to have images and representations of the appropriate deities.

**Day One:** *The Measure of Ma'at* and *The Heart's Sacrifice*  
**e.g. Tuesday**

Arise and greet the rising sun on a day of your choice. For those practising western esoteric magic, you may choose to perform Crowley's Solar Adoration, *Liber Resh*. Otherwise, spend a moment aligning yourself to the rising light and look forward to the week.

Prepare yourself and imagine that you are entering an invisible Temple, constructed of all the parts of the seen world. The walls of your house may be the pillars, the postman a sacred messenger, the local park an inner sanctum. This is a magical practice inspired by the secret Workings carried out by Florence Farr's Sphere Group at the turn of the last century (and at the time a secret group within an inner order of an occult organisation!) and is called *Entering the Temple of the World*.

Now perform a two-card reading from the Book of Thoth:

1. What must I do to meet the measure of Ma'at? [1 card]
2. What do you ask in sacrifice? [1 card]

Contemplate these cards. Take a look at both the keyword and title of the card, and any Egyptian deities that might be present and making themselves known to you at this time. If so, find out their attributes and qualities. In this contemplation, seek to answer the two questions – the first will give directions for action in the days to come, the second will give you something that must be given up or paid. You have three days (e.g. Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday) in which to meet the conditions of these cards.

**Days One-Three:** *Fulfilling Ma'at* and *Making Sacrifice*.

During these three days do not conduct any further readings or magical practice. Seek to meet the conditions established by the cards without deviation. Know what it is specifically to meet these requirements and demonstrate in the eyes of the very Gods that you have done so. Do not progress in this working if you do not meet the requirements over these three days. Do not extend the practice - unless the two cards suggest in some way otherwise. Abandon the **entire** working and only return to commence from the beginning again after at least a full lunar month (28 days) has passed.

**Day Four:** *Honouring the Living King and Passing the Fields of Iaru*  
e.g. Friday

If you have satisfied Ma'at and made appropriate sacrifice, arise and greet the rising sun. As before, enter the invisible temple of the world and visualise that your place of working is now within an inner sanctum. Your own self is here as a statue – you have been honoured and yet are forgotten – the old self is to be left behind as you re-align yourself to your own true Will. This next divination will show you who you are and what you must do to be ready to pass beyond.

1. How must I honour the Living King? [1 card]
2. What must I do to pass the fields of *Iaru*? [1 card]

Take the two cards given to you by the deck and contemplate them as before. The first card tells you of your essential self, and the nature that you must recognise and honour more in your life, and the second card tells you the way in which you must do so. This level of the reading is more intimate and mysterious than the previous, and will be of personal import. The message of both cards combined should lead to definite action – an action or series of actions which in turn change your beliefs or behaviour, or call your values to be engaged more with the world.

You have this day and the following day in which to perform this action. It must be decisive, immediate, and clear. You may choose to say “I honour the Living King” when performing the action, or just prior to it.

**Day Five:** *Choosing the Barque and Opening the Gates of Heaven*  
e.g. Saturday

On the evening of the fifth day, make observation of the setting sun. See that the light is diminishing and the old self is passing away as you start to renew yourself. If you have been able to *honour the Living King* and have passed the *fields of Iaru*, you may now proceed to the Chapel in which are the three Holy Barques. If you have not been able to have done so, abandon the working and do not return to start from the beginning until at least a lunar month (28 days) has passed. In that time, contemplate the *Honouring of the Living King* card each day as a penance.

After sunset on the fifth day, find time and space to recognise again the Temple of the World. See that night has fallen and there is a profound silence in this region of the Temple. Visualise in front of you a chapel of stone with three large wooden boats waiting for you – in front of each stands an ancient Egyptian deity as here:

**Khons**, the God of the Moon

**Isis**, the Mistress of Magic

**Ra**, the God of the Sun

Take three cards from the Thoth deck and place them face down in these three positions, each to represent one of the Barques. Now take a moment to select which of these Barques you are going to choose to take – it must only be one:

**The Barque of Khons**, in which case the question is “What service must I offer to reflect the hidden light?” [1 card]

**The Barque of Isis**, in which case the question is, “What must I learn about myself to become closer to the hidden light?” [1 card]

**The Barque of Ra**, in which case the question is, “What shall I create in the world to reveal the hidden light?” [1 card]

Select the card which corresponds to your chosen Barque. The card will reveal the answer to the relevant question. Discard and return the other two cards to your deck without looking at them. The card of your Barque is to be contemplated and enacted over the following two days. This represents the *opening of heaven*; a deserved passage into a new sense of self and reality. Through this activity, you are making a journey into the afterlife.

**Day Six – Seven:** *The Journey into the Afterlife*  
**e.g. Sunday – Monday**

With the card of your chosen Barque in mind at all times, engage with the world in a manner befitting it. Offer service, meditate, or create as dictated by the card. This should occupy as much of your time as possible, for the more time you offer in contract, the more rewarding the final result will be. You should note that even if you fail in this activity, you must now still perform the last divination. Dare you face this final judgement, then, without having performed the journey fully?

At this point there is no abandonment possible, nor failure – only the judgement of Thoth which waits. To simply stop the working at this point and not perform the last divination will not stop it occurring anyway. This is a magical working.

**Day Seven:** *Entering the Naos*  
**e.g. Monday**

At sunset of the seventh day, considering the whole week prior and in particular the journey of the last two days, you should return at last to the Temple of the World. Imagine then that your place of working is now a secret place, hidden in plain sight. To others it is simply your workroom, your bedroom, your study – to you now it is the hidden place of the Gods, opened by your journey into the unseen world which permeates the apparent world.

At last you approach Thoth, the very heart of this deck. Visualise him as an Ibis-headed scribe, the recorder of all that has been created, the creator and utterer of creation itself, the single word that vibrates in all eternity.



Bow your head for a moment in recognition and then select two cards in response to the questions which you have long sought to ask:

1. What is your Word? [1 card]
2. How Shall I utter it? [1 card]

The nature of these cards will be appropriate given the level of service you have performed in the preceding week. The answers of the god Thoth may be direct or enigmatic; they may be calls to action or to moments of contemplation. They may be simply mysterious or magical. But they will indeed be the very voice of Thoth, scribe of the Gods, “ruler of the sacred books in the house of life”, and hence the voice of your own deck when it is used to truly engage with the world and your very life.



Aleister Says ...

“These twenty-two cards acquire a personality of their own: a very curious personality” (p. 22, *Book of Thoth*).

Marcus Katz, M.A., M.B.A., Ph.D. Candidate (Western Esotericism) is the Director of Tarot Professionals and has been studying, reading and teaching Tarot for over thirty years. He teaches Tarot, Kabbalah, Witchcraft and Initiatory Western Esotericism workshops at the Far Away Centre in the heart of the English Lake District. The centre has been included in reference guides such as the *Book of English Magic* and *The Guide to the Mysterious Lake District*.

He writes a regular column on Witchcraft and Neo-Paganism for the *Magicka School Magical Light* magazine, reaching 40,000 students, where he also offers a Spell-Crafting Course and Kabbalah Course. His main site at the Far Away Centre offers Magical Apprenticeships both 1:1 and self-study. As a life-long student of Aleister Crowley’s works, he teaches a *Thelema Intensive* weekend at Treadwell’s Bookshop in Covent Garden, London.

His first book on Tarot, *Tarosophy®: Tarot to Engage Life, Not Escape It*, is under contract to be published in Spring 2010.

<http://www.farawaycentre.com>

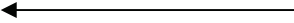
# THE QABALAH OF NINE CHAMBERS

Mary K. Greer, comments on Aleister Crowley's notes for this Kabbalistic Model.

In the "Introduction" to the *Kabbalah Unveiled* by S. L. MacGregor Mathers, Mathers presents three forms of word analysis by permutation through which to find hidden meanings and correspondences among Hebrew words. One of these is known as Aiq Beker or "The Qabalah of Nine Chambers," which he tells us was used by the Mark Masons. (It was used as a cipher for the secret word lost at the death of the architect, Hiram Abif.)

The Nine Chambers form a chart by which one can convert Hebrew letters to their numerical equivalents (1 = 10 = 100) and is a major technique for creating sigils and talismans. Similar to the term QWERTY for a typewriter keyboard, the name Aiq Beker [AiQ BKR] is derived from the Hebrew letters in the first two chambers: Aleph, Yod, Qoph, Beth, Kaph, Resh (read right to left in the chart below). This grid is used as the template from which to permute the letters in words in order to discern hidden truths. This Pythagorean "rule of 9," in which numbers could be reduced to their *pythmenes* (roots or thrones) was used by Hippolytus with the Greek alphabet and, according to him, by the Egyptians. It was said to bring qualities of peace and harmony to the universe.

The chart should be read from right to left. The numbers 500 and above correspond to the "final" form of the double letters and have no corresponding Trump cards.



3 Sh L G 300 30 3	2 R K B 200 20 2	1 Q Y A 100 10 1
6 M S V 600 60 6	5 K N H 500 50 5	4 Th M D 400 40 4
9 Tz Tz T 900 90 9	8 P P Ch 800 80 8	7 N O Z 700 70 7

The following text, making the correspondence with the Tarot Trumps clear, was written by Aleister Crowley between 1907 and 1911, prior to his having resolved the "Tzaddi is not the Star" issue. The Thoth card names and astrological correspondences have been added to Crowley's text.

NOTE BY H. FRA. P[erdurabo]. 4° = 7□ ON THE R.O.T.A.  
BY THE QABALAH OF NINE CHAMBERS from LIBER CCXXXI  
(This book is true up to the grade of Adeptus Exemptus.)

Units are divine --- The upright Triangle.  
Tens reflected --- The averse Triangle.  
Hundreds equilibrated --- The Hexagram their combination.

1. "Light." ---[Here can be no evil.]  
1-**Aleph** / **Fool** / **Air**. The hidden light---the "wisdom of God foolishness with men.  
10-**Yod** / **Hermit** / **Virgo**. The Adept bearing Light.  
100-**Qof** / **Moon** / **Pisces**. The Light in darkness and illusion. [Khephra about to rise.]
2. "Action." ---  
2-**Bet** / **Magus** / **Mercury**. Active and Passive --- dual current, etc. --- the Alternating Forces in Harmony.  
20-**Koph** / **Fortune** / **Jupiter**. The Contending Forces --- fluctuation of earth-life.  
200-**Resh** / **Sun** / **Sun**. The Twins embracing --- eventual glory of harmonised life under Sun.
3. "The Way." --- [Here also no evil.]  
3-**Gemel** / **Priestess** / **Moon**. The Higher Self.  
30-**Lamed** / **Adjustment** / **Libra**. The severe discipline of the Path.  
300-**Shin** / **Aeon** / **Fire**. The judgment and resurrection. [0=10 and 5=6 rituals.]
4. "Life." ---  
4-**Dalet** / **Empress** / **Venus**. The Mother of god. Aima.  
40-**Mem** / **Hanged Man** / **Water**. The Son Slain.  
400-**Taw** / **World** / **Saturn**. The Bride.
5. "Force" (Purification). ---  
5-**Heh** / **Emperor** / **Aries**. The Supernal Sulphur purifying by fire.  
50-**Nun** / **Death** / **Scorpio**. The Infernal Water Scorpio purifying by putrefaction.  
This work is not complete; therefore is there no equilibration.
6. "Harmony." ---  
6-**Vau** / **Hierophant** / **Taurus**. The Reconciler [Vau of Yod-Heh-Vau-Heh] above.  
60-**Samekh** / **Art** / **Sagittarius**. The Reconciler below [lion and eagle, etc.].  
This work also unfinished.
7. "Birth." ---  
7-**Zain** / **Lovers** / **Gemini**. The Powers of Spiritual Regeneration. [The Z.A.M. as Osiris risen between Isis and Nephthys. The path of Gemel, Diana, above his head.]  
70-**Ayin** / **Devil** / **Capricorn**. The gross powers of generation.
8. "Rule." ---  
8-**Chet** / **Chariot** / **Cancer**. The Orderly Ruling of diverse forces.  
80-**Peh** / **Tower** / **Mars**. The Ruin of the Unbalanced Forces.
9. "Stability." ---  
9-**Tet** / **Strength** / **Leo**. The Force that represses evil.  
90-**Tzaddi** / **Star** / **Aquarius**. The Force that restores the world ruined by evil.

**NOTES by Mary K. Greer**

- Each chamber can be placed on the Tree of Life and related to the *sephira* of that number.
- Except for the position of the Fool, the Trump cards are disposed in groupings corresponding to a person's Lifetime or Birth Cards. These are cards derived by numerologically reducing the sum of that person's birthdate.
- Each of these Nine Chambers and the cards in them is described as a "constellation" in my book *Tarot Constellations: Patterns of Personal Destiny* (a concept learned from Angeles Arrien). It's interesting that neither Mathers nor Crowley seem to have developed this concept further in relation to the Trumps.



# THE 10 OF DISKS IS SCREWED!

Lon Milo DuQuette, Author of *Understanding Aleister Crowley's Thoth Tarot*

The first thing we must keep in mind when discussing all the cards of the *Thoth Tarot* is that their images are modeled to a lesser or greater degree upon those of the Golden Dawn deck. In fact, I don't think it too much of an exaggeration to say that the *Thoth Tarot* is a 'hybrid' of the *Golden Dawn Tarot*. This is especially evident in the Court Cards and Small Cards.

The original GD deck was never printed or published. It was in all likelihood designed by S.L. Mathers and painted by his wife Moina. It was loaned to members of the GD who were obliged to make their own copies (no matter how funky). To my knowledge, the original deck has been lost in the mists of time, But, there are several fine modern versions of the GD deck currently available that appear to be faithful representations of surviving descriptions. If you don't already have one I encourage you to get your hands on one and study it *vis a vis* the cards of the Thoth Tarot.

An important feature of my book, *Understanding Aleister Crowley's Thoth Tarot* (from here on mercifully abbreviated UACTT) is the inclusion of a description of the GD model at the very beginning of my comments on the individual cards, so I'm going to encourage you to acquaint yourselves with that material rather than dwelling on it here..

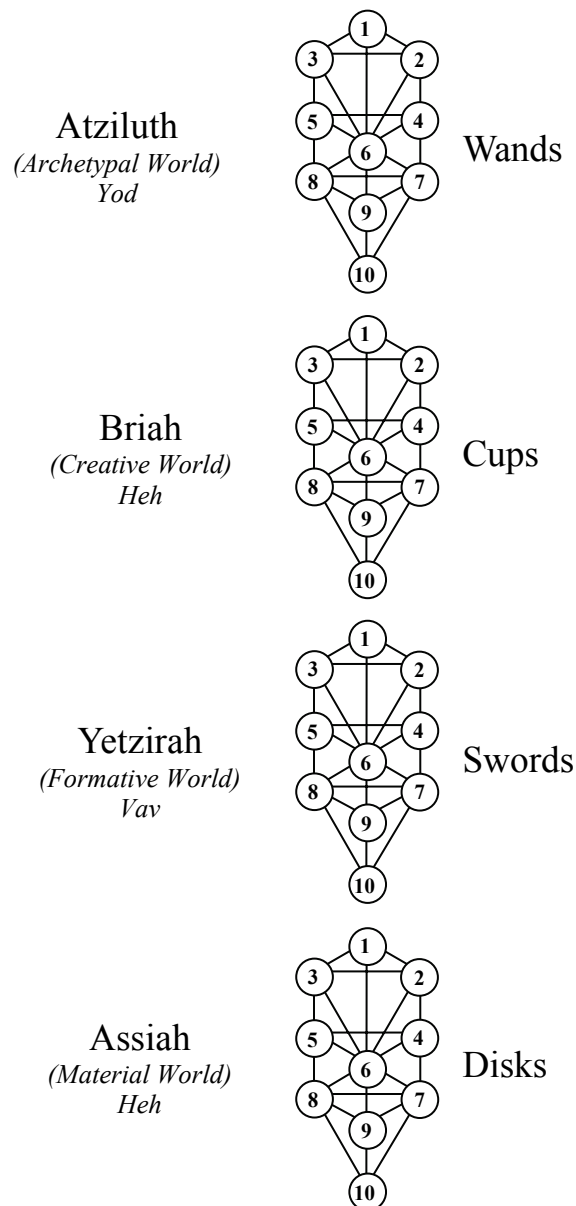
Now, I would like us to do something else. So, I hope you are reasonably comfortable with the method of the madness of how the Small Cards get their Elemental, Zodiacal and Planetary qualities, and how their divinatory characters are the result of these factors. And, I hope you also have at least a moderately firm grasp on the nature of the Qabalistic World each of the suits represents, e.g.,

- Disks are the Material World (Assiah), the environment of consciousness that manifests as matter and material objects like our example.....a chair. (In more religious sounding terms this is the body of God...manifest creation itself.)
- Swords are the World of the Intellect (Yetzirah), the environment of consciousness wherein dwells mental images and patterns ... the idea of the chair. (In more religious terms...the mind of God.)
- Cups are the Creative World (Briah), the environment of consciousness that creates profound and universal concepts like our need to get off our feet now and then. (In more religious terms....the heart and soul of God.)
- Wands are the Archetypal World (Atziluth) the highest, most universal level of consciousness... an environment that gets to the root of what chairs are all about, that is....the pure concept of rest! (In more religious terms...the Will of God.)

Every aspect of existence and being has its proper place within this fourfold structure. If we wanted to get 'Biblical' sounding about all this we could personify these ascending and descending divisions of energies, forces and consciousness as celestial personages such as Seraphim, Cherubim, Archangels, Angels, and finally us. As a matter of fact that's just what qabalistic magicians do.

But one needn't be a card-carrying magician to respect and appreciate the simplicity and elegance of this particular way of looking at things, and how clearly it is expressed in the tarot. So if I may impose upon you to separate the Small Cards from the others and assemble them in a qabalistic ladder made of four Trees of Life as I've illustrated below.

### THE LADDER OF SMALL CARDS



Take a good look at your layout of the cards and notice how the 2s and 3s are almost always sublimely cool, and the 5s and 8s, and the 4s and 7s run the risk being real clinkers because of their unbalanced position on their respective trees. Notice how the 6s are universally wonderful and so are most of the 9s. Notice especially the 10s. All but the Ten of Disks (Wealth) are difficult cards.

Now imagine, if you will, that the Cards literally spring one to another in a tumbling cascade of descending 'light.' The Ace of Wands at the very top is the source...the pure 'light' of supreme consciousness. It is the ultimate 'reality' behind all realities. But as the pure light "appears" to descend the ladder of the Tree of Wands, it becomes more and more obscured as if passing through optical filters ... and the 'light frequency' slows down step by step until we find the poor Ten of Wands trodden down by the momentum ever dimming light. The Ten of Wands feels like its title (Oppression). If it could, the Ten of Wands would stop the descent here and imprison the light before it abandons the World of Wands.

But the remaining light does escape the Ten of Wands and the World of Wands, and finds a bright welcome in the World of Cups...a world that thrives on joyfully receiving the light as much as the World of Wands delighted in projecting it. By the time the light has filtered down to the Ten of Cups the world of Cups is gloriously full, and in its bloated "Satiety" spills the remaining light on to the head of the Ace of Swords.

How dull the pure light becomes by the time it passes through the gate of the World of Swords...so much so that at each level of the suit the individual cards attempt to capture and shunt the light into conduits of energy and mold it into shapes, patterns and ideas – as if the illimitable light could be analyzed, defined and trapped in form. The death-throws of the Ten of Swords is even more tragic than that of the Ten of Wands. But at least the light has somewhere to go when it leaves the suit of Swords.

The light slows and crystallizes in the suit of Disks ( $E=MC^2$ ), and becomes the darkness of matter. Of course, it looks to all of us (whose consciousness is rooted in this world) to be the light of creation itself. The tapestry of earthly life plays out in the Tree of Earth until the CLIMAX OF THE DESCENT OF MATTER reaches the nadir of the ladder of creation...in the Ten of Disks.

### **THE MIRACLE OF THE TEN OF DISKS**

The Ten of Disks is the bottom of the Small Card barrel. There is nowhere for the dark broken dregs of the pristine light of to go from there – no lower number than 10, no suit lower than Earth. It's the last daisy in the universal daisy-chain. I liken it in UACTT to cosmic constipation (a vulgar but very accurate description of its predicament).

But is it an unhappy card? Just look at it...a Tree of Life made of coins, and the last coin, Malkuth...#10, is the biggest, fattest coin of all.

The Ten of Disks is happy because it is the lowest of the low (the climax of the descent of Matter) the Ten holds the secret of "reintegration by Spirit", the secret of returning the universe and ourselves to our 'former estate'.

Back in an earlier lesson, when discussing the Hermit card, I quoted Crowley:

“Virgo represents the lowest, most receptive, most feminine form of earth, and forms the crust over Hades. Yet not only is Virgo ruled by Mercury, but Mercury is *exalted* therein.”

**“Compare the Ten of Disks, the general doctrine that the climax of the Descent into Matter is the signal for the reintegration by Spirit.”**

**“It is the Formula of the Princess, the mode of fulfillment of the Great Work.”**

*The Book of Thoth*, p.89

I then asked you to write the last two sentences in your notebooks along with this quote from DuQuette:

**“Mercury, Earth, and the Sun are the three cosmic players responsible for creating the ‘Mode of Fulfillment of the Great Work.’”**

These three sentences describe nothing less than the secret inner processes of creation – not only the creation of human life, but the creation of consciousness and being. They come together in the last and lowest card of the tarot – the Ten of Disks – the card Crowley calls the **“hieroglyph of the cycle of regeneration.”** (*The Book of Thoth*, p. 217).

In UACTT pp.271-3 I tell the story of how the Ten of Disks literally jump-starts the cycle of regeneration, i.e., how the Ten of Disks creates from itself the Ace of Wands and starts the process of creation all over again. Please carefully review that material.

Mercury and Earth. Hermes penetrating the “crust over Hades” to rescue Persephone the daughter Demeter to regenerate life on earth with the yearly return of the Sun. Ten of Disks = Mercury in Virgo, “the lowest, most receptive, most feminine form of earth.” It is no coincidence that the allotment of Planets to the Small Cards starts at 0 Degrees Leo (with the Five of Wands). How else would the last of the Small Cards, the Ten of Disks, be allotted the Divine Mercury in its last decan of Virgo.

And, as I point out in UACTT, the true secret fertilizing ingredient in this most special of Small Card recipes – the ingredient that is not apparent to the uninitiated – is the Sun – the Sun carried as the lamp in the Virgo/Hermit’s hand (hand = Yod = Sperm).

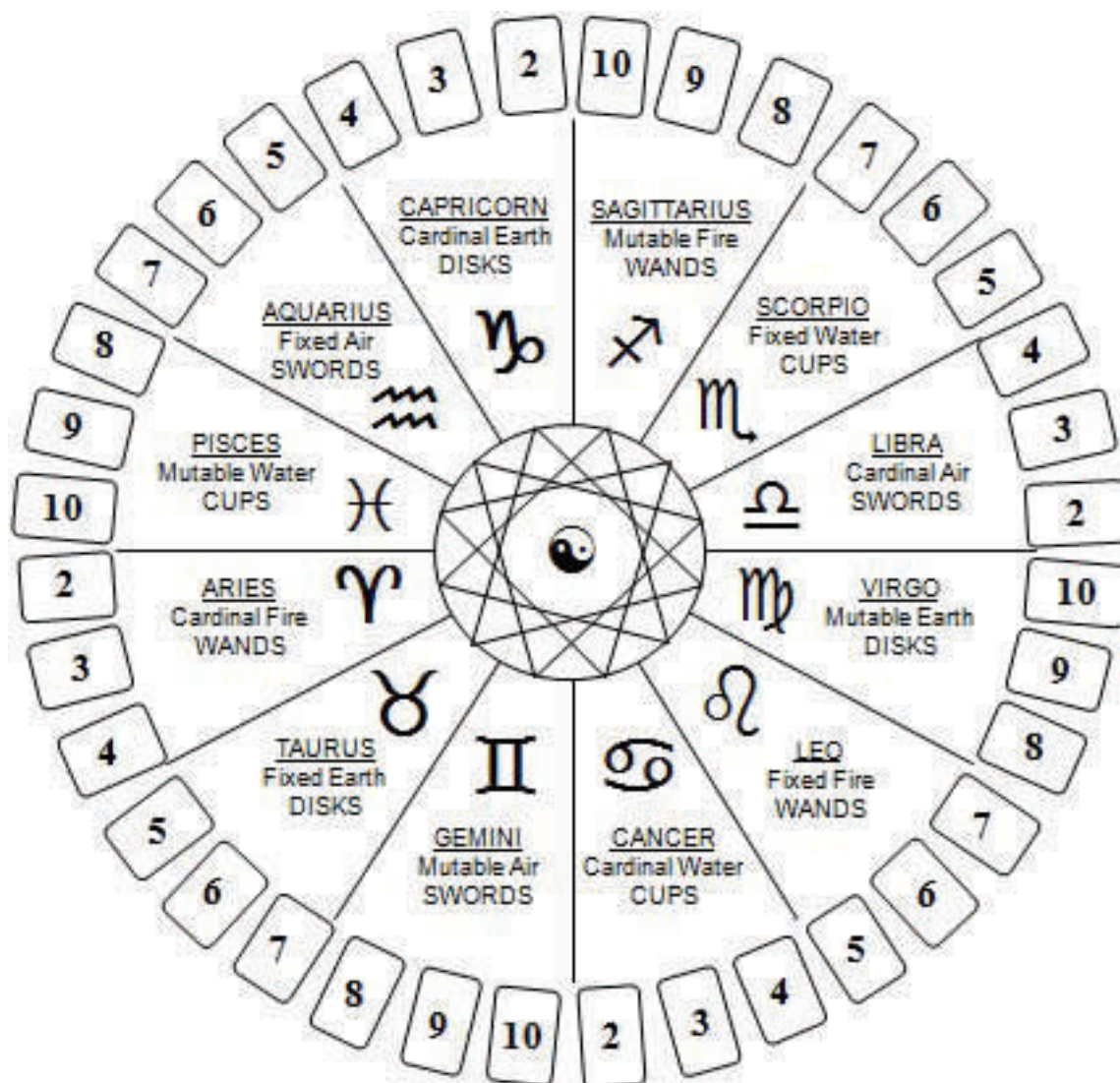
In the Ten of Disks, the Earth in its “lowest, most receptive, most feminine form” is **SCREWED** by Hermes/Mercury whose ‘wand’ is a conduit, a hollow tube, carrying the fire of the Sun. Mercury may penetrate, but the Sun fertilizes ... and life begins anew.

The story is there for those with eyes to see in the painted card stock of the Thoth Tarot.

Excerpted from Lon Milo DuQuette’s *Maybe Logic* Academy Course, “Understanding Aleister Crowley’s Thoth Tarot” and based on the book by the same name by Lon Milo DuQuette (Weiser Books 2003). Reproduced with kind permission.



## Minor Arcana and the Decans (Degrees of the Zodiac)

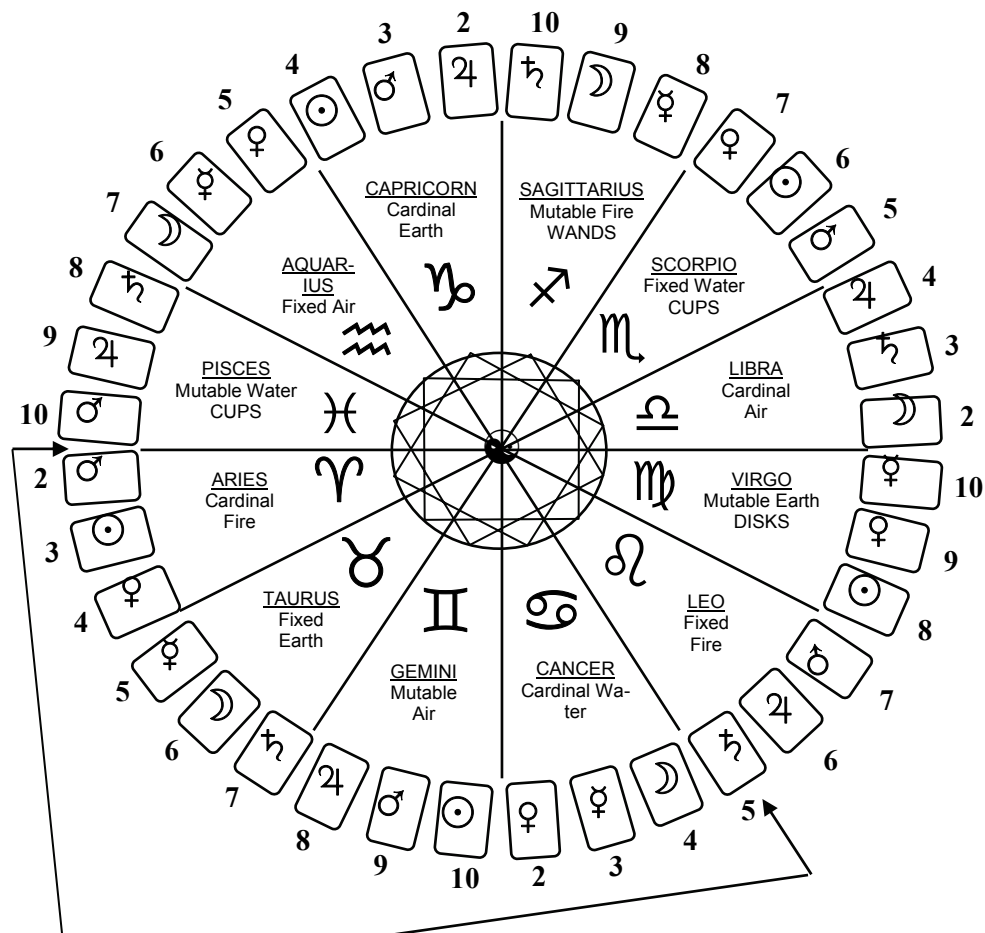


Each of the 36 Small Cards rule 1 Decan (10°) of the Zodiac.

2s, 3s, 4s rule the *Cardinal Signs* ♈♊♏♍  
 5s, 6s, 7s rule the *Fixed Signs* ♉♌♋♈  
 8s, 9s, 10s rule the *Mutable Signs* ♊♍♎♏

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## Minor Arcana and the Planets



Starting with 0° Leo, the Planets are allotted to the Small Cards in *Tree of Life* descending order:

♂ 2 ♂ ☉ ♀ ♀ ☾  
 Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus, Mercury, Luna.

Mars is repeated at the end and beginning of the Solar year.



10 of Disks (“Wealth”), *Thoth Deck*



**Lon Milo DuQuette**, author of *The Chicken Qabalah*, *My Life with the Spirits*, *Enochian Vision Magick*, *The Key to Solomon's Key*, *Illustrated Goetia* (with Christopher Hyatt) and *Understanding Aleister Crowley's Thoth Tarot*.

<http://www.lonmiloduquette.com>

# FOUR THINGS ABOUT THE FOOL ...

**Douglas Gibb**, professional Tarot reader, author and creator of Tarot Eon.

## **1. A simpleton or Bodhisattva?**

Historically, the Fool card was unnumbered, although there were exceptions and one of them was to number the Fool as either zero or twenty-two. By not assigning a number to the Fool, we are effectively placing it outside the pack of Tarot cards. We are saying that he lives outside the world, outside society and outside of the rules governing all phenomena. I find this strangely disturbing.

As observers of the Fool, safe behind all our experiences, all those experiences that have destroyed our innocence, holding us in like a walled city; we gaze out upon the Fool and we conclude, this is a madman, a simpleton; look how he acts – like such a Fool.

However there may be some who disagree, who mutter under their breath for they are afraid, experienced as they are, of who might hear; this is someone with great Spiritual awareness; a Bodhisattva come out of great compassion for he has renounced nirvana to save all sentient beings. It would be a mistake to see this as foolish; he is no Fool, but a great man!

The nature of the Bodhisattva is apparent from a teaching story in which three people are walking through a desert. Parched and thirsty, they spy a high wall ahead. They approach and circumnavigate it, but it has no entrance or doorway. One climbs upon the shoulders of the others, looks inside, yells “Eureka” and jumps over. The second then climbs up and repeats the actions of the first. The third laboriously climbs the wall without assistance and sees a lush garden inside the wall. It has cooling water, trees, fruit, etc. But instead of jumping into the garden, the third person goes back out into the desert and seeks desert wanderers to tell them about the garden and how to find it. The third person is the Bodhisattva.

## **Is this foolish or compassionate?**

It is difficult not to judge the Fool within all of us. In fact, we judge him all the time. He is that embarrassing aspect of us that we need to work hard to silence. However, in one aspect of the Fool, it's the silence of the Fool which is part of his innocence.

## **The most powerful of all the Trumps**

The Fool is unnumbered, and without a number the Fool is free to travel wherever he wills, not constrained by traditional boundaries and being beyond the rules of Law, his wanderlust can end up destabilising the Establishment. In almost all ways the Fool serves no real purpose in a Tarot deck, or a pack of playing cards for that matter. Does the Fool upset our ordered and balanced Tarot readings? Why have we kept him around? It's foolish don't you think?



## The Fool is easy to overlook



It's easy to overlook the Fool, much like the court Jester in the Royal house. Although the Court Jester served no obvious purpose, it was this lack of purpose which gave the Jester so much power within the politics of the time. Able to mingle between different groups of people, he served as an excellent spy and in some sense, held power equal to the King or Queen; certainly this person was not someone to underestimate. There is an Old Italian saying still in use today, "To be like the Fool in Tarocchi" (Tarot), which means to be welcome anywhere. Although this seems like a positive saying, the role that politics has played in manipulating innocence, both the idea, in the sense of manipulating somebody with experience to look like he is innocent as a ploy in subterfuge, and in the sense of manipulating people; the saying takes on a slightly sinister quality.

## 2. The Fool as zero

This is perhaps the most disturbing aspect of the Fool card. Aleister Crowley, in *The Book of Thoth* writes, "The really important feature of this card is that its number should be 0." I should point out that it doesn't really matter all that much if the Fool is numbered zero or twenty-two. In the symbolism of number, twenty-one forms a complete cycle, so twenty-two can indicate a return to zero.

Zero indicates a divinity of absence; this is in contrast to the 'divinity of presence' which we are used to dealing with and thinking about (religion or defined routes of spirituality would be examples). The Fool indicates a place that lies beyond the command of language; a place where all contradictions are united; a place of 'emptiness'; a place where knowledge becomes ignorance or when the events of history are forgotten but the remains of those events are present all around us. Ultimately, the Fool represents that irrational idea that something can come from no-thing and in this sense, the whole of the Universe issued forth from the Fool.

## The Symbol of Zero

Zero is a numerical sign which derives its meaning from the Arabic word *sifra* (cipher). It has no value of its own and replaces the values missing in other numbers. In this sense it represents objects which have no properties of their own, but rather it confers properties upon other objects. An example of this would be adding a zero onto a number to increase its value. Zero therefore, depending on whether the sign which precedes it, in the sense of the sign being either subtraction, addition, division or multiplication alters the value of the object in question.

Zero, in connection with the Fool card, represents the initiatory aspect of the card; being unnumbered it may either validate or annul other cards depending on its position.

## Zero as complete potential

Zero is the pause in generation; like the cosmic egg.

### 3. The Fool goes forward

In most depictions of the Fool, although there are exceptions, the Fool is moving forwards. This particular aspect of the Fool is emphasised in these particular decks for one possible reason. The Fool represents action, movement, going forward and, based on the images, in one definite direction. The overcoming of fears, taking risks and confronting the unknown are all traits that are portrayed in the Fool. Inexperience doesn't hold the Fool back; innocence is what allows the Fool to move forward.

In some images of the Fool, the image of the cliff, the dog warning him of the danger ahead, is a classic portrayal of this card. Does this indicate a pure fool heading toward his doom, or the leap of faith and the purity of heart needed?

“Pure Folly leads to initiation” *Aleister Crowley*.

### 4. The Fool as innocence

There are many myths that are connected to the Fool. Most, such as Percivale, who wins the Holy Grail through his innocence and lack of experience; or Hoor-Pa-Kraat, the Egyptian lord of silence, who tread upon the crocodile god Sebek, the Devourer, indicate a quality to the Fool card that is difficult to understand. In the most abstract sense, if the Fool was to ever have a single thought in his head, he would no longer be innocent, rather he would be experienced. Thoughts destroy innocence. The connection that the madman, the simpleton and the Fool have to divinity is in their innocence; their lack of rational thoughts – their lack of politics and their ‘empty headedness’. It is their innocence which makes them appear, to rational human beings, as Foolish.



Aleister Says ...

**On the Fool (0) ...** “In the initiated symbolism, the act of devouring is the equivalent of initiation” (p. 62, *Book of Thoth*).



The Fool, *Thoth Deck*

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<http://taroteon.com>





Lady Frieda Harris crayon sketches on tracing paper to show how the Thoth paintings should be hung in a gallery.

Circa 1941.

[Katz Collection]



# THE ALCHEMICAL CARDS OF THE THOTH DECK

Mary K. Greer, *independent scholar and teacher, author of nine books on Tarot & magic.*

Aleister Crowley wrote little directly about alchemy, but his Thoth deck is full of alchemical symbolism. Alchemy is the transformation of base matter into gold, whether physically in the outer world or psychically in the inner. The transformation process consists of a series of stages (described variously as three or seven or twelve or more) and are, upon occasion, depicted in pictures called *mutus liber* or “mute books.” Crowley taught that magick is “the science and art of causing change to occur in conformity with will.” In *Magick in Theory and Practice* (hereafter, *Magick*) he says that alchemical transformation is a branch of magick. Furthermore, the Great Work is the culmination of all magick, “the attainment of the *Summum Bonum*, true Wisdom and perfect Happiness.” Crowley continues, “The Alchemist is to take a dead thing, impure, valueless, and powerless, and transform it into a live thing, active, invaluable and thaumaturgic [able to work wonders] . . . to bring each substance to the perfection of its own proper nature.” Crowley also compares alchemy to initiation for both works isolate the product from its accretions, returning it to the essence of its own nature. In the aspirant to initiation these “accretions” are “the complexes which have corrupted him” and must be purified.

I speak, in this article, not as a working alchemist or magician but as a tarot reader. Here we seek to learn how the alchemical symbolism of the Thoth deck can help us handle the complexes that stand in the way of drawing closer to our own essential nature and to what the Golden Dawn called conversation with our Holy Guardian Angel.

As Crowley further explains in *Magick*, all the Major Arcana (Crowley’s “Atu”) are alchemical. The Fool begins the Great Work (“the first matter is a man . . . a perishable parasite”) and the Universe card ends it, being a glyph of its completion (“the pure and perfect Individual originally inherent in the substance chosen”). Crowley explains that the twenty cards that lie between these two exhibit the Great Work and its agents in various stages. Among other things, the middle cards depict the breaking up of these accretions or “coagulations of impurity.” As the First Matter blackens and putrefies, along with the aspirant’s agonized reluctance to their elimination, he plunges into “such ordeals that he seems to turn from a noble and upright man into an unutterable scoundrel.”

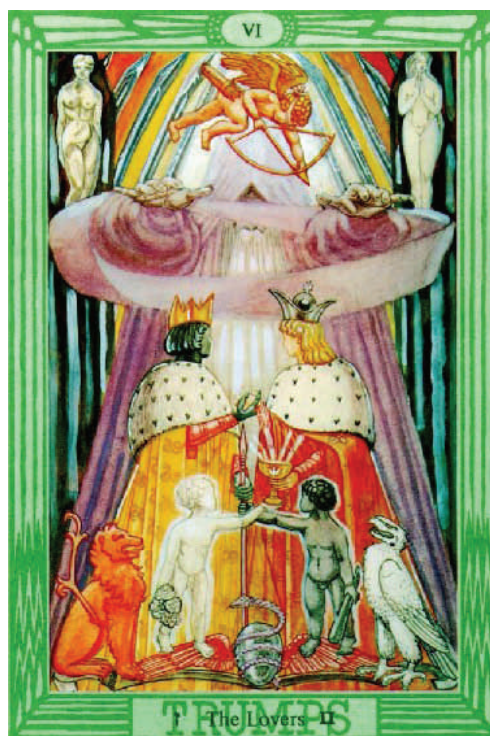
While Crowley does not specify the alchemical action that takes place in each Atu, he gives enough indications to stimulate our thinking about the rest. The Priestess, Empress and Emperor are philosophic mercury, salt and sulphur, respectively, and are “modes of action [rather] than actual qualities . . . the apparatus of communication between the planes.” Strength is “distillation, operated by internal ferment, and the influence of the sun and moon.” In the Hermit, the philosophic or Orphic Egg is fertilized (this being a solitary act in which the energy raised goes into the Great Work).

Death is putrefaction, “the series of chemical changes which develops the final form of life from the original latent seed in the Orphic egg.” Crowley counsels in *Magick* that, regarding alchemy and tarot, “the student may work out for himself the various analogies involved and discover the “Black Dragon,” the “Green Lion,” the “Lunar Water,” the “Raven’s Head,” and so forth.”

Two Atu are more overtly alchemical than the others and are described in much detail: the LOVERS and ART (formerly Temperance) cards. They depict the alchemical maxim *solve et coagula*. The subject of the LOVERS is “analysis” telling us of what things are composed. It is mirrored by “synthesis” [ART], demonstrating how we can recombine these things to our greater advantage. To understand what they are trying to tell us the remainder of this article will look at these two cards more closely.

## VI. THE LOVERS / THE BROTHERS

The LOVERS depicts a royal marriage, but most of all it is a glyph of duality. Crowley preferred calling it the “The Brothers,” partly in recognition of the astrological sign Gemini, but even more to emphasize the brothers Cain and Abel as the primary duality in this card of many contrasts. Falling on the path between *Binah* and *Tiphareth* on the Qabalistic Tree of Life, we see at the top of the LOVERS the Great Mother *Binah* in a dual form as Eve and Lilith from the Garden of Eden. Behind each is a dark pillar which can represent the two trees in the Garden and erect serpents spreading their hoods. *Tiphareth* is featured at the bottom of the card as a serpent-encircled winged egg. Being that the LOVERS and ART cards “together compose the comprehensive alchemical maxim: *Solve et coagula*.” The LOVERS represents the *Solve*, “dissolution” or analysis, part of the equation and is the division of anything into its separate elements, depicted here in a “harmony of contraries.” To show this, Crowley went back to the story of Creation.



*Illus. VI. The Lovers, Thoth Tarot Deck*

He drew this core theme from Eliphas Lévi's *The Key of the Mysteries*. Lévi claimed that alchemy borrowed the notion of an active and a passive principle from the Qabalah with its trees of life and death and its primal man and woman. Qabalistic operations were based on a law of analogies resulting from the harmony of contraries. Reaction is always equal and opposite to action. The formulation of any idea creates its contradictory at almost the same moment. The contradictory of any proposition is implicit in itself.

According to Lévi, Cain and Abel are essential elements in the story. And so Crowley declares the card to be the story of Eve and the Serpent, "for Cain was the child of Eve and the Serpent, and not of Eve and Adam." To maintain the contraries it was necessary for Cain to bring death into the world and carry the mark of the predicted Beast of the Apocalypse. In *The Key to the Mysteries* Lévi wrote:

The mystery of the necessary and successive reactions of the two principles on each other is indicated subsequently by the allegory of Cain and Abel. Force avenges itself by oppression for the seduction of weakness; martyred weakness expiates and intercedes for force when it is condemned for its crime to branding remorse. Thus is revealed the equilibrium of the moral Universe; here is the basis of all the prophecies, and the fulcrum of all intelligent political thought. To abandon a force to its own excesses is to condemn it to suicide.

Like the two opposing pillars on the Tree of Life, each energy—whether severity and mercy or force and weakness—requires the other to keep it from falling into excess.

The marriage of the elements takes place between a solar king (the Emperor) and a lunar Queen (the Empress). The King wears a robe emblazoned with serpents as the sign of eternity through their various sheddings of the skin like those involved in the alchemical process. The Queen's robe features the honey bee, a sign of the ability of the Queen to transform base-matter into a life-sustaining golden elixir. They are royal to show that they are not involved in a mundane marriage but an elevated one.

In the act of conjoining the King and Queen is a hooded figure in the form of the Hermit, taking the role of the god Mercury (Atu 1). Shrouded to signify that this act is not for profane eyes nor open to the intellect, he stands with arms outstretched in the ritualistic "Sign of the Enterer," blessing this Hermetic Marriage and its offspring with a prophecy of the New Aeon. A scroll in the shape of a Möbius Strip encircles his arms to show the mysterious essence of his message. It appears as a figure eight of two circles from the side but as a single circle from above. A continuous line drawn anywhere on it continues on both sides, epitomizing the continuity and equilibrium necessary to begin the Great Work.

The wedding arch of ten swords can be seen as a pledge of loyalty to traveling the Tree of Life and its ten Sephiroth but refers most directly to the corresponding Hebrew letter, *Zain*, which means a sword—a tool of division and analysis.

Crowley drew from imagery in “The Chymical Marriage of Christian Rosenkreutz” (found in Waite’s *The Real History of the Rosicrucians* (1887)) to express the continuous see-saw of contradictory ideas. In both are found:

a Black, Moorish King	a White Queen
Sun	Moon
Golden crown	Silver crown
Lance	Grail
Serpents	Bees
Red Lion	White Eagle

Additional dualities, implied or direct, include:

Emperor	Empress
Male	Female
Dark	Light
Whore	Virgin
Age	Youth
Inorganic matter	Organic matter
Fire (Lance)	Water (Grail)
Air (scent of Roses)	Earth (Club)
Death (Weapon/Club)	Life (Vegetation/Roses)

Alchemically speaking, the Empress is Salt, the inactive principle of Nature, which must be energized by The Emperor, Sulphur, “to maintain the whirling equilibrium of the Universe.” The Emperor as Sulphur is “the male fiery energy of the Universe, the rajas of Hindu philosophy. This is the swift creative energy, the initiative of all Being.” The orb surmounted by a cross in the Empress’ crown is the symbol for antimony, used in the purification of gold.

The children are “counter-changed” so that the dark child stands before the Queen but grasps the King’s spear. The white child is in front of the King, elevating the cup held by the Queen.

Flanking this tableau are the alchemical Red Lion and White Eagle. The blood of the red lion (called the serpent) and the tears of the white eagle (called the gluten) are the red and white alchemical tinctures, complementary yet opposite, which ground all existence and renew the other. The application of spiritual Fire to the Athanor of the male causes an ascent of the Serpent to the Cucurbite or Retort of the female. The white eagle lays the egg and the serpent winds itself around it. The alchemical marriage or the mingling of the two streams of force in the retort causes the chemical corruption of the serpent in the menstruum of the gluten, this being the Solve part of the alchemical formula of *Solve et Coagula*.

The product of this Hermetic Marriage is pictured here as a Winged Orphic Egg whose nature is concealed so it can take any form. Protected by the wings of the ancient Mother Goddess Mut (*The Vision and the Voice*), the egg is gray, a neutral blend of black and the white, and as yet only latent, for fertilization does not take place until the Hermit card (who performs a solitary magickal act) and finally the conception (Coagula) at the ART card. It’s final form is dependent on the influences at conception.



In *The Triumphal Chariot of Antimony*, reproduced in *The Alchemical Tradition in the Late Twentieth Century*, edited by Richard Grossinger, we find the process described:

Let the Lion and Eagle duly prepare themselves as Prince and Princess of Alchemy—as they may be inspired. Let the Union of the Red Lion and the White Eagle be neither in cold nor in heat. . . . Now then comes the time when the elixir is placed in the alembic retort to be subjected to the gentle warmth. . . . If the Great Work be transubstantiation then the Red Lion may feed upon the flesh and blood of the God, and also let the Red Lion duly feed the White Eagle—yea, may the Mother Eagle give sustainment and guard the inner life.

The blindfolded Cupid or Eros represents the will of the soul to unite itself with all and sundry, a result of the agony of separateness. He is the libido, the driving force of all creation and source of all action. His arrow suggests being directed by a spiritual intelligence. It also links this card to ART as mentioned in the next section. Eros' quiver is labeled Thelema, a Greek term for “will” used in such varied places as the New Testament, by the monk Rabelais and by the Hellfire Club. Crowley adopted it as the name for his religious and philosophical system based on the axiom, “Do what thou wilt is the whole of the law.”

Yet, even Eros is depicted in his dual nature. The egg entwined with the serpent is, among other things, a reference to the Elder Eros or Phanes, first born of the ancient gods. Hatched from the world-egg of Time (*Kronos*) and Necessity (*Ananke*), he was known as the god of procreation and new life. Eros is, in fact, the Holy Guardian Angel.

Crowley's Holy Guardian Angel speaks to him in *The Vision and the Voice* saying,

There are the wings of Maut [Mut], the Vulture. Thou mayest draw to a head the bow of thy magical will; thou mayest loose the shaft [phallus of Amoun] and pierce her to the heart. I am Eros.

The LOVERS shows an alchemical and Hermetic Wedding in which all the distinctive elements that eventually will be combined are separately analyzed, paired and consecrated to the Work. It is a mirror in which we must recognize, confront and accept all the contraries within the self (masculine and feminine, active and receptive, creative and destructive). It shows the process of discovering how things are composed, and then it must turn to ART when asking, “How shall we recombine them to our greater advantage?” In this card the consummation, gestation and birth are only prophesized.

#### XIV. ART/TEMPERANCE

As the LOVERS was *Solve*, so ART is *Coagula*. Crowley's renaming Temperance as ART, signifying what is called the “alchemical art,” clearly tells us that this is where the most active and defining alchemical act takes place—“the mingling of the contradictory elements in a cauldron.” As we learned earlier, Crowley defined magick as “the science and art of causing change to occur in conformity with will” and alchemy as a branch of magick. Michael Snuffin suggests in *The Thoth Companion*, that the LOVERS is the science or analysis part of this statement. It helps to determine what components are involved (the recipe or formula, if you will).

The ART card portrays synthesis or the creative process through which something new emerges that is far more than the sum of its parts. The whole of ART is the hidden content of the Egg from the LOVERS, now the pearlescent oval behind the Alchemist. In a modern, post-Crowleyan world (since 1951), it can be seen as depicting the moment when the separate DNA strands, carried in the sperm of the father and the egg of the mother, fuse into new DNA (an “assimilation of its equal and opposite”), and the cells of the zygote begin to split. This first splitting of the cells can be seen in the blue background of the card.



*Illus. XIV. Art, Thoth Tarot Deck*

The formerly Red Lion now drains itself of its last drops of blood, becoming white, and the White Eagle is now in full menstrual flood. Water from a silver cup joins with a fiery brand and with animal secretions in a golden cauldron. On the lip of the cauldron is a cross, showing that their admixture has occurred, while at the bottom of the cauldron we see a raven on a skull, the *caput mortuum* or “dead-head,” putrified dross that has separated from the elixir. Crowley reminds us that it is also fallow earth.

This state of the great Work consists of the mingling of elements in the cauldron, so that the contraries are united. According to Crowley, “the integration of the cards can only be regained by repeated marriages, identifications, and some form of Hermaphroditism.” The hermaphrodite, whose name is literally Hermes-Aphrodite (or Mercury-Venus), is the two-headed being whose faces and arms have counterchanged in color since the LOVERS. Grillo De Givry in *A Pictorial Anthology of Witchcraft, Magic and Alchemy* quotes Nicolas Flamel:

In the second operation thou hast two conjoined and married natures, the masculine and feminine, and they are fashioned in one sole body, which is the androgyne of the ancients, formerly called likewise the raven’s head or element transformed.

The alchemical child has assimilated the opposites of its parents, and, as is said in *The Emerald Tablet*, “The Sun is its Father, the Moon its Mother, the Wind carries it in its belly; its nurse is the Earth.”

The Emperor and Empress along with the Brothers, having united completely into a single entity, wear a robe decorated with the snake of the Emperor and bee of the Empress and in the color green of new vegetable growth. For Crowley this signifies that the first problem of alchemy, which was to raise mineral to vegetable life, has been achieved. The Alchemist is now at work on perfecting the next stage—the animal life. The green can be likened to the *vigor viriditas* or green energy of Hildegard of Bingen and the “force that through the green fuse drives the flower” of Dylan Thomas’ alchemical poem of opposites (that could have been written with this card in mind).

Astrologically, ART is Sagittarius (the Archer) and the zodiacal opposite of the LOVERS Gemini (the Brothers), “and therefore, ‘after another manner,’ one with it,” since both cards feature archers. The arrow of Sagittarius represents creative aspiration. In “The Fifth Aethyr” of *The Vision and the Voice* (not the Fourth as the *Book of Thoth* says in error), we are told that the arrow’s feathers are Ma’at (divine truth) and “the arrow persists for it is the direction of Energy, the Will [*Thelema*] that createth all Becoming.” Qabalistically, Sagittarius/ART is on the middle pillar connecting the Sun of *Tiphareth* to the Moon of *Yesod* (“the sphere which formulates Existence”). The arrow, pointed up, aspires to *Tiphareth*, habitation of the Holy Guardian Angel.

The arrow pierces a rainbow called Qesheth in Hebrew, for the Hebrew letters Qoph, Shin and Tav that make up the word are the three paths connecting Malkuth to the Tree above it. Thus a rainbow, coloring everything we see, separates the heavenly bodies above from the physical plane of Malkuth below. Crowley points out that alchemically, “at a certain period, as a result of putrefaction, there is observed a phenomenon of many-coloured lights, the ‘coat of many colours’ said to have been worn by Joseph and Jesus, in the ancient legends.” It is called the *Cauda pavonis* or Peacock’s Tail and is, alchemically speaking, a kind of iridescent shimmer that forms on top of the solution.

In “Absinthe: The Green Goddess,” Crowley talks a little more about this:

Originally in the . . . legend of the Hebrews, the rainbow is mentioned as a sign of salvation. The world has been purified by water, and was ready for the revelation of Wine. God would never again destroy His work, but ultimately seal its perfection by a baptism of fire. Now, in this analogue also falls the coat of many colors which was made for Joseph, a legend which was regarded as so important that it was subsequently borrowed for the romance of Jesus. The veil of the Temple, too, was of many colors. . . . In western Mysticism, . . . the middle grade initiation is called *Hodos Camelionis*, the Path of the Chameleon. There is here evidently an allusion to this same mystery. We also learn that the middle stage in Alchemy is when the liquor becomes opalescent. Finally, we note among the visions of the Saints one called the Universal Peacock, in which the totality is perceived thus royally appareled.

Crowley explains in *Magick* that the arrow is “Temperance in the Taro [sic]; it is a life equally balanced and direct which makes our work possible; yet this life itself must be sacrificed!” In a footnote Crowley adds, “Note that there are two arrows: the Divine shot downward, the human upward. The former is the Oil, the latter the Incense, or rather the finest part of it.” Like incense, the rainbow forms an airy cloud ascending from the cauldron and its combined fire and water, blood and gluten, sperm and menstrual blood. This steamy incense rises with the arrow as the aspiration of the human spirit toward the Divine. At the bottom of the card flames shoot up out of what looks like water but may represent the oil or chrism with which the Divine blesses the world below.

Crowley equates the Alchemist with the many breasted moon-goddess Artemis, also known as Diana the Huntress with her bow. In fact, the Alchemist has integrated not only the King and Queen but also the Brothers and Eros into an insignia of life-force energy. The multiple breasts symbolize Diana at Ephesus. However, if they are considered as six circles (one unseen) tangential to a central seventh, then it points to ART as the culmination of the second of three rows of seven cards in which the Trumps are often presented. As five circles, alternating dark and light plus a central circle of both dark and light, it represents the Alchemist having integrated the LOVERS personas within itself.

When alchemical mercury, salt and sulphur perfectly combine they form what is called the “universal solvent” Vitriol. V.I.T.R.I.O.L. is an acronym standing for the Latin phrase written along the inside edge of the egg: “*Visita Interiora Terrae Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem*,” which means “Visit the interior of the earth; by rectification you shall find the hidden stone.” The “hidden stone” is the universal medicine or panacea. In *Magick*, Crowley explained that “the Universal Medicine will be a menstruum of such subtlety as to be able to penetrate all matter and transmute it in the sense of its own tendency, while of such impartial purity as to accept perfectly the impression of the Will of the Alchemist.”

Rectification means both “repeated distillation” and also “the means to finding a straight line that is equal in length to a curved [or crooked] line.” Crowley says, “it implies the right leading of the new living substance in the path of the True Will.” It is apparent that ART, being on the middle pillar, is the straight line to the Divine.



In alchemical psychology the V.I.T.R.I.O.L. exhortation says we must re-enter the Mother's body (or egg) from whence we came. That is, we must descend to the deepest cave of the unconscious and the most material world of the next Tarot card, the Devil (the Jungian "Shadow"), in order to put everything we discover about ourselves through the *solve et coagula* process. This way we make straight whatever has become crooked within us. The seven letters also represent the seven planets and their metals, as those specific energies and emotions within the self that need to be freed from the "dross" so that they can function according to their true nature.

In Crowley's appendix to the *Book of Thoth*, called the "General Characteristics of the Trumps" (also in "*The Heart of the Master*") this verse describes the ART card:

*Pour thine all freely from the Vase in thy right  
hand, and lose no drop. Hath not thy left hand  
a vase?  
Transmute all wholly into the Image of thy will,  
Bringing each to its true token of Perfection.  
Dissolve the Pearl in the Wine-cup; drink, and  
Make manifest the Virtue of that Pearl.*

First of all, this is a sexual or tantric instruction. It requires etherealizing the energies raised in the sexual act, followed by the focus of this energy on an "image of thy will." Secondly, Cleopatra, in the name of health, drinks a pearl dissolved in wine to show how easily she absorbs the worth of a whole province, while Shakespeare has Hamlet's father (calling the pearl a Union) similarly drink the value of four kingdoms. Remember, the pearl is the iridescent character of the alchemical egg.

I believe Crowley drew for some of his imagery on Canto II of Dante's *Paradiso*, in which Beatrice proposes an alchemical experiment to determine the true source of dark and light. She tells Dante that, should he do this experiment, it will "set him free." It would take, however, an entire article to make my case. I just want to mention that in 148 short lines, Dante invokes Minerva (Diana), travels to the Moon with the speed of an arrow and asks whether the dark spots on the Moon are due to Cain. He describes being on the Moon as entering into a luminous cloud or an eternal pearl, as "water accepts a ray of sunlight," and how one dimension absorbing another is as a longing for unity. In the experiment, light is thrown back by the hidden layer of lead [base matter] beneath a glass. Finally, each angelic intelligence and its diverse virtue makes a different alloy within each precious body that it quickens, and these combine within a person. This is the formative principle that produces, according to its worth, dark and bright.

In looking for the highest level of this card it serves us now to turn to Lon Milo DuQuette's commentary on Crowley's "*Liber Samekh*" (from the Hebrew letter corresponding to this card, which means a "prop or tent support"). It is a ritual suggesting how *Samekh* signifies a prop or support through communion with the Holy Guardian Angel, residing in *Tiphareth* to which the ART card aspires. It's worth remembering that the Alchemist is pictured as an angel on other tarot decks.

Lon Milo DuQuette explains in *The Magick of Aleister Crowley*:

This then is the true aim of the Adept in this whole operation, to assimilate himself to his Angel by continual conscious communion. For his Angel is an intelligible image of his own true Will, to do which is the whole of the law of his Being. . . His Angel is the Unity which expresses the sum of the Elements of that Self, that his normal consciousness contains alien enemies introduced by the accidents of environment, and that his Knowledge and Conversation of His Holy Guardian Angel destroys all doubts and delusions, confers all blessings, teaches all truth, and contains all delights.

Alchemy is the means by which the “alien enemies introduced by the accidents of environment” are refined out of ourselves so that our will and that of the Holy Guardian Angel (“the sum of the Elements of that Self”) may operate in unity.

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# THE HANDBOOKS OF THOTH

**Marcus Katz**, Director of *Tarot Professionals* & PhD Researcher in *Western Esotericism*

*A Guide to the Guides of the Book of Thoth*

## Introduction

Since Crowley produced the Book of Thoth, there have been several attempts to provide further clarifications, commentaries or more introductory-level guides to the deck. As a ubiquitous deck in Germany, it is no surprise that the first attempt was German (Ziegler, 1984) and two other major attempts are also German (Banzhaf & Theler, 1998; Akron, 2007). These have been joined by two streams of alternate approach from both the psychological/anthropological perspective (Arrien, 1987) and the Western Esoteric viewpoint (Wanless, 1987; Willis, 1998; DuQuette, 2003). These seven books, supported by minor works and internet articles, provide many alternate approaches on the complex synthesis of the deck and Crowley's original disjointed text.

## A Personal Reviewers Warning

I here provide a personal review of these books – in my opinion only – against the Crowley original. You should be warned in advance that some of these I find a travesty against Crowley's original intent – as much as that can be surmised. However, having said that, others without my particular approach on Crowley will of course find these works useful and relevant. So long as they encourage you to re-engage with Crowley's work, and not assume that what you are reading is in any way connected with the cards in front of you, you'll be fine. To cut to the chase, buy Lon Milo DuQuette's book and Crowley's original Book of Thoth first, maybe with Ziegler's book as a useful companion along the way. Then maybe consider the other titles.

## The Handbooks of Thoth

The following summary is a list of the most commonly-known published handbooks on the Thoth deck. If there are others I have missed, please write me care of the "Letters to the Editor", c/o [editor@tarotprofessionals.com](mailto:editor@tarotprofessionals.com). For this article, I have not included prior publications of Tarot material by Crowley, such as in the *Equinox*.

The Book of Thoth (Crowley)	1944/1969/1974
Tarot Mirror of the Soul (Ziegler)	1984/1986
The Tarot Handbook (Arrien)	1987
New Age Tarot (Wanless)	1987
Magick and the Tarot (Willis)	1988
Keywords for the Crowley Tarot (Banzhaf & Theler)	1998/2001
Understanding Aleister Crowley's Thoth Tarot (DuQuette)	2003
Crowley Tarot Fuhrer I & II (Akron)	2007

Note that the Akron book is in German only. The Banzhaf & Theler book was translated into English in 2001. It is interesting to compare the timeline of these publications with the publication history of the deck itself with most of these handbooks immediately following the publication of the popular Swiss edition of the deck in 1986.

## Reviews of the Handbooks of Thoth

### Tarot Mirror of the Soul

#### Handbook for the Aleister Crowley Tarot

*Gerd Ziegler*

This first publication of a handbook providing a “detailed examination of the Crowley Thoth deck” is by Gerd Ziegler, who is described as a “therapist specialising in humanistic and spiritual therapy”. The book is a straight-forward, no-nonsense summary of the cards, with little added or over-elaborated. As such, it is a useful handbook for reading the cards when first practising with the deck.

There are the usual misconceptions; the very first line of the book in which the Tarot is described as “an ancient system of knowledge which has been taught over the centuries in secret Mystery schools”.

However, each card is also given an “indication” (interpretation), a “question”, a “suggestion” and an “affirmation”, which although extremely brief, provide a useful synopsis of the card. Key-words are also provided, and the use of Crowley’s images and interpretations is not ignored, although it is simplified.

A promising section at the back of the book, cataloguing and explaining “commonly occurring symbols” throughout the deck is equally brief, and could have been so much better, considering the author states that there are “1200 symbols contained in the 78 cards”. Only 37 of these are listed, on just 2 pages with mainly a one-line description.

A small section is also provided on finding one’s *Personality Card*, *Soul Card*, and *Yearly Growth* card by numerological analysis of your birthdate. This idea is expanded in Arrien’s book (following review) without credit – Arrien does not even include Ziegler’s book in the bibliography, although Arrien does ascribe the “Growth Cycles” to Twainhart Hill.

### Summary Scorecard

As Good as the Original:	0
Easier or more Difficult to read:	+100
Relevant to the original design and execution:	+25
New Ideas and Development of the original:	0

Overall: 125

*It could have been the essential encyclopaedia, but it is still a very useful LWB.*



**The Tarot Handbook**  
**Practical Applications of Ancient Visual Symbols**  
*Angeles Arrien*

An anthropologist who was dismayed to find no Tarot work “addressed the mythological, psychological, or cross-cultural themes prevalent in the Tarot”, Arrien sees the Tarot as “a symbolic map of consciousness and an ancient book of wisdom”. Although she was attracted to the artistic execution and cross-cultural symbolism of the Thoth deck, she “read Crowley’s book that went with this deck and decided that its esotericism in meaning hindered, rather than enhanced, the use of the visual portraiture that Lady Frieda Harris had executed”.

So on the positive side, she utilises the images of the Thoth deck and the key-words extensively, but on the negative, she jettisons Crowley’s text because “it is Crowley’s interpretation of these symbols, regardless of his reputation, which with I have an issue”. To me this seems strange, as it is Crowley’s design that informs the cards – and therefore the symbols are not merely “interpreted” by Crowley, but placed there by his design. It seems we should equally honour this intent as well as Harris’s collaboration and execution.

Arrien’s book uses Douglas’s (1972) work for its history of Tarot, before moving on to a brief summary of Tarot as an “outer mirror for internal and external processes”. She concludes by suggesting our work with a deck such as the Thoth deck leads us to “be able to see how universal principles, symbols and myths are outer representations of a deep collective psycho-mythology that is working inherently throughout the human species”.

Her main text is divided as ever into the Major, Minor and Court Cards. She provides a basic symbolism key to each of the Major cards, suggests an affirmation for each card, and considers the card as an “outer mirror”, which is closer to an interpretation of the card in a reading. The affirmations seem very incongruent with Crowley’s work. We read that we should say to ourselves when considering the Fool:

“I am a radiant being ... I am a living treasure ... I deeply honour and value the unlimited resource of courage that is within me ... I respect the nature of who I am ... There is nothing to fear.”

From an therapeutic-linguistic point of view, there are several problems with that script, and I personally wouldn’t want any of my clients taking on such incomplete and flawed statements about themselves. But others may find these affirmations helpful and positive as they are surely intended.

For each of the Majors, Arrien then provides a message for those whose “Life-Time Personality Symbol” is expressed by that particular card. This life-time symbol is something Arrien has produced based on basic numerology of a persons birthdate. Again, I hesitate to recommend anything reducing a person to a single card, particularly for their entire lifetime. But others may find this insightful and useful.

It is in the text of Arrien's analysis of the Majors we see how far away from Crowley's intent this book actually goes. In the Empress card, over three pages, little of Crowley's intended meaning of the symbolism is suggested, instead replaced with Arrien's rather generic and "new-agey" self-help speak. Thus, the "bumble bee" represents a "way of seeing", not as the symbol nor meaning Crowley intended it, and even the birds, which are described by Crowley as clearly a Dove and a Sparrow, are seen as "a dove or Kiwi bird," and "a small sparrow or bluebird". Crowley is specific with the birds and their significance, Arrien entirely disregards this and cognate meanings. This is evident throughout the card, with an even worse misreading of what is clearly pictured and described by Crowley as the "pelican feeding its young with the blood from its own heart" as a "swan with her four baby swans" by Arrien.

For a superb analysis of the bird images on the Empress, see *The Aviary at the Gates of Heaven* by Magdalene Meretrix at: <http://www.realmagick.com/articles/39/2039.html>

Another example will suffice. In this issue of T.I. we have read about the complex mythological and cross-cultural basis of the FORTUNE card. In Arriens, having to completely ignore everything Crowley wrote and intended, and simplify everything Harris painted to its most generic, Arriens is reduced to a single paragraph for the whole card, suggesting simply that for good fortune we should be as "objective as the Sphinx, flexible like the monkey, and reach for new opportunities and ways to express our creative power like the crocodile." I don't know how that works, but I can't think of the crocodile (which is here explicitly given and painted as Typhon, the destroyer, at the descending arc of the wheel) as "creative power".

So, you may be reading about a card with Arrien, but it is not the Thoth card in front of you, that's for sure! It is a clear case of throwing the baby out with the bath-water. But again, some may find the user-friendly, generic, self-help advice some comfort in contrast with Crowley's more robust assessment of human motivation and potential.

My main annoyance with this book is that it states its intent and interest as being based on cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary work, and to avoid the interpretation of one person, i.e. Crowley, and then throws out all of Crowley's plainly cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary work in favour of an interpretation unique to Arrien. Even the most simple and straightforward symbolism and mythology is warped – in discussing the Aeon (and having to consult Websters Dictionary for the meaning, in avoiding Crowley's actual explanation) Osiris is represented as "God of Wisdom" and Isis as "Goddess of Intuition". These are neither self-evident nor accurate nor useful nor relevant to the cards usage of the images of Osiris – and Isis is not on the card at all. Then we have "Osiris with his forefinger to his mouth" which is actually Harpokrates or the child Horus and I have to give in with the book.

There are other sections of the book you may find provocative and useful – a section on using the "thirteen challenge cards" as portals of growth is a useful approach, marred only by the apparently authoritative statement that the "In the entire Book of Thoth, or Book of Wisdom, we find only thirteen challenges or tests pictured". Which then coincidentally matches with the "thirteen states" of the "Bardo" of the Egyptians. All of which is nonsense, but the following text on using cards such as "Sorrow" (3 of Swords) to rework the state itself is very useful for self-development work.

Similarly with the Tarot Constellations which I would have almost certainly purchased as a stand-alone book if given further development and not marred by a misreading of the Thoth deck itself. But then I read in the Spreads section that the “Celtic Cross” is the “only spread to have survived since the middle ages” [See Origins of the so-called Ancient Celtic Cross Spread” in T.I. #2] and I have to throw the book across the room again.

### Summary Scorecard

As Good as the Original:	-60
Easier or more Difficult to read:	+60
Relevant to the original design and execution:	-80
New Ideas and Development of the original:	+20
Overall:	-60
<i>Take it or Leave it.</i>	

### New Age Tarot Guide to the Thoth Deck *James Wanless*

James Wanless, Ph.D., who designed the Voyager Tarot deck with the often unacknowledged Ken Knutson, presents this next Thoth handbook, which “enables the reader to use the tarot, and the Thoth Deck in particular, with a greater ease and fluidity than ever before”! He acknowledges Arrien as his “original teacher” so it should be no surprise that in many respects this book follows her lead, for example stating that “tarot has endured for thousands of years, since its origins in ancient Egypt” and then explaining that “tarot is an ancient Egyptian word for ‘royal road’”.

In extending this error, yet another stretch is made to state not only that this in some way equates with “Torah”, but also that “the destiny of the road of tarot is totality, suggested by another anagram of Tarot, ‘tota’”! This is simply poor – in no sense is “tota” an anagram of Tarot, any more than I could say the Latin name “Marcus” suggests “summa” meaning “summary” because it has some of the letters the same – and tota is actually better *toto* or *totus*.

The bulk of the book is taken with a page-by-page presentation of keywords for the symbols on the cards, repeating such errors as on the Empress, “Mother Swan and Young = nurturing” and providing such generalisations as on the same card, “Birds = Thoughts”, hence entirely misrepresenting Crowley and Harris’s painstaking five-year design and execution of the deck.

The Minor and Court cards are then given comparatively short shrift, with the only interesting component being the addition of key titles for the Court Cards, such as The Knight of Swords being “The Decider” and the Knight of Cups being the “High Flyer”. At least these provocative titles get one agreeing or disagreeing with the nature of the card and character represented by the card.

Spreads are also provided against each Major card, such as the “Horns of the Devil” Reading, but these are somewhat bizarre and strangely illustrated. It appears that Wanless owned the publishing company which produced his book. Perhaps he also sketched the illustrations?

### Summary Scorecard

As Good as the Original:	-70
Easier or more Difficult to read:	+50
Relevant to the original design and execution:	-90
New Ideas and Development of the original:	+10

Overall: -100  
*You don't need it.*

### Magick and the Tarot

#### Using Tarot to Manipulate the Unseen Forces of the Universe

*Tony Willis*

Designed specifically for use with Anthony Clark's deck, *The Magickal Tarot*, itself a variation of the Thoth deck and hence included in this review, Willis's book promises that it “lays bare actual methods of manipulating the unseen forces of the Universe, information not normally found in print”. Willis dedicates his book to Marian Green.

Here, by 1988, at least we see a small transition to historical accuracy, although it is downplayed severely. Willis writes that “nobody knows for sure” where Tarot came from, then goes on for several pages discussing the Egyptian heritage of the deck, where “few commentators actually believe that the Tarot existed in those days in book form” – why that would surely be ridiculous and require proof (!) – so “It was more likely a set of religious pictures such as the vignettes of the Egyptian Book of the Dead ...” etc. This gives the impression that such might seriously be the case when in fact there is no evidence at all.

The rest of the book provides a few methods for “manipulating the unseen forces”, such as candle magic, meditation and so forth, but all can be easily found in print elsewhere, and more. The analysis of the cards is peppered with interesting snippets and complete fabrication, with no indication of sources or evidence.

An example suffices; “Long ago diviners had first to learn the 22 magickal precepts [the 22 Major Arcana] just like any other trainee magician. For in those days, divination was treated as just another facet of magick. After being schooled ... the prospective diviner would be taken into one or other of the two Temples of Prophecy”. I have no idea to this day, having studied the history of divination and oracles for twenty years, in Rome, Greece, ancient Egypt, what Willis is talking about here, but I suspect it is entire fiction based on channelled information or hearsay.



### Summary Scorecard

As Good as the Original:	-100
Easier or more Difficult to read:	+5
Relevant to the original design and execution:	-100
New Ideas and Development of the original:	0
Overall:	-195
<i>You don't need it.</i>	

### Keywords for the Crowley Tarot

*Hajo Banzhaf & Brigitte Theler*

This self-described “cookbook” follows our previous titles by a good ten years, and improves massively in all respects. Although more of a dictionary than a textbook, it makes a good attempt at the known history of the cards, and references Crowley’s original designs accurately, for example, the Pelican on the Empress card and the Typhon on the Wheel symbolising “annihilating and destructive forces, decay” rather than the new-age interpretations of previous handbooks.

The tables against each card give meanings and interpretations for the card in terms of “profession” (i.e. in a career reading), partnership, and positive and negative readings. Rather than an affirmation, the tables give a meaning for the card if chosen as a “Card of the Day”, which in part reflects the late Banzhaf’s astrological background; “Today you may get into a conflict of interests ...” reads the 2 of Pentacles, in language familiar to those who consult the newspaper horoscope sections.

About 14 spreads are given which are all very interesting. They almost slip when saying that the “Celtic Cross” has “been passed down from earlier ages” but they don’t slip into “from ancient times”!

I personally like and recommend this book as a useful companion and given a choice, would probably buy this rather than the earlier Ziegler book, as representing a purer distillation of Crowley and Harris’s original work.

### Summary Scorecard

As Good as the Original:	0
Easier or more Difficult to read:	+100
Relevant to the original design and execution:	+50
New Ideas and Development of the original:	+10
Overall:	+175
<i>Very useful reference work.</i>	

## Understanding Aleister Crowley's Thoth Tarot

An Authoritative examination of the world's most fascinating and magical tarot cards.

Lon Milo DuQuette

If my only trouble with a book on the Thoth deck is to quibble slightly over the alchemical attributions of two of the cards and that book contained just about every other explanation of the Kabbalistic and Alchemical, even some of the sexual, symbolism both obvious and buried in the Thoth deck – then I'd be very pleased. In fact, delighted and somewhat envious I hadn't written it myself! So it is with highest recommendation (and an eye on the fact that Lon has submitted an article to this magazine and will be sent a copy) that I review this title as follows – **go buy it**.

It is also with some awe that one might note that DuQuette has not been able to expound and expand on every facet of the deck, and yet in touching on those most relevant and previous unexplored esoteric angles, this book still runs to 300 pages. This testifies to the dense synthesis that Crowley and Harris wove into their work.

### Summary Scorecard

As Good as the Original:	+50
Easier or more Difficult to read:	+200
Relevant to the original design and execution:	+100
New Ideas and Development of the original:	+50

Overall:	+400
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*Have you bought it yet?*



## Crowley Tarot Führer

### The Thoth Tarot by Aleister Crowley and Frieda Harris

Charles F. Frey (Akron)

REVIEWED BY K. FRANK JENSEN FROM THE GERMAN

Is it possible to review a handbook, a dictionary, a work of reference? Yes and no. Its real value and significance will first be revealed after frequent use. What can be reviewed are the intentions and the knowledge of the author/authors and their ability to place this knowledge into a frame that makes it easy to find exactly that detail you are looking for.

One would believe that all that can be said is already said about Aleister Crowley and Frieda Harris' *Thoth Tarot*, but it is not so - or should I say - it was not so, until the Swiss publishing house Urania/AGMüller recently presented us for Charles F. Frey's (perhaps better known as Akron) "Crowley Tarot Führer" with the subtitle "Eine Magische Reise durch die Welt des MEGA THERION".

Akron's former books are all heavy works like his book about Giger's *Baphomet Tarot* and his own *Akron Tarot*. This one is no exception, the two volumes contained in a well designed cassette consist of 175 and 560 pages respectively. Profusely illustrated, mostly in colour and with the illustrations placed right along the relevant text.



Volume one begins with the background story on how Akron found Crowley or Crowley found him. In the turbulent late 1960's young Charles was a drummer in a professional rock band, inspired by groups like 'Black Sabbath', 'Led Zepelin', 'Tyrannosaurus Rex' and 'The Beatles', whose Sergeant Pepper album cover depicted Aleister among its portrait gallery. One night playing in nearby US-barracks for GIs awaiting to be transferred to Vietnam, one of them handed over a book about Crowley to Charles. This was where Akron's way to become a Crowley addict actually began.

It should, however, take years before Akron's first book on Crowley appeared. One day, in 1989, Ursi, the great love of his life, who had moved back to the area where Akron still lived, after they had been living apart for three years, asked if he could accompany her to a tarot lecture given by Hajo Banzhaf, who at the time had been known for a couple of mainstream tarot books. Such events were not Akron's cup of tea but he accompanied her and met Banzhaf.

Banzhaf had just been assigned to write a book about the *Thoth Tarot* for Urania, meant to substitute Gerd Ziegler's inferior 'Spiegel der Seele'. Banzhaf suggested that Akron take over the task, due to his own ignorance of Crowley's magical world, which Akron was assumed to know better from the life he had lived in the 1970's, a life of experiments, drugs and music.

The end result was, that Banzhaf and Akron wrote 'Der Crowley Tarot' together. In my own 'Bibliography of Books in Spilkammeret' my short annotation to this book reads: 'After a number of superfluous books, Banzhaf is back with a better work. Or, perhaps, it is Akron, who makes it better'.

The entire work is dedicated to Ursi and Frieda. Ursi Cadonau, an artistic glass-maker, was Akron's partner from 1976-1986 and later he met her again. He also tells the sad story about her dying of cancer at the end of 2005. Among the many colour illustrations in the book we can see some of Ursi's glass windows, among them a tryptikon she created for AGMüller's residence. Frieda, of course, is Frieda Harris, the artist, who created Crowley's *Thoth Tarot*.

Akron describes also, how he became more and more absorbed in the world of Crowley. He discusses this world in detail, like when he analyzes the possible nature or existence of *Aiwass*, the entity which Crowley 'met' in the Egyptian museum in Cairo; a 'channelling' with Crowley's wife Rose as a medium. This event, that happened during their honeymoon, brought Crowley some of his main contributions to the world, 'Liber Al vel Legis' or 'The Book of the Law', the Thelemic philosophy and the declaration of 'The New Aeon'.

Crowley, as a person, is discussed pro and contra. Was he a visionary poet, a creative genius, a master of self-promotion, or was he an egocentric, a bisexual sadomasochist or a scrupulous adventurer? Akron gets around this and a lot more in his psychological portrait of the person Aleister Crowley and the world with magical invocations, scandals, drugs and sex experiments he lived in.

Over 40 pages Akron describes in chronological order Crowley's personality, his eventful life and doings, year by year from his birth in 1875 to his death in 1947 and even the legal disputes, that showed up after his death. His experiments, his publications, his travels, his marriages, his magical work, his ever changing 'scarlet women'. When needed, Akron has added clarifications when, for example, a ritual need to be explained.

It is all richly illustrated with drawings by Patricia Cooney. Many of the illustrations are after well-known photos of Crowley and his circle of followers but Cooney's drawings bring life to the story. A supplement - again richly illustrated - tells the story of Crowley's Abbey of Thelema in Cefalù, Sicily and the work with its restoration, including the original wall paintings by Crowley and his disciples.



Aleister Crowley and Frieda Harris.  
Illustration from the book by Patricia Cooney

In 1938 Crowley met Frieda Harris; both then around 60 years of age. Frieda was a recognized artist, Crowley a notorious magician. Frieda was not another of Crowley's Scarlet Women. He was aging and worked on other planes now. Their working together on creating the 'Book of Thoth Tarot' began in 1938 and came to last five years.

The images were first printed in 1944 in a limited edition book, even though a part of the original paintings had appeared at art exhibitions earlier.



Akron asked himself why these images are so immediately fascinating and he gives the answer that the reason is not only Frieda Harris' high artistic qualifications but also her schooling in and use of Rudolf Steiner's philosophical concept of projective geometry for their dispositions, a detail which Crowley probably was not aware of and would not have liked since Rudolf Steiner and Crowley were not exactly on friendly terms.

## Volume Two

Volume two is devoted to the "Handbook of the Crowley/Harris Thoth Tarot". Opening the book, the scene is set with the Tree of Life-diagram in genuine esoteric colours. On the reverse side of this same page are the darker aspects of the same diagram, the shadowy sides of The Tree of Life, rendered. We are in the Realm of Kabbalah. About 20 pages describe fundamentally the qualities of the paths and *sephiroth*, the Hebrew letters and their symbolic meaning etc. Then for each of the 78 cards we get a very detailed description. The card's relation to the entire kabbalistic system. Its colours in the Golden Dawn colour scales, its astrological references, its possible relations to the I-Ching, Runes, Alchemy etc.

There is a long analysis of each card and its psychological meanings. The references to other cards are all illustrated in colour with details pointed out and a suggestion on how the card can be interpreted. All correspondences from Crowley's work '777' are, of course, listed, but Akron has added several more references, some of them illustrated. References to paintings, music and holy places, goddesses and myth etc.

In between there are other remarks. When we, for example, come to The Magician, the question of copyright is discussed. American O.T.O, who own the copyright for the Crowley-Harris deck, have decided that the edition of the Crowley pack with three different 'Magicians' is not in accordance with Crowley's intentions and have therefore denied its continuous publication. AGMüller does not agree with this, but have accepted it to avoid further legal problems.

This leads to a discussion of whether a major set of 24 cards is better in accordance with number systems in general, as we also know it from Akron's own deck. Same ideas are also promoted by Nicholas Tereshchenko and the brothers Doctors van Leeuwen, none of which, however, are part of AGMüllers argumentation. It is relieving to see that these disagreements are discussed openly in a world which otherwise throws a veil over such things.

Akron's book on Crowley/Harris' Thoth Tarot is a major work in the esoteric tarot literature. It exemplarily presents, explains and comments on one of the most important tarot decks ever in an accessible, modern and attractive way. With this work Akron has confirmed the impression I had, after having reviewed his *Akron Tarot*, as being the best Tarot author and philosopher we have today. Now we can only hope for a translation into English which, unfortunately, so far has not happened to the *Akron Tarot*. Thanks to Akron, Patricia Cooney, Silvie Bachmann, AGMüller/Urania and whoever else were involved to make this book available.

*Crowley Tarot Führer*

Subtitled: Eine Magische Reise durch die Welt des MEGA THERION

By: Charles F. Frey (aka: Akron)

Swiss publishing house: Urania/AGMüller

Two illustrated volumes (175 and 560 pages respectively)

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# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In a new regular section, opened by Mary K. Greer, we print your letters.

Write to [editor@tarotprofessionals.com](mailto:editor@tarotprofessionals.com)



Dear Editor

You mention [V.1.Iss.2] that the Ancient 10-card (Celtic) Spread was not original with Waite, but that it had been in use in the Golden Dawn. This is confirmed by John Brodie-Innes in an article in the Occult Review, "The Tarot Cards" (XXIX, No. 2, Feb, 1919):

"As to divination or fortune-telling, there are many ways of laying out the cards; I have myself been shown over a dozen, and I am persuaded there are many more, some of them peculiar to individual diviners. The first method described by Mr. Waite has long been familiar to me. It was sometimes used among others by Mrs. Florence Farr Emery, but the divinatory meanings were entirely different. Rightly or wrongly they were logically formed by the combination of the general meaning of the suit with the mystic properties of numbers, which Mr. Waite apparently disregards."

Also, you refer to Waite's having admitted "we have had other help from one who is deeply versed in the subject." You and Roger Parisious both seem to think this was W. B. Yeats [Nb. I suggested this was F.L. Gardner, not Yeats, Ed]. However, Yeats always had others help him with tarot readings and his use of tarot's symbolism is minor. Even his association of the four suits to the ancient Celtic "treasures," which he recounted to Jessie Weston (mentioned in her book *From Ritual to Romance*), actually originated with Waite.

There are at least **three** other candidates: Florence Farr, Helen Rand and Arthur Machen. Florence Farr taught tarot classes (especially scrying with the trumps) for the Golden Dawn membership. Helen Rand (Vigilate) was a good friend of Farr's, the Order's primary astrologer, very talented at scrying. More importantly, she lived with Waite (who was still married) as his housekeeper and lover for several years around 1910-11 (and possibly earlier). I would imagine Rand knew the Tarot quite well. Arthur Machen was Waite's best friend and worked with him closely on Waite's Grail book, which came out in 1909.

Regarding Helen Rand (who I believe is the best candidate) Ithel Colquhoun wrote in *The Sword of Wisdom: MacGregor Mathers & the Golden Dawn* (NY: Putnam's, 1975, pp.231-232):

"I have been told by a woman who was a member of his 'Holy Order of the Golden Dawn' for a short period about 1910 that he then lived in Penywern Road, Earl's Court, with his secretary-housekeeper whose motto was, appropriately, *Vigilate*. (She was Mrs. Rand, ex-Isis-Urania and recognisable by her Order-name.) She looked after him hand, foot and finger; they used to come to lunch about every three weeks with my informant's parents, who lived in Kensington and were both devoted members. Waite was vague in manner; he would say, 'Do I like mustard, *Vigilate*?' and she would have to tell him."

Waite's own notes on the search for the German source of the GD note on several occasions that Robert Felkin visited Waite and Rand at Penywern Rd. One of several examples is, "October 12, 1911: FR [Felkin] called on SR [Waite] and *Vigilate* [Rand] unexpectedly bringing curious pack of Tarot Trumps. SR could only identify three of them – Sun, Moon, possibly Venus & the Hermit."

Mary K. Greer

PS.

Brodie-Innes also refers to Farr's "Gypsy lineage" in his article in the *Occult Review*:

"I was interested to find that what she [Mrs. Lee - a gypsy] told me of the Tarot was well known to another friend of mine, the late Mrs. Florence Farr Emery, who herself claimed Romani descent, and had a great store of strange learning. She it was who first pointed out to me the correspondence of the interpretations of the pip cards with the Pythagorean system, greatly to my delight, for the meanings usually ascribed to the cards had seemed merely empiric, and founded on no system, as indeed are the meanings ascribed to cards by the ordinary type of fortune-teller to-day. More doubtful were Mrs. Emery's suggestions of Egyptian correspondences. She was a diligent student of Egyptology, though perhaps not quite as much of an authority as her friends claimed, and with natural enthusiasm was apt to see ancient Egypt everywhere."

Reply from the Editor:

Mary

You raise even more intriguing possibilities for the designer of what is now commonly known as the "Ancient Celtic Cross" spread. Helen Rand is a fascinating candidate, as would be Florence Farr. The latter was such an accomplished teacher - and promoter of the Celtic current - it would be easy to see her designing a spread which would be more easily taught and learnt than the entire "opening of the key".

Also, as you write yourself in *Women of the Golden Dawn*, it was none other than Pamela Colman Smith who acted as Farr's stage manager during her American tour. Farr also maintained contact with Yeats into the last years of her life.

Until further - more specific - information comes to light, of course, we will never know for sure who designed this spread. It is however a useful exercise to collate the



various pieces of related material together and engage in dialogue that narrows or widens the field! I look forward to further research and discussion in the future.

The Editor  
Marcus Katz

Another potential designer of the “Ancient Celtic Cross” spread? Florence Farr (1860-1917), here as Aleel, a Bard & Seer, in Yeat’s play *The Countess Cathleen* (1904).



At the Magic Realist Press we focus on the design, development and production of beautiful, intelligent and image-rich books and card decks. All our work falls into the broad areas of magic realism, myth, magic and symbolism. We believe that imagination and a sense of enchantment can transform and enhance life - and that all magic is in the mind's eye, if we choose to see it.

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# TAROSOPHY CONFERENCE 2009 REPORT

**Marcus Katz**, Director of *Tarot Professionals & PhD Researcher in Western Esotericism*

As all participants agreed, there is no more beautiful venue in the country than the Theatre by the Lake, on the shore of Derwentwater in Keswick, England. At only a few hours by train from London, and less from Edinburgh, Manchester, and Birmingham, it is also easier to get to than getting between Gatwick airport and central London – and cheaper!

So it was with delight that we welcomed twenty-five Tarosophists to the Theatre for a weekend conference on the best in Tarot, Astrology and Kabbalah. This conference was actually a year in advance and three months full-time in the planning; we'd talked with Rachel Pollack earlier in the year to provide teaching for a conference, and events simply grew from there – students wanted this to happen this year, so it did!



We aimed to demonstrate three things; that we would do exactly what we planned to do, that it would be utterly professional on all levels, and that we would offer the best teaching on Tarot in the world. We believe we achieved these aims – in fact, we know, because every single person who attended is already making plans to attend next years Tarosophy conference in September 2010.

## **So, what did we do? What did you miss?!**

Rachel Pollack offered our main session each day, teaching on “Death in the Tarot” and “Solar and Lunar Readings”. These were revelations even to those of us who have practised and studied Tarot for thirty years. To be seriously discussing death – actual death, not new-agey death as “transformation” – with other people, using the Tarot as a language – was entirely profound. And in effect, it did bring about serious transformation. This was a workshop that will percolate its teachings for several months to follow. Rachel’s ability to provide a living voice for the Tarot was truly inspirational and we look forward to welcoming her back for a second time next year.





Rachel's second day session on "Solar and Lunar" readings proved extremely popular, particularly when we had a face-off between two readers adopting either style of reading – for a real question. Again, lessons abounded – how we all as Readers may vary between intuition and knowledge, how they are related, and how we may not even recognise our own style because we are so close to it!



As with all our workshop sessions, this was a load of fun as well as being innovative and engaging Tarot. That we got several Court cards in a row was also challenging!

I offered two brief presentations on Kabbalah and the Majors, and the patterns in the Minors. I spoke a lot about correspondence, and why it is so important in the western Esoteric tradition, and presented two unique methods of learning Kabbalah through Tarot, and taking clients to a "next step" with an innovative three-card method. These were distilled from over twenty-five years of teaching, and the general feedback was "That's the simplest and best explanation and way of learning Kabbalah I've ever heard!" – for more on that, please look out for my book *Tarosophy* early next year!

Our two other speakers helped us make the conference comprehensive with both subject matter and presentation styles. Kim Huggens presented on Tarot and Comparative Mythology, and Keren-Happuch provided a quick but concise tour of traditional Astrology. As well as a welcome break to our Tarot, this session was fascinating as it really showed the bare bones of Traditional Astrology as an ABC primer for Natal Astrology. This led to great discussions about learning Tarot, and the pre-requisites for learning the language of Tarot; symbolism, art, esotericism, correspondence and so forth.

*Photos L to R. Emily Carding, Participants at the Theatre by the Lake venue, Rachel Pollack*



Kim returned to close our conference with a brief exercise on the Court Cards, which meant we covered the Majors, Minors and Court cards during the weekend. This was nice as we joined together in groups and played a party game with the Court personalities! Again, for many it was liberating also to hear different approaches to the often troublesome Court cards and free themselves from Court cards as just people and as embodying so much more in a reading.

### **So, how did everyone rate the event – really?!**

In terms of hard numbers, our average feedback total this first year across all presentations, for style, innovation and relevance, including the venue, organisation and more, was:

**84%**

So I will be berating and beating relevant volunteers and staff, and myself, to ensure we gain that missing 16% next year ...! Perhaps we should have put fruit on the tables and not just bowls of mints? Anyhow – as you can see by the previous sentence, **every** bit of feedback has been attended to - for next time!

### **What's for next year (September 2010) then?!**

Our feedback suggested that there was a unanimous vote for holding the conference in the Lakes – the venue, costs, and ambiance of the place is most suited to learning Tarot deeply and with time and space for consideration. I know from experience that once a student on my own courses has been here once, they will easily travel again knowing how straightforward it is – overcoming that initial travel apathy is always our challenge! But I feel the same travelling to a city; it is always easier coming back!

With regard to next year, participants overwhelmingly voted for even more master-classes – and we have some brilliant ideas for these already! How would it be to step into the mind of an experienced Tarot Reader – we'll show you how! Can a jaded professional regain a Zen-like beginners mind? We'll try!



*Photo. Rachel Pollack reading at Castlerigg*

What goes on when an intuitive says something that isn't obviously on the cards – we'll teach you how to do the same! Even some Trance Tarot is planned! There'll also be plenty of opportunity for socialising with fellow Tarot enthusiasts and experts of all levels. Everyone commented on how friendly and supportive their fellow participants were, but also they'd have liked more opportunity to socialise in an organised way – this will be built up next year now we have one conference in the bag!



Our next conference in 2010 will be entirely geared to taking your practical Tarot to a whole new level, modelling the best in the world. We will also offer Tarosophy® Tarot Masterclass certificates to those wishing to demonstrate excellence.



*Photo L to R. Marcus Katz, Kim Huggens, Rachel Pollack, Keren-Happuch*

I'd like to thank our Presenters; Rachel, Kim and Keren, for offering their wit and wisdom throughout the weekend and Tali for volunteering to assist throughout the months leading up to the conference.

There was video taken of the entire weekend, and we will be looking to edit selections of this for members of Tarot Professionals in the coming months.

*Photos L. to R. Tarosophy Training materials, Baba Bags for sale, Phil & Julia say farewells!*



# TAROSOPHIST OF THE YEAR AWARD 2009

**Marcus Katz** announces the First Recipients of the Tarosophist of the Year Award.

In future years of Tarot Professionals, it will be given to the membership to nominate the potential recipients of the *Tarosophist of the Year* award. This will then go to our panel of Honorary Members to vote for one final winner - someone who has contributed to the development of Tarot in an outstanding way during that year. This year I have taken an autocratic approach out of necessity and actually awarded it to **two** individuals for very different reasons, but both of which I feel personally embody what Tarot Professionals is all about - seriously inspired Tarot!

The work of Tarosophy®, the living wisdom of Tarot, in engaging with life, will be the criteria - those who are working to develop and integrate Tarot into culture, life and make of it a useful tool for any purpose, both mundane and magical. The criteria will also include those who have taken Tarot to new arenas, avenues or audiences, or developed it in an innovative manner.

The winner will receive a **life-time membership** of Tarot Professionals, recognition on a special web-page on the public site, and in future years a small financial award. They will also receive a rather special trophy in keeping with the Tarosophy® ethos ...

This year has already seen many Tarot innovations. The close runner-up this year is definitely **Emily Carding**, whose **Transparent Tarot** (pub. Schiffer) was reviewed in our very first issue, which barely seems a year ago now! Reward her by buying her deck and playing with it - it deserves your attention!

However, the **TAROSOPHIST OF THE YEAR 2009** award goes first to ...

## EMILY E. AUGER

Emily E. Auger, based in Thunder Bay, Canada, is a freelance scholar and convenes the Tarot panel of the PCA/ACA annual conference. A college professor of art history at Malaspina University College in British Columbia from 1990 through 2003, she has written for such publications as American Indian Art Magazine, Journal of Aesthetic Education and Inuit Art Quarterly. She is also the author of *Tarot and Other Meditation Decks: History, Theory, Aesthetics, Typology* (2004). Her work in proposing, gaining contract and editing the forthcoming 2-volume multi-author *Tarot in Culture* anthology (pub. Edward Mellen Press, 2010/11) will contribute massively to the appreciation of Tarot and requires a deserved recognition. Her personal friendliness and academic support has also been a boon to me personally, so I take great pleasure in making this decision!

Our second recipient is the artist **CIRO MARCHETTI**, who has produced an animated Tarot deck! A dream of mine for many years, I doff my cap to an artist who has realised the technology to make this digital breakthrough. Ciro also very kindly (prior to even knowing he had this award!) prepared a digital **Tarosophist Trophy** which can be displayed on the recipients websites and on our main site. So congratulations to you both!

# TAROT PROFESSIONALS NEWS & VIEWS

The latest news and views from Tarot Professionals by **Marcus Katz**

In this regular section, I will be promoting the general activities of Tarot Professionals and news from our member activities, including new decks and books not otherwise reviewed, special discounts and promotions and the general state of the art with Tarosophy® worldwide. This issue we showcase several of our members decks and materials.



I would first like to draw members attentions to the delightful and quirky artwork & tarot of Maine-based artist Beth Seilonen. An eclectic artist using a variety of media, her tarot decks (22 Majors only) are available in extremely limited editions from her website and on Ebay.

Some of these decks are produced in editions as small as 15 decks or 25 decks, and sell out quickly to collectors and tarot enthusiasts, so they are art investments as well as practical and amusing decks!

Beth's artwork is straightforward as it is insightful - a recent deck entitled *Both Sides* was created by pairing each of the Majors. That's to say, if you placed the **Fool** and Magician cards next to each other, or the **Empress** and the **High Priestess**, etc., they show two halves of the same image, showing two sides of a composite concept. An intriguing idea that helps the student learn that cards reflect each other in myriad ways.

Other decks show Beth's use of nature, including Maples leaves, Trees and Flower-based decks. However, my personal favourite at the moment - and one destined for my Yule present from my wife - is the **Isobel Snail** deck! Just the promotional image of the interpretation of the Tower (top left here) had me both concerned and laughing at the same time - the expression in the poor snail's eyes conveys everything one needs to know about the Tower!

Beth Seilonen  
Cat's Eye Gallery  
272 North St  
Calais, Maine 04619  
(207) 454-2020  
<http://www.catseyeart.com/>



ADVERTS

Tarot Professionals includes some of both the brightest new and established stars of the esoteric and Tarot world.

We are delighted to recommend the work of James Jacob Pierri, with the Auset Gypsy Podcast, and the incredible Thelemic artwork of Marlena at Acrylick Alchemical.







*Image: King of Discs from Cilla Conway's Intuitive Tarot deck.*

## END-PIECE

On 23rd September, 1923, some time early morning after 5:15am, Aleister Crowley was inspired to briefly abandon using his beloved Yi (I-Ching) and instead make divination by R.O.T.A. (Tarot) - for perhaps six months. This phase actually lasted until 1:55am the following day.

His first question to the cards was on the work of his magical order, the A.'.A.'. To which the response was Princess of Cups, King of Cups, Fool, 9W & 8S. His reading of this was that the "work is to make itself understood by ordinary men ... virtues required are persuasive skill and silence ... hitherto the Work has been restricted and nipped in the bud ... it will be established in great strength" and we hope in some part to have contributed to that Work in this issue of *Tarosophist International*.

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### Future Issues and Articles

The next issue of *Tarosophist International* will feature an incredible insight into the life and work of David Palladini, designer and artist of the **Aquarian Tarot Deck** & the **New Palladini Tarot**.

With over **40 exclusive photographs and images**, many never published, and **personal interviews with both David Palladini and Stuart R. Kaplan** of U.S. Games, this issue continues to take the magazine to higher levels.

Also includes reviews of the two decks, books associated with the decks, and personal stories of Readers who have come to know and love them.



**FIND OUT MORE ON December 1st 2009 !!!**

**The next issue of *Tarosophist International*, issued quarterly free to all members of Tarot Professionals & available at cost to the public, will be available 1st December 2009.**

**Please submit any articles or promotions to  
[editor@tarotprofessionals.com](mailto:editor@tarotprofessionals.com)  
May a full deck of possibilities be yours!**

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This issue of *Tarosophist International* has been brought to you by the letter "T", 2:40 am in the morning, and *Evanescence*.