TAROT AND MAGIC

Images for Rituals and Pathworking

GARETH KNIGHT

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To my mother and father
wherever they may be
on the journey to
the Land of the Heart's Desire

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Acknowledgements

All students of the Tarot today must be indebted to two books which have revealed much knowledge that was hitherto obscure or unknown. These are *The Game of Tarot* by Michael Dummett and *The Encyclopaedia of Tarot* by Stuart Kaplan.

Michael Dummett has little sympathy for occult interpreters of the Tarot, and not without reason. He is all the more to be respected for his patience in analysing much that must have been hardly congenial to an Oxford Professor of Logic, and I for one am grateful for the benefit of such devoted application of academic discipline in establishing the historical facts of a subject close to my heart.

Stuart Kaplan, as one of the great Tarot card collectors of the world, and a publisher of some of them, is also to be thanked for sharing his accumulated treasures with the rest of us.

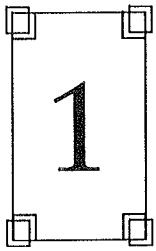
I am also grateful to the curators of the Bibliothèque Nationale who assembled a once in a life time exhibition of Tarot when I happened to be in Paris.

This book concentrates on the magical applications of the Tarot and to this end I am grateful to those like-minded spirits who attended my workshop on the subject at Hawkwood College in December 1984 where much of the practical work described herein had its origin.

Also my thanks go to Daniel Bloxsom for appearing out of the blue at the appropriate time and engaging me in an illuminating and wide ranging correspondence on the subject.

And finally my thanks to the spirit of the Tarot itself. Despite all the abuse it may have had from less than spotless hands and intentions in the past, it revealed itself to me as a very wise and gentle source of wisdom and encouragement, deserving much respect.

Gareth Knight



The Evolution of the Tarot

The Tarot is a structured system of magical images. The date and place of its origin is not precisely known but the historical evidence points to some little time before A.D. 1450. Some have claimed a greater antiquity for it, with roots in ancient Egypt, but although, as archetypcal images, many of the figures may well have correspondences in remote antiquity, the particular characteristics of the Tarot system indicate that it is an artefact of the Renaissance period, grafted on to the newly popular games of playing cards.

Although the Tarot has come down to us as part of a card game it does not pre-date the ordinary playing card pack. Playing cards were introduced to Europe soon after 1375. The first references appear in 1377 and they are widespread all over Europe by 1400. In 1392 Charles VI of France commissioned the design of a pack of cards but there is no evidence that they were Tarot cards – although they were for some time confused with the mid-fifteenth century Gringonneur Tarot cards in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

The Tarot is characterized by the twenty-two cards that we nowadays call Trump cards, although they were originally called *trionfi* or Triumphs. Trionfi are first mentioned in 1422 and the term *tarrochi* from which the word Tarot derives does not appear until 1516.

Another, less well known characteristic of the Tarot is the introduction of the Queen to the court cards of each suit. Originally the court cards were King, Knight and Page. The fourteen card Tarot suits introduced the Queen who, in the course of time, ousted the Knight from the thirteen card suits of modern playing cards.

The suit emblems of all cards were originally Swords *(spade)*,

Wands *(bastoni)*, Cups *(coppe)*, and Coins *(denari)*. When card games spread to France, Switzerland and Germany however, modified suit emblems were introduced and became nationally accepted. We inherit in the familiar Spades, Clubs, Hearts and Diamonds of today, the French system, which first appears in 1480.

The German Leaves, Acorns, Hearts and Shells, and the Swiss Shields, Acorns, Roses and Shells appeared between 1430 and 1460. The suit emblems that we associate with the Tarot are the original Italian devices, and seem to originate from Turkish dominated Egypt, with possible roots in Persia or even India. A few playing cards in the Istanbul Museum show suits of curved Swords, or Scimitars, Cups, Coins, and curved Wands that may derive from polo sticks. There is a strong tradition in Italian suit design for curved swords and wands with spatulate ends, and this may have been their origin – Mamluk Egyptian cards imported possibly through Venice. There are no Court Cards (and thus certainly no Trumps), because of the Muslim prohibition on depicting human figures.

A common theory that it was the gypsies who brought either playing cards or the Tarot to Europe does not seem likely, for gypsies did not arrive in Europe until 1417 by which time playing cards had been known for forty years. And the first mention of Trionfi, although soon after, seems associated with aristocratic circles. In all the records referring to gypsies before the nineteenth century there is no mention of telling fortunes by cards – their particular speciality was palmistry. Indeed telling fortunes by cards does not seem to have occurred to anyone prior to the mid-eighteenth century, and subsequent gypsy use would appear to have been the result of *gorgio* influence upon them rather than the reverse.

The earliest examples of Tarot Trumps or Trionfi that we have date from about 1450.

This was a time of great interest in meditation upon magical images, following the translations of Greek hermetic works by Marsilio Ficino under the patronage of Cosimo de Medici. A number of the works of the artist Botticelli are thought perhaps to have been commissioned for magical purposes. The *Primavera*, or the *Birth of Venus*, or *Venus overcoming Mars* could be cited as possible magical images, and his *Fortitia*, or Strength, could certainly have come straight from the Tarot Trumps.

The Visconti-Sforza cards are typical of a number of

sumptuously produced hand-painted and gilded sets that would hardly seem suited for actual playing at cards, even by the most opulent of princes. If they were *objets d'art* for display, and it seems that they may have been popular as wedding gifts, then they could equally have been subjects for meditation as magical images by those who were in the know. Even the Popes were interested in magic in those days – sometimes quite enthusiastically.

One of Marsilio Ficino's recommended methods of natural magic was the placement in certain designs and configurations of lamps or other symbols to counteract unfortunate astrological forces or psycho-physical distempers. The Tarot Trumps would have made excellent figures for this use.

However, between 1450 and 1480 there is clear evidence that whatever the possible magical uses, the Trionfi were definitely in use as a game. A document known as the Steele Manuscript, that dates from this time, records a sermon by a Dominican father against the evils of gambling games. In the course of this he lists, in numbered sequence, the Tarot Trumps.

It is worth our reproducing this list, for it confirms that the same images were in use that have come down to us today. And we also find that they are in a different sequence. Of this, more later:

1. El bagatella
2. Imperatrix
3. Imperator
4. La papessa
5. El papa
6. La temperentia
7. L'amore
8. Lo caro triomphale
9. La forteza
10. La rotta
11. El gobbo
12. Lo impichato
13. La morte
14. El diavolo
15. La sagitta
16. La stella
17. La luna
18. El sole
19. Lo angelo
20. La iusticia
21. El mondo
22. El matto sine nulla

This numbered sequence is of interest because it is the only evidence we have of the names and numbers of the Trumps at this time. Names and numbers do not appear on the early hand-painted cards, nor on the earliest printed examples we have of c. 1475.

Of the mainstream of Tarot card design and tradition the

earliest non-Italian printed set we have is the Catelin de Geofroy pack of 1557. This is something of an idiosyncracy as it is copied from a luxury set designed by a distinguished engraver, Virgil Solis, in 1544. There are only three suits, lions, falcons and peacocks, and only seven Trumps survive. However, this fragmentary pack is historically important in that its Trumps are numbered in conformity with the sequence that came to be the standard that has come down to us today.

Between 1500 and 1750 the story of the Tarot is principally that of a popular card game. Although the game originated in Italy, France became the major manufacturing country, with Rouen and Lyons being centres for exporting cards to Spain, Flanders, England, Portugal and Switzerland in the late sixteenth century. We have taxation records that give clear indications of the importance of the industry. In 1595 cards were being manufactured in Paris and in 1599 at Nancy. In 1608 the manufacturers of Lyons tried to get the rival growing industry in Marseilles suppressed. However, in 1631 Marseilles received a royal edict for its activities and became the dominant centre for card manufacture, exporting them even to Italy. It is thus that the Marseilles Tarot has become largely the modern accepted standard.

In 1622 a Jesuit comments that the Tarot is played in France more than chess, and at this time the industry was so attractive to framers of tax laws that some entrepreneurs abandoned France to set up factories in Switzerland, Savoy and even England.

The game was played in Switzerland by 1600, possibly as early as 1515, and was certainly well established in Germany by 1650. In 1664 it had reached Sicily, via Rome, from the North.

Evidence for its rise and decline in popularity as a card game can be gleaned from successive editions of the French book of games called *La Maison académique de jeux*. In the second edition, of 1659, detailed description of the game and play of Tarot is given. This continues through successive editions until 1718, when it is dropped.

Coincidentally, 1718 is also the date of manufacture of our earliest surviving Marseilles Tarot pack.

The Tarot rules appear only sporadically in subsequent editions of *La Maison académique de jeux*, and in 1726 it is described as obsolete.

This reflects only Parisian society and Northern France

however, for the game continued to be popular in Southern France, Italy, Germany and Switzerland. It was this fact that caused Court de Gebelin to say in his book of 1781 that the Tarot was unknown in Paris.

This book of 1781 is of key importance to the development of the esoteric traditions of the Tarot. It was the eighth volume of Court de Gebelin's *Le Monde Primitif* in which he announced the Tarot to be the remains of an ancient Egyptian book of secret wisdom.

Court de Gebelin (1719–1784), a Protestant pastor, born in Geneva, had wide ranging occult interests. Since the 1770s he had been a freemason and a member of the Order of the Philalèthes, which was an off-shoot of the Order of Elect Cohens founded by Martines de Pasqually (d. 1774). Thus Court de Gebelin's remarks on the Tarot may well not originate entirely from him, but be the revelation of an esoteric tradition propagated in eighteenth-century secret fraternities. As I commented in *A History of White Magic*, the Order of Elect Cohens 'consisted of seven grades leading to that of Rose Croix and was based on belief in Biblical truth together with a general spiritual evolutionary scheme that commenced with man's existence long before the creation story in Genesis. Some of these teachings seem to derive from Jacob Boehme and Dr John Dee.'

Court de Gebelin's aim in writing the nine volumes of *Le Monde Primitif* was to advance his theory of an original golden age – a concept by no means unknown to the traditions of the ancient world. He proposed to substantiate this by the allegorical interpretation of myths and the etymological study of language.

As part of this great design he cited the game of Tarot as a surviving example of ancient wisdom. He claimed:

that the symbolism stemmed from ancient Egypt;

that Egyptian priests had rendered these symbols into playing cards to preserve them through the ages;

that from the Egyptians it passed to Imperial Rome, and thence with the later popes to Avignon, from whence it spread throughout Provence;

that the word 'Taro' derived from ancient Egyptian words *tar* for 'way' and *ro, ros, rog* for 'royal';

that the twenty-two Trumps corresponded to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet.

As an addendum to this part of *Le Monde Primitif* Court de Gebelin added an essay by an anonymous M. le Comte de M***.

This supported the theory of ancient Egyptian origin for the Tarot, and indeed:

referred to it as 'the Book of Thoth';

derived the word Tarot from Egyptian language as meaning the doctrine or science of Thoth;

said that the Tarot came to Europe through Spain with the Muslims, and was thence carried to Germany by the troops of Charlemagne;

associated the Tarot with fortune telling, described as an ancient Egyptian practice;

drew correspondences with the Hebrew letters as part of the cartomantic method.

In his introduction to this essay, Court de Gebelin also made the assertion that bands of Egyptians known as Bohemians carried the cards throughout Europe. This is the origin of the gypsy theory.

He also provided illustrations of the Tarot Trumps and the Aces but these are crude copies of the Marseilles Tarot rendered by an amateur artist friend.

To be quite frank, Court de Gebelin, is a likable but garrulous eighteenth-century gossip of appalling scholarship, but the publication of his assertions aroused tremendous interest in the Tarot, particularly as a fortune telling device.

This was exploited to the full by a professional cartomancer, astrologer, interpreter of dreams and maker of talismans known as Etteilla, the inversion of his real name of Alliette.

Etteilla was perhaps one of the earliest card readers, and fortune telling was rife in pre-revolutionary Paris, a fashion which continued well into Napoleonic times. He had previously used a piquet pack of conventional cards and published a book on his method in 1770, which ran through several editions.

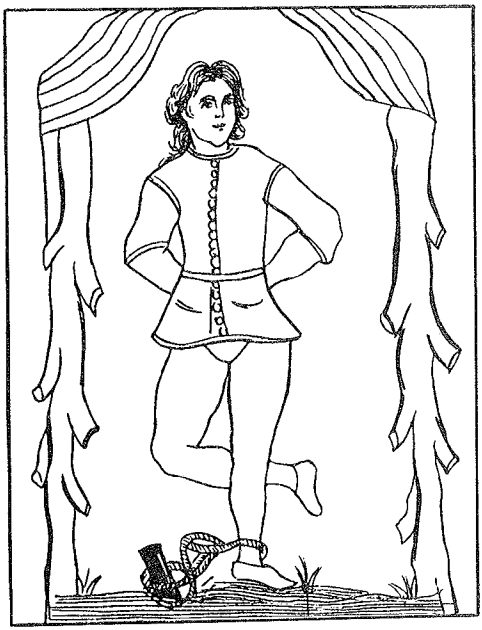
After the interest aroused in the Tarot by Court de Gebelin, Etteilla was not slow to introduce a fortune telling method using the Tarot pack, which, following the mysterious M. le Comte de M***, he called the Book of Thoth. He followed this up with a series of booklets developing the subject and indeed claimed that he had long been aware of the esoteric significance of the Tarot. He said that from 1757 to 1765 he had studied it at the

instigation of an old man from Piedmont who had given him his notes on the subject. These notes referred to the Tarot as an Egyptian book compiled by a group of magi presided over by Hermes Trismagistus soon after the Flood. The originals had been inscribed on leaves of gold and deposited in a temple at Memphis.

Etteilla then proceeded to make 'rectifications' to the existing Tarot designs, bringing them in line with his ideas of their true esoteric significance. This was the start of a tradition among occult writers that has continued with increasing proliferation.

For instance, he considered that the oval wreath around the central figure on the World Trump should be an ouroboros – the symbol of eternity – a serpent swallowing its own tail. He follows Court de Gebelin in inverting the Hanged Man and calling the card Prudence. This idea seems to have arisen from Court de Gebelin having seen a Belgian pack wherein this error of inversion is made by a careless manufacturer. He seized the opportunity to introduce the fourth Cardinal Virtue to the Trumps, (Justice, Temperance and Fortitude already being present), describing the figure as 'an upright man who has one foot poised before the other ready to take a step and examining

Figure 1



the place where he is going to step. The title of this card was therefore the man with suspended foot, pede suspenso.' (See Figure 1.)

From 1783 Etteilla advertised his 'corrected' pack for sale, though none of these survives. They are, however, well described in his books and modified sets were subsequently issued by his followers after his death in 1791. Grand Etteilla Pack I appeared in about 1800, and II and III in the 1840s. They are still available but Etteilla's fertile imagination soon lost connection with the original Tarot and his work is really an idiosyncratic fortune telling system.

In this he was followed by a whole generation of society clairvoyants practising cartomancy. The most celebrated was Mlle. Marie-Anne Adelaide Lenormand (d. 1843) who claimed the patronage of the Empress Josephine. From 1825 many fortune telling packs were published and although some claimed a Tarot origin, the connection was generally very tenuous. An extensive ephemeral literature accompanied these packs, lasting through to about 1875.

A more serious continuation of the estoeric Tarot tradition is to be found in the works of Alphonse Louis Constant (1810–75) who wrote under the pen-name of Eliphas Lévi. *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* appeared in 1855/6, *Histoire de la Magie* in 1860, *Le Clef des Mystères* in 1861 and *Le Science des Esprits* in 1865.

Like Court de Gebelin he considered the Tarot to be a book of ancient wisdom. He called it the Book of Hermes and considered it to have come from a time long before Moses, ultimately from the patriarch Enoch. He had little time for Etteilla or the plethora of contemporary fortune telling packs and insisted on the need to go back to the Marseilles Tarot.

He related the twenty-two Trumps to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the ten numeral cards of each suit to the ten Sephiroth of the Tree of Life. He saw the Court Cards as representing stages of human life and linked the four suits to the four letters of the Holy Name of God. He accepted the Trump sequence of the Marseilles Tarot but placed the Fool between Trumps XX and XXI. He also expressed the desire to issue an esoterically rectified Marseilles Tarot but never achieved this ambition.

In 1852 he was approached by a writer and former librarian named Jean-Baptiste Pitois (1811–77), who took lessons from

him, and wrote subsequently under the pen-name of Paul Christian. *L'homme rouge des Tuileries*, of 1863, took the form of a supposed manuscript written by an old monk, copied from a breviary based upon seventy-eight gold leaves that had been arranged in a great circle in an Egyptian temple at Memphis. There is no mention of correspondences with the Hebrew alphabet although the figure is alleged to have been known to the rabbis as the Samaritan Oracle. It is, of course, the Tarot, though with a full blooded Mystery nomenclature deriving largely from Egyptian assumptions.

I	The Magus
II	The Gate of the Sanctuary
III	Isis Urania
IV	The Cubic Stone
V	Master of the Mysteries of the Arcana
VI	The Two Roads
VII	The Chariot of Osiris
VIII	Themis, or The Scales and the Blade
IX	The Veiled Lamp
X	The Sphinx
XI	The Muzzled or Tamed Lion
XII	The Sacrifice
XIII	The Skeleton Reaper or Scythe
XIV	The Two Urns or Genius of the Sun
XV	Typhon
XVI	The Beheaded or Lightning Struck Tower
XVII	The Tower of the Magi
XVIII	The Twilight
XIX	The Blazing Light
XX	The Awakening of the Dead or Genius of the Dead
O	The Crocodile
XXI	The Crown of the Magi

It will be observed that the sequence follows that of Eliphas Lévi.

In 1870 Paul Christian published a *History of Magic*, in which he describes an initiation ceremony under the pyramids of ancient Egypt. The candidate is led up seventy-eight steps and passes through a hall of images of the Tarot Trumps. However fanciful this may be in historical terms it nonetheless has the hall-marks of a powerful creative visualization exercise or initiatory 'path working'. Thus for those concerned with

practical occultism his ideas should not be lightly dismissed. It may give the clue to nineteenth-century occult praxis in some of the secret fraternities and their antecedents.

There is a lull in published work on the Tarot until 1888, when Eugène Jacob, the husband of a professional cartomancer, devoted fifty pages to the subject in an astrological work, written under the pen-name of Ely Star. He follows Paul Christian quite closely but places the Crocodile (The Fool) at the end of all the Trumps and numbers it XXII.

1888 was an important year in two other respects in that it saw the foundation of two influential occult societies, the Cabalistic Order of the Rosy Cross in France, and the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn in England.

The French order was founded by Marquis Stanislaus de Guaita (1861–97), who was a great admirer of Eliphas Lévi. In 1887 he met an amateur artist named Oswald Wirth (1860–1943) and together they set about realizing Eliphas Lévi's expressed intention of 'restoring the twenty-two Arcana of the Tarot to their hieroglyphic purity.' In 1889 an edition of 350 copies of the Trumps was published. They were numbered 0 to 21 and given an appropriate Hebrew letter correspondence in accordance with the system of Eliphas Lévi. The designs followed the Marseilles pattern but with esoteric modifications.

Dr Gerard Encausse, a co-founder of Stanislaus de Guaita's society, used the Oswald Wirth illustrations together with those of the Marseilles pack in the first published book devoted exclusively to the Tarot. This was *Le Tarot des Bohèmiens*, published in 1889 under the pen-name of Papus. The method of interpretation is a numerological one based on the four-fold symbolism of the Tetragrammaton, the Holy Name of God. It is influenced by both Eliphas Lévi and Paul Christian.

Another work published in France before the turn of the century was by R. Falconnier, an actor in the Comèdie Française, and enthusiast of the Egyptianized Tarot. Indeed, the extended title of his book, published in 1896, says it all: *Les XXII lames hermetiques du tarot divinatoire, exactement reconstituées d'après les textes sacrés et selon la tradition des mages de l'ancienne Egypte.* Designs for the cards were taken from original frescos and bas-reliefs in the Louvre and the British Museum but they nonetheless retain a very French flavour.

In similar vein a *Tarot Hieroglyphique Egyptien* was issued in 1897 by Madame Dulora de la Haye. Twenty-two cards only,

with explanatory text incorporated on the pictures, that is in effect a mélange of Etteilla and the Marseilles Tarot.

The English interest in the Tarot may have been stimulated directly by Eliphas Lévi. He visited England in 1854 and 1861 and is known to have had contacts with individuals who later became prominent members of the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia, founded in 1866, namely Lord Lytton (1802–73) and Kenneth Mackenzie (1833–86).

Mackenzie was particularly interested in the Tarot, discussed it with Lévi, and wrote a book on the subject that was, however, never published. He was an important influence on Dr William Wynn Westcott (1848–1925) who was one of the founders of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

The Tarot played a significant part in the Golden Dawn curriculum, although the Knowledge Papers on the subject were probably the work of another founder member, Samuel Lidell Macgregor Mathers (1854–1917). He had published a booklet on the subject in 1888 in which he referred to the French occult authorities on the subject and used the sequence and numeration of the Trumps promulgated by Eliphas Lévi. For the most part it was an elementary instruction book on divination. It is interesting that he used a different sequence in the Golden Dawn papers.

Eliphas Lévi's works were now being translated into English by A. E. Waite, who had already translated Papus' *Tarot of the Bohemians* in 1892. Lévi's *Dogme et Rituel* was translated in 1896 as *Transcendental Magic*, and also a hitherto unpublished work by Lévi on the Tarot, the *Sanctum Regnum*. This translation carried a preface by Dr Westcott which stated that the Levi/Christian/Papus sequence, and Hebrew letter attributions, was incorrect. He alleged that this was a blind to preserve the secret tradition from profanation by the uninitiated, and that he had seen a manuscript, some 150 years old, in cipher, giving the correct version.

This kind of portentous secrecy and mystery mongering was typical of the Golden Dawn leaders. Whether there was such a document is open to conjecture. It may have been yet another 'blind'. There is circumstantial evidence at least to suspect that the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn and the Societas Rosicruciana in Anglia may have been influenced by, if not derived from, a German Rosicrucian tradition. This might well account for the differences from the French tradition.

Although all published work on the esoteric Tarot throughout the nineteenth century was French, the British occultists were adamant in refuting, at first in private and then publicly, the French system of correspondences.

A major event in Tarot exegesis occurred in 1910 with the publication of A. E. Waite's *Key to the Tarot* issued with a full pack of esoterically designed cards. These included the innovation of picture designs for the numbered suit cards as well as the Trumps. This pack incorporated the Golden Dawn system of attributions and sequence and it is important in having influenced much subsequent esoteric pack design. Waite had been a member of the Golden Dawn briefly in 1891/2 and again from 1896, until in 1903 he took over control of a society that was beginning to splinter into factions. He dissolved his part of the Order in 1914, and founded a new group, the Fellowship of the True Rosy Cross, in 1916.

Another Golden Dawn member who played an important role in the development of esoteric ideas on the Tarot was Aleister Crowley (1875–1945). He joined in 1898 but by 1907 had formed his own group and in 1912 published a study of the Tarot in his journal *The Equinox.*

His most prominent contribution however was in 1944 the publication of a full length study of the cards, called *The Book of Thoth* together with a set of highly original and competently executed cards painted by Lady Frieda Harris. This again is generally based upon the Golden Dawn system but with some idiosyncratic developments of considerable complexity and subtlety.

More in the main stream of the Golden Dawn tradition was the work of Paul Case (1884–1954) in the United States, who had originally headed up the Chicago temple of that body. He later founded his own group, the Builders of the Adytum (B.O.T.A.) which still functions in Los Angeles. He published *The Tarot* in 1927 and issued a pack in 1931, with a modernized version of the Waite Trump designs in black line outline so that the student could personalize them by painting in the colours. He reverted to the old tradition of geometric patterns for the suit cards.

Hitherto, the principal impact of the Tarot in the United States had been A. E. Waite's translation of Papus, which crossed the Atlantic in 1910, and copies of Waite's cards by the de Laurence Publishing Company in 1918.

Manley P. Hall also wrote knowledgeably about the Tarot in his monumental *An Encyclopaedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabbalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy* of 1928, which is now more familiarly known as *The Secret Teachings of All Ages*. From this project was developed a new set of designs by his artist J. Augustus Knapp which generally follow the rectified Marseilles tradition first effected by Oswald Wirth. In France, a new and revised version of Wirth's pack was published in 1926.

Another American promulgator of the Tarot was Elbert Benjamine whose *Sacred Tarot* of 1936 closely followed the French/Egyptian tradition of Falconnier, with closely reasoned but idiosyncratic Qabalistic correspondences.

In 1937 to 1940 the Golden Dawn system was revealed to the American public and the world in four volumes of the Order's papers published by Israel Regardie (1907–85). It had been the practice in the Golden Dawn for members to copy a set of their own from a single master set. Regardie had made his own set in this manner in 1923, by which time certain modifications had been introduced. However, in 1977, with Robert Wang doing the art work, Regardie published a copy of such a pack, modified to be as close as possible to the original Golden Dawn master set.

For a period of twenty years after the Second World War there was a dearth of Tarot exegesis apart from a little book by Frank Lind and a set of traditional type cards issued with a six lesson course by the Insight Institute.

At the time I wrote *A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism* in the early 1960s it was very difficult to find a pack of Tarot cards. Even the Marseilles pack was not to be found unless one travelled to the appropriate part of Europe where the game was still played. And A. E. Waite's *Key to the Tarot* as well as the works of Regardie and Crowley and the others were rarities on the second-hand book market.

Since 1970 the scene has been utterly transformed. There has been an explosion of books upon the subject and also of esoteric packs, with reprints of most of the older versions too. A whole host of specialist packs cater for every conceivable taste. There are packs designed to appeal to students of witchcraft, Tibetan Buddhism, astrology, Mayan legend, even Pop/Rock. No doubt many of these will prove to be ephemeral but this burst of publishing activity indicates that in the Tarot there is a response to a modern need.

How this need may be met in more practical terms we hope to show in this book, but first, by analyzing the evolution of the design of each card, we must identify the basic idea or archetype that each one expresses.

2

Tarot Trump Imagery

In the survey of Tarot Trump design that follows we have made a number of assumptions in the interest of clarity.

1. We have used the Marseilles Tarot sequence, because this has become the generally accepted standard. There are other orders possible which we discuss in the next chapter.

2. We have chosen as headings the Trump titles which are most widely accepted or at least understood by students of the esoteric Tarot.

3. We have used a line drawn Marseilles design for reference as this is the source from which most esoteric packs derive.

4. We have sought only to cover the main stream of esoteric design. That is, we have omitted the cartomantic packs of Etteilla and his imitators and the Egyptianized designs of the Paul Christian/Falconnier stream.

5. We have not discussed esoteric designs beyond 1910. That is, we have confined ourselves to the three principal packs of the turn of the century, those of Oswald Wirth, the Golden Dawn and A. E. Waite. Most later esoteric packs derive from one or other of these lines of tradition. (See Table 1.)

6. We have structured our remarks into the following broad headings:

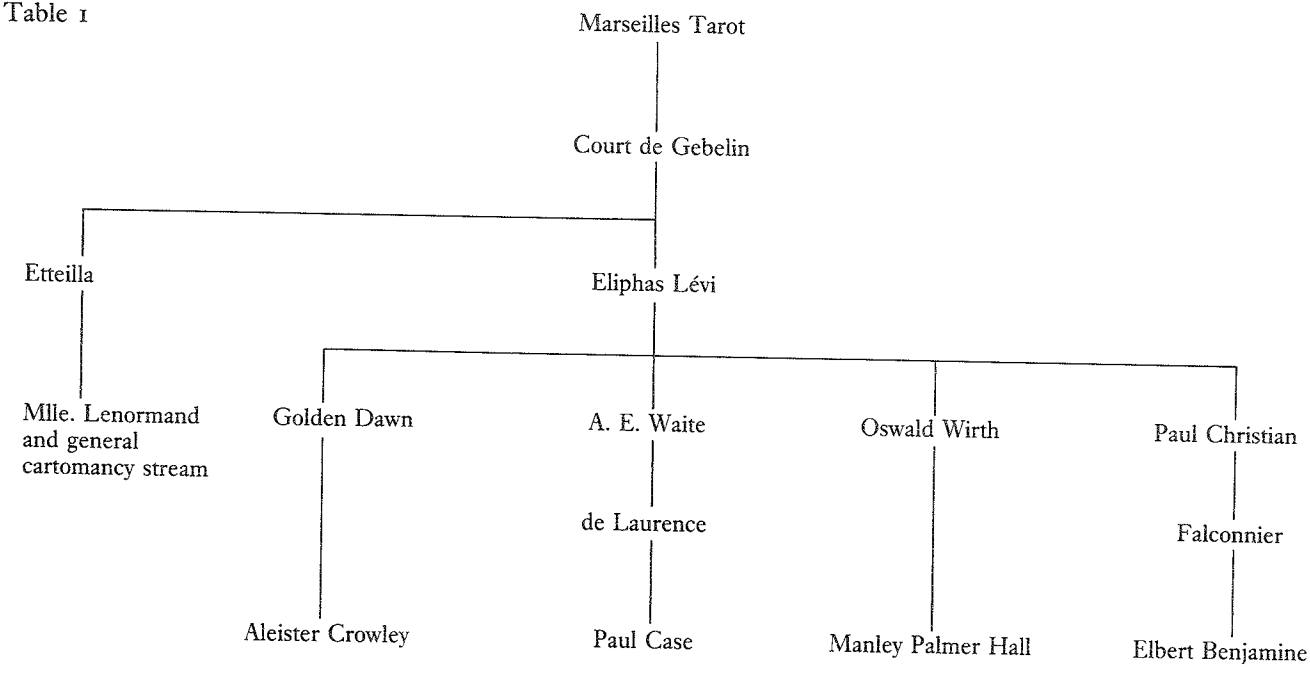
a) Hand-Painted Images (i.e. circa 1450–1500)

b) Early Printed Card Tradition (i.e. circa 1500–1700)
Designs after 1700 proliferate wildly according to whims and fashions of card makers and their customers.

c) Esoteric Versions (i.e. occult society based packs of 1889–1910).

d) Commentary – our own notes and observations from study of these designs.

Table 1


Marseilles Tarot
Court de Gebelin
Etteilla
Eliphas Lévi
Mlle. Lenormand and general cartomancy stream
Golden Dawn
A. E. Waite
Oswald Wirth
Paul Christian
de Laurence
Falconnier
Aleister Crowley
Paul Case
Manley Palmer Hall
Elbert Benjamine

7. Short titles have been accorded to the packs cited, details of which are as follows:

Hand-painted

Visconti Sforza: Pierpoint Morgan Library, New York and Accademia Carrara, Bergamo. (15 and 5 Trumps)
Gringonneur: Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. (16 Trumps)
D'Este: Cary Collection, University of Yale. (8 Trumps)
Fournier Visconti-Sforza: Museo Fournier, Vittoria, Spain. (2 Trumps)
Cary/Yale Visconti-Sforza: Cary Collection, University of Yale. (11 Trumps)
Brera: Brera Gallery, Milan. (2 Trumps)
Rothschild: Rothschild Collection, The Louvre, Paris. (1 Trump)
Von Bartsch Visconti-Sforza: Museum of Fine Arts, Montreal. (1 Trump)
Collection Piero Tozzi, New York. (4 Trumps)
Victoria & Albert Visconti-Sforza: Victoria & Albert Museum, London. (2 Trumps)
Guildhall: Guildhall, London. (1 Trump)
Rosenthal Visconti-Sforza: Rosenthal Collection, London. (5 Trumps)
Castello Ursino: Museo Civico, Castello Ursino, Catania, Italy. (4 Trumps)

Printed Cards and Sheets

Rosenwald: Rosenwald Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (5 Trumps, c. 1500)
Parisian: Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. (22 Trumps, c .1650)
Catelin Geofroy: Museum fur Kunshandwerk, Frankfurt. (8 Trumps, 1557)
Colonna: British Museum, London. (4 Trumps, c. 1610).
Rothschild: Rothschild Collection, The Louvre, Paris. (6 Trumps, c. 1500)
Beaux Arts: Bibliothèque de l'École Nationale Supérieur des Beaux Arts, Paris. (6 Trumps, c. 1500).
Italian: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. (5 Trumps, c. 1500)
Swiss: J. P. Mayer cards. Cincinnati Art Museum. (6 cards. c. 1680)

Marseilles: Common. Before 1740 to present.

Esoteric

Oswald Wirth: Stanislaus de Guaita & Oswald Wirth, Paris 1889.

A. E. Waite: A. E. Waite and Pamela Coleman-Smith, published by Rider, London 1910

Golden Dawn: S. L. McGregor Mathers and associates, c. 1888, reconstructed by Israel Regardie and Robert Wang 1977, published by U.S. Games Systems Inc., New York.

The Fool

Hand-Painted Images

The Visconti-Sforza Fool has the appearance of an ill-cared for idiot. He stands in rags, his bare feet show through holes in his stockings, and seven feathers are stuck in his hair. His ill-shaven face has a blank look, and over his shoulder he carries a long club.

In the Gringonneur cards the Fool has more the aspect of a clown, with a widely grinning vacuous face. He has a pointed cap with asses' ears and is arrayed in a form of motley, though bare legged. He plays with a string of balls or bells and about his feet four boys gather stones to throw at him.

The D'Este Fool is similar but less dressed, being virtually naked save for his head dress. This is more the conventional jester's tricorn, a belled centre point with long ear-like side points. He carries a stick with some kind of baubles attached.

Early Printed Card Tradition

On a seventeenth-century Parisian set he is more fully dressed, in jester's clothing, and carries a stick with a puppet fool's head at which he gazes.

In the Marseilles Tarot he is similarly dressed but carries a bag on a stick over his shoulder. He has a staff as a walking stick and is pawed from behind by a dog. (See Figure 2.)

Esoteric Versions

Oswald Wirth saw Le Fou much as the Marseilles card although the harrassing animal is feline rather than canine. A fallen obelisk and a crocodile also appear in the background.

Whereas the Wirth figure's face looks coarse and imbecilic, A. E. Waite stresses the innocence of youth. He shows the Fool about to walk off a high precipice in the mountains. The bag

Figure 2

over his shoulder has an eye on it and in his other hand he holds a white rose. A white dog beside him jumps for joy.

The Golden Dawn stresses innocence even more by depicting the Fool as a naked child, stretching his hand to pluck a golden rose from a tree, accompanied by a leashed black wolf or wolf-like dog.

Commentary

In the game of Tarot the Fool has a special role, for with his Zero designation, he has no scoring capacity in the ranking of the Trumps. Rather, his function is that of being able to overturn all the rules. He is never played in the usual sense. Rather, the player who holds him shows him at the appropriate moment, and this excuses the player from having to follow suit with a higher card that he may wish to reserve until later. For this reason the Fool is often called the *scusi* – the excuse.

It is natural to assume that the Fool is the last surviving Trump in the conventional pack of cards, where he now appears, with a similar kind of playing function, as the Joker.

It appears however that there was no direct line of descent in this development. The ordinary pack never had a Joker or similar special card. It was a nineteenth-century introduction in America.

However, those who have some experience of the magical power of the Tarot archetypes, and the reality of the Platonic Ideas of the magical universe behind the physical world, may be willing to concede that the Fool has willed his own re-invention or rediscovery. He in particular, of all the Trumps, is too important to be ignored.

The realization of this especial role and significance carries over into the modern esoteric tradition. For Manly P. Hall makes the suggestion that the Fool contains all the other Trumps. In the full page illustration to the Tarot section of his *Secret Teachings of All Ages* he shows this quite strikingly, with a picture of the Fool and a pyramid of the other Trumps superimposed over his body.

A. E. Waite also spoke guardedly, in his characteristic style, of the Fool being 'the most speaking' of symbols, which we may take to refer to its representation of the Word. The Word made Flesh in an esoteric Christian conception of the Tarot would certainly have all the characteristics of the Fool; the apparent insignificance and foolishness that is in reality a power and wisdom that transcends that of the mundane human world.

In his novel *The Greater Trumps* Charles Williams emphasizes this role in his description of the secret room where the original models of the images are kept. This is of course a very real inner condition, although for the conventions of the genre it is described as a physical place in the story. Here, on a table, about which are ranged symbols of the Lesser Arcanum, the Trump figures move about in self-propelled endless dance, in a golden haze and with a slight humming noise. This is a very evocative image, and it is even worth placing the cards out on a table physically in this manner and meditating upon it. The cards speak most strongly to those who physically 'play' with them.

In this set-up the Fool is described as standing in the centre of all the moving Trumps, as stable focus and indeed Lord of the Dance. However, when someone such as Aunt Sybil looks at the table she sees the Fool in fact also to be dancing in amongst the other cards. Sybil is that remarkable person, a fully redeemed human individual, one whose realization of the true and the good is firm and sure, and who expresses this in her daily life. To her the Fool is a living active Fool, just as to the perceptive Christian, the Christ is a Risen and Active Lord in the presence of, and in relation to, all his created archetypes, rather than a formal theological or philosophical concept.

The traditional cards add a brutal side to the concept of the Fool that is akin to the Biblical account of the passers by who mocked the dying God at the crucifixion. This is demonstrated in the cards that show children gathering missiles to throw at the demented beggar man.

This reflects a common human characteristic, the persecution of the strange or the afflicted, a trait which extends even into the animal world. There are, of course, deep paradoxical truths in the wisdom of the innocent, as has been explored in Shakespeare's *King Lear* and Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*.

A. E. Waite's esoteric cards take up the theme of innocence as a quality of the virgin human spirit coming into the world. The Golden Dawn card also more overtly carries the quality of the miraculous child, one who can tame and control the fierce elemental forces or even the wolves of evil intent, and pluck the golden blossom of the Tree of Paradise.

In esoteric allocation of the Hebrew letters to the Trumps, Eliphas Lévi favoured Shin for the Fool, signifying the three-fold fire of the Spirit. The Golden Dawn tradition allocates Aleph which, as Divine Breath, could also be held to be relevant.

The Magician

Hand-Painted Images

The Visconti-Sforza Magician is well dressed, in scarlet trimmed with ermine, including an ornate hat. He thus has the air of a merchant rather than a trickster or thimble rigger. He sits on what appears to be a chest and has various artefacts before him on a table, and a rod in his left hand. The objects are a knife, a cylindrical cup, two small round objects, and what appears to be a white soft hat as might be used by a conjuror for concealing things.

The D'Este Magician stands in a more active pose before a young audience. He is also richly dressed and with a plume in his hat. He holds a cup aloft, another larger cup is upon the table, together with three small round objects.

Early Printed Card Tradition

On the sixteenth-century Rosenwald printed sheets, the Magician wears a two-horned jester's cap and bells and faces straight out of the card, standing behind his table, a stick in each hand, with a number of small objects before him.

In the Catelin Geofroy card he is definitely entertaining three people to a performance of legerdemain, sitting with magic wand. The tricks of his trade are small objects and two down turned cups under which they might appear.

The Parisian seventeenth-century card also shows him with a two pronged jester's hat. He is performing before an audience and has a monkey and a dog beneath his table.

On the Marseilles card and its derivatives he stands without an audience before a table laden with a number of objects that include small balls or bells, cups, knives and a bag. He reverts to a wide brimmed hat in place of the jester's cap, though his dress does not appear to be motley. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3

Esoteric Versions

Oswald Wirth's Bateleur has a tidier table than the Marseilles card and placed upon it are emblems of the suits; a coin, a sword and a cup, which is filled with red wine. The magician holds the wand in his hand, which has a red sphere at one end and a blue sphere at the other.

Waite also puts suit emblems, including a stave, on the table, which now takes on the appearance of an altar. The magician

holds another wand high in his right and with his left hand points downward, as if directing force from one level to another. A lemniscate halo is placed over his bare head, and red roses and white lilies bloom before his altar, with more red roses above his head.

The Golden Dawn Magician has a figure of Mercury in the air over his head as well as the traditional broad brimmed hat. The caduceus of Mercury is also emblazoned on the breast of his tunic, and on the square stone altar before him are the four suit emblems.

Commentary

In the original tradition this figure is one who carries a power and glamour about him, whether conceived as a rich merchant from far away places, or as a master of tricks and legerdemain. To an extent, all actors, performers, fairground showmen, even market traders, and by extension, advertising men and 'image' merchants share in this archetypal role.

In the theological context he is therefore an extension of the Fool – in fact almost the polar complement. One who demonstrates a wisdom superior to those whom he tricks or entertains, and so who also has a power over them. As wanderer, whose home is always elsewhere, he carries with him the ambience of another world, another dimension of existence. This is the attraction of the 'other' that leads all the adventurous young to leave home, or to seek the glamour of fame or fortune. In this aspect he is like the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

The esoteric cards conceptualize the magical and philosophical elements of this rather more formally by making the table into an altar of magical operation, and the thimbles and bells and other illusionist's tricks into the four suits of the Tarot with their implied elemental attributions. All of this sense is implied, perhaps more strongly if less obviously, in the traditional card design.

The Magician seems, with the advent of the printed cards however, to have come down somewhat in the world. From well heeled merchant traveller to fair ground or market mountebank. All these occupations are, of course, under the patronage of Hermes.

Eliphas Lévi sought to see the Hebrew letter Aleph in the attitude of the figure on the Marseilles card, but this connection is of doubtful provenance.

In his broad potential the Magician is very much a Hermes figure – the psychopomp of all magic and knowledge and exchange. The chameleon like Mercurius of the alchemical process. The Golden Dawn card lays emphasis on this fact. The power of ever flowing creation and bringing through of power from one level to another is also well expressed in the Waite and Golden Dawn designs.

The High Priestess

Hand-Painted Images

The Visconti-Sforza figure is a seated nun in a brown habit holding a closed book in her left hand and a thin sceptre topped by a cross in her right. Over her tall white pointed wimple she wears a triple golden tiara.

These basic features are repeated in the Fournier Visconti-Sforza card although her threefold tiara appears more queenly than ecclesiastical in design. Almost as if she were a noble lady in charge of a convent – a practice that was not uncommon in medieval and Renaissance times.

Early Printed Card Tradition

The theme is repeated on the Rosenwald printed sheet but she holds a key in her left hand and a closed book on her knee with her right.

Book and sceptre appear in the Parisian printed cards and also the suggestion of pillars and veil behind, which becomes a prominent feature of later esoteric cards.

This feature is similarly apparent in crude and embryonic form in the Marseilles card, where, however, she has lost her sceptre but holds her book open in her lap. (See Figure 4.)

Esoteric Versions

Wirth's Papesse has her book closed, although she retains one finger at a particular page. The book has received an oriental touch by having a Chinese 'tai-ge-tu' sign emblazoned on its front cover. In her left hand she holds crossed gold and silver keys, and a crescent moon tops her three-fold tiara. Behind her the suggestion of pillars in the Marseilles card is made explicit, in red and blue, with a white veil between them, and the floor is of black and white paving, like a masonic lodge.

Waite gives the priestess a scroll in place of a book, on which the word TORA(H) can be seen. At her breast is an

Figure 4

equal-armed cross, and her silver head-dress is horned and indicative of the three phases of the moon. Her blue and white draperies flow to the floor with a suggestion of water, to a silver crescent moon by her feet. The pillars behind her are massive black and white ones, of Egyptian style, with lotus capitals, and bearing the letters B and J – no doubt for Boaz and Jachim, the Hebrew titles of the pillars of the Temple of Solomon the King, familiar to masonic tradition. The veil between them is decorated with a pomegranate motif.

The Golden Dawn High Priestess, in light blue draperies on a predominantly light blue card, stands bare foot, holding a chalice, a silver crescent moon at her brow.

Commentary

The original conception of this card seems to have been simply a noble lady of religious vocation. The allocation of the startling title of Popess, indicating an apparent readiness to concede at least equal spiritual temporal status to female as to male, is a notion that traditional religious authorities have found it difficult to come to terms with. The patriarchal bias of Judaeo-Christian religious thought has tended to regard women as spiritually subservient if not inferior. A natural reaction to this unnatural

attitude has been the supernatural elevation of the mother of Jesus, through the Cult of the Blessed Virgin, to Mother of God.

The esoteric development of this card has followed the Marian trend so that the symbolic associations now associated with it bring to mind titles that have been accorded to the Virgin – Star of the Sea, Fount of Wisdom and so on.

The root of much of this symbolism is found in the great pagan appreciation of the divine feminine in such goddesses as Isis and Ishtar. This reassertion of ancient channels of devotion has scandalized the Protestant wing of the church.

The High Priestess is ultimately representative of the Holy Wisdom, the *sancta sophia,* the Holy Spirit seen as a feminine principle. This is indicated by the book or scroll that she carries.

The Pillars of the Temple of Solomon are by no means irrelevant to this conception for she might also be regarded as the Shekinah, the Divine Presence that ever accompanied the Ark of the Covenant, from the times of its travels in the tent of the Tabernacle in the Wilderness to its installation on the Holy of Holies guarded by Cherubim in the Temple of Solomon. The Veil before which she sits not only has relevance to the Veil of Isis, the barrier of perception between the planes (that were seven-fold in the legends of Ishtar), but also the Veil of the Temple that was woven by the young virgin, in scarlet and purple silk, in the apocryphal stories of Mary, and which was rent at the Crucifixion, opening to the world the potential of that which had been hitherto concealed and unrevealed since the expulsion from Eden.

The Empress

Hand-Painted Images

The Visconti-Sforza Empress sits crowned with sceptre in her right hand and shield in her left, upon which is the device of the black imperial eagle.

Early Printed Card Tradition

In the Rosenwald sheet the sceptre is in her left hand and she holds an orb in her right. The Parisian tarot returns the sceptre to her right hand and her left hand is empty. This is the same basic pattern as the Catelin Geofroy Card.

In the Marseilles card the sceptre is held in the left hand and has a large orb with cross at its top, and the eagle shield

reappears at her right hand. There is also the suggestion of two pillars behind her – or else a high backed throne. (See Figure 5.)

Figure 5

Esoteric Versions

Wirth's Imperatrice is winged, and holds a grand golden sceptre surmounted with a cross, and also a red shield upon which is a white eagle. A halo about her crowned head contains nine five-pointed golden stars. Her blue mantle falls down toward a crescent moon, which has a representation of an eye above it.

Waite's Empress is out of doors on a green mound, with wheat growing before her, and trees, a stream and a waterfall in the background. She holds a short green and gold sceptre aloft, and wears a head-dress consisting of a green wreath with twelve golden five-pointed stars. Her robe is decorated with flowers and her throne is supported by a heart shaped shield emblazoned with the sign of Venus.

The Golden Dawn Empress sits before a green curtain on a brown throne on a dais. She wears a flat head-dress with a type of crown decoration upon it, and holds an ankh in one hand and a sceptre topped by a golden sphere in the other. A halo encircles her head, the sphere, and arms of the throne; and a golden bird that is emblematically portrayed beside her head.

Commentary

In the original hand-painted images this represents the simple power of supreme rulership in its feminine aspect.

This is a more outward, or mundane expression, so to speak, of the principle of the High Priestess – just as the Magician might be said to be a more outward expression of the Fool.

It can be found in the archetype that overshadowed great queens such as Elizabeth and Victoria – or that mythical queen who was thought to reside in the heart of Africa.

The principle of sovereignty was a feminine figure going back to the oldest of times, as in the figure of Eriu, the sovereignty of Ireland, which is at root behind and beyond the Holy Grail legends.

In Christian terms the figure is represented by the great Mother Church – an outward, mundane expression of the inner church that is represented by icons of the Virgin. Again there is deep symbolic relevance to the church as Body of Christ; for the feminine principle in outward expression is that of the body, the vessel, ultimately the Grail.

A. E. Waite emphasizes another expression of this great ruling feminine principle by showing on his card the Earth Mother, and the Venus symbol that is upon her heart-shaped shield is a reminder of the inner tradition that Venus holds the pattern for the perfected Earth. This, however, is more immediately a product of the Golden Dawn's allocation of the Trumps and planets to the Paths of the Tree of Life. This is indicated on the Golden Dawn by the presence of a hovering dove, a bird sacred to Venus.

The Empress as a whole might indeed be regarded as, not only the goddess Venus, but all goddesses that rule expression in form, including the principle of motherhood.

The Emperor

Hand-Painted Images

We have a number of extant hand-painted cards of the Emperor.

The Visconti-Sforza Emperor sits with a sceptre in his right hand and an orb in his left. On his head is an ornate hat bearing the imperial eagle.

The Cary-Yale Emperor sits facing us on a raised throne. He is similarly accoutred, and attended by four pages, one of whom,

at lower right, kneels bearing a crown.

The Brera-Brambilla card is similar but without the pages.

The same basic features are found on the otherwise stylistically very different Rosenthal card; and again on the Fournier card.

The Gringonneur card has much the same features, though stylistically is different yet again, and attended by two pages with hands piously crossed upon their breasts. The eagle hat has given way, however, to a crown, and the sceptre is a form of fleur-de-lys, as are the decorations of the crown.

The Rothschild Emperor has two attendants also, but these are small bearded figures before him that barely reach to his knees. His sceptre is again a fleur de lys and the orb may have turned into a great seal.

Early Printed Card Tradition

The simple lines of the Rosenwald sheet show orb or seal in right hand, fleur de lys sceptre in left, and a crown on the head. There is no suggestion of eagles or attendants.

The Emperor of the Parisian card is a crowned standing figure in open country, wearing an enveloping cloak.

This suggestion of being out of doors is maintained on the

Figure 6

Marseilles card, but the emperor is again throned, the eagle re-appears at the side of his throne, and in his right hand is a crossed orbed sceptre. His left hand is empty and he wears a chain and lamen of office. (See Figure 6.)

Esoteric Versions

Wirth's l'Empereur is given a trident or fleur de lys sceptre, with a crescent moon near its base, and a large orb. Emblems of the sun and moon are placed on his breast plate. He sits on a cubic stone instead of a throne, and the imperial eagle is on the side of it.

Waite depicts the Emperor full face, sitting on an imposing grey stone throne decorated with rams' skulls. Behind him is a chasm with a river at the bottom, and on the far side of it, high red mountains. He holds an orb and a sceptre rather like an elongated ankh. He wears full armour under a purple cloak.

The Golden Dawn Emperor is similar but sits before a green curtain or background. He is barefoot and clad in red court robes. His feet rest upon a white ram, and a white ram's head also tops his sceptre. In the other hand is the orb.

Commentary

The original hand-painted card shows simply a great king or emperor. It is the principle of rulership, of kingship, of empire – so all power of government, of whatever political colour, may be said to be represented here. In fact it is the peak of the pyramid of any organizational structure. This applies not only to mercantile or social systems but to systems generally, all of which, as organizations or organisms of diverse units, have a coherent ruling principle, without which the whole thing falls into decay, disease, chaos or death. In the mundane demonstration of authority Charles Williams summed up the principle in the up-raised arm of a policeman directing traffic. Multiply the function of this raised arm of authority many times and one has the structure of government, law and order in action. This is a force that can be used with wisdom and justice or abused.

It should be said in the context of both the Emperor and Empress cards that the concept of empire is not, in its true sense, the exploitation of one nation by another; even if that is how it is generally expressed in a far from perfect world. Empire should be a step toward the ultimate expression of a peaceful universal order. Ultimately, in religious symbolic terms, it is the

descent from heaven of the New Jerusalem, or the founding of a universal Utopia. It is the full expression of what the United Nations Organization sets out to express.

Charles Williams in his Arthurian cycle of poems expresses the conception in the symbol of Byzantium. It is also implied in the great vision of Dante in its cosmic aspect, of universal city.

The ram symbolism on the Waite and Golden Dawn cards derives from their chosen system of Tree of Life correspondences. In so far that 0° of Aries is the conventional position for commencing the marking out of the zodiac, like the convention of the 0° meridian line of Greenwich for terrestrial timing and navigational charting, this symbolism has its relevance.

The Hierophant

Hand-Painted Images

The Visconti-Sforza Pope faces out from the card making a sign of blessing with his right hand and holding a long sceptre, topped with a cross, in his left. The same theme appears on the Von Bartsch card.

The Gringonneur Pope, however, holds a key, and is seen in profile, flanked by two seated cardinals.

The D'Este Pope is likewise seen in profile but as well as holding the key he makes the sign of blessing, and has no attendant figures.

Early Printed Card Tradition

In the Rosenwald sheet the Pope, facing us, has no attendants or accoutrements, nor does he make any sign of benediction. He simply sits enthroned with possibly an open scroll on his knees.

The Parisian Pope, however, holds a huge key and also a long staff which may be topped by a banner.

In the Marseilles cards this long staff appears with a three fold cross at its top whilst the Pope makes the sign of blessing with his right hand to two tonsured figures before him. Behind him are two distinct pillars. (See Figure 7.)

Esoteric Versions

Wirth's Pope is essentially similar to the Mareilles card apart from stylistic differences. Waite also, with more massive pillars and crossed keys at the feet of the figure. The Golden Dawn figure has no pillars but sits alone before a white curtain, holding an open scroll and a shepherd's crook; the throne decorated with bull's heads.

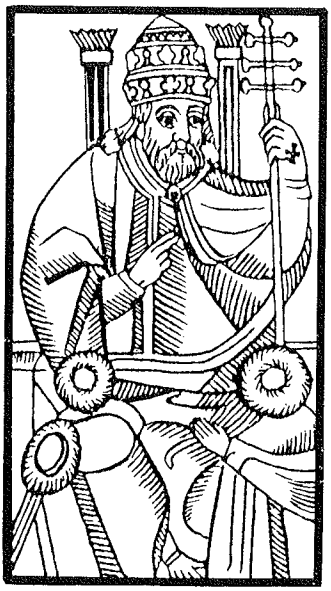


Figure 7

Commentary
The hand-painted cards depicted the principle of spiritual authority on Earth. The esoteric cards extend this conception with minor symbolic additions. The bulls in the Golden Dawn card relate the card to Taurus on their Tree of Life schema – and presumably no pun was intended over papal bulls!

The function relates to that of the Emperor. In fact this card might be said to be a more inner expression of the Emperor, just as the High Priestess is of the Empress.

In outer life the principle of the Pope is seen not only in the papacy but in the seat of authority in all religious confessions, including the least authoritarian, where the authority may be invested in a congregation or committee. The principle can also be applied to all organizations with an idealistic vision, even if that vision be expressed in non-religious or even anti-religious terms. The card indeed sums up the principle of faith and belief, from which any code of conduct or moral standard ultimately derives.

The Lovers

Hand-Painted Images
The Visconti-Sforza Lovers stand hand in hand, facing each

other, beneath a winged blindfolded and naked Cupid who holds a long arrow aloft in his right hand, and a long rod in his left, which could possibly be another dart or a bow. He stands on a high pedestal behind the lovers.

In the Cary Yale Lovers, the pedestal has become a parasol-like canopy and Cupid flies above it, holding two darts.

The Gringonneur card shows a procession of three pairs of lovers, and a cloud above them from which two winged naked figures, not blindfolded, shoot with bows and arrows at the assembled company.

Early Printed Card Tradition

On the Rosenwald sheet the male lover kneels on one knee before his beloved, his hands on his heart, in conventional pose, whilst the winged and blindfolded Cupid flies above them with bow and arrow, supported by a cloud.

The seventeenth-century Colonna sheet, of superior workmanship, similarly shows a blindfolded Cupid shooting from a cloud, but the lovers stand holding a flower between them.

The Parisian printed Lovers card shows three figures, dancing or embracing under a tree, with Cupid overhead with

Figure 8

bow and arrow, in what appears to be a sunburst.

The Marseilles card similarly shows three figures, but the third has emerged from the background to appear as a wreathed female, her hand on the shoulder of the male lover, who stands facing her with his beloved. Cupid, in a sunburst above them, without blindfold, aims a shaft at the couple. (See Figure 8.)

Esoteric Versions

Wirth's L'Amoureux has the young man plainly standing at a forking of the ways, his hands crossed on his breast, while one way is indicated by a flower decked bare-foot maiden in yellow and green, and the other by a crowned maiden in red and blue. As on the Marseilles card, Cupid flies overhead but his dart is pointed directly at the young man and not between the lovers.

Waite transforms Cupid into a great winged angel standing in the sun, and the lovers appear as Adam and Eve. She has a fruiting tree behind her with a coiled serpent; he has a burning bush. Between them in the distance is a high mountain peak.

The Golden Dawn breaks new ground with a picture of a naked Andromeda chained to a rock, menaced by a monster from the sea, whilst Perseus with sword, shield and winged helmet, dives from the sky to her rescue.

Commentary

The original principle of this card was Love, the key figure being Cupid hovering over the lovers. In the course of time, on the Marseilles card, we find the centre of interest subtly changed. This has caused some difference of interpretation among the esoteric commentators. Some interpret the card as a young man standing at the crossroads of vice and virtue, or facing some other dilemma. This is implied on the Wirth card where the young man stands with one foot on each of the branching ways.

Waite and the Golden Dawn use the ambiguity to launch into lines of thought of their own. Waite makes Cupid an overseeing angel and evokes the imagery of the ancient Biblical mythology of the Garden of Eden and the Fall. The Golden Dawn also reverts to very ancient imagery, for the Perseus and Andromeda story was old even before the ancient Greeks adopted it, probably from Babylonia. It is the age old perennial story of the hero rescuing the damsel in distress.

Whatever the mode of symbolism, the common root is that we have sexual differentiation expressed on the card.

The figure on the Marseilles card who stands before the lovers is perhaps best regarded as Venus, the mother of Cupid. Each of the lovers is at a point of decision in their commitment to each other that love demands.

The Chariot

Hand-Painted Images

On the Visconti-Sforza card a fair lady is depicted, on a platform of a triumphal chariot drawn by two white winged horses.

On the von Bartsch card she casually holds the reins in her right hand, holds an orb in her left, and, wearing a crown, is seated on an ornate throne.

The card in the Museo Civico, Catania, shows the now more familiar face-on scenario. The chariot is now a box-like affair in which there stands a female figure holding an orb or disk. The horses are not winged and are led by two men.

On the Gringonneur card we have the platformed type of float but face-on. The figure now appears to be male, clean-shaven and youthful in appearance, wearing a sword and holding a halberd. The horses are not led, nor are they winged.

Early Printed Card Tradition

A fragment of a printed Italian card of the fifteenth or sixteenth century shows a scallop shaped chariot in which several people appear to travel, with a winged figure above them who is possibly holding the reins and driving the chariot.

On the uncut Rothschild sheet, plumed horses pull a high edifice on a triumphal car upon which a figure with winged helmet is perched, holding orb in right hand and drawn sword in left. There appear to be two suns in the sky but this could be festive bunting.

The Rosenwald sheet is more prosaic, showing the box-like car drawn by two horses in which a crowned male figure stands, orb in right hand, sword in left.

The Colonna card of the early seventeenth century shows a similar figure, on a throned chariot, the orb and sword in opposite hands.

The Parisian seventeenth-century version is much more actively portrayed, in side view. A triumphal figure sits somewhat precariously, holding a baton or similar device, whilst a young driver before him whips up the horses.

The Marseilles card is a very static face-on representation, in a box-like chariot which has appeared before but now with four pillars supporting a canopy. The crowned figure holds a sceptre in his right hand and is equipped with strange epaulettes in the form of faces appearing as crescents. The horses are not winged. Between them on the chariot front is a shield-shaped device with the letters S.M. The conventionalized drawing of the horses, face on, gives the appearance that they are a two-headed single creature. (See Figure 9.)

Figure 9

Esoteric Versions

Wirth places stars on the canopy of the chariot and on the charioteer's crown, and transforms the horses into sphinxes, one black and one white. This follows the suggestion of Eliphas Lévi. The front of the chariot is embellished with Egyptian-derived signs including a winged sun-disk.

These signs also appear on the front of the Waite chariot, as also the sphinxes and the stars, derivative either from Wirth or Lévi.

The Golden Dawn card shows a horned-helmet warrior riding a chariot through the sky, pulled by a black and a white horse. The shaft of the chariot is embellished with a hawk or eagle head.

Commentary
The original hand-painted conception was a simple one, familiar since classical times, of a usually winged figure of Victory in a triumphal chariot. Thus the horses are winged on the Visconti-Sforza card.

Somewhere along the line the sex of the charioteer changed and the chariot was depicted head on, and the strange epaulettes appear. No commentator seems to have adequately accounted for these beyond speculation that they may be oracular devices deriving from ancient Hebrew tradition.

With the starry canopy we have a certain resemblance to the Vision of Ezekiel and the whole range of Merkebah or Chariot mysticism. This is a mystical Jewish conception of God but there are also pagan allusions that could be drawn, such as the sun chariot of Helios.

It is odd that the change of sex of the figure has diverted attention from the original conception of Victory, which has an interesting correlation with the fact that this is Trump VII and the seventh Sephirah of the Tree of Life has the title of Victory.

Justice

Hand-Painted Images
The Visconti-Sforza Justice shows a seated female with scales in her left hand and a drawn sword in her right. Overhead a bareheaded but otherwise armoured knight on a richly caparisoned white horse gallops with drawn sword. The same features appear on the Rosenthal Visconti-Sforza card.

The Gringonneur figure, however, appears without the knight in the background, but has a kind of angular nimbus about her head.

Early Printed Card Tradition
The nimbus also appears in the Rosenwald sheet, which is similar, apart from the scales and sword being in different hands. On the seventeenth-century Parisian printed version the figure of Justice stands, has no nimbus and is blindfolded.

The Marseilles card reverts to a straightforward seated figure, with crown-like head-dress, and sword and scales. (See Figure 10.)

Esoteric Versions
Wirth's Justice follows the conventional lines of the Marseilles

Figure 10

card. So does Waite's, though he places her before a veil between pillars. The Golden Dawn figure, however, is Egyptianized, seated between black and white lotus pillars, and with lotus decorations on her throne. Her bare feet rest on a grey wolf and the floor is the chequered paving associated with masonry. A black and white striped Egyptian nemyss is upon her head.

Commentary

The traditional design for this card is the conventional figure of Justice, although the inclusion of a knight is an interesting feature which has dropped from the esoteric designs. This is perhaps a pity as it has resonances with the law-keeping tradition of the knight errant, and also the ancient tradition of one test of justice being battle by champions. Whatever our view of this method of jurisprudence, it was part and parcel of a different world view, which considered that God would and could act on the side of right. We may have lost something of value in our more demotic and reasoned view of the processes of law.

However, there remains at a sterner level the incontrovertible fact that might is right insofar that life is subject to natural law.

Thus the balance of nature is to be seen at work here, and in more millennial terms the ultimate fate of the world and those who live on it.

The Egyptian symbolism of the Golden Dawn card is hardly essential, but the Egyptian conception of a judgement after death is strikingly presented on surviving papyri and has obviously impressed modern students of occultism. Balance is, of course, an important concept in magical philosophy and practice; the principle is a universal one and the rule of law and balance works at all levels of existence and in all ages and climes.

The Hermit

Hand-Painted Images

The Visconti-Sforza hermit is an old man with an ornate hat, bearing a long staff and holding an hour glass.

The Gringonneur hermit has a more modest head-dress and a cloak over his girdled robe. He has no staff but holds up an hour glass at which he gazes. In the background is a high mountain.

Early Printed Card Tradition

The sheet in the Bibliothèque de l'École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts shows the hermit on crutches, though winged. He seems to stand in a gateway, and behind him is an obelisk, while a sun shines from the top left-hand corner of the card. All these details suggest attributions of Time.

The Rosenwald sheet likewise shows an old man on crutches but without background symbolism, nor with wings.

On the Catelin Geofroy card the old man has a cross hanging by a beaded chain from his waist. He holds a lantern in place of the hour glass and seems as if he may be knocking at a door. Although somewhat decrepit, he has no need of crutches.

In the Parisian printed set he appears to be either tending a light or even serving an altar.

The Marseilles card depicts the hermit robed, with staff in left hand and lantern upheld in right. (See Figure II).

Esoteric Versions

Wirth's l'Ermite is similar to the Marseilles card, with the addition of a dragon-like worm crawling before the hermit.

Waite's Hermit has a gold six-pointed star in his lantern and is standing on a snowy height.

The Golden Dawn Hermit, however, stands on a desert plain

Figure 11

under a starry sky and has a Hebrew letter Yod in a triangle upon his hood. This is to accord with the Tree of Life Path attribution of this card in accordance with the Golden Dawn system.

Commentary

This figure has undergone a sea change. Originally he was Father Time carrying an hour glass, and sometimes seen with wings or crutches, for time can crawl or fly according to circumstances.

As soon as the hour glass became a lantern it laid the basis for an additional range of meaning, that in fact seems to have ousted the original conception. Nowadays he is seen as a way shower; a guide, philosopher and friend; a keeper of secret wisdom.

The card can, in fact, carry all the attributes conventionally associated with age, from God the Father and Ancient of Days downwards – though age and ancient wisdom are not necessarily to be associated with decrepitude.

Time might well be reconsidered as a title for this card by esoteric students, for it is by involvement in the world of time that the lessons of life are learned. This is the experience of incarnation and all time is measured in terms of the movement of the Earth and the other celestial bodies in space. The hermit

is therefore a universal figure of cosmic proportions.

In the role of guardian of esoteric secrets he also has profound dynamics. The guardian of any mystery system is also its psychopomp. Thus we have the tradition in myth and legend that the seeker at the gate, if he succeeds in gaining entry to the mystery, has to take his turn as guardian. This is clearly demonstrated in *The Chymical Marriage of Christian Rosencreutz.*

Another line of tradition could see the hermit as Joseph, either as head of the Holy Family, or, in the Grail Tradition as Joseph of Arimathea. In both roles he is the custodian of profound mysteries.

The snowy heights that are introduced into Waite's card emphasize the heights of spiritual wisdom. Thus the Hermit is also a light-house, so to speak, and in olden time, light-houses were also altars. His lantern holds 'the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world'. His cloak, in this respect, is the Night of Time.

The Wheel of Fortune

Hand-Painted Images

The Visconti-Sforza Wheel of Fortune has a blindfold winged female figure at its centre, no doubt representing Fortuna. At the top of her wheel is an enthroned king; a young man rises upon the wheel at the left; another man falls head first at the right. The falling man has a tail, and the two others, asses' ears. Underneath the wheel, an old man crawls on all fours. The figures are labelled as follows:

top figure – Regno – I rule
rising figure – Regnabo – I shall rule
falling figure – Regnavi – I ruled
bottom figure – Sum sine regno – I am without rulership

The Brera-Brambilla card is similar but without the inscribed words, and the descending figure has no tail. Likewise the von Bartsch card, with minor changes of detail and inscriptions difficult to decipher. The descending figure has a tail, but the figures do not have asses' ears, though the topmost figure's crown has a configuration that suggests them.

Early Printed Card Tradition

The fifteenth/sixteenth century Italian sheets in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, are crude in execution. No figure of Fortuna appears at the centre and the wheel direction

is reversed. At the top is a four-legged beast; descending on the left is a man; and rising on the right is an animal headed man; whilst underneath a possibly female figure seems to lie in repose. The inscriptions are not well produced but plainly are the same as those cited above.

On the Beaux-Arts card there is no figure of Fortuna and at the top what appears to be a bear-headed figure in kingly regalia, holding orb and truncheon-like sceptre. Three figures at the bottom and sides cling to the anticlockwise-revolving wheel.

The Parisian card wheel revolves clockwise with three human figures at bottom and sides. The topmost place is held precariously by a man with cloak and trident. Again there is no figure of Fortuna.

The Marseilles card is remarkable for having no human figures, no goddess Fortuna, and only three figures. The rising and falling ones on the anticlockwise rotating wheel are like monkeys, the one at the top with crown and sword rather like a monkey-faced sphinx. (See Figure 12.)

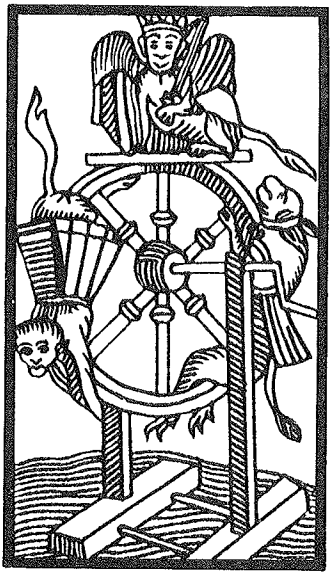


Figure 12

Esoteric Versions

Wirth's wheel has fantastic creatures about its rim after the style of the Marseilles card. He makes the topmost figure

unmistakably a sphinx, whilst the descending figure is a horned devil with a trident, and the ascending one a figure of the Egyptian god Anubis, the Opener of the Ways, carrying a caduceus. The whole wheel floats upon a moon-shaped boat with twined serpents rising from it.

Waite places his Wheel in the sky with winged kerubic emblems at the corners – man, eagle, lion, bull. The wheel is in the form of a disk or pentacle with the letters TARO and the Divine Name JHVH in Hebrew letters, with a formal sigil in the centre. He also places a sphinx at the top, and has a rising Anubis, but a falling serpent.

The Golden Dawn Wheel is a twelve-spoked one floating in space, its spokes coloured in different shades in accordance with the Golden Dawn's attribution of colours to the twelve signs of the zodiac. Above the wheel is a sphinx; below it a monkey.

Commentary

It is surprising that the figure of Fortune should have dropped from this card – she who turns the wheel whereby men and women suffer the vagaries of 'those two imposters' – 'failure' and 'success'.

The assinine characteristics of the ambitious creatures about the wheel came in the course of time to dominate the card, leading esoteric commentators to transform them into figures from Egyptian iconography.

This has led to a more overtly philosophical implication in that Wirth indicates the Opener of the Ways rising, and an evil figure falling, under the presidency of a sphinx. This idea is followed by Waite who adds the further cosmic framework of the Kerubic Emblems and the Tetragrammaton, or Most Holy Name of God. The colour symbolism of the Golden Dawn also implies a system of interlinking zodiacal influences.

The cyclic aspect of this card should also lead us to consider the universal principle of cycles, in time and space and circumstance, that is a condition of existence outside of eternity. Therefore, like the Hermit, this is a card closely linked to the principles of time and space.

Those of an oriental turn of mind will also see within it the cycles of karma; others, such as the followers of Gurdjieff, the principle of recurrence. Given the principle that time may not be the simple linear figure that is commonly assumed, various possibilities of sequence of experience become tenable. A free spirit can presumably enter and leave the turning wheels of time and space at any point in their revolution.

Strength

Hand-Painted Images

On the Visconti-Sforza card a rough looking man, with flying scarf, holds a club on high in a threatening fashion. At his feet is a lion. They both appear to be threatening the same person or object off the card. (At first sight it looks as if the man is belabouring the lion but on closer examination this seems not to be the case.)

On the Gringonneur card we have a maiden (with an angular nimbus similar to Temperance and Justice and the World in this set), standing beside a column which is breaking in two.

Early Printed Card Tradition

On the Rosenwald sheet the maiden (also with angular nimbus in common with Justice and Temperance on the same sheet), is seated beside an unbroken column, which she clasps.

The Parisian card has the stump of a broken column but the maiden who stands over it is demonstrating her power by subduing a lion.

On the Marseilles card the stump of pillar has gone and we simply have the maiden, in wide-brimmed hat, holding a lion by the jaws. (See Figure 13.)

Figure 13

Esoteric Versions

Wirth's La Force follows the Marseilles card closely.

Waite introduces a chain of roses between the maiden and the lion and in place of the wide brimmed hat places a lemniscate figure above her head. In the background is a high mountain.

On the Golden Dawn card the maiden simply stands beside the lion, her hand on its mane, and she holds four red roses, while a yellow veil blows in the wind about her.

Commentary

The Visconti-Sforza card is something of an anomaly in relation to the main stream of tradition of the card, although there is a lion featured upon it. Generally speaking the traditions are two-fold, either a maiden beside a pillar (which may be broken) or a maiden controlling a lion.

The maiden and the pillar is perhaps the more conventional image, and, as Fortitude, was depicted by many artists, including Botticelli, as one of the Cardinal Virtues. Although the pillar may be broken, or show the maiden apparently breaking it, the image more consistent with the spirit of the card is really an unbroken pillar, for the sense of the image is strength and support. Indeed the maiden could well be depicted as a caryatid, though this idea does not appear to have occurred to any designer.

The strong man with a club on the Visconti-Sforza card can be thought of as Hercules, the archetypal strong man and hero, who has associations with a lion. The more appealing image is however the maiden with the lion with its associations of beauty and the beast, of spiritual will gently but indominatably controlling physical power. Or again, an idea depicted in another fashion by Botticelli in a famous picture, the victory of Venus over Mars.

The Hanged Man

Hand-Painted Images

The Visconti-Sforza Hanged Man is suspended by the left leg from a beam, supported by two posts, rather like a door frame. His hands appear to be tied behind his back and his right leg is crossed behind the bound one.

The Gringonneur hanged man is altogether more active, suspended by his right ankle and flailing around somewhat, holding on to two heavy bags, presumably containing money. The frame of the gallows is more rustic.

Early Printed Card Tradition

The Beaux Arts sheet is similar to the Gringonneur conception

but the figure is in much more repose, the left leg crossed behind the right. The same applies to the Rosenwald sheet, though it is the left leg that is tied.

The Catelin Geofroy card shows a conventional gibbet from which the hanged man is suspended by both feet, his hands tied behind his back.

The Paris card is without money bags, though the hands are not tied or held behind.

The Marseilles card shows the hands behind the back, the legs crossed and a ragged framework, seemingly erected over a ditch or abyss. The moon-like pockets and buttons down the front of the man's coat appear on this card, which have given much grist to the imagination of later esoteric commentators. (See Figure 14.)

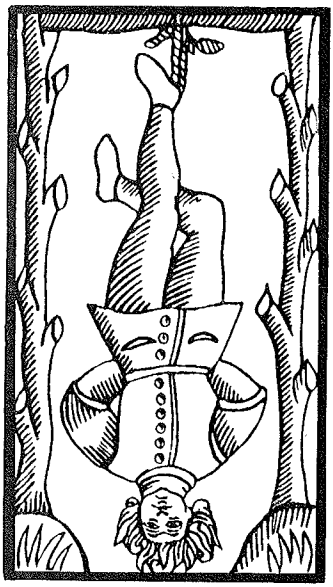


Figure 14

Esoteric Versions

Wirth's Le Pendu follows the Marseilles card but has coins falling from the man's pockets, gold one side, silver the other.

Waite changes the shape of the gibbet to a Tau cross and gives the man a halo.

The Golden Dawn man is suspended from the roof of a sea cave and the cross and triangle motif suggested in most Hanged Man cards by the disposition of the man's limbs is here accentuated in thin lines of light.

Commentary
This card was often referred to as The Traitor, and no doubt this was the unequivocal meaning to Italians, from the Renaissance period to the present day. It is the mark of extreme social disgrace, and effigies of traitors were publicly displayed upside-down and no less an artist than Botticelli was commissioned to produce works for such a purpose. In modern times the body of the dictator Mussolini was hung up in this way by a vengeful mob.

This may relate to the money bags that the man has on some cards, which could refer to Judas Iscariot, the archetypal traitor, on the common assumption that he betrayed his leader and his God for money.

A traitor represents one with an inversion of all values and there is a higher sense to this inversion that is brought out in the esoteric cards by the serene expression on the man's face and his halo. He is in this respect the willing sacrifice, or the martyr, or one whose actions and beliefs are based on non-material values – or values that differ from the assumptions of the society in which he lives. In this respect the card can represent the Crucifixion, which in Roman times was a mode of execution associated with utter social disgrace, and one particularly applied to traitors or rebels against the state.

Death

Hand-Painted Images
The Visconti-Sforza figure of Death is a standing skeleton, a white cloth or band about its head, holding a bow in one hand, an arrow in the other.

The Cary Yale skeleton wields a scythe and gallops on horse back over a huddled group of human figures.

The Victoria & Albert Museum card has the figure standing on a floor of black and white paving, holding a scythe over his shoulder. He wears a cardinal's hat and the words SAN FINE come from his mouth. Two sets of beads depending from the hat brim are in the form of a Pythagorean tetractys.

The Gringonneur skeleton is more fully clothed and rides, wielding his scythe, over supine personages of power such as kings and bishops.

Early Printed Card Tradition
The Italian card of the fifteenth/sixteenth century also rides a

horse, carrying a scythe, but there are no victims depicted. The Rothschild sheet is similar.

The Rosenwald sheet also features scythe and horseman, with two victims beneath the horse's hooves. The Catelin Geofroy card has the skeleton on foot and wielding a scythe, with a shovel over his shoulder.

The Parisian card is also of the standing skeleton scythesman, which is found on the Marseilles card too, in a field of lopped heads, hands and feet. (See Figure 15.)

Figure 15

Esoteric Versions

Wirth's skeleton mower closely follows the Marseilles card.

Waite follows the tradition of a skeleton on horseback, which he depicts in black armour and carrying a black banner on which is a white rose. Two children kneel before him, a bishop stands, apparently in supplication, and a king lies dead. In the background is a river, and on the horizon the sun rises, or sets, between two towers.

The Golden Dawn follows the Marseilles tradition but introduces a strange multicoloured sun, as if in eclipse, in the sky; and a blue eagle head from which depends a fiery serpent.

Commentary

Printed card manufacturers, in deference to popular supersti-

tion, seldom gave a name to this card; and they also contrived to give it the number of 'unlucky' 13 no matter what local variation of Trump sequence there might be. Even today tarocchi players who draw this card consider themselves to be unlucky.

Temperance

Hand-Painted Images

On the Visconti-Sforza card Temperance, in a starry robe, stands in open countryside, pouring liquid from one vase into another. This theme is repeated on the von Bartsch and on the Gringonneur cards. On the latter the figure has the characteristic pointed nimbus found also on Strength, Justice and the World in this set, and the figure is seated, as also on the d'Este card.

Early Printed Card Tradition

The Rosenwald sheet is similar to the d'Este.

The Catelin Geofroy figure is also seated but pours liquid from a jar into a dish.

The Marseilles figure is remarkable for being winged, and also reverts to the convention of a standing figure in countryside. (See Figure 16.)

Figure 16

Esoteric Versions

Wirth follows the Marseilles scheme. Waite has an angelic

figure standing partly on land, partly on water; and a pathway leads to mountains over which is the sun, upon which is superimposed a crown. The angel also has a solar disc on the forehead, and iris flowers growing at the water's edge are symbolically reinforced by a rainbow over the figure's head.

The Golden Dawn card also has Temperance standing on land and sea. She has a yellow square on her breast and a golden sphere or sun is above her head. In the background a volcano erupts.

Commentary

Temperance is another standard iconographic figure of one of the cardinal virtues. It also has strong alchemical connotations of purification and the tempering of metals. Another sense, that is not so readily obvious, is that in days before piped running water lords and ladies at table washed their hands (which they used for eating until forks were later introduced), by the assistance of a servant pouring water from one bowl to another. Thus the figure also represents a cleansing process.

The standing between land and water is a comparatively modern esoteric conception, it would seem. The rainbow attributions of the Waite card refer to the position the card was placed on the Tree of Life in the Golden Dawn system, on the path between Yesod and Tiphereth.

Of interest on the Gringonneur cards is the nimbus given to Temperance, Strength, Justice and the World, which implies a relationship between these four cards that accords with a particular way of laying out the cards. (See page 92.)

The Devil

Hand-Painted Images

No Devil on a hand-painted card has survived.

Early Printed Card Tradition

The earliest version we have is a fragmented Italian printed sheet where he stands in open country, a tree in the background. He is winged and carries a trident over his shoulder. He has another face on his lower abdomen, with animal ears, which could be part of a garment. He has horns and long ears on his head which could, again, be part of a head-dress.

The uncut Rothschild sheet shows a more grotesque figure, with taloned feet, a tail, a horned and animal-eared head that is definitely part of the figure, another more human head for a

torso, and spiky wings and shaggy body-hair which by the shape suggests flames. He is in the process of eating a man and a woman.

The Rosenwald sheet Devil is much less menacing, with a quaint depiction of a human figure with horns, animal ears, and taloned feet, holding a trident and dressed in a tunic, either of shaggy fur or feathers, or possibly flames.

The Parisian pack Devil is similar in principle; a menacing figure, horned, winged and taloned, with a rod or trident.

The Marseilles card differs from all previous in having the Devil, who holds a hiltless sword or baton, standing on an anvil-like pedestal to which are attached two human figures with horned head-dresses, and who have tails that they may be holding on behind them. The horns, as those of the Devil, appear to be stag rather than goat horns. The Devil himself has bat-like wings and taloned feet. (See Figure 17.)

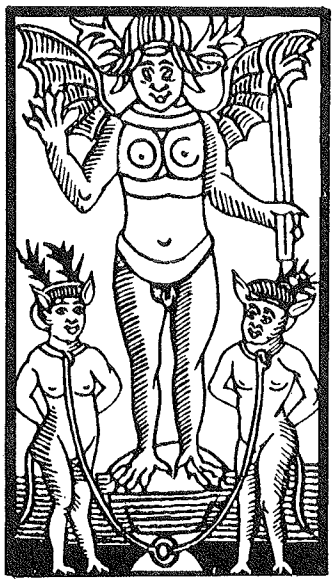


Figure 17

Esoteric Versions

Wirth's Diable has devils, not humans, secured to the pedestal. The Devil himself bears a long candle and a lamp, with one arm labelled SOLVE and the other COAGULA. At his loins is the sigil for Mercury. A pentagram is upon the forehead of his goat head, and his feet are cloven rather than clawed. Most of these

ideas derive from Eliphas Lévi's illustration of the card.

On Waite, the forehead pentagram is inverted, and the alchemical signs and labels do not appear. The figures below are naked humans, though with horns and tails. Their neck manacles are large enough in diameter to be lifted off over their heads. The woman's tail ends in a bunch of grapes, the man's in a flame. The Devil makes a sign of duality with one hand and holds an inverted torch in the other. His feet are the traditional claws.

The Golden Dawn Devil has a horned head that closely resembles an inverted pentagram. He holds an inverted torch and a horn in the other hand. His feet are clawed. The figures below are human but equipped with horns and skirts, and they are manacled to the pedestal by their wrists.

Commentary

The absence of any hand-painted form of the Devil suggests that in the Renaissance period the evil qualities of the Devil were taken seriously and it was preferred that this card be hidden and not on display. As C. S. Lewis has pointed out in *The Screwtape Letters* a major victory for the Devil has been the spread of the assumption that he does not exist. Or, that if he does, he cuts a ludicrous and easily identified figure after the fashion of the demon king at a pantomime.

The recognition of the real presence of evil in the world, however, is not the same as elevating its importance to a level with God. Everything of evil is uncreative, parasitic, a corruption or distortion of the health and proper function of a living system. It may be that evil is a menacing presence within the world but in the end it will come to nothing, in the Nothing that is the Limitless Light which dispels all darkness.

In the meantime the weeds may flourish with the good and growing crop. The basis of the parable of the tares and the wheat is that the wheat grows to a greater height than the tares. To try to eliminate the tares during growth would be a difficult task injurious to the growing wheat. At harvest time, however, the wheat ears, having grown higher, can be easily harvested, leaving the tares to be put to the destroying and earth-cleansing fire.

The figures on the card plainly indicate bondage, and most evil could be described as a form of bondage – of compulsive behaviour. Compulsion is the hallmark of neurosis and disease, of addiction and vice. In true service is perfect freedom.

Evil is present not only within the world but within each one of us. One does not have to fear raising the Devil by 'dabbling in the occult' or by any other means. His presence is as close as God's – closer than breathing, nearer than hands and feet. But often we give ear and credence to the promptings of evil rather than good. However, the choice remains ours. It is not really sufficient for all that fall to cling to the excuse that they were pushed!

The sign of duality that appears on the cards signifies the principle of evil. The demonic reflection of the Tree of Life, for example, has as its highest (or lowest) sphere the Dual Contending Heads rather than the One Great Countenance of Kether. The Devil may indeed aspire to establish the principle of dualism – an equal footing with God or good – but in this he has the same ambitions as a cancerous cell.

The inverted pentagram similarly, with its two points upward, is a denial of the power of the spirit over the elements.

Waite demonstrates the ultimate lack of power of evil by making it possible for the chained figures to remove the manacles from about their necks. The prisoners, like the inhabitants of Dante's *Inferno,* are there by their own free choice. When we really abhor evil we will cease to be ruled by it. Hence the Delphic adage 'Man – Know Thyself'.

One of the great lessons of more advanced occultism, and one that is more difficult to learn than almost any other, is that the world about us reflects back to us, in the circumstances of our lives, our own state of soul. Yet we often recoil from the hideous face in the mirror of our environment, seeking to blame anybody but ourselves. This is the confrontation with the Dweller on the Threshold who is, like the Devil and his victims, an image of ourselves.

The Tower

Hand-Painted Images

The Gringonneur card is the sole surviving depiction of a hand-painted Tower. Here it is a massive four-square castle-like edifice that is crumbling and falling at the back, with flames disintegrating its upper tower.

Early Printed Card Tradition

The crudely effected Italian printed sheet has a single square tower standing between two trees at the top of a flight of steps.

The top of the tower is ablaze with an arrow of lightning coming down from the Sun.

On the Rothschild sheet we have a scheme similar to the Gringonneur version: a massive building, burning in its upper stories, and the introduction of a male and a female human figure falling before it. There also appears to be two suns in the sky but this feature is found also on other cards in this series (Star, Moon, Chariot and Wheel of Fortune).

The Rosenwald card follows the Gringonneur style also, but with no human figures. A massive tower disintegrates, with flames at the top. The sun is shown above; there is no lightning flash, but flames appear in the sky between the sun and the tower.

The Catelin Geofroy tower is full of drama. The tower burns in the background whilst in the foreground is a grotesque devil-like figure, and two human figures, one of whom is playing a violin.

The Parisian card is similar in conception and shows several figures in confusion, including one naked with an animal head.

A Swiss pack of 1680 shows the free-standing tower, with two figures falling from it. A blast from the sun lifts the turreted top of the tower, and stones fall from it.

Figure 18

This is the style developed in the Marseilles Tarot, although here the tower is quite intact below the tilting turret, and the falling masonry becomes a pattern of circles in the sky. (See Figure 18.)

Esoteric Versions

The Wirth card follows the Marseilles card closely, though the top courses of brickwork of the tower are damaged, and falling bricks accompany the coloured spheres. One of the falling figures wears a crown, and the bolt from the sky clearly emanates from a sun face.

Waite's Tower is on a high eminence, and appears to be depicted at night. Its top is like a crown and is thrown off intact, as on the Marseilles card. A lightning bolt strikes fire into the tower itself. Two figures fall, the female one crowned. Clouds are in the sky and the coloured spheres of the Marseilles card are rendered as flames in the form of Hebrew letter Yods.

In the Golden Dawn card a bolt from the sun strikes the tower, which is a raging inferno inside, and damaged – although the golden-crown top of the tower lifts up intact. Two part-naked figures fall, and the spheres of the Marseilles card are arranged as two Trees of Life; a conventional white one to the right and a black one with an extra sphere (two Yesods) to the left.

Commentary

Like the Devil, this card has not survived well from the hand-painted era. This is probably because of its close association with the Devil in its interpretation as Gate of Hell.

An immediate association of the picture on the card is with the Tower of Babel, raised by man's overweening pride. This has an ominous relevance to the contemporary world with man's towering achievements in science and technology and his inability to handle the power that this gives him.

The tale of the Great Tower has resonances throughout history and legend. Thomas Mann in the Prelude to his *Joseph and his Brothers* cites other examples such as the pyramids of Cheops in Egypt and Cholula in Central America:

> The people of Cholula have always denied that they were the authors of this mighty structure. They declared it to be the work of giants, strangers from the east, they said, a superior race who, filled with drunken longing for the sun, had reared it up in their ardour, out of clay and asphalt, in order to draw

> near to the worshipped planet. There is much support for the theory that these progressive foreigners were colonists from Atlantis, and it appears that these sun worshippers and astrologers incarnate always made it their first care, wherever they were, to set up mighty watch-towers, before the faces of the astonished natives, modelled upon the high towers of their native land, and in particular upon the lofty mountain of the gods of which Plato speaks. In Atlantis, then, we may seek the prototype of the Great Tower.

There is a more positive side to the card however. This is indicated in the convention that shows the top of the tower gently lifting off to receive the lightning bolt. Similar imagery is described in great detail in the seventeenth-century *Chymical Marriage of Christian Rosencreutz* where it is part of the resurrection process in a sequence of spiritual alchemy.

In all the variations of meaning there is an underlying theme of the power of God, the lightning strike of the Spirit, the Promethean force that re-establishes rulership to its supernatural source.

One could perhaps read in the esoteric tendency to replace falling masonry with symbolic patterns, a desire to rebuild harmonic order from chaos – to restore the true pattern that has been lost by the tumbling figures.

The Star

Hand-Painted Images

The Visconti-Sforza Star shows a maiden with a star-patterned cloak over her robe, holding up an eight-pointed star.

On the Rosenthal Visconti-Sforza card she is crowned, as also on the Victoria & Albert Museum card.

The d'Este card shows two bearded men looking up toward a central eight-pointed star, pointing to it. One of them holds a chart or text.

Early Printed Card Tradition

The Rothschild uncut sheet shows three figures under the star, holding up a crown between them. One of the men seems to be a king, another a jester or fool, whilst the third figure is a woman.

The Rosenwald uncut sheet is a plain central star, between two formal devices above and below that are suggestive of wheels with pointed rays.

The Parisian printed card shows a single seated figure looking up towards a star.

The Swiss 1680 pack has a naked figure pouring two urns out onto the ground, with seven stars in the sky, one very prominent, and a tree in the background. This is the scheme adopted by the Marseilles card with, however, an extra star, and two trees, with a bird in one of them. (See Figure 19.)

Figure 19

Esoteric Versions

Wirth's l'Etoile follows the Marseilles card but he replaces the bird on a tree by a butterfly on a red flower. One jar is gold, the other silver.

Waite also follows the Marseilles card iconography.

The Golden Dawn differs only by having both jars poured into the water instead of one onto the land. In the background is an additional eight-pointed star that appears immediately over the figure's head, who has one vase red and the other blue. Two trees are in the background, one carrying spheres in the form of a Tree of Life, the other with a white bird flying over it.

Commentary

The earlier versions of this card concentrate upon the star rather than the figure below. However, this figure is important,

and indeed on the Visconti-Sforza card the starry cloak of the maiden brings echoes of Astraea, the Virgin of the Stars, and the starry messenger, a form of Isis-Urania, who comes to Christian Rosencreutz at the commencement of the *Chymical Marriage.*

The maiden who pours her vases upon the land and the waters may well be regarded as the Spirit of the Stars, and the dew that is found in the morning used to be termed the sweat of the stars, and was considered to have profound healing and magical powers. Indeed one interpretation of the Mysteries of the Rose Cross is that the rose derives from the Latin word *ros*, meaning dew.

The lore of the stars is a greatly neglected field of esoteric knowledge despite the apparent popularity of astrology. Astrology as commonly practised has become closely involved with the art of mundane prediction and character analysis through the interpretation of theoretical charts. The deeper wisdom is to be gained from going out and standing under the stars and observing them as the ancient navigators, herdsmen, travellers, farmers, and indeed astrologers did. One is more likely to meet the Star Maiden under the stars than in the library.

The Moon

Hand-Painted Images

The Visconti-Sforza Moon is a maiden holding the crescent moon in her hand. Her girdle is prominently featured, and her dress has a pattern of a spiral round her body, like an orbiting celestial body.

The Gringonneur Moon shows two astrologers with chart and dividers under a crescent moon.

The d'Este card shows just one seated astrologer, working at a chart with a pair of dividers, an armillary sphere on a stand behind him, and a crescent moon in the sky.

Early Printed Card Tradition

The Rothschild sheet shows two figures, either female or classically draped, one with dividers and holding an armillary sphere, the other with what is probably a form of sextant. Their heads are wreathed and they point to the moon, which is a crescent, filled in to a full moon with a face. At each top corner appear to be suns with rays – a convention found on other cards on this sheet (the Chariot, the Star, and the Wheel of Fortune, though the latter without rays).

The Rosenwald sheet, as with the Star, shows just the moon itself, with a double crescent enclosing a full moon face, and also like the Star, between two formal devices like rayed wheels.

The Parisian moon is full face, with features, shining over a scene with what appear to be battlements and various small figures below.

The 1680 Swiss pack shows the pattern also adopted by the Marseilles Tarot; a full moon over two towers on either side of the card, and a dog baying at the moon on each side of a path that runs from a stream or pool in the foreground in which there is a craw-fish. (See Figure 20.)

Figure 20

Esoteric Versions

Wirth's la Lune follows the Marseilles card, but with a clearly defined path leading between the two towers. The two canine creatures are shown as a white dog and a black wolf.

On Waite's card the path starts actually from the water and leads to distant mountains. Otherwise the Marseilles symbolism is followed, with Wirth's dog and wolf.

The Golden Dawn card is similar but with two dark wolves, one on either side of the path.

Commentary

The Visconti-Sforza card follows the same simple principle with

this card as it did with the Star, showing a maiden holding the crescent moon. Similarly she could be regarded, not as the star maiden, but as the goddess of the moon.

Later versions of the card emphasize by implication the hidden laws of life that are studied by astronomers or astrologers – there was no distinction between the disciplines in earlier times.

The Marseilles card follows another line of interpretation with an evocative design that, in true moon fashion, hints at mysteries just beyond the range of intellectual consciousness. It has not inappropriately been named the Twilight. The falling drops may also be regarded as the dew of lunar influence, similar to the star dew mentioned in relation to the Star.

In Renaissance and earlier natural philosophy there was a profound difference between the perceived influence of the moon and of the stars. On the system of crystalline spheres that were held to surround the central Earth, the moon was the nearest and that of the fixed stars the penultimate furthest, with only the sphere of the angels, and God, beyond. This is represented schematically on the Tree of Life with the Moon on the 9th Sephirah, Yesod, and the Fixed Stars on the 2nd Sephirah, Chockmah. Between them are the spheres of the Sun and the visible planets. The powers of the sub-lunary world, which lie within the Earth's shadow, differ considerably from the starry powers of deep space.

Latter-day esoteric comment tends to see the force of evolution represented by the Marseilles card. One is at liberty to read into a card whatever one is inspired to see, but the card was designed in pre-Darwinian times, which leads to the interesting question of whether the original designers were aware of the theory of evolution centuries before it was formulated, or whether we moderns tend to read into old symbols our own assumptions as to what was intended.

The Sun

Hand-Painted Images

The Visconti-Sforza card shows a naked winged boy, a scarf loosely draped across his shoulders and loins standing on a cloud above a hilly landscape and holding a ruddy-rayed sun-head aloft.

The Rosenthal Visconti-Sforza card shows a full-face sun,

adorned with features, over a castle under which is the inscription FORTEZZA. A fleur de lys and a five-pointed flamed wheel are in the sky over the side towers of the castle.

The Gringonneur Sun shows a sun blazing in the sky above a maiden with long fair hair who stands in a meadow spinning.

The d'Este card has two figures, beneath a blazing sun complete with face. One, a bearded man, sits in what can only be described as what appears to be the end of a large drain pipe, and converses with a younger man standing before him.

Early Printed Card Tradition

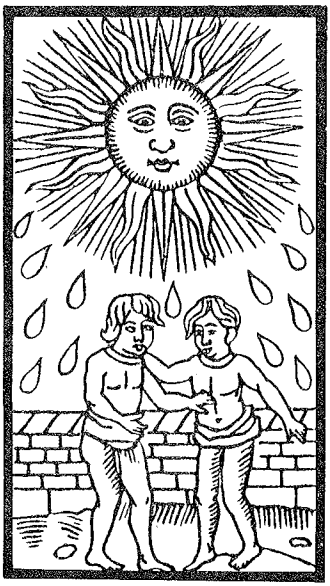
The Beaux Arts sheet shows the full sun-face over a maiden, with hat and long hair, who sits spinning before what seems to be a low ornate wall.

The Rosenwald sheet is a plain rayed sun, with face, shining in the sky with a few flat clouds above and below.

The Parisian card shows, under a shining solar face, a long haired maiden gazing into a looking glass held up to her by a monkey.

The 1680 Swiss Sun is full in the sky, with face, and drops emanate from it in all directions. Below are two children, naked

Figure 21



except for loin cloths, embracing. They are standing on a low hillock, or possibly an island, and behind them is a low wall. This schema is adopted also in the Marseilles Tarot. (See Figure 21.)

Esoteric Versions

Wirth shows the Marseilles card children in a fairy ring replete with flowers.

Waite introduces a naked boy riding a white horse and carrying a large red banner. Sunflowers grow behind the rear wall.

On the Golden Dawn card a naked boy stands on land, a naked girl in water, and they hold hands before a curved wall. Daisies grow in the grass.

Commentary

There is a very great deal more behind this card than the superficies of bright enjoyment in the sunshine after the manner of a holiday poster. The Visconti-Sforza boy holding up a radiant head is an image that has resonances with the Mysteries of Orpheus and the Holy Grail, ancient Celtic Mysteries, and the esoteric Christianity associated with Salome and John the Baptist. The maiden in a meadow spinning is another deep and evocative symbol. Also the Sun's face being given features is no mere convention but an affirmation that it is the physical body of a conscious being.

The Last Judgment

Hand-Painted Tradition

In the Visconti-Sforza card a bearded figure looks down with a drawn sword, flanked by two angels blowing trumpets. Below them three figures emerge from a tomb.

The Cary Yale Visconti-Sforza card has just the two angels, one with a bannered trumpet, the other with banner only, but four figures rise from a tomb below.

The von Bartsch card includes the bearded figure with drawn sword above the two trumpeting angels, and he is also crowned. Two figures rise from the grave.

On the Gringonneur card there are just the two winged trumpeting angels and seven figures rising from the tomb.

Early Printed Card Tradition

The Beaux Arts sheet card is dominated by a single trumpeting

angel who stands, a vast figure, on the landscape, with three figures rising below him. The Paris card is similar.

Two figures rise under a single angel, in a more formal interior context on the Rosenwald sheet. And there is also but a single angel on the Catelin Geofroy card, seated in the clouds, while three human figures rise below.

The Marseilles version shows three figures rising and an angel above appearing with rays from the clouds, with a trumpet from which depends a banner with a cross emblazoned upon it. (See Figure 22.)

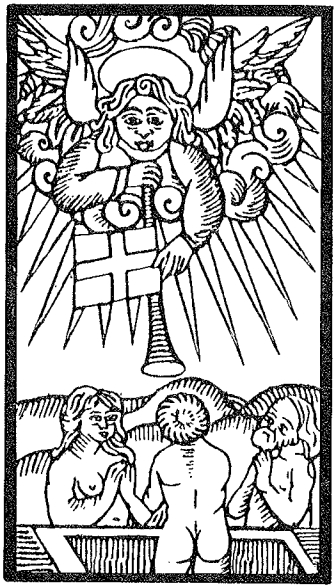


Figure 22

Esoteric Versions

Wirth follows the Marseilles card quite closely, but introduces the falling drops that are associated with the Sun, Moon and Tower cards. Waite also, with sea and high mountain peaks in the background; a feature that is suggested in the Marseilles card.

The Golden Dawn card also features sea and a number of additional symbolic elements. The angel above is in the centre of a circular rainbow pathway in the sky and is attended by serpents. He is also surrounded by a white equilateral triangle. Seven Hebrew letter Yods appear in the air, and a letter Shin at the base of the card.

Commentary
This is obviously a card of Resurrection and is an unequivocal reminder that the Renaissance magi were Christian and quite happy to work within a Christian and Biblical iconography.

It is a great handicap to understanding to ignore this fact. If the angel were to be seen as an inter-galactic spaceman arriving on his starship to rescue the beleagured individuals of a dying planet then something of the mighty and wide ranging implications of this conception might become more apparent to those who cannot come easily to terms with conventional religious tradition.

The World

Hand-Painted Images
The World in the Visconti-Sforza Tarot shows two winged naked boys, each draped with a scarf about the shoulders, in an outdoor landscape, indicating a formal sphere above them in which there is a fair many-turretted castle, upon an island in the middle of the sea, with golden stars above the castle in the sphere.

The Cary Yale Visconti-Sforza card shows a woman in the top half of the card bearing a trumpet in her right hand and a crown in her left. Below a scallop-shaped motif there is a large golden crown beneath which, under an arch, is a scene of various castles and buildings, with sea and a river. Ships embark on the sea, and there is a boat being rowed in the river, between a fisherman on one bank and an approaching knight on horseback on the other.

The Visconti-Sforza card in the London Guildhall follows the former scheme. But a card in the Museo Civica, Catania is a variant of the latter. Here a maiden with a sword and orb, or seal, stands upon a sphere that contains land and seascapes – whilst below are six mountain islands. The Gringonneur card is similar but instead of a sword the maiden carries a sceptre with a cross at the top.

On the d'Este card a winged naked child sits above the sphere, and below is an eagle with spread wings, apparently supporting the sphere. The child holds a sceptre and an orb or seal.

Early Printed Card Tradition
The Beaux Arts sheet has a quite formal design. The sphere is

like a circular wreath divided in a way similar to the arms of a Maltese cross, and surrounding a quartered centre in which are emblems of the four elements – clouds, a moon, a fiery altar and a tree. The figure standing above is fully armed with a winged helmet and holds an orb and sceptre. The orb is topped with a cross, the sceptre with a winged orb.

The Rosenwald sheet also shows a circular wreath in which is a land- and sea-scape. An angel stands above it, with wings and halo, holding sword and orb.

The Parisian card shows the world itself as a great orb, with cross rising from it, tilted at an angle. Above, a naked figure is partly draped with a curtain or banner.

The Marseilles card shows a naked figure, draped with scarf, and carrying two batons, inside an oval wreath, with angel, eagle, lion and bull at the corners, the first three with halos. (See Figure 23.)

Figure 23

Esoteric Versions

Wirth's Le Monde has a circular wreath in which the female figure appears, and the two batons are carried in one hand.

Waite closely follows Marseilles symbolism. The Golden Dawn also, in general structure, although the wreath is like a necklace of pearls before twelve spheres in zodiacal colours.

The female figure also has a moon above her head and a star beneath her feet.

Commentary

It is interesting to compare the Visconti-Sforza and the Marseilles card, for a certain counterchange seems to have taken place. The single draped figure on the Visconti-Sforza Sun appears on the Marseilles World; and the two naked children of the Visconti-Sforza World appear on the Marseilles Sun.

Esoterically there is a close symbolic link between Sun and Earth, which is highlighted in the Qabalistic Tree of Life, where the Lesser Countenance of the Sun sphere, Tiphereth, has his Bride in the Earth sphere, Malkuth.

A strong impression that comes from the Visconti-Sforza design is that the world here shown is an ideal world. It is the New Jerusalem yet to come. This card therefore seems the summation of achievement, as befits, in the game, the highest scoring Trump.

Indeed if the previous card of the Last Judgement represents an awakening of the dead, then this is the new world to which they are awakened. This is amply represented in the wreathed figure on the Marseilles card, surrounded by the four cosmic principles. It is a card of achievement.

3

The Language of the Tarot Images in Pattern and Sequence

A conceptual structure that will serve as a starting point for us to appreciate the magical dynamics of the Tarot can be found in the design of the Marseilles Trump of the World. That is, a dancing figure within a wreath, with one of the four kerubic emblems at each corner of the card.

These kerubic emblems represent the Elemental powers that are unfolded in the suit cards. The attributions run as follows:

Man (or Angel)	Air	Swords	East
Lion	Fire	Wands	South
Eagle	Water	Cups	West
Ox (or Bull)	Earth	Coins	North

The Trumps are represented by the central figure.

Thus we can take a first step in practical magic by sorting the pack into five stacks, face up, running in sequence from the Aces at the top to the Kings at the bottom of each pile. The Trumps similarly are arranged face up in the centre, with the Fool on the top, running down in numbered sequence to the World. (See Figure 24.)

This in itself is an evocative meditation symbol, for from it the rest of the powers represented by the Tarot can unfold.

One method of unfolding these powers visually is to lay the cards out after the fashion of the mysterious table of Tarot images that is described in Charles Williams' novel *The Greater Trumps*.

This circular table, kept in a curtained room behind locked doors, had upon it twenty-two sculpted figures of the Tarot Trumps that danced of their own volition. In the centre was the Fool, about which the other Trump figures moved, generating a humming sound and a golden light. The lesser cards were

Figure 24

represented by the structure of the underpart of the table itself, a single central support opening into four foot pieces each with fourteen claws. We, however, can represent these cards by placing them in a circle outlining the circumference of the table top. It is also quite evocative to arrange the central dancing figures in a roughly spiral way. The full arrangement will be something after the style of Figure 25.

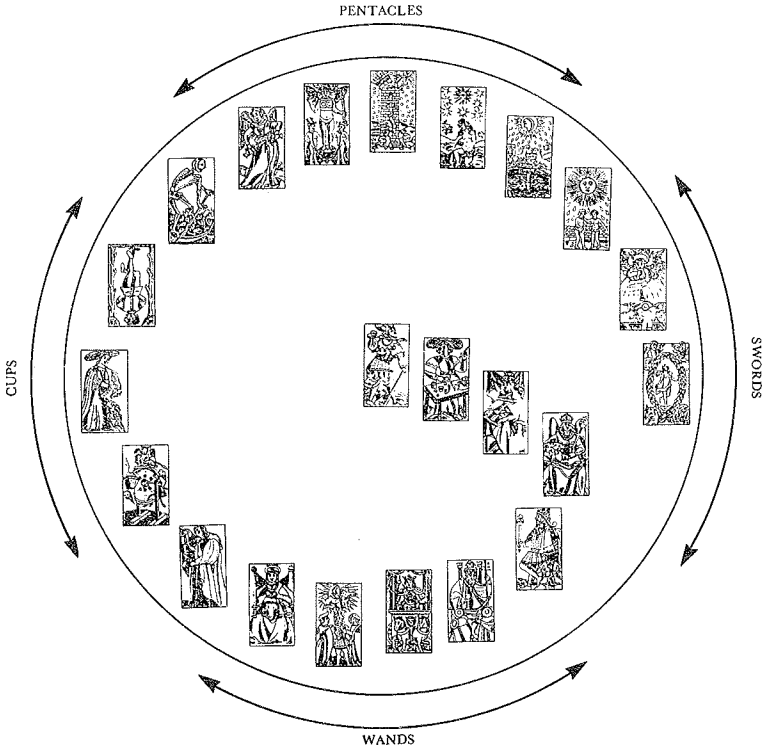


Figure 25

It will save space and also help to create greater realism if we fashion little stands for each of the Trump cards, so that they stand upright. This is most simply done by cutting and folding a slip of thin card to form a V-shaped base, with vertical slots to hold the Tarot card. (See Figure 26.)

In the first instance it will serve to lay out the suit cards in straight sequence in clockwise direction from Ace through to King. From this straightforward spread, where all the cards are visible in logical sequence, the a-logical sequences and

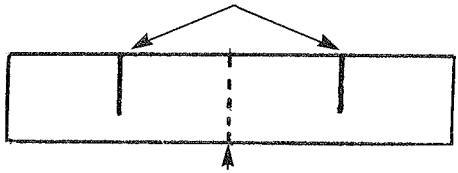


Figure 26

arrangements will have the chance to make themselves apparent to the intuitive and meditative eye.

The four suits represent the four modes of expression of created existence. These four modes have their objective expression at all levels, from the most spiritual to the most material; and also their subjective experience at all levels, from the most interior and mystical to the physical and organic.

There is considerable written material available for the student to gain acquaintance with the dynamics of this fourfold structure. In *The Rose Cross and the Goddess* we have built up the same structure starting from the basic principles of nature, and also using musical symbolism. They are familiar, in their subjective aspect, to students of Jungian psychology in the four functions of intuition, intellect, feeling and sensation. W. G. Gray has used the system as the basis for his magical textbooks and indeed did much to pioneer the modern use of it. I have formulated it in elementary terms in *The Practice of Ritual Magic.* And in terms relating to the Tarot specifically they are imaginatively described in Charles Williams' *The Greater Trumps*, though Williams prefers, as do some other authorities and practitioners, to equate Swords with Fire and Wands with Air. This, however, does not affect the general principles of the fourfold magical structure.

An encyclopaedia could be compiled without exhausting the detailed ramifications of the structure that we have laid out. It represents all created existence in all its potential. It is a model of the universe, and thus also a model of the soul of man, which reflects it.

We will pursue one or two possible developments of structure to indicate how insights can be gained in this way.

One of the symbolic functions of this circle is that of time. The turning of the Earth causes the apparent movement of the

Sun in the sky, at its zenith in the South, its rising and setting over the horizon in East and West, and its unseen nadir, below the horizon, in the North. Applying this to our arrangement the Swords take on associations related to Dawn and beginnings of things; the Wands to Noon and the full power of the noon-day brightness; the Cups to Dusk and the receptive twilight time; the Coins to Midnight and the hidden wisdom of the starlit, moonlit hours of the Midnight Sun.

Similarly, by reference to the path of the Earth around the Sun as a function of our time circle, the Dawn of the Year, or the Spring, and all that is associated with it in terms of new life, may be associated with the Sword cards. In like manner the Wands relate to the powers of Summer; the Cups to the powers of Autumn, and the Coins to those of Winter.

These simple allocations of the hours of the day and the seasons of the year to the circle of cards of the suits gives the basis for a deep appreciation of the Elemental forces that go to make up the natural world, and their application to the individual cards themselves.

This application extends also to human life itself, to the dawn and springtime of childhood and youth; to the summer and high noon of young adulthood; to the autumn and dusk of advancing middle years; and to the winter and night-time of old age.

You may tread the circle of cards in the mind's eye, allowing the associations of each time and season to come into consciousness at the appropriate quarter and suit. This can be taken to a greater degree of participation by imagining yourself, like Alice in Wonderland, as very small, or alternatively the cards as very large, and processing about their circle. This indeed is a form of 'path working' (see Chapter 4).

You may then become aware of the dancing spiral of the archetypes of the Trumps whirling about the centre, inviting you into the central dance of the inner forces of life, in their infinite complexities and interlocked experiences. And through this whirling dance of the archetypal forces you may discern at the centre the stable zero point, the pole about which all the dance revolves, and about which also the outer circle of Elemental cards is structured, the central Fool. Ultimately you may dance, and merge your being, with the Fool. This is the attainment of a universal consciousness that may be approached and experienced in many ways – just as there are many ways of approaching the centre through the ever changing labyrinthine

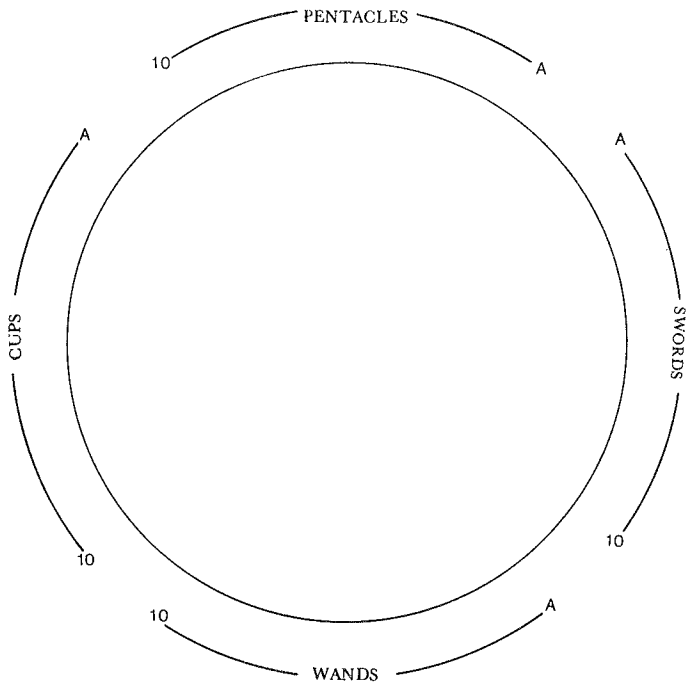
dance of the archetypal forces that make up the framework of existence.

To return however to our considerations of the circumference of the Elemental cards, we may attain to further realizations by slightly changing their arrangement at each quarter.

There is a certain polar complement between the Swords and Wands on the one hand, and the Cups and Coins on the other. The Swords and Wands with their associations of Dawn and Noon, Spring and Summer, pertain to growth or outer life expression; whilst the Cups and Coins with their associations of Dusk and Midnight, Autumn and Winter, pertain to fruiting and seeding and the inward turning of life expression.

It is interesting to note, in this respect, a traditional Tarot scoring practice that has fallen from modern card game usage. That is that the Aces to Tens rank one way in the Swords and Wands, which have Ten high and Ace low; and the other way in the Cups and Coins, which have Ace high and Ten low. We could express this diagrammatically in Figure 27.

Figure 27



It will be realized that esoterically the numbers 1 to 10 imply an outward turning and conversely 10 to 1 an inward turning of the life forces. On the Tree of Life of the Qabalah, Kether is the 1st Sephirah and Malkuth the 10th; the inner and outer poles of creation respectively.

We should note that the Court Cards do not figure in this peculiar method of scoring. They in fact may be seen to occupy a different function esoterically, each one being a mode of operation at different levels of Elemental force.

This is perhaps best expressed by reference to a particular numerical arrangement that was the keystone of Pythagorean number mysticism – the tetractis. This is an arrangement of the numbers 1 to 10 in triangular pattern of four ranks, thus:

1	King
2 3	Queen
4 5 6	Knight
7 8 9 10	Page

Each of these four ranks of numbers can be epitomized by one of the four Court Cards. The King is the fount of all number at unity; the Queen is the principle of duality, and the odd and even principles; the Knight is the threefold expression and the Page the fourfold manifestation of the appropriate Elemental power.

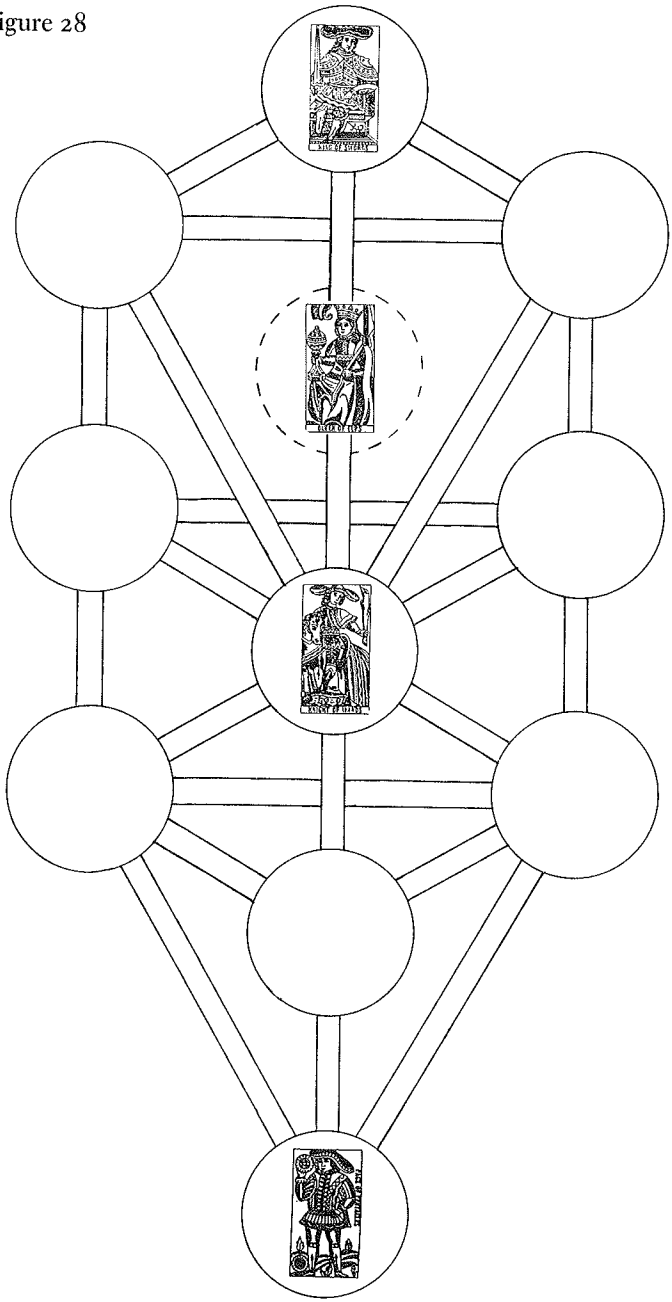
Those familiar with the Qabalistic Tree of Life may also observe a special relationship with the Sephiroth, the King pertaining to the 1st Sephirah, Kether; the Queen to the 3rd Sephirah, Binah; the Knight to the 6th Sephirah, Tiphereth; and the Page to the 10th Sephirah, Malkuth.

Sufficient has been said to provide the discerning Qabalistic student with several avenues of fruitful meditation, and in Figure 28 the layout of the cards on the Tree of Life is shown. It will be observed that the Queen may be placed in the Daath position, mediating between the purely spiritual and the more formative aspects of life expression. In this role she partakes of both the 2nd and 3rd Sephiroth, as Mother of Form in Binah, and Astraea the Star Maiden in Chockmah.

However, one does not have to be a student of the Qabalah or of Pythagorean mathematics to understand the Tarot, even though there are parallels of interpretation, in that the systems, each in their way, describe the same inner reality.

The Tarot is quite capable of demonstrating its own wisdom

Figure 28



without recourse to other systems. It is simply a question of actively working with the images, intellectually, intuitively, imaginatively and physically. It is amazing what can be learned simply by persistently laying out the cards and pondering over them. And this is particularly noticeable if one uses packs of different design. Each will prove to have its own ambience of meaning and 'atmosphere'.

This free approach is demonstrated in the account by the Golden Dawn initiate Brodie Innes of his meeting with an Epping Forest gypsy. (This appeared as an article in *The Occult Review* Vol. xxix, No. 2, February 1919, reprinted in *The Sorcerer and his Apprentice,* edited by R. A. Gilbert, Aquarian Press, 1983). Mrs Lee told him, in confidence, the principles she used for interpreting the cards in divination. Brodie Innes respected this confidence but stated that '. . . it was a thoroughly logical and complete system, the four suits representing the four elements, and the four temperaments, and being judged according to their position. The Wands representing fire and the sanguine temperament, a wand card occurring in a bad position would indicate danger from rash and hasty action, anger or quarrelling; the same card in a good position would show noble and generous action, courage, energy and the like.'

He goes on to say, 'Curiously enough the numbers of the pips were interpreted on a system very much akin to the Pythagorean sytem of numbers, especially in regard to the occult meaning of odd and even numbers. Mrs Lee laid particular stress on the arrangement of the pips on the cards, pointing out its similarity to the arrangement of spots on dice and dominoes.'

However, if we examine a number of Tarot packs we shall find that there is no uniform way of laying out the numbered suit emblems. It seems apparent therefore that Mrs Lee used her own intuition to a great extent in arriving at the meanings, although they were probably based on a relatively rough and ready oral tradition. This is borne out by observation of the card reading technique of one of the older members of my own family who was taught how to read the cards, as a child, by a gypsy. Although individual cards did have a general ambience of meaning, this could be considerably altered according to place in the layout and the effect of surrounding cards. In fact, in practice cards tended to be read in terms of association and combination in pairs or groups rather than as set individual meanings. This of course is much like life itself, which is ever an

infinity of combinations and permutations of similar elements of relatively limited range in themselves.

The imaginative and intuitive approach has certainly been freely indulged by both the cartomancers and the esoteric savants of the nineteenth century, even though the latter might have been loth to admit it. And whilst there are differences in quality between the wilder flights of fancy of some of the Society cartomancers and the deeper philosophic musings of the occult fraternity initiates, each in their way is formulating a workable language. And whilst there may be a difference in aesthetic quality between say fashionable society idioms and the stately forms of a sacred language, they may be equally effective as means of communication in the appropriate context.

We are dealing with the language of symbols. And if one seeks a language for the elucidation of daily problems of worldly folk then the meanings to be found in any cartomancy book may serve very well, however arbitrary they may seem. If one seeks higher wisdom then one may do better to go to the classical systems of Pythagorean numerology or Qabalah for a language that can do justice to the concepts involved. The strength of the Tarot is that it can cater for either approach equally well.

As an example, we might cite the traditional titles of the small cards of the Tarot as they have been enshrined in Western occult tradition via the Golden Dawn and their meanings as described in a typical fortune telling book. For instance, a popular fortune telling compendium cites the Five of Cups as a card that 'foreshadows marriage, a happy and triumphant conclusion to a love affair', whilst a respected occult text accords to the same card 'Loss in pleasure. Partial loss. Vain regret'. From the same sources the Seven of Swords is either 'Business success and bright prospects' or 'Unstable effort, uncertainty, partial success.'

It should be plain that different background criteria are being referred to as the rationale for the meanings. In fact the most obvious divergence is whether one regards Swords as symbols of misfortune per se, as was probably the case in Renaissance times, or of the Element Air, which is a later esoteric preference.

We should not, from this, jump to the conclusion that the whole thing is subjective and arbitrary nonsense. The fact is that despite these anomalies good practitioners can make the thing work. This is because the inner planes are what might be called ideoplastic – they will conform to many of our preconceptions.

So the lesson is that each student should formulate personal interpretations from personal meditation and experience.

This extends even to the numbers, titles, and sequence of the Tarot Trumps. We have seen earlier that the iconography could change over the years. On the original hand-painted Trionphi there were no names or numbers. Therefore there is no documentary evidence as to what their original sequence was, or indeed even if they had a numbered order.

Certainly as soon as they became part of a game of play they would have needed a scoring order and this they had, we know, from the anti-gaming sermon of the Steele manuscript.

However, the numbered order given in that manuscript differs from that of the familiar Marseilles Tarot, and when we look more closely at the historical record we find that there are regional differences in the order.

At the greatest possible count it could be said that there are ten or eleven different orders for the Trumps. However, this can be reduced to three when minor deviations are ignored. Similarly, we may disregard blatant interference with the game for social or political reasons, as when, for instance, in the Papal States, the Emperor, Empress, Pope and Female Pope cards were replaced by four equal ranking Moors.

Following Professor Dummett's analysis we can identify the three basic systems as follows:

Variant A is typified by the Sicilian packs,
Variant B is found in the Steele manuscript,
Variant C is that of the Marseilles Tarot.

Variant A could well be considered a late version. It suffered a certain amount of change during its passage from a probable Florentine origin down through Bologna and Rome to relatively late arrival in Sicily.

Variant B has an early provenance – before 1500 – but of a literary and therefore indirect nature.

Variant C can only be traced with certainty back to the mid-sixteenth century but in the course of time, through the popularity of the Marseilles pack and the industry of the Marseilles manufacturers, has become a standard.

When we place the orders side by side we see, however, that there is a firm general structure that is common to all three. The variations occur mostly as a result of switching the positions of the Cardinal Virtue cards of Strength, Temperance and Justice.

Let us list them, standardizing the titles according to our own chosen convention. It will be noted that in none of these lists does the Fool appear, for as the *scusi*, it is not part of the order of Trumps, it has no scoring capacity but simply changes the rules by its presence.

	A	B	C
1	Magician	Magician	Magician
2	Empress	Empress	High Priestess
3	Emperor	Emperor	Empress
4	High Priestess	High Priestess	Emperor
5	Hierophant	Hierophant	Hierophant
6	Temperance	Temperance	Lovers
7	Strength	Lovers	Chariot
8	Justice	Chariot	Justice
9	Lovers	Strength	Hermit
10	Chariot	Wheel	Wheel
11	Wheel	Hermit	Strength
12	Hanged Man	Hanged Man	Hanged Man
13	Hermit	Death	Death
14	Death	Devil	Temperance
15	Devil	Tower	Devil
16	Tower	Star	Tower
17	Star	Moon	Star
18	Moon	Sun	Moon
19	Sun	Last Judgement	Sun
20	World	Justice	Last Judgement
21	Last Judgement	World	World

In these principal Variants the following deviations occur:

Variant A: Hanged Man and Hermit may interchange.
Wheel and Chariot may interchange.
Lovers may be placed above Temperance and Temperance, Strength and Justice displaced by one.
Both Lovers and Chariot may be placed above Temperance, and Temperance, Strength and Justice similarly displaced but the latter two also interchanging.
In some cases the Emperor, Empress, High Priestess and Hierophant have been altered for religious reasons, or the Devil replaced by a Ship.

Variant B: Emperor and High Priestess may interchange.
Lovers and Chariot may interchange.

Variant C: High Priestess and Empress may interchange.
Empress and Emperor may interchange.
Chariot and Justice may interchange.
Hermit and Strength may interchange.

And when we compare the three Variants one with another the differences between Variants B and C may be summarized as follows:

High Priestess may come before or after Empress and Emperor.
Temperance may appear either between Hierophant and Lovers or between Death and Devil.
Strength and the Hermit may interchange.
Justice may appear either between Chariot and Hermit or between Last Judgement and the World.

The general characteristics of Variant A in comparison with B and C are that:

World and Last Judgement are interchanged;
and the Cardinal Virtues, Temperance, Strength and Justice remain close together.

All this seems very complicated but we have itemized it at some length in view of the latter day esoteric preoccupation with formulating a one true order. The above should show that this is none too easy and, if one exists, unlikely to be achieved by minor alterations of the Marseilles order. This has been the general esoteric tendency, interchanging Justice and Strength, and possibly the Emperor and the Star, and variously attempting to fit in the Fool at the beginning, the end, or between the Last Judgement and the World.

However, if we examine the general outline of the three principal Variants, as Professor Dummett points out, we see that they fall into three discrete segments if we ignore the Cardinal Virtues. All minor interchanges occur only within the bounds of these segments. They are:

Segment 1: Magician, Empress, Emperor, High Priestess, Hierophant.

Segment 2: Lovers, Chariot, Wheel, Hermit, Hanged Man.
Segment 3: Death, Devil, Tower, Star, Moon, Sun, Last Judgement, World.

This accounts for eighteen cards, the rest being made up by the three Virtues – Temperance, Strength and Justice – plus, as an outsider, the Fool.

So if we wish to conjecture what the possible original sequence may have been, we would do well to confine ourselves within these parameters. We should also bear in mind the change in meaning that has occurred with some of the Trumps, for instance:

the Hermit having originally been Time;
the Lovers having originally been Love;
the Chariot having originally been Victory;
the Hanged Man having originally been a Traitor.

We will then find ourselves presented with four sets of four cards each:

a) 'Powers' : Emperor, Empress, Hierophant, High Priestess.
b) 'Conditions' : Love, Victory, Time, Fortune.
c) 'Malefics' : Traitor, Death, Devil, Tower (of Babel or Hell's Gate).
d) 'Celestial Spheres' : Stars, Moon, Sun, Angelic World or Heaven.

Against each of these sets we can place one of the remaining cards, to represent each set as a whole:

a) Strength – against the Powers.
b) Temperance – against the Conditions.
c) Justice – against the Malefics.
d) World – against the Celestial Spheres.

Oddly, we find that each of these has a correspondence with one of the suits:

Strength to Wands (one version has a man wielding a club).
Temperance to Cups (the figure holds two cups).
Justice to Swords (the figure holds a sword).
World to Coins (the medallion-like appearance of the World on the earlier cards).

This leaves the Magician with his table of implements as controller, in turn, of these four cards. Thus there is a neat and meaningful symmetry in the arrangement. (See Figure 29) The Fool, again, is outside of this arrangement. If one likes, he can be thought to represent the interior, unmanifest side, of the Magician.

We do not claim that this is in fact the original conception. We lay it out simply as an example of the way the cards will arrange themselves if one is willing to adopt a flexible approach and go back to first principles.

This arrangement, if true, reflects a different conception of the suits or four-fold powers of the Tarot than the Elemental or nature based one that we have already outlined.

Instead of Air for Swords we have Evil;
instead of Fire for Wands we have Spiritual and Executive Power;
instead of Water for Cups we have Existential Conditions of life;
instead of Earth for Coins we have Celestial Spheres and their influence.

This, we feel, may well represent a Renaissance view of the universe, magically expressed, and it also accords with the cartomantic fortune tellers' general conception of the cards, which tends to view

Swords as malefic or sorrow bearing;
Wands as organizational;
Cups as emotional;
Coins as financial or matters of material well being.

In this respect Alliette and his like, so despised by Eliphas Lévi and the more philosophical esoteric commentators, may well be closer to the original conception of the Tarot than the savants of the esoteric brotherhoods.

This is not necessarily a condemnation of the latter. Ideas and modes of consciousness move on. And to remain relevant to current needs an ancient wisdom has to grow and develop into a modern wisdom. Hence the changing meanings of some of the cards.

In this context it will be seen that the fortune telling stream of interpretation of the meaning of the cards is a conservative tendency rather than a wildly innovative one, despite appear-

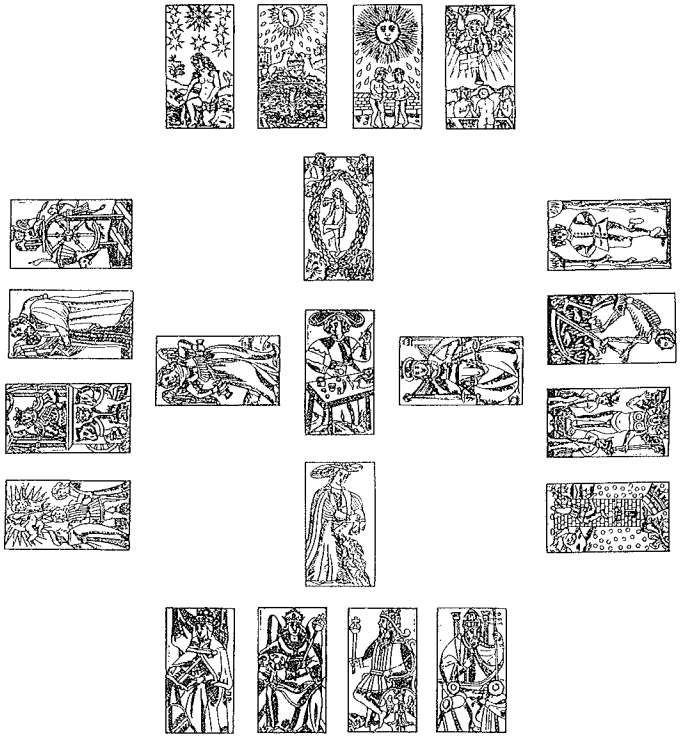


Figure 29

ances to the contrary. And the progress in thinking about the meaning of the cards comes in fact from the esoteric theorists who tend to be thought of, not least of all by themselves, as conservative guardians of ancient secrets.

It is a mistake to consider one generation right and another wrong. Each formulates their own needs and expression of life qualitites, and these will be reflected in the Tarot. With changes in the mode of consciousness over a five hundred year period we should expect to find changes and modifications of interpretation. The great strength of the Tarot is its organic vitality, its ability to adapt to the needs of those who go to it. We should, in general terms, seek for expansion of meanings for each card, rather than limitations.

It is similarly limiting to accept later conventions or the assumptions of various esoteric authorities as rigid and inviolable rules. To this end it can be helpful to use, as we have done throughout the illustrations of this book, a set with the names and numbers blanked off. This, combined with the artless crudity of the Marseilles designs, gives a greater freedom for the images to speak.

There are many arrangements that can be made that will afford interesting intuitive insights.

For instance, we could take the Trumps in the conventional Marseilles order and read them off as a treatise of spiritual alchemy. In this lay-out one has three vortices of four cards, interlinked by pairs. By reference to the lay-out in Figure 30 the following seed ideas may be used as a fruitful meditation sequence.

0:	Let the imagination flow freely.
1:	It will form or discover its own structures,
2/3/4/5:	constellating in a four fold manner, Male and Female, Within and Without.
6:	From this dual polarity the flying miraculous creature (Cupid) will be brought forth,
7:	and go forth like a conquering hero in the moving four fold structure, pulled by the steed of wisdom on the wheels of cyclic change.
8/9/10/11:	This produces a further field of archetypal expression: Astraea, the Virgin of the Worlds, the holder of the balance and of polarities;

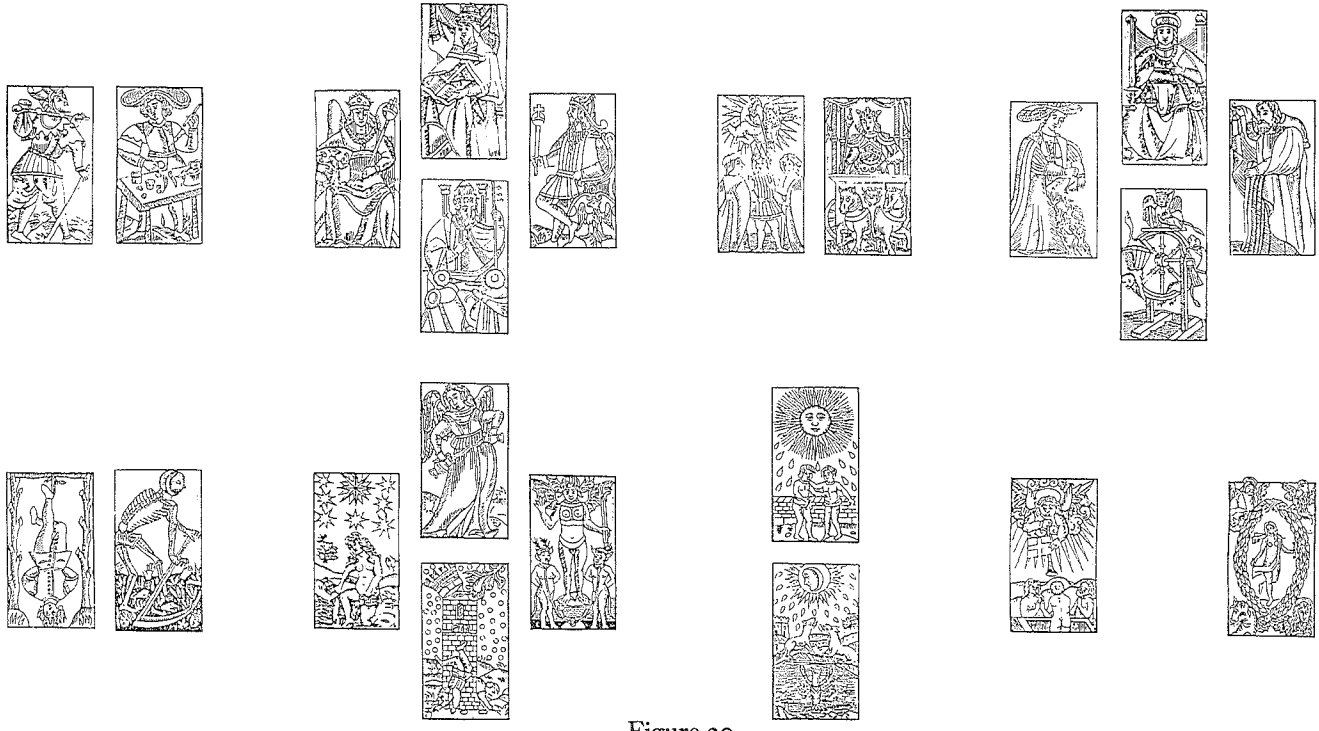


Figure 30

our own mission, or back into another planet somewhere in some different space and time. We are bidden by our dog to close our eyes and to think of the sun, a golden sphere before us, feeling its warmth upon our hands and face. And when we so feel it to open our eyes again.

When we do so, we find that the great angel and the milling throng has gone, but hanging in a clear blue sky before us is a golden sun. It has a face just like the Moon had earlier, big, broad and smiling, and with a distinct resemblance to the Fool, with rippling flames and a heat haze passing over its surface continually; so that it is difficult to make out its features exactly.

Before us is a sward of bright green turf before a garden wall, over the top of which tall sunflowers nod their heads. And in a circle on the grass before us are lots of little animals gambolling and playing – white mice, guinea pigs, rabbits.

'This is the pet's garden,' explains the dog, 'or part of it. In other parts we could find cats, dogs, or ponies. Any animal so closely associated with humankind that it has been given a personal name.'

He says we can, if we wish, go to any of these other parts of the garden. They are all similar to this, with green sward, wall and sun flowers before the Sun, but with different types of animals. There, if we call the appropriate name, re-acquaintance can be made with some once loved animal.

There are childrens' gardens up here too, we are told. Those who leave the outside world prematurely, by illness or by accident, so that they can finish growing up.

One may also see dreaming worldlings, who are only visiting, for comfort and refreshment. These, however, look like vapoury ghosts and as if they are asleep, which, indeed, in the outer world is what they are. They may not remember their visit, except perhaps in confused remembrance of dream, but we are special visitors, we are having a waking dream, or induced vision, and so will remember all of what we see in these Summerlands of Between the Worlds.

But with this realization comes the remembrance that we are on a dedicated mission, and not seeking rest or fulfilment of curiosity. Yet at times of need we may indeed return here, to this happy land of individualizing animals and children.

For a little while longer we are allowed to bask in the rays of this inner Sun and to make contact with any who reside here. We do this by calling their name and thinking of them with love

as standing in the sun before us.

Then we must pass on our way.

Exit-point Two

Third Branch: (The Star and Temperance)

We turn to the Fool's dog who opens and guards the ways, to be directed in the next stage of our journey to the profounder depths, or more extended heights, of the inner worlds.

He tells us we must seek the Star Maiden, who is to be found where land and waters meet. This is a similar location and condition to where we first saw the inner Moon but is on a higher level. However, we take a sighting on where land and water meet by looking below us. We look intently at the ground on which we stand, and as we look we see it become transparent, and we can see land and sea and shore line far beneath. We follow the dog as he starts to run towards a point below which the line of land and water meet. Then, raising our eyes, we find we are on the shore of a calm clear lake at our own level, with rushes and water plants at its margin. We stand on the grassy bank and look out over the water.

To our surprise we find that stars appear to be forming in and upon the still water. It is as if the night sky were being reflected in the water of the lake, but above us the sky remains the bright blue of the day.

We notice that the stars seem to form a pattern. It is rather like the kind of star map where lines are drawn to represent the shapes of constellations. Only whilst on star maps the figured drawings often do not seem to relate very closely to the actual pattern of the stars, in this case, although there are no lines drawn, the actual pattern of the stars in the water very clearly shows an outline. It is of a maiden kneeling. She is holding two vases of water. One of these she pours out into the waters of the lake itself. The other, because the figure is so close to the shoreline, she appears to be pouring onto the land by the lakeside.

Also reflected in the water is a ring of bright stars around her head. There are seven, bigger and brighter than any star we have ever seen.

Parts of a landscape can be seen behind her, outlined in the stars. It is of low rolling hills, with a tree that has clusters of star blossoms and leaves and fruit all at once. There are star birds

within it too, and shining butterflies, outlined in the different silvery blue, green, red, purple and yellow colours of starlight.

We wonder if the starry country laid out in the lake is under the water or in the skies overhead, and if so, why we cannot see it in the sky above.

'It is neither under nor over the water,' says a deep fluty voice behind us, and turning, we see a large white swan standing on the bank, regarding us with a hard round eye.

It walks past us and with a light splash slides onto the waters of the lake. The outgoing circle of ripples causes the pattern of stars in the water to bob up and down for a little, but as the waters still, there remain the star images in the lake, plainly to be seen, of the tree and birds and butterflies and the maiden pouring water from her vases.

'Neither under nor over the water,' repeats the swan, floating in the water before us, at the feet of the image of the star maiden, 'but *on* the water. That is where reflections are.'

We wonder why we cannot see the real stars that the reflections come from, for the sky above is the bright clear azure of the day.

'Because you do not have eyes that can see what is real,' says the swan, in answer to our unarticulated question. 'You come from a world of illusions. On a spinning ball whose whirling movement spins out a thread of weaving patterns you take to be the real. You only see in reflecting surfaces. You are children of the mirror. But there is much to be learned from the starry lake, and passing to the other side of the looking glass.'

And so saying the swan turns, and instead of swimming away, plunges down into the water. As we watch we see her, now an outline of stars within the picture, receding into the distance toward the centre of the lake. We wonder whether we are expected to follow her but, as we watch, a star in the lake seems to be growing bigger. It is the great star over the maiden's head that begins to grow in size and brightness, to such an extent that the other stars in the water become quite pale by comparison. And it begins to come, beneath the water, towards us. Soon it is like a glowing ball just beneath the surface of the waters at our feet. We are aware of nothing else within the waters until, with a splash, it rises out of the water before us and we see that, bobbing on the ripples it has made on the surface of the lake, it has become a little boat. It is white in colour and shaped in the form of a swan. Its prow is built up high like a swan's neck

and it has a beautifully sculptured swan's head at its top. The rest of the boat curves round like a swan's body but with the normal shape of the wings removed, to reveal the bottom of a boat. It is swept round to a stern that is similar in shape to the tail feathers of a swan, and at the back of the boat, on a little seat, there sits a tall figure with blue and silver draperies, and wings.

The boat comes to the shore before us and, following the dog's lead, we step into it. Being a magical boat, despite its small size it can contain any number of people. We sit facing the stern looking back toward the angel, who we see holds two cups, as did the image of the star maiden in the lake.

Smiling serenely the angel raises one cup on high and begins to tilt it so that the contents pour out. It is like a firework display. From the cup there falls a stream of coloured lights, sparks, and flaming shapes; some whirling like catherine wheels, some shooting off brilliant points of light, some spouting forth golden rain, and in every conceivable shape and colour. The angel catches the flow of fiery liquid shapes in the other cup and holds it forth for us to look at. When we look into the rim of the cup it is like looking out of a hole let into a huge expanse of sky. As far as the eye can see, there are revolving, spinning, balls of different sizes and colours floating in space, some of them orbitting round each other. It is like the making of a host of whole worlds and suns and planets.

Then, in another breathtaking sight, the angel extends its brilliant wings, like a butterfly's, and gently fanning them, propels us across the lake.

As we proceed we are struck by more wonders. We no longer seem to be floating on the surface of a lake with reflections of the stars in the waters. Out on the lake the stars are real, and we are proceeding through bright indigo darkness with the stars all about us and on every side and above us, as well as below the boat.

And we listen too, for from the stars about us there comes a beautiful singing, like a harmonious choir, that contains all kinds of wondrous sounds, as if from instruments yet unknown that we have never heard on Earth.

And then a great brightness appears on the horizon – if it can be conceived that the space between the stars can have a horizon. A golden glow appears behind us, in the direction in which we are proceeding, and we turn in our seats to regard it. It grows in intensity and lights up the airy waters about the boat so

that the stars begin to fade, and it is as if we are now proceeding across a mirror of golden glass. Then we realize that our craft has stopped.

The angel has ceased to propel us and, smiling, indicates that we alight. In that smile there is a blessing also, although no words are expressed. As we have noticed before, the beings in these higher worlds, including our dog, are telepathic. They can read our thoughts and put their own into our heads, and can do this so gently that one might quite easily think the thoughts are not theirs but our own. This can be a mixed blessing and requires vigilance over our own states of mind.

The boat has beached upon the edge of golden yellow sands, which seem to stretch for miles ahead as far as the eye can see. The scene is lit by bright golden light which seems to have no source, and we feel the thoughts of the angel, within our heads, responding to our barely formulated question as to why we can see no sun in the sky.

We do not need a sun to give us light. Light was created before there was any sun or moon, or even fire upon the Earth. A sun is but a vehicle of the outward expression of light. A moon of its quiet reflection.

The angel now rears up to a great height and gazing down upon us, laughs with joy as once again it pours streams of coloured fire and light from one cup to another. Then it up-turns the lower cup so that it pours into the swan boat. There is a sizzling, hissing sound, and the boat rears up out of the water, transformed back into a swan, which, beating its massive wings, soars up and away, back over the way that we have come. And we see, perched upon its back, between the beating pinions, the figure of the Star Maiden, shining like silver. And the swan and the maiden disappear into the distance, to become no more than a tiny point of radiance like a bright silver star. The form of the angel slowly disappears, dissolving before our eyes until nothing remains to be seen in the shimmering air. But a thought comes into our minds: 'Because you cannot see a friend it does not mean that you are alone.'

Exit-point Three.

Fourth Branch: (Death, the Tower and the Devil)

We stand and recall the dedicated purpose of our journey which is to find our own true names and the expression of our own

essential self. We follow the dog, who begins padding along what seems to be a footpath that is hardly ever used. The landscape about us is flat and hard-packed sand.

A realization comes to us that we are entering the Dangerous Wastes and that we should pause and perform a little ceremony of dedication. We stand in a circle and each putting our left hand over our heart we raise our jewelled Tarot emblem. We find that the uplifted magical weapons are bathed in sunlight, and at the same time a golden warmth enters into our hearts and radiates from us. Nothing but love for all seems to exist for us, coming to us and flowing through us.

Immediately upon having done this simple act we feel as if a rapid wind has departed from us suddenly, and a certain darkness we had not hitherto observed has lifted from us. Somehow, things seem lighter and brighter than they had been before, less glaring and harsh. An overshadowing darkness has left us. We remember how angels' thoughts can come into our heads and realize that other spirits' thoughts may do likewise. In the one case we will be impelled to the true and the good, and in the other to quarrelsomeness and distrust, or spite, lack of charity and lies. But our free will remains our own. The pictures or thoughts that come into our heads may be another's, just as any circumstance in outer life may not flow from our own initiative, but it is what we do about those pictures, thoughts or circumstances that counts. It is another's will that we be tempted; our own will if we succumb.

We continue on our way, and see something shimmering in the distance before us. It is either a spot in the desert where water wells up and brings life to all around it, an oasis; or else it is a mirage, that will lead us astray with its empty promise and illusion. Although in this desert, we begin to realize, there may be mirages that do not disappear on approach, and these can be the worst kind.

The place we see in the distance is indeed beautiful. It is a tall ivory tower, each window gay with colours, and at its top is a shining golden dome with a high point. The tower rises out of the desert emptiness like a giant pillar or a light-house, and about its foot are shady trees and gardens laid out around the rocky promontory upon which the tower is based.

As we approach the sun begins to go down, or that is what on Earth we would have assumed, for there has not been any sun to be seen in this sky. Anyhow, gradually the sky grows darker and

the air colder as we proceed. It seems to us that we have been travelling long and that night will shortly fall.

The tower appears yet more beautiful in the twilight. A tall, slender, graceful, purple silhouette against the crimson coloured sky behind it. Welcoming lights begin to shine in the high windows and in the gardens at its base, fires seem to be lit, and the savour of herbs and spices and appetizing smells, even incense-like bonfire smoke drifts towards us on the desert air.

Nonetheless, we hesitate before going further, recalling the warnings that we have received. But as we stop we hear a noise. It is like a steady drumming in the far distance behind us. Although it is not loud, it is powerful, and the ground begins to shake slightly beneath our feet as it approaches.

Above the deep drumming we also hear a high pitched kind of singing, whistling noise, quite soft, but very eerie. And then, somewhat to our alarm, in the ground all around us, cracks begin to appear. The sand is running down into some of them, and the cracks spread out in a regular pattern like the tracing of a web.

The ground beneath our feet shakes yet more violently and a large crack opens beside us. In it we see livid red earth and dry bones, what looks to be a human arm, a rib cage, and a foot and leg. With a crackling noise other fissures open and in all of them we see lying under the surface, nothing but dry bones and skulls.

We decide we have no option but to run to the tower. As we run we find ourselves in effect performing a bizarre and ungainly travesty of a dance as we strive not to put a foot into any of the cracks that open up around us. But it takes our minds from the sinister drumming noise which has become louder and louder, a dull throbbing persistently beating inside the brain. The whistling noise has become a high pitched shriek and it seems as if something is pursuing us.

As we reach the welcoming trees about the tower it seems that it is almost upon us. We turn to face it, and see that the drumming noise has been the beat of the hooves of galloping horses. A dozen or more great black beasts race towards us as if to run us down, but sheer off at the last second, unwilling, it seems, to enter the grove of trees and bushes. As the horses wheel past at full gallop, whinnying fiercely, showing long yellow teeth and the whites of rolling eyes, we see the riders on their backs. Each is clad in robes of flowing black that stream in ragged tatters behind. They carry long scythes which they whirl

beside their charging steeds to cut down anything that comes their way. And from beneath each dark cowl of this hooded band there peers, not a face, but a skull, with grinning teeth and vacant sockets for the eyes, each lit up with a putrid luminous green. And from the bony hands that grip the scythes, and the bony feet in the stirrups we see that each one of them is a skeleton.

They wheel back into the surrounding darkness and the ground gradually ceases to shiver and crack. The sound of their hoof beats and swinging scythe blades recedes into the night, and we realize the air about us is very cold. The tower, with its bright lights and appetizing smells, certainly seems more inviting than the cold dark desert with its bones and fissures underfoot, and galloping bands of skeleton reapers.

We make our way toward the tower and mount the winding row of shallow steps that spiral round its base. As we approach the wooden door we hear sounds of music and great festivity going on within. Beside the door is an iron ring on the end of a chain. As soon as we touch this there comes a loud jangling noise from within the tower walls.

The door is thrown open and in the light that streams out from it there stands a tall and gauntly beautiful lady in a long jewelled dress of red and gold. Her eyes light up as she sees us and she extends her arms in a gesture of welcome. She ushers us in and closes the door behind us.

We find ourselves in a narrow hallway, hung in rich red velvet with golden facings. The hall swings up immediately into a curving staircase, thickly carpeted, for the tower is quite narrow, rather like a lighthouse. We are also struck by the warmth of the place. After the cold night air it seems almost oppressive and makes it hard to breathe. The air is scented, with a sweet sugary smell. At a distance from the tower this had seemed enticing and inviting but close to, in the thick of it, it seems slightly sickly and oppressive.

A tall man appears and stands behind the lady. He too is richly dressed, in a tight fitting coat of black, with silver and pearl buttons, and a wide starched collar that protrudes like wings on either side, and that is cut so high that he has to hold his head forward and up in an unnatural and uncomfortable way.

He peers at us in an oddly eager fashion, without taking his eyes from us, and beckoning continually, he shuffles backwards

before us up the stair well while the tall lady advances behind us. And so we ascend the spiral stair, towards the sound of shouting and singing and raucous jollity.

The tall man stops outside a tall narrow door hung with curtains. The noise from behind is intense. A hectic party is obviously in progress. He swings the curtains back upon their rod – and instantly there is silence.

We are ushered into a strange scene. The room is full of people but everyone has stopped stock still and is silent at our entry, staring fixedly at us. It is as if each one of them had suddenly turned into a statue. But they are living all right. Their hot flushed faces are plainly not of stone, and they breathe heavily from the exertions of barely a second before.

The tall man and woman walk forward with us to a clear space in the centre of the room. We look around at the circle of heavily breathing, staring faces about us. A riotous party has been taking place. There are bits of cake, half eaten sandwiches and cocktail delicacies all over the floor, some trodden into the carpet. Tables around the edge of the room have their cloths half pulled off, their contents spilled around them. And by the state of their disarray and attitude some of those present have been interrupted in pursuits other than drink or food.

The tall woman addresses us. 'We welcome you to join our celebration,' she says, 'to welcome you and receive your gifts.'

We realize that the gifts she means are the jewelled Tarot emblems that we carry before us, and we feel great reluctance to part with them.

'I know they were given to you by someone you regard a friend,' says the woman, smiling, 'but not to keep for ever!'

'To exchange, to barter, for something better,' says the tall man, coming forward holding out his hands for them, 'so you may join our privileged company, where everyone can do as they like.'

We look around at the company. They do not look exactly happy – but rather desperate and degraded.

We realize that not only do we not wish to join them, but that we are firmly determined to keep our emblems given us by the Fool and his mother. They represent our personal integrity.

'Do not forget we may be bigger and stronger than you,' adds the woman, with a note of menace.

'We are the King and Queen of this Tower,' says the man, 'and you are our prisoners.'

We gather into an outward facing circle instinctively, to protect ourselves.

'Children of Night and Delight,' cries the Queen, 'tear them down!'

The figures about us in the room immediately take on life and movement, and slowly gather in a circle about us, a vicious or a mocking gleam in every eye.

'Fear not!' comes the clear voice, in our minds, of the Fool's dog. 'Raise your emblems before you, that were given you in wisdom and power and love!'

We raise them before us and the jewelled stars give off a diamond radiance that obliterates all the hatefulness about us.

'Begone all phantasms!' comes the clear voice of the dog, 'Show yourselves as you are.'

There is a rumbling and crumbling noise that grows louder and louder, culminating in an awareness of falling objects all around us. We ourselves do not experience any falling sensation and the falling objects do not harm us. When all is silent the dog tells us to lower our emblems, for our adversaries now stand in the light of truth without illusion.

As we do so the diamond radiance fades and we find we are standing on the ground in a pile of crumbled stone and rubble. It is as if we were in the midst of a decayed ancient city that has been overcome by a great catastrophe and been left to the wild beasts and the elements for countless years.

But we are not alone. We stand in what seems to have been a courtyard or open room. The remains of broken pillars are all around, with mossy boulders and crumbled masonry scattered on the ground. On the far side of the space is a massive block of grey stone and plaster; it looks rather like a stage in some broken down old theatre. And upon this block or stage is sitting, cross legged, a huge revolting creature.

It could well seem very frightening because of its size and monstrous appearance. Its head is like a goat, with long curling horns. And although it has the body of a man, its legs have scales, which turn into bedraggled feathers and clawed feet, like a bird. And at its feet, with chains around their necks that fasten them to the block below are the king and queen of the tower – one on each side. Although now, instead of seeming rich and powerful and dangerous, beside the great beast they are small, powerless and pitiful.

'Now see what you have done!' screams the queen at us. But

her voice is a weak thin shriek that is almost lost in the air.

'You will be sorry for this!' shouts the king, only it comes as a wheezing high pitched croak. He turns towards the towering figure above him, pointing a scrawny finger towards us. 'Devour them!' he cries.

But the great figure, far from doing as it is bidden, cries in a loud and petulant voice, cracked with self conceit, '*I* do as *I* will!' which it repeats over and over again. Its voice is not that of a giant, or what one might expect from so large a creature, but is a chorus of high pitched voices that are just like the raised voices of the revelling rabble within the tower.

As it chants its monotonous sing-song it strikes the mock king and queen repeatedly with a greasy bladder on a stick that it holds in one hand. In a way it seems to be a spiteful travesty of the Fool. The blows are not hard enough to injure but enough to bowl the king and queen over and knock the breath from them.

The monster grunts, sniffs and looks around. We feel that it has sensed our presence but is probably very short sighted. Then it catches sight of us and hisses and growls, muttering to itself with its many voices. We feel it is probably also fairly slow witted, even if cunning and malevolent. Then it focusses its gaze and attention on us.

'Come!' it says in its creaking voice, 'Give! Obey!'

It stands towering high above us and we realize that it is particularly desirous of the emblems we carry. It opens its bat like wings that have been concealed behind its back, a parody of one of the mighty and beautiful angels. Beating its pinions with a shattering clatter it rises into the air above us, its claws extended downwards, to grab our treasures or ourselves.

'Come!' we hear the voice of the dog clearly in our heads. 'Straight forward! Fear naught! Remain true!'

He rushes straight towards the hovering monster and underneath it. We follow behind, straight to the block upon which it has been standing. There we find a dark and narrow little door that has been beneath its feet, between the chained king and queen.

We are momentarily conscious of the stench of the monster, like rotting meat and blocked drains, and then we are through into clean air with the fresh smell of earth. We pass between narrow earthen walls in single file behind our faithful guide.

Presently we find ourselves in a relatively spacious chamber

underground, a cave in the earth and rock. We stand and look about us. We realize that this is the place that the beast was trying to guard; trying to prevent people finding. It wants them to go back to death and the desert, or else to become, like itself, slave of the proud tower. But it is only like a waking bad dream. Its only power is if you are afraid of it, or fall to its crude temptations. It has many voices and many names. One of them is Legion. Another is the Dweller on the Threshold, or the Shadow. But if we let the light shine within us it loses all its tawdry glamour. Now we are safely past it we can proceed to the next stage of our journey, from the desert margins of creation toward the very heart of things.

Exit-point Four

Fifth Branch: (The Wheel of Fortune)

We proceed down the narrow passage and as we do so it gets gradually wider until, after a while, we find it is fairly comfortable to walk. The path slopes quite steeply downwards but although it is not steep enough to be called a staircase, natural shelves in the rock beneath our feet make our descent easier; and the path seems to be ever curving so that we can not see very far in front or behind. This gives us the chance to examine the walls and narrow ceiling and floor of the passageway. We find that the jewels on our magical weapons give off a cool clear light which enables us to see where we are going without stumbling. We see that we are going through solid rock, which changes in colour and texture from time to time as if we are descending through different strata. Sometimes veins of other brightly coloured rocks run through the duller rock of the floor, walls and ceiling. Occasionally there are isolated pockets of crystalline rocks, that seem like strange flowers or gems embedded in the surrounding rock. Then we realize they are in fact gems.

It is like going through a gigantic treasure box surrounded by what appear to be emeralds, rubies, sapphires, and diamonds, gleaming in greens, and reds and blues and starlight crystal fire about us – in clusters, or singly, like stars in the night sky. And like the stars in the night sky, as we go deeper and deeper, so do the gems glitter and glisten with their own light – not simply reflecting the light that we carry. And as we go deeper still, little living flames can be seen flickering about them, and the way

becomes light enough for us not to need to rely on the light from the emblems we carry.

Even the solid rock of the roof and floor of the cave begins to glow with its own quiet light and then becomes almost transparent, as if it were, although still solid rock, also like a mountain mist, swirling and thickening and clearing unexpectedly, making strange shapes about us. We begin to think we can see movement in the rock all about us, like figures moving through the mist, and all going in the same direction as ourselves.

And sure enough, on either side of us, as we travel on, we begin to see little men, with long beards and pointed caps and bells on their pointed shoes, marching beside us beyond the walls of the rock. Most of them carry sacks on their backs or the tools one might expect to see in a blacksmith's shop. Hammers, tongs, little portable anvils.

It also seems to be getting warmer and we begin to hear a dull low roaring noise, and what sounds like the tapping of hundreds of tiny hammers. The path now slopes down less steeply. In fact it has levelled out and the walls of the rock have become so clear that it is as if we can see through clear pink mist at a wide circular clearing in which sit, as far as the eye can see, hundreds of the little gnomes. Each is sitting cross legged, with a little golden anvil before him, beating away with hammer and tongs, fashioning the most beautiful gems and jewels that ever eye has seen.

We think for a moment of how the monstrous beast, and those who are enslaved by it, would envy and covet these treasures. Yet these gems are too pure for them. Even if they could, by some impossible chance, lay their hands for a second upon them, the treasures would fade into the appearance of old leaves, or dust and ashes, in their grasping hands. They are allowed to have and to hold certain low quality gems and precious metals in the outer world, as an act of mercy and training, but it is their own debasing greed that stops them from valuing anything much better than dirt. And the really precious things seem to them to have no value.

We walk slowly through the ranks of labouring gnomes, admiring the beautiful gems that they fashion. And we realize that the little folk are in fact seated in circles around a central rim from which shines an incandescent light. At the same time, we become aware of a gradual sensation of movement, and

realize that we are slowly revolving around this centre, as if on a great carousel.

We wonder why we feel as if we are going round, and the thoughts of the dog answer us. He tells us that everything that exists is always going round. That it is called the Great Dance, and all created systems, from little atoms to mighty galaxies, do it. We do not notice it normally, but as we get near a centre so we begin to realize we are spinning and to feel the movement. The centre itself, of course, is still. Paradoxically, although obviously, there are many centres besides the One Great Centre of All. And if we go to one centre, even if it is the centre within ourselves, we are not far off *all* centres, for they all have the quality of stillness, that some people who have experienced these things would call eternity. As to whether we will see the One Great Centre depends on each one of us, and whether we really want to. The One Great Centre is at the same time very far and very near. If you do not know how to look for it, it is a universe away. But if you do know how to look, it is very near. We have, in each one of us, a replica of this universal centre. It is called the heart.

We now advance towards this centre to which we have come. As we approach, a shaft of white light powers up from the ground before us, and we realize we are standing near the brink of an enormous precipice, a circular well that plunges into untold depths below. And from it is blazing a light so bright that, like the light of the sun, it is almost impossible to gaze upon. We are at the top of what might perhaps be called a volcano of light, or one could think of it as a fountain – a light fountain. We gaze in awe at the jets of coloured light that can be discerned within the overall whiteness, and our eyes follow the pulsing jets downward, into the depths of the light well. And as our eyes grow used to the brightness, we begin to see movement and shapes down there.

It seems as if we are looking at a great wheel, with another wheel within that, going another way. And another one still. Wheels within wheels. Indeed, as we gaze, we begin to see the outline of what looks like a giant gyroscope. That is, a circular wheel turning between two rings that hold it as in a simple cage. There are childrens' toys made like them, like spinning tops that will stand secure and still, kept so by the speed and force of their spinning.

In this cage all the rings are in motion. In a slow stately

movement like the turning of the Earth or the stars. And as well as being three rings, they are also disks, for the material of which they are made, extends from the rim to the centre of each disk, and so the three disks turn and interpenetrate each other all the time. And when they do so they cause currents of light to form at their points of interchange. So we are looking down not only onto a great, slowly turning sphere of light, but within that sphere great rays of light are traced out in a pattern of huge figures of eight, each having as their centre the common point of the centre of the sphere. We count six of these great double lobes, or solid figures of eight, and each one is a different colour. As well as this the sphere is forming bands of light within itself, also of different colours. We can count seven of these, spheres within spheres, all inside the great spinning sphere made up of three turning rings. We are gazing upon the most magnificent many coloured jewel that it is possible to imagine, its colours ever changing.

'Would you like to see it closer?' asks a gruff but kindly voice beside us. We look round to see that one of the gnomes, who seems to be a chief or senior one, has approached us. He has a very long grey beard that reaches almost to his toes, and a brown leathery face wrinkled into a broad grave smile.

We say that we do so wish.

'These are the Wheels of Fortune,' says the gnome, 'and I will summon the Lady who spins them, to tell her you are here.'

He takes a horn from his side and gives three mighty blasts that echo and re-echo. As the last note dies away, as if formed from the vibration of the notes in the air, there appears before us, standing over the abyss, a fair lady dressed in sky blue, with long golden hair.

She smiles at us and beckons us to approach. As she does so a pathway of brilliant light forms before our feet, and taking our courage in both hands, and not looking down at the incandescent depths below us, we step onto the narrow bridge, towards the lady, whose radiant smile of welcome dispels all fears.

We stand at the centre before her, looking up, for she is twice the size of an ordinary human being, and many times as beautiful.

'Have you come to gaze in wonder at my beautiful spinning wheels?' she says, 'Or do you seek to pass through the Gates of Space and Time?'

The dog speaks for us. 'We look for the One Great Centre to find our real names and our essential selves. And then to return, to take them back to the outer world.'

'All ways lead to the One Great Centre,' smiles the lady, 'and all lesser centres have a gate through which one can pass in the twinkling of an eye. Or there is the longer way around the Paths of the Spheres that takes millions of years. Let me show you a central secret Path that will not long delay you.'

As she says this we begin slowly to descend. We pass between cylindrical walls of brilliant light, then there is a slight, almost undetectable bump, and a feeling of gentle vibration.

'We enter the North Pole of my spheres,' says the lady. And as we descend, so the vibrating feeling encloses us, and we can no longer see the white light-walls of the shaft, but find we are in a gigantic sphere.

It is a world of rainbow colours and of sound as well, and even scents and tastes and feelings. It is like being inside a piece of music. Each sound has a colour and a shape so that we not only hear it but see it as well. And there is no discordant noise or ugly shape. All is melody and rich harmony. Melodies appear like strings of beautiful necklaces of light, and harmonies appear like deep pools of merging colour into which the eye as well as the ear can sink in delight.

'This is the heaven of the spheres,' says the lady. 'All the sounds and sights you see and hear are angels making patterns. This is a place of patterns. If you could copy these patterns in the outer life you lead, then your little world would be harmonious too. But the angels do not think of the patterns they weave. They simply sing for joy straight from the heart, and being full of love and joy the beauty and harmony follows. It is really very simple.'

And as we continue our journey toward the centre and as we gently come to rest we see we are at the meeting place of twelve great corridors of light and echoing sound that swing off through the sphere, each of which has its own dominant shade of colour and different range and tone of harmonies. If we look down the corridors of each one we can see great figures appearing in the distance.

Some of them are animals. We notice a golden lion in one, a mighty bull in another, and in another a curly-horned ram. Others are people, a man pouring water from a pot, and a pair of twins. They are in fact the signs we associate with the

constellations of the zodiac. We are in the centre of a great jewel that is the perfect pattern of our cosmos and we pause to regard the wonders that can be seen, and to imbue our souls with the essential harmony and beauty and serene peace of the centre of a perfect pattern.

Exit-point Five

Sixth Branch: (The Hanged Man and Strength)

We now look to the floor upon which we ourselves stand and see that it is like a shining glass window or perhaps a crystal ball, and bright and clear within it is the image of a man who is upside-down.

That is, his head is closest to the floor at our feet, so in a sense he might be said to be the same way up as ourselves. But past his head we can see that he is hanging. Hanging by his feet from a wooden frame that straddles a deep precipitous chasm.

Whether this is a kind of distorting mirror we cannot be sure, but it seems as if the man is very long and tall; that his feet are miles and miles away, so small and distant are they. But his head and smiling face are right at our feet and a golden glow seems to emanate from it and from out of the mirror towards us so that it is like standing in the warmth of a radiating fire.

'This is the mirror centre,' says the lady, 'it looks like a window but in fact it is a door. There are many kinds of door to many kinds of places. Some doors are for going through, and others are best kept shut – at least for a time. But where there is a door there is always a choice. So it is for you to choose whether you wish to go through.'

We wonder how it can be that a mirror reflects something that is not there.

'It reflects something that *is* very much there, and *here*,' says the lady in reply to our thoughts. 'Remember we are at the centre of things, and so a mirror image will be in the same place as that which it reflects.'

We stare down at the figure of the man in the floor beneath us, and see that he has varicoloured clothes, and his hands are held behind his back. He gazes upon us, smiling.

'He seems to recognize you,' says the lady, 'so if you want to go through the door just wish.'

We look into the man's face, and feel that he is a friend. Someone we can trust. And we wish we were through the door.

As we do so the hanging man's arms come from behind his back and up and out through the mirror floor. As they do so, showers of golden coins fall round and about us. But we have no time to stop and pick them up for we are seized in strong, protective hands and pulled through the floor. There is a confusing topsy-turvy dizzy moment when we know not whether we are up or down as we pass through the mirror surface, and then we are plainly on the other side with the man, hanging upside-down in an abyss whose depths seem bottomless. We have no time to feel frightened, for doubling himself up from the waist, the man, still holding us, places us at the top of the chasm on firm ground. Then with masterly agility, he unhooks his foot from the hanging loop of rope, and leaps from over the yawning gap to stand before us. We see now, however, that he is of normal size, and he has a strong resemblance to the Fool, though there is a radiance about his face that makes it difficult to be certain.

But there is no doubt from the actions of the dog, who throws himself upon his master in a paroxysm of twisting and curling and tail wagging and turning round and round and jumping up and down, until at length he ceases his cavortings and sits by us, his head on one side and his ears cocked, looking up at his master attentively.

We want to ask many questions about how we got here and where we are but the radiant-headed man smiles gently and we realize these things are beyond our understanding, at least until we have completed our journey and can see things in a true perspective.

In a sense, the twisting and turning of our minds has no more chance of understanding the universe than the capering of the dog. When our minds, like the dog, are still, the man raises his arm and points into the distance.

'Beyond you is a hill,' he says, 'Climb that and you will find the way to clearer understanding.'

We turn, and see, over rolling countryside, a round green hill in the middle distance.

When we turn back to ask more questions we find we are alone. Of the man and the gaping chasm and the scaffold over its depths there is now no sign. There is no sign of life in the deserted landscape either, but it has a friendly and welcoming feel.

We make our way towards the hill. It seems to take us a long

time, perhaps because of the quality of stillness about the place. But eventually we see that after only two or three more undulations of the rolling downs we shall reach it.

As we draw closer we notice what appear to be white markings on the side of the hill. At first we cannot make out what they are but suddenly it becomes apparent. Carved in the side of the hill is the unmistakable figure of a lion, a great white lion with long curling tail and huge shaggy mane. And at the top of the hill can be seen a ring of standing stones.

When we reach the foot of the hill we find it does not seem so small. Certainly it is perfectly round, but whilst this looked pretty from afar, when we arrive we find that this means that the sides at the bottom are almost sheer. And from this point we can see nothing of the lion carving or of the standing stones at the top.

We realize that there is nothing else for it but a hard climb, calling for determination and faith – or remembrance of what we have seen from afar. Fortunately the grass is quite long so we can hang on to it to help us to climb.

The grass is quite slippery to stand on or to hold, but it grows in tussocks, which we find we can use like stepping stones. And so we scramble on and up, sometimes giving each other a helping hand.

After a time the going gets easier. As we come round the vertical curve of the hill we begin to see the lower markings of the lion cut into the turf, the end of the tail, and the feet; although it is more difficult to see that it is in fact a lion now that we are so close to it.

Gradually the rest of the carved figure comes into view and we find ourselves standing along the underbelly of the huge figure. The grass is cut away in a long curve to either side of us, and before us is the bare chalk of the figure.

The chalk is very white, and looks very polished and slippery. Apart from this it also seems very special, and we do not feel we should walk on it. So we make our way sideways beneath the white carved figure. The going is not so hard, for we are no longer climbing, but we have to take care not to slip. Having climbed so high up so steep a slope, to lose faith and tumble could mean a nasty fall.

We come to the beginning of the front legs and realize that we shall have to go back down again, the whole length of its front leg and then up its other one, and then all the way round its

head, but there is nothing else for it if we are to avoid clambering over the figure.

'There *is* another way,' says a voice.

We look round, wondering where it can be coming from, and see, high above us, the head of a maiden. Her head is all we can see because of the curve of the hill.

'You are wise not to tread on the lion,' she calls in a gentle voice, 'for this is holy ground. But if you show due reverence and respect for that which is beneath your feet, you may be allowed the short way up. Remove your shoes and leave them behind. Then you may come straight to where I am.'

We sit on the grassy tussocks and remove our shoes, and barefoot, start up across the chalk of the carved lion. Although it had seemed as if it might be as slippery as ice, to our bare feet it is warm and gives a reassuring feel. The slight vulnerability we felt on abandoning our shoes gives way to a sense of freedom and sure-footedness.

We climb the decreasing slope to the top of the lion's back and find ourselves face to face with the maiden who had called to us. She is very beautiful, with long yellow hair with many-coloured flowers plaited in a wreath to make a little ringlet crown. Her dress is patterned with flowers, and she has more flowers in chains all around her neck and waist, spilling onto the ground about her feet and onto the chalk surface of the lion. We see too that the grass of the upland above the lion is no longer lush dark green tussocks of coarse-bladed grass but rich short turf, covered with varicoloured flowers, not only buttercups and daisies but all imaginable kinds of little rock plants. The grass is of different quality up here, just as the fur on the various parts of the body of a lion, long and shaggy around its mane but short and smooth on the top of its head. Indeed, we realize that the chalk figure is not just a decoration but shows what the hill itself really is. And as if by way of demonstration, the maiden waves the end of her long skirt over a patch of ground in front of us in which there is a fissure in the soil, like the cracks that appear on a long dry summer. And as she does so, 'Huff! Huff! Huff!' there are three rumbling snorts. and from the cracks in the ground, three puffs of smoke arise, accompanied by a shower of sparks.

'Lion's breath!' the maiden cries, 'It may seem hot enough to be a dragon's. Indeed some people do call it a dragon, but to those who know it, it is a friendly lion – although that does not

mean that it is not wild! He could burn us all to cinders, or shake us off his back, or swallow us all, if he had a mind to. He is very strong.'

And she swirls her dress about in a few wild steps of dance, the strings of flowers whirling into spiralling shapes about her. As she does so, between her bare feet, the ground shakes and trembles and shoots forth jets of smoke and fire. It is like standing on a volcano.

The maiden stamps her feet rhythmically so that a pattern of puffs of different coloured smoke hang in the air about us. She laughs with infectious gaiety as she whirls about us, and the drumming of her bare feet on the turf draws us into imitating her dance, whirling and spinning and spiralling. The maiden is dancing so rapidly now that the whirling of her skirts, and the ropes of flowers she has, become blurred to our sight, so it appears as if she herself might be somehow made entirely of flowers.

'The grass and the flowers and the trees and the moss and all things that grow, dance on the back of the lion,' she sings. 'Let us dance the dance of the life of the lion.'

And we do, proceeding in wild spiral dance, led by the dancing flower maiden. And so doing, we approach the stone circle that stands on the top of the hill.

Here we encircle a flat stone that stands before a trilithon gate and there are impelled to stand quiet and still before the quiet majesty of the stones, while the maiden dances off back down the hill waving a joyous farewell with the swirling garlands about her head.

We remain standing before the entrance to the stone circle contemplating its great age and ancient purpose.

Exit-point Six

Seventh Branch: (The Hermit, the Lovers, the Chariot)

We regard the low stone beside the trilithon gateway before us. It has a shallow depression in its top and beside it a silver bowl of water. We each take the bowl in turn and pour a little of the water onto the stone. There is a low rumbling sound as we do so, and then as the last one of us puts back the bowl upon the stone, a deep roll of thunder, a flash of lightning, and a deep strong voice cries 'Who comes?'

We see a tall figure standing in the pylon gateway who gazes

sternly upon us. He is as lean as he is tall, and has a long white beard, a white robe and long white hair with a tonsure shaven on the top. In one hand he has a long thick staff, intricately carved with twining serpents, and in his other hand he holds aloft a flickering lantern.

'Who comes to the Circle of the Stones of the Eternal?' he asks again. 'If you seek to enter, utter the password.'

'That which is truly reflected is as that which is upright,' replies the dog on our behalf.

'Enter, little ones of the flickering light of time,' says the old man, standing aside.

And as each of us crosses the threshold of the grey stones he scrutinizes us most carefully, holding his lantern to illuminate our faces. We see that the candle inside it is minutely divided with marks to record the passing of time.

'The light in my lantern is time itself,' the old man says, walking gravely before us, 'which ever burns itself away.'

'When this little candle is all burned away then time itself will be no more, and will give way to the brighter light of eternity.'

As he speaks, he leads us through a maze of standing stones. They seem to be in some sort of order but there are so many that it is difficult to see what it may be. It is rather like walking through the mechanism of a stone clock. But in the centre there is a clear circular space in the midst of a pattern of dark blue coloured stones. And in the very midst of all is a low rounded stone, with a smooth flat top of light pinkish grey. And upon that a yet smaller stone of pure white, cut into a perfect but ever changing shape, that sometimes seems to be a cube, at other times a pyramid. Sometimes an eight-fold diamond shape, and at other times more complicated, with lots of sides of triangles or pentagons. Indeed it is a shape-shifting Platonic solid, whose planes are ever equidistant from its centre.

'So you seek to enter the realm that has no time,' he says, 'that is called the Land of the Ever Young and also the Land of Great Wisdom.'

He raises his serpent staff high above the white stone, and in the lantern light the serpents carved upon it seem to wriggle and to hiss, and two wings grow out from either side of the top of the staff and beat rapidly, whilst the very top, shaped like a pine cone, glows as if it were very hot.

'Open the Gates of Time!' the old man cries, 'And let eternal love come in!'

He thrusts downward with the bottom of his staff, which is sharpened to a spike, a spike that wriggles and squirms like a sting. It strikes the white stone and as it does so the stone takes on the appearance of an egg. The staff cracks and smashes a hole into its shell, and it falls into a thousand fragments onto the stone beneath, its yoke wetting the stone and pouring away into the ground. But from the egg, hovering in the air before us, is a young boy. He seems no more than four or five years old, and he glows brighter than the old man's lantern, with a warm ruddy kind of colour. It is as if he came from the midst of invisible flames. He hovers on bright wings before us in the air, holding a bow and arrow.

Smiling at us, he stretches the bow string tight, and shoots an arrow high into the air. It rises like an ascending rocket, leaving a rainbow trail of sparks and coloured vapour.

'Quickly, quickly! Over the rainbow bridge!' cries the old man. And he hustles us onto the central stone where a cloud of the coloured vapour from the arrow has descended. We find it is like solid ground and that we can stand on it.

'On you go!' cries the old man, 'Out of the stones of time.'

Led by the dog we race up the rainbow path. It is like climbing the green hill all over again, except that this time it is like going up a narrow bridge rising high into the sky. Looking down we can see the rolling countryside far beneath us, the green hill with the carved lion upon it, the flower maiden still dancing round it, puffs of smoke and fire coming from beneath her feet. And at the top of the hill, now far, far below us, the circles of stones within stones, in a complex pattern, but looking no bigger that a button, so great is our height. And still the old man's voice urges us on. 'Go! Go! Out of the circle of the stones of time!' But now his voice is no longer that of an old man, it is a childish treble that calls after us – or so it appears at this height.

Gradually the steepness of the rainbow path of the arrow decreases until we reach the top of its arc. As we pass the zenith we find that as we go down we go faster and faster, until our speed has become so great that everything about us is nothing but a blur. And then it all becomes so fast that we no longer even have any sensation of falling. We appear to be floating in some state of suspended animation.

'How do you like my chariot?' comes a clear laughing voice.

We look around and find that we are sitting on something flat

and square and solid, with a beautiful complex pattern on it. It seems rather like a magic carpet, for it flies swiftly and silently. At the rear of it stands a young woman with a flowing dress and golden reins in her hands. These stretch over our heads to where we can see before us a team of four beautiful horses, with silvery backs, and huge golden wings held upright, for they do not seem to need them to fly, but gallop merrily through the air as if it were their natural element.

'I am the Spirit of Victory,' says the maiden, 'and these are my four great steeds. You have been shot far from the Earth by the arrow of Love. And now we are travelling faster than the speed of light. When you travel as fast as this all kinds of things happen that otherwise would be impossible. No-one behind us can see us. And we approach people who are in front of us so fast that we are past them before they see us coming. And of course once we are past them they cannot see us anyway. And so we are invisible. And of course if you travel fast enough you are always in the same place. All straight lines join up together at infinity and turn into circles because everything is curved. And if you go round a circle fast enough you are always in every part at once. So we are always wherever we want to be, and that is wherever the heart is. If we slowed down you would find yourselves not so far from where you want to go. I know you seek your true names and your essential selves and they are in the direction of Love's arrow, which is where the winged horses are taking us. Straight to the heart of the empire. And look below, for there it is.'

Looking down we see that the horses pulling us have begun to circle. and gradually we are spiralling down onto a flat plain that lies beyond a range of mountains over which we have just passed. The mountains are a beautiful dark blue and lit with tiny diamond lights.

'See the Celestial Mountains, or the Mountains of the Stars,' says the lady. 'The stars you see in the outer heavens are in those mountains. And those mountains are indeed your night sky. This is where the arrow of Love and the chariot of Victory bring you. To the land of the Emperor Beyond the Stars. You see his palace below you and all who are assembled to welcome you.'

We look down and see that there is a space marked out for us towards which the horses circle round and round, getting lower and lower. Marked out on the ground is a system of circles, one within the other, and coloured like a rainbow. In fact it is, in one

sense, like a target for the arrow of Love; in another it is similar to a plan diagram of the spheres, at whose centre we found the mirror gate of the Hanged Man.

All about the circle are ranged people who have come out to see us. As we descend we realize that the great square is the central square of the palace. The palace itself is huge, like four palaces in fact, ranged on each side of the square. Its tall white and golden spires and turrets reach towards the sky, and it seems that a glorious army is come out to meet us. As we come to rest on the shimmering rainbow circle, right at its centre, there is a burst of triumphal music.

On each side of the square about us are ranged winged angel soldiers in different coloured uniforms, and as one, they raise their spears and banners in salute to us. They stand rank upon rank before us clad in gold and yellow. Those to our right are dressed in the reds of fire. Behind us they are all in purple and blue. And to our left the ranks are in shades of green.

The yellow clad angels, for that is what they appear to be, for they have wings arched behind them, are armed with bows and arrows, like the child who so wondrously guided us here from out of the stone circle.

The red ones have long slender spears with flames at the tip, for controlling monsters and giants.

The blue angels have nets and tridents, and are so equipped for seeking the seas for monsters who lurk in the dark depths.

And the emerald angels have mirror like shields, which are not only for defence, for any attacker seeing his own reflection will be stunned by it, or even turned to salt or stone.

However, we are led to understand that there are no such enemies to be fought against here, but that these angelic powers are for helping to keep the law in the troublesome mists and waters of the lands of time, at the further side of the Starry Mountains from which we have come.

Finally we say farewell and give our thanks to the winged horses of the chariot of Victory. Upon each is a cloth of a different colour, yellow gold, crimson red, dark purple blue, and emerald green. And the horses' names are embroidered upon each cloth, and each one is named after a wind. The one in gold and yellow is called Oriens, after the East Wind. The one in red Meridies, after the South Wind. The one in blue Occidens, after the West Wind. And the one in emerald Septentrio after the North Wind.

And we stand for a few moments communing with their mighty forces that coincide with the army of angels with banners that guard our own and the higher worlds.

Exit-point Seven

Eighth Branch: (The Emperor and the Hierophant)

'Now that you have seen his servants,' says the Lady of Victory, 'you should present yourselves to the Emperor. If you turn round and lift your eyes you will see that he is standing there before you.'

We turn but can see no-one.

'Look further,' she says, 'toward the far mountains.'

We do so. The palace is in a plain in a wide valley. When we approached it we crossed a dark blue range of mountains studded with stars. With our backs to these mountains we now look to the further side of the valley and to the mountains that rise there.

These are of a different colour, mostly reds, from scarlet to crimson. They are also studded with coloured points of light, like radiant gems. They rise to an enormous height, and are dominated by a huge promontory that is lighter coloured, like pink granite. From this there descend frozen streams, or glaciers, that merge on the lower reaches into stretches of snow. The summit of the promontory is also covered in snow, and about it have been built what appears to be a miraculously high wall of gold, regularly carved into turrets of fantastic shape, with coloured inlays, like slabs of precious stone.

The golden wall round the top of the mountain looks something like a crown, and indeed as we look more closely we see that it *is* in fact a crown. And the huge mountain is like a head, and what looked like pink granite cliffs is in fact a face. We can see the eyes and nose; and that which we took for ice and snow is white hair and a beard.

It seems like a gigantic carving but as we watch we see it move. And what we thought was going to be an avalanche turns out to be a smile. We are gazing, not at a mountain range, but at the head and shoulders of an ancient man, with long beard, red gem-studded robe, and a jewelled crown upon his snow-white head.

'We are at the gate of the World of Giants,' says the Lady of Victory.

'Greetings and welcome,' cries a huge voice. It is deep and awesome as thunder, and rolls echoing round the valley.

'You will have to believe your ears and trust your eyes,' it says, and breaks into a chuckle that is like an erupting volcano. 'Fear not, my little ones, you are coming to me.'

We see, suddenly, travelling with enormous speed towards us, a gigantic hand. And before we know what is happening we are plucked from where we stand and are rushed through the air within its gentle grasp.

We are dropped lightly onto the crimson coloured surface of the emperor's robe, and gaze in wonder at the panoramic view that we see from his shoulder.

Below us, like a tiny model, is the four square palace with the troops drawn up on all sides of the rainbow circle. There stands the lady with her triumphal car, like a tiny dot before us. And across the valley is the far mountain range, dark blue with glittering stars.

'There stands the universe,' says the great voice above us, and as it speaks, it rumbles right through us for we stand on the very shoulder of the body from which the great voice speaks.

'As you can see, it's not quite as big as me. But it is as big as it needs to be. It is. Just as I am I. And although I created it, if it belongs to anyone it belongs to those who are within it. That is who it was made for.'

'But I see you wonder for what purpose it was made. And whom it serves. Those are very big questions. Far too big for me!'

The giant chuckles, and beneath our feet it is like a minor earthquake

'The answers to questions like that you will have to discover for yourselves. They are to be found only in the Gardens of the Blessed. And you may learn your true names there too, and find your essential selves.'

'You also wonder why I am so much bigger than you,' he continues, 'That is just because I know more. I know all the laws that govern the universe and how to keep them going, and every hair or scale or feather on every animal, fish or fowl that walks or swims or flies or crawls or burrows throughout all of that which you call time and space. That is why I seem bigger than you. But when you find what you have come to seek, that knowledge is so great that you may well find yourselves as big as me. And that, I may say, is a considerable responsibility.'

As he says this he stands up. It is like going up in a fast elevator. As if the ground beneath us shot upward into the sky. Except that there does not seem to be any sky. Just a great light blue turquoise light all round us as far as the eye can see.

And far, far below us, if we strain to see over a fold in the crimson cloak that seems like a giant earthwork, we can see, as if laid out on a table, the little mound of twinkling indigo blue that is the entire universe.

'Fear not where you are going,' says the Emperor, 'You see little for the moment only because your eyes are short sighted and the light is so clear that it dazzles you. I have a close companion, very much like unto myself, who will look after you and lead you to the garden. Seek for his coming. Look for a star.'

We stand wondering if we shall see another huge face before us like a mountain. But then, high in the air we see what looks to be a moving star, that is gradually growing bigger. As we watch the star, at first a tiny point of diamond light, grows brighter and larger, and we see that it is plainly descending.

As it does so it begins to take on shape and we see that it seems to be a great building descending through the sky. It has a three fold structure. In the centre is a dome, from the top of which the star light comes, and on either side of the foursquare building there is a tall tower rising, pointing upward like a pillar with a spire. The whole building, its central hall and side towers, is of stone of brilliant white.

It ceases its descent and hovers in the air before us some distance off. Faintly we can hear music coming from within it, and a spicy pinewood smell like incense seems to drift across to us.

The two doors of its central tower are flung wide open, and the sound of music rolls towards us and the scent of all kinds of woods and flowers and hedgerows.

As we watch, it seems that a radiance and a vapour surrounds the building and extends to where we ourselves are standing. It is like a vibrant lake of silvery purple mist. Then a figure comes to the open doors. We can see his outline dark against the light that blazes from within. He slowly walks towards us, across the lake of light, as if along the bright path of reflected light that shines from the radiant doorway.

As he approaches we see he wears the rough dress of a shepherd and that he has a tall staff, curved at the top like a

shepherd's crook. Our dog leaps forward to meet him, running round and round him joyously like a shepherd's dog. The young man stops before us and smiles.

'Welcome to my house,' he says. Smiling, he beckons us to join him on the silvery walkway of light across the shimmering lake. We walk together towards the doorway of light.

'I should warn you it is not so much a house,' he says, 'in the usual sense of the word. It is not meant to be lived in. It is more in the nature of a gate keeper's lodge. A place for passing through.'

We approach the double doors. The singing of mighty choirs and the scent of incense swamps us as we enter the blaze of light. It is like a brilliantly lit cathedral, with an undefinable sense of Christmas in the air. As we pass through the door we pass also through the brilliant light that hangs like a curtain before it, radiating its illuminating power to the world outside.

Inside the door we see before us a mighty pillar that soars upward high above us, and extends outwards like a bowl or a chalice at the top. It could almost be a huge baptismal font.

'This,' says the young man, 'is really a magic fountain. But a fountain that is blocked. And if you go close to it you will see who it is who has blocked it.'

We approach and see that it is made up of thousands of grey bricks, or stones like bricks. And as we look closer we see that each one has a name on it. And we each discover a grey stone that is deeply inscribed with our own full name.

'Do not marvel at finding your own name amongst all the thousands there,' says the young man, 'There is no such thing as chance. Whatever you truly seek you will find. Each stone stands as a record of all who are blocking the flow of the magic fountain. You can remove your own grey stone from the channel if you will, but you will find it is stuck tight until you can replace it with something better. That is, with a stone of gold and crystal that bears your true inward name, that expresses your own essential self. Then this model of a dark tower will become a shining bright pillar, and a model of the true goodness of all whose names appear in it. The gold and crystal stones will not block the fountain's flow because it is a fountain of light. Light spurts from the source of all being, and jetting high into the air becomes clear crystal water that dissolves all evil it touches. It transforms all that is sick and ailing or neglected into beauty and health. And that will form into a lake with a beautiful garden

surrounding it. And from the garden four great rivers will flow into your dark world, and into the other dark worlds in the Mountains of the Stars, to transform them into a place of wonder.'

'But as I said, where we now stand is only at the gateway to the Lands of Wonder. If you seek to find the gold and crystal stones with your true names on I would ask first to entrust your jewelled emblems to me that were given you at the start of your journey. But that must be something for you to decide, on the grounds of whether you feel you can trust me. And that is a wisdom of the heart. Does it warm within you when you think of giving me your treasures?'

And then we pause long and consider whether or not we should give our emblems to the young man who stands smiling before us, who stands offering a key to us in exchange, if we so decide.

Exit-point Eight

Ninth Branch: (The High Priestess)

The young man gently takes from us the sparkling emblem that we offer to him, and in return he gives us a little gold or silver key.

'Find the lock that will take those keys,' he says, 'and your mission will be all but complete. But in times of trial or testing, remember me.'

It is our dog who leads us on into the building. He scampers, with his nose down to the ground, round the tall dark font. And as we go past it, clasping our keys, we notice how the dark stones that bear our names have begun to grow a little lighter in colour, a little more translucent, even to glow very dimly.

Past the font we find we are passing through a great hall. It is, in proportion, like a church but is festooned with coloured lights and all manner of decorations. All around the sides of the hall it seems that there are merry groups of people full of chatter and laughter. From high above us light streams down onto the scene below through windows of many coloured glass. These show scenes that seem to be associated with Christmas. A star guiding three wise men. Shepherds in the fields at night talking to angels. A baby in a manger surrounded by an ox and an ass and other animals. A fir tree laden with presents, with a fairy on the top. A jolly red cloaked Santa Claus laden with gifts from the

North Pole, reindeer pulling his sleigh. The same merry figure walking the snowy roof tops and nimbly descending the chimneys through glowing hearth fires to leave his gifts by the bedsides of sleeping childen.

Our dog, however, with nose to ground, hurries on and we follow him. He leads us to a wide circular maze, outlined on the floor with patterned tiles. It is equal in extent to the dome in the roof high above it.

It is not a puzzle maze. There is only one path for us to follow. But it goes round and round, and back and forth, until every patch of ground within the circle has been covered. And at last, after a short final straight bit, we find ourselves at the centre.

It is a tradition with such mazes that the distance through the maze is the same as the height from its centre to the high point in the roof. We look up and marvel at the height of the patch of the dome above us. We admire the bright and beautiful pictures painted on the inside of the dome. It is of the starry sky, with angels pushing the stars round as if they were movable lamps. We also see mighty constellations depicted; those that surround the Northern Pole. The Great Bear, the Swan, the throne of Cepheus the king, and the curling, coiling Dragon. And we realize that the point of the dome is the North Pole of the heavens, about which all the stars turn throughout the night, all the way down to the zodiacal creatures at its rim.

Looking down, at our feet we see embedded in the floor in the very centre of the maze is a little picture in shining mosaic. It is of a naked figure, surrounded by a wreath of holly and mistletoe, dancing in a night sky, holding in each hand a spiral wand, one of gold and the other of silver. It is difficult to see if the figure is male or female but around the wreath are emblems of a lion, an eagle, a bull and an angel. We look closer and see that each of the spirals has throughout its length a number of tiny keyholes. We each take the key that the young shepherd has given us to see if it will fit one of the keyholes. Soon each of us finds we have found a keyhole that will receive our key. If we have a gold key it will fit into a silver keyhole. If we have a silver key it will fit a gold keyhole. Then, having fitted them, together we turn them, for none will work unless they are turned together. Each is like the facet of a combination lock.

As the keys turn a strange thing happens. The whole floor of the maze starts to turn, not round and round, but over onto its

back, so that we find ourselves, upside-down, under the floor. Only we soon forget that we are upside down because above our heads is another great dome, exactly the same in shape and size as the one before, but with different pictures painted on it.

The pictures around the rim, of the Zodiac, are the same, although, because we view them from another side, they now seem to go round the other way. But the paintings on the rest of the dome, although they are of stars, are not the familiar ones of the upper dome. They are those of the terrestrial Southern hemisphere. They are mostly sea pictures. Of Argo, the great ship that bore the heroes in search of the Golden Fleece, of Cetus the great whale, and other sea monsters, and high above shines a Light-house Altar and the Southern Cross, near the Centaur, who by tradition invented all the signs of the constellations.

We realize we now have to tread our way back out of the maze, not forgetting to take our keys. The dog, his nose to the ground, leads us along the circuitous way. We find that the exit to the maze is at the far side from the way we came in. In other words, if it had been the westernmost point of the circle we had entered, we now leave it at the eastern side.

We now pass through another part of the building. It would correspond to the choir if we were in a church. High seats tower on either side of us, except that one can hardly call them seats. Each is rather a niche that is occupied by a model of an angelic figure, every one with a stringed instrument or a horn of some kind, and they play a slow and stately solemn music in contrast to the merry noise of the upper side of the building. It is like a great mechanical organ, with figures, played by some unknown mighty hand.

At the far end we come to a shallow flight of long low steps that lead upward to a throne. We are aware of a powerful presence seated upon that throne, for we feel the power of her eyes upon us as we approach. We tread instinctively in time to the stately music of the model angels high on either side of us.

Behind the throne is a rich tapestry that shows all manner of fruits of the earth. And this theme is continued upwards by the soaring pillars and stained glass windows that show, glowing in the coloured glass, pictures of every bird and beast that can be imagined. There are indeed birds and beasts represented there that were never seen on earth, and some that are heard about only in legend, such as centaurs, unicorns, amphisbaenas,

phoenixes, basilisks, winged serpents and many more besides.

We stop at the foot of the steps before the throne, and look up to the grave beautiful woman who gazes down at us with eyes that seem to see through to the very core of our being. It is the kind of look from which no secrets are hid. She sees all that we are and have ever been.

She is fair of skin, with great violet eyes, and wears a glittering silver crown upon her head, and a long cloak of blue and silver which falls about her feet. Behind her head and shoulders, as part of her throne, there is carved a golden sunburst, an image of the rays of some far off sun behind or beyond our sun, that shines with a sparkling corruscated light. And at her feet, partly concealed by the folds of her robe, that billows like waves of the sea, is a large silver crescent moon that shines with its own deep silver light. And one of her silver shoes is resting upon it.

Her eyes are the more powerful because she wears a veil that hides the lower part of her face, although it is made of such diaphanous silk that we can see that she is smiling. Upon her lap she holds a large book, with thick black covers, and with one hand she holds a marker between the pages. Slowly she opens it and gazes long upon the page that she has marked.

'I see that you aspire to much,' she says at length, 'but that you have the power to pass the secret gates, which brings a high responsibility – and not a little danger. The danger that comes to all who seek to fly so high. For the higher you fly, the more dreadful may be your fall. You have been given great opportunity but to those who are given much, much is expected in return. To complete the quest that you have commenced you now must face your greatest test. If you will – pass beyond my veil.'

She indicates the tapestry of living things behind her, and rises to her feet and stands to one side of it.

'I should warn you that to pass this way demands your deepest dedication. Are you willing, in order to do the greatest good, that you yourselves may even cease to be? For it is said that no-one who has passed beyond my veil has ever returned to tell the tale of what was to be found there. You may refuse, with honour, at this stage, if you choose. Pause and reflect, consider deeply, before you seek to lift my veil.'

Exit-point Nine

Tenth Branch: (Justice)

We stand before the figure of the high priestess.

'The way is before you,' she says, and with a regal gesture that is also supremely gentle, she pulls the throne aside, and behind it is revealed a narrow gap within the veil through which she motions we should pass.

As we start to mount the steps the angelic trumpeters above and behind us blow a mighty fanfare that stirs the blood and gives us courage to go forward in faith and meet whatever is to be found beyond the veil.

There is utter silence as we come through the other side of the curtain. We find ourselves in a world devoid of sight or sound. Nothing can be seen before us but a shining silver mist. It is like being in the middle of a vast grey-silver ball, except that the inside of the ball seems to be an infinite distance away. We are, it seems, in the middle of nowhere. We turn to look behind us and discover that the veil through which we have come is veil no more, but black, hard, shiny, solid rock. In fact we stand on a perilously narrow ledge, on a blank rock face, with nothing extending before us but the empty air.

It looks almost as if we may have been tricked or trapped. Even our dog seems at a loss. He shakes his head doubtfully, and although he tries to put a brave face on things, his tail sinks a little between his legs.

Logically we ought to be on the far side of the building that was the young man's house or porter's gate. Except that we would be upside-down because we turned topsy-turvy under the dome. However, neither logic nor common sense seem to work here very well.

Our main hope seems to be the good faith of the young man who sent us here and whether we were right to have faith in him. We close our eyes and think of him as vividly as we can. We recall his smile and his face. His robe and his shepherd's crook. And we invoke his aid.

But a stern woman's voice, that echoes like a giant's, startles us.

'Who is this that disturbs the silence?'

Opening our eyes we see the voice comes from a great figure of a woman who appears to be floating in the air, far out from the rock face, over the abyss.

She is similar in some ways to the lady through whose veil we have but recently stepped. She sits on a throne at the top of shallow steps but her robes are a dull silvery grey, shot with dark crimson and scarlet. A helmet of iridescent metal is upon her head, and in one hand she holds a set of golden scales that swing gently up and down, first to one side and then the other, on their narrow balance beam. In the other hand she holds aloft, point upward, a sharp and naked sword.

The Fool's dog answers for us. 'We have come in good faith to seek our real names and our essential selves.'

The woman bursts into a peal of laughter that has a hard mocking edge to it.

'And what do you think you will find out here? Do you realize where it is that you have come to?'

She pauses, and we make no answer.

'To the place where you will find nothing. Nothing. You are on the outside of all things.'

She pauses again while we consider this, and then continues.

'And if you find that difficult to understand,' she says, 'it is because here there is nothing to understand. What you call reality is behind you. In the lands of illusion. Behind that dark rock face in the world of dreams.'

She swings her sword round and round in a circle of fire. Sparks and flames leap from it sizzling off in all directions.

'My place is to stand guard outside that realm of illusion,' she says, 'and to turn back all presumptuous wanderers. I stand at the gulf of emptiness between what is real and what is not. Only behind me and beyond me, on the far outside of nothingness, is the real world, where no evil dwells.'

'You who strive to emerge from the cosmic egg,' she says, 'have only emerged from the yoke. You are into the white, and the limits of what you see all about you is the inside of the shell. Only when the chick is ready to hatch, can that shell be broken. And that will not be for aeons – millions and millions and millions of years. That is to say if the egg does not become addled first, with internal corruption, and have to be destroyed.'

'But we were sent here, by one who gave us a key,' says our dog, 'and who told us that this was the way.'

The woman receives this in silence, considering it and looking at us searchingly. Then she continues in a slightly more conciliatory tone.

'You may try to go further, if you are ready. And as to that you

must satisfy *me.* For I may not suffer anything unworthy to go beyond this place.'

She lowers her sword, holding it straight out before her, its point directly towards us.

'You have to tread a path as straight and narrow as the blade of my sword.' she says. 'If you are not straight enough in your intentions and desires you will fall from the perilous bridge and be lost, floating forever in nothingness through all eternity, for that is the penalty of overweening spiritual pride – utter permanent aloneness.'

And as she speaks the sword, in a marvellous manner, extends itself, and grows so that its point reaches the edge of the ledge where we stand.

'And know also,' she continues, 'that even should you reach the cross hilt of my sword, you will then be weighed within my scales to see if you are worthy.'

We wonder if her words are just meant to frighten us and to test our faith. And we decide we must concentrate on living up to the faith in us of the one who sent us here. Would he have done so if he thought we could not succeed? He believed in us. Now we must believe in him. If we keep thinking of that, and of him, perhaps that will keep us upright and straight along the narrow way.

And with these thoughts in our hearts we each step firmly and quickly across the narrow bridge, which seems quite broad once we are on it, surrounded by a golden light as if in a radiant protective cloud that saves us from looking down and falling prey to our own negative thoughts and fears. And we find ourselves standing at the sword's golden hilt, which is like a crossroads, in the centre of which we stand. The seated figure of Justice towers high above us.

'You have dared much to reach the greater test,' she cries, 'now you must be weighed within my scales.'

She brings the swinging balances close to us. They are huge, each pan like a cauldron of shining brass. And a white fluffy feather comes floating down from on high and settles gently into one of the pans. It hardly deflects it downwards, so light is it.

'Behold, a feather from the Dove of Peace that laid the egg,' the voice of Justice cries. 'It carries no weight of evil within it. If any of you weigh more that that, then your side of the balance will go crashing down and you will be spilled into the emptiness of the everlasting nothingness.'

We hesitate before this seeming impossible test.

'You were proud enough to present yourselves,' comes the woman's stern voice. 'Is your hesitation now one of fear, or of true humility? Or a new-found vision of your own unworthiness in the scales of reality?'

We console ourselves with the thought that if we are doomed to perdition it were best if we faced our doom together. In any case, we have a feeling that, in this world between the worlds, and maybe in the worlds of reality, a united group may weigh more favourably than a lone proud individual. So believing, we leap into the near side pan of the balance.

There is a sickening swinging for a few moments, and then slowly but surely we start to dip. Down and down we go, as we far outweigh the beautiful feather in the opposite pan. Our pan begins to tilt to a steep angle as it nears the bottom of its traverse.

It seems that our fate is sealed. But we send a last call of faith and love to the young shepherd. We shut out eyes tight, and visualize that we are all holding hands together, thinking of him. To our mind's eye, this time he does not appear like a young man, but as a boy, golden haired and smiling, and with his shepherd's crook green and bursting forth with spring shoots and flowers. And we begin to feel the pan stop in its slow descent, hover still, and then begin to go up again.

Hardly daring, we open our eyes. To our surprise and delight we see that as well as the feather in the opposite pan of the scales, there is the young shepherd boy, weighing down the other side to make a perfect balance. He is smiling and waving and shouting great joy and encouragement to us. And the pans of the balance softly settle, gently swaying level, and we are filled with joy and relief.

As the scales settle to rest in perfect balance so they become transformed. They flatten out into platforms, upon one of which we stand, and the chains upon which the pans have swung become solid, and form coiled golden springs out of themselves, like frost forming on a window. The cross beam becomes fixed and solid, as we see it to be a golden lintel across two golden gates of finely traced scroll work.

The great stern figure of she who had held the scales and sword slowly disappears. It is as if she evaporates like morning mist. And so we stand outside a pair of golden gates, and with us is the young shepherd boy holding his flowering crook, covered

in little white flowers, whilst sitting upon his shoulder is a pure white dove.

The gates seem firmly locked. And there is nothing above, below, or behind them to be seen. It is as if we and they are floating in space.

The young shepherd boy smiles and, taking the gently cooing dove, he casts it into the air. It makes several long swoops around us, and we see that it holds in its beak a tiny branch of wood, with grey-green leaves and fruit upon it; an olive branch.

As it swoops around us the dove appears to be growing in size. The second time round it seems as if it has grown to the size and bulk of a peacock, although still in the form of a dove. And after the third or fourth gyration it is more the size of a large hawk or an eagle. But still it wheels about us, round and round, and above and below, until it is difficult to tell how big it is for as it grows so its circles of flight grow greater, so that it is further away.

Finally, at what seems to be the bounds of the sphere in which we are confined, the silvery-grey sky which stretches as far as the eye can see, it must have become of enormous size, but still it wheels and then, as it reaches the confines of the sky a thunderous cracking sound begins.

We gaze up and around us in awe as the silver sky remains glassy and opaque no more, but rapidly is spread with jagged cracks, black against the silver. With loud rumbling cracks, like ice floes breaking up or the start of an avalanche, or a bridge or a building starting to fall, light begins to shine through. Light so bright that it seems like lightning, particularly when a forked crack grows larger and wider and a jagged stream of light bursts through it. And all in all it seems as if the sky were falling in all round us, with the thunder and lightning of the most tremendous storm.

We look across to the shepherd boy and see that, far from being alarmed, he is not only smiling, but capering with joy, his staff held high in the air, and he looks across to us and cries: 'We are nearly home!'

And at that cry the gates swing open. With a last roar the sky disintegrates and falls away. A pure golden light like that of the rising sun at dawn shines through the open gates toward us, causing our faces to shine like gold as we look upon it.

Exit-point Ten

Eleventh Branch: (The Empress and the Magician)

On the other side of the gates we see a golden yellow path, with gleaming bricks within it, and on either side of the path, as far as the eye can see, the most beautiful and perfect gardens. They are formal and in intricately laid out patterns near the path, and become rolling parkland beyond. In the parkland and among the trees animals roam. Deer, bears, dogs, sheep, creatures one has never seen before, even dinosaurs. And none of them interfere with or chase the others, even those one would suppose to be enemies.

As we walk forward in wonder through the gates the shepherd boy kneels on the path before us and prises up some of the stones. Smiling, he presses one of them into the hands of each one of us. Each stone seems to glow with a light of its own that comes from deep within it. And on it is our own name, deeply carved. But as we look, other names appear below it and so on deep into the centre of the stone, until, far into the heart of the stone, in strange characters that we could not in our ordinary minds have deciphered, is a final name that when we look upon it causes our hearts to burn within us. It is as though we had at last met someone, or received a message from someone, who loves us and knows us far better and more deeply than anyone else has known us before. Indeed, better than we have ever known ourselves. It is like finding a long lost possession that has been lost so long ago that is has been almost forgotten entirely, and the refinding of which brings back memories of great joy of wonderful times past, and at the same time the realization, now that it has been found, of wonderful times to come.

'Paving stones on the way to the one true centre,' says the young shepherd boy, smiling broadly. 'The record of your own true names. You see that you have many, for many are the ways that you may have been named in different times and climes, but in the centre of all is your own true name, of which all the others are outward forms.'

'They are yours to keep for they belong to no-one else, unless we include the Great Magician who made them, for he owns all in the end. And he will be overjoyed that you have found them.'

'First, however,' he continues, 'we must meet the Lady of the Garden, who rules over all the flowers and plants, and birds and beasts within this place, and over the fishes in the lakes and pools. This is a garden that goes on for ever. No-one I know has

ever come to the end of it yet. And the entrance, as you have discovered, is not easily achieved. But were the whole world to enter in those gates the garden would be large enough for all of them. There are no limits to the space that is needed here. Each one can be alone in the midst of a personal horizon if they so wish to be, because this is the Garden of the Heart's Desire. Anything that you wish for is yours. You may have heard the story of the Holy Grail, that brings to those who see it the food that they most desire in all the world. The Grail is just a little cup containing the essence of this whole great garden.'

We walk slowly along the golden path, and as we walk so a crowd gathers about us, of animals that have been wandering and grazing. There is a great stag with huge spreading antlers. And sheep and goats. And little squirrels and rabbits and hares and mice. A grand tawny lion with shaggy mane. A beautiful slinking leopard or cheetah. A lynx like a great cat with prominent ears. And on the animals' backs there ride birds. Little sparrows and coloured finches, some of them perched on the branching antlers of the stag. And on the lion's back there is a sleepy looking barn owl, blinking wisely. And flocks of bluebirds and swallows whirl about our heads.

Soon the path leads by a lake, and as we walk so we see that fish are swimming alongside us, of all shapes and sizes, some putting their heads out of the water, and smiling in fishy ways. One or two bigger ones even wave their fins, or leap right out of the water, their scales shining rainbow colours in the air.

Presently we come round a curve in the lake and find a rustic bridge that leads across to an island. The shepherd boy leads the way and all the animals follow.

The island is a riot of flowers and growing things. It is almost like climbing into a flower basket. Little paths lead through the clumps of blossoms so that none of the animals or we ourselves need tread on them, and the flowers are swaying gently to and fro in unison and singing, and each of the blossoms has a little face. With their singing they give off a beautiful scent that varies with the notes of the tune they sing so that it is a melody of perfume as well as of sound, coming from the glorious variegated colours of the blossoms.

Then we notice a deeper strain to the song as if others were joining in, and we realize that the animals about us are singing too. The stag and the lion and the other big creatures in deep

bass voices. And the birds are singing their hearts out as well, although much higher up the scale. We are now all ranged round a little mound of rocks, piled up in the centre of the island.

The rocks themselves that comprise the little hill are clumps of crystal that glow and change their colour and brightness in unison with the song. The smaller creatures, the rabbits, the stoats, the weasels, the squirrels, the mice, even butterflies and humming birds, and multicoloured insects, sit between the stones of the hillock looking up towards its top where, upon a throne of pure white marble, a most beautiful young woman sits. Her hair is yellow and her skin fair and she wears a circlet of multicoloured flowers as a crown, each of which has its own little face and joins in the song. Her dress, which flows down to her bare feet, is of green and decorated with patterns of leaves and plants and flowers, and she holds a golden sceptre in one hand, and in the other a heart shaped mirror that flashes with a dazzling light whenever it catches the sun.

She smiles upon us all and slowly raises her golden sceptre. The song of the flowers and the animals and birds comes to a natural close and we stand facing her in a pure and golden silence.

'You are now near the centre of all things,' she says. 'A part of you will stay here, now that you know of us, but you still have much to do on the outer side of things. All parting is only a seeming so. You will see me, if you develop the eyes to see, in all the flowers and growing things of nature. In all the fish, the animals and birds. For I am the queen and empress of all living things. And then one day, and it will be the last long day, you may return here, if you wish, for ever.'

'I see from the gold and crystal stones you carry that you have gained already most of what you need to know. Your True Names are the key to your Essential Selves. If you will exchange your stone for the jewelled mirror that I offer you, your own Essential Selves will be revealed to you if you take them away in your hearts and learn to gaze at the truth in them.'

We each advance and proffer her our stone and receive a jewelled mirror. As soon as we have done so there is a deep rumbling from the rocks below that rapidly grows louder and louder, and then with a great splashing sound a huge fountain jets up from behind her throne and shoots high into the air far above our heads, and the spray begins to fall like gentle rain.

As we look up we see that the softly falling spray is as a veil before the diamond bright sun that hangs high in the sky above us, and that a most glorious rainbow is forming about it. In fact it is a full rainbow. A full circular rainbow, and a triple one as well. Three full circular rainbows in the spray of the fountain.

Then the rainbow itself begins to take on form and we see the figure of the shepherd boy, who is capering and dancing and waving to us.

'Come up into the heart of the rainbow,' he cries.

The dog, with a bark of joy, leaps into the air and runs straight up towards him as if on invisible wings. Before we have time to doubt our ability to do so, we do the same, and run to join the shepherd boy. It is like running through a funnel of rainbow coloured light. The falling waters of the fountain are like mist upon our faces, tingling and refreshing. We run so easily that we might well be running downhill instead of steeply up.

The boy is silhouetted against the diamond white disk of the sun.

'Come along,' he cries, 'Up toward the sun!' and he leads us in a merry dance, on upward toward the diamond disk behind him.

'The sun behind all suns!' he cries.

We seem to be going ever faster. It is the attraction of the diamond sun, which pulls all things towards it. And the nearer we go the stronger the pull. As we approach it faster and faster so indeed it grows larger and larger and brighter and brighter, until we strike what must be its surface.

As we do so the boy gives a great cry of laughter that echoes like joyous thunder all about us, and he suddenly appears like a giant before us.

'Had you forgotten you were in the land of giants?' he cries, laughing. And he merrily juggles a multitude of coloured spheres in the air before him.

'See my worlds. My ideas for worlds. Each one more beautiful than the last,' he cries. 'If you were standing inside one I expect you would call it a universe.'

He snaps his fingers in the air and they stream off up and into the far distance, glinting in the light like a stream of soap bubbles.

'I am a magician you see, as well as a juggler,' he cries. 'Come and see my table.'

He points a finger at us and beckons, and we find ourselves

wafted into the air before him to look down on the surface of a square table below.

'Now we must see about getting you home,' he says. 'Look down at the top of the table.'

As we do so it lights up, like an illuminated screen or a clear window. It is in fact a window in space because there we can see our own sun and its system of planets whirling and turning around it. As we watch the vision grows closer, past the outer planets to our own blue Earth and then down through its atmosphere.

Soon we see directly below us the roof of the building wherein our physical bodies now sit.

'It is time for you to return, with the things you have won in the inner worlds,' he says, from behind us. 'But remember we are never very far away. You see how easily I can see you when I want to. And you can see me too, with the power of love in your hearts and by building our pictures in your minds. Keep the windows of your inner perceptions clear.'

'And cherish the things you have been given on your journey here. Your own true names, and the mirror of your own essential selves. Keep hold of them in your minds' eye and you will never be lost or alone, no matter what trials and tribulations may seem to come upon you when you are in the dark worlds, where people are still learning to see.'

'And for your part it is up to you to give me a name by what you see of me.'

And before our eyes he turns into the Emperor we had seen before the Mountains of the Stars, and into the bearded old man we had seen as the priest of the stones, and the man with his head hanging down into the abyss, and then into the Fool we first met.

And beside him there appears the young woman from the island below, with her flowered dress, and they put their arms in love round one another, and look down upon us. And she also takes on all the different forms, of the veiled lady on the throne, the stern lady with the scales and the sword, the maiden on the victory chariot, the young girl with the lion.

And the dog appears beneath their feet, and he has grown to giant size, even greater than the lion.

'Farewell!' the three of them cry, and we find ourselves sinking downwards into the table. And as we look back toward them we see behind the young man and young woman and their

dog a great white tower building. And although it is in shape like the evil tower in the desert on our journey upwards, we realize that that was but a shabby imitation of this one in its purity and power.

We turn our eyes down to the table again and see the roof of the building in which we physically sit coming up, as it seems, towards us. And gently we come back inside our physical bodies and our own heads, and even the imagination bodies we had made are gone.

Final Exit-point

On Magical Images

We originally entitled this book *The Treasure House of Images.* This is a traditional title taken from the Qabalah, where it refers, generally speaking, to the Sephirah Yesod, which, in psychological terms, is the great repository of archetypal images and forces that is often referred to as the subconscious. It is fed by the dynamics of the two side Sephiroth – Hod, which provides the glorious images, and Netzach, which provides their emotive power – and all should be a reflection of the superconscious formless levels of the Sephirah Tiphereth and beyond.

However, psychology is not everything, it is merely a subjective analogue of a greater objective reality. Thus the term 'collective unconscious' is sometimes used, although we would prefer to forget psychologically based terminology altogether and go back to good old-fashioned occult terms such as the astral plane or the astral light. Whatever terms one uses, the images will be found to have an autonomy and energy all of their own. In this there lies our opportunity and also our attendant risks. And whether they represent one or the other depends on our attitude towards them.

We should not, on the one hand, try to categorize them intellectually in such detail that no life can flow through them and they are thus reduced to desiccated mental structures. This is often the case with analyses of systems of magical images, whether it be the Tarot, the Tree of Life, or the mass of Rosicrucian and alchemical iconography, whether in pictorial form or cast into *ludibria,* vivid stories utilizing magical images such as *The Chymical Marriage of Christian Rosencreutz* or Goethe's fairy tale *The Green Snake and the Beautiful Lily.*

These systems do not yield their secrets to intellectual analysis. They are not coded puzzles designed to test our mental

ingenuity. Paradoxically, they reveal all at the same time as appearing to conceal everything behind a veil of apparently arbitrary images. This is the old alchemical adage in operation, that says that the hidden stone is so obvious that seekers overlook it or despise it.

One simply has to accept the images and enter into them sympathetically. Then their magic will be released and revealed.

This requires a certain freeing of the mind to act and react with the visions encountered. There is nothing very mysterious about this; it is simply the creative process of the artist or the inventor.

It is to be hoped that the examples of such work given within this book will assist others to make their own acquaintance with these archetypal forces and make their own discoveries.

This can be applied to magical images other than the Tarot, and also by approaching the Tarot images in various ways. For instance, they could be approached according to the formal structures of the Tree of Life of the Qabalah, in which case this book might be regarded as a third volume to my *Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism*, a practical manual giving a demonstration of the technique of working with the formal images. But a Qabalistic framework is by no means essential and there is much to be learned from putting out the images in various sequences and combinations and, to this end, ignoring their traditional titles may be no bad thing.

In practical magic the key is generally to be found in seeking the middle way between polar opposites. And just as an arid intellectuality and formal regimentation of the images is to be avoided, so one must avoid the opposite tendency to undisciplined and arbitrary fantasizing. The fringes of occult literature are full of the results of this error, resulting in screeds of exaggerated claims and sloppy minded ideals that fade at the first touch of material or indeed spiritual reality.

So a good grounding in theory is no bad thing, but then the theory should be allowed to sink into the background of the mind, so that although almost forgotten consciously, it nevertheless forms an unobtrusive framework, or loom, for the weaving of the true patterns of higher consciousness.

Thus although the sequence of workings we have given in the *Journey to the Centre* was taken using the cards in a relatively loose order, there will be discerned behind it a structuring that aligns with the basic principles of the Tree of Life. It is, in

effect, a progress up the 32nd, 25th and 13th Paths but without confining the Trumps rigidly to the Paths assigned in *A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism* or similar works.

The whole sequence might be mapped out as follows:

1st Branch: The Fool and the World – the inner side of Malkuth. The Cottage of Lost Play is a term borrowed from early Tolkien but the mysterious cottage concept is found in fairytale and fantasy novels. The Moon marks the start of the 32nd Path.

2nd Branch: The Last Judgement and the Sun represent the approaches to the lower side of Yesod; the Summerlands of the Spiritualists in some respects.

3rd Branch: The Star and Temperance – a journey across the magic mirror lake of Yesod.

4th Branch: Death, the Tower and the Devil – the testing 25th Path, the Tower being the crossing point of the 27th Path, after which the work becomes deeper.

5th Branch: The Wheel. The 25th Path beyond the testing point, toward the Sphere of Tiphereth.

6th Branch: The Hanged Man and Strength. Into the central mysteries of Tiphereth.

7th Branch: The Hermit, the Lovers and the Chariot. Passing out of Tiphereth into the higher spiritual air of the lower reaches of the 13th Path.

8th Branch: The Emperor and the Hierophant. Could be equated with the crossing point between Chesed and Geburah of the 19th Path.

9th Branch: The High Priestess – approaching the mysteries of the 'hidden Sephirah' Daath.

10th Branch: Justice. The abyss. The Daath sphere.

11th Branch: The Empress and the Magician. Passing the crossing point of the 14th Path towards the topmost sphere of Kether but returning to Malkuth (which is symbolically closely linked to Kether) rather than passing on into the Uncreate Realities of the Limitless Light beyond.

This is a similar structure to the shorter Path working given earlier but the different way in which certain of the images have been used should exemplify the flexibility of approach that is recommended. Thus the Tower in one instance is a place of self-revelation, in the other a temptation and trap.

Extensions beyond these could be taken. The Hermit, for instance, could well be Gandalf, or Merlin, or any great prophet, magician or seer. The maiden on the lion hill has many

resemblances to the goddess to be found behind the nature forces. A whole inner universe is to be discovered through these Tarot figures – we should not try to confine them too closely to our own preconceptions.

It says something for the inventive genius of whoever selected the series of Tarot images that they knew what to use and what to leave out – which is the acid test of any creative structure.

Thus its apparent imbalances or ommissions, which have led to endless controversies about 'Where does the Fool go?', 'Should Strength and Justice be interchanged?' or 'Where is the fourth Cardinal Virtue?' is in fact the mechanism that gives the whole structure its dynamism.

It is therefore arguable that this makes it a superior system to, say, the Mantegna Tarot, an attempted improvement on the scheme, where a by no means unintelligent and unperceptive mind has endeavoured to 'fill out' the gaps in the Tarot images by introducing others to give a complete intellectually rounded system with a full complement of Conditions of Man, Apollo and the Muses, Liberal Arts, Cosmic Principles and Celestial Spheres in a 50 Trump system. Unfortunately this very act tends to render the whole thing static. It has lost its main spring or its pendulum in some strange fashion.

For those who seek a full magical training the Tarot has all that is required.

Such training has three aspects or stages:

a theoretical structural background, so that one knows more or less where one should be going;

a practical system of technique so that one knows how to get there;

and a regimen of applying the practice to make the theoretical concepts become living realities.

When this has been more or less achieved, then the deeper work can begin.

In the traditional grading structure of the Mysteries the first stage leads the neophyte to the grade of Theoricus; the second to the grade of Practicus; the third to the grade of Philosophus. Then, if and when the higher spiritual contacts open up, the grades of adepthood become possible.

In terms of the Tarot the grade curricula can be described as follows.

The theory can be acquired by reading about the Tarot and the inner planes in general in various books and studying various designs of card.

The practical framework can be acquired by studying the four-fold Elemental structure of the suit cards. This process can be formalized by spending a period of time on each in turn, meditating upon the significance of each Element and by recourse to Pythagorean number symbolism or the Qabalistic Tree of Life, coming to one's own realizations as to the meaning of each card and as a result making one's own designs for the 56 cards of the Lesser Arcanum.

The third stage, after this four-fold structure has been formulated, consists of coming to terms with the central powers of the Tarot Trumps by various forms of imaginative work.

The student working alone may well follow a less structured course but in the end, (if the end is reached), all the above phases must have been well and truly experienced and worked through. It is not easy to work alone any more than it is easy to learn a foreign language or how to play a musical instrument without benefit of teacher or fellow students – and for much the same reasons. However, it is not impossible.

For anyone who seeks to follow such a line of training, using my own books as a basis, with *A Practical Guide to Qabalistic Symbolism* as a general background reference, the exercises in *Experience of the Inner Worlds* can be worked through. This will take at least ten months. Then a personal set of Lesser Arcana should be designed, with practical reference to the first section of *The Rose Cross and the Goddess* and the little book *The Practice of Ritual Magic*. This may take another year. Then the Greater Arcana should be worked with and a set designed by using the techniques to be found in this book, with the theoretical back-up to be found in the rest of *The Rose Cross and the Goddess* and *A History of White Magic*, particularly the first and last chapters. This is likely to take at least another year.

This is a regimen giving the minimum requirement for anyone aspiring to dedicate themselves to occultism as a way of life and of service. By the end of it, which would be likely to take a minimum of three years, possibly twice that time, if the dedication is there and the inner ways truly opened, the dedication may be accepted and the powers and responsibilities of adepthood opened up – leading to a life lived in full realization of the levels of existence beyond the physical. This is neither so easy nor so glamorous as it may sound.

Those with less ambitious aspirations, such as personal psychological improvement, or the comfort of a higher

philosophy, or a practical divinatory technique, can find their needs in a less systematic application to these books, or by recourse to the many books which now make up a readily available and extensive Tarot literature.

The Tarot has 'arrived' and is readily available in its many aspects for anyone who seeks. In the last analysis however, the secrets of the Tarot are to be found in the Tarot itself. There is no real need for any instructor other than itself. It is, in itself, a book of universal wisdom. Its images are not closed secrets demanding elucidation by another, but are a personal invitation to the dance – the Great Dance of the Heavenly Fool.

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