

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

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## Lesson 10 : Tarots printed in books

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

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

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



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

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



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

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

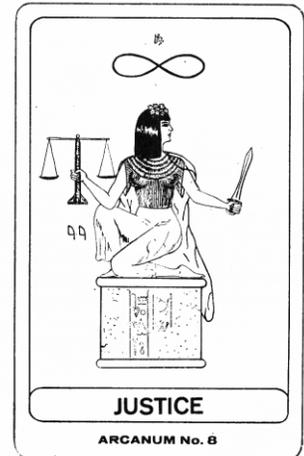


One interesting feature of the Dequer/Fathman designs is that the images in the second half, 10-21, have a little rectangular panel below the stylised cartouche. These panels contain

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

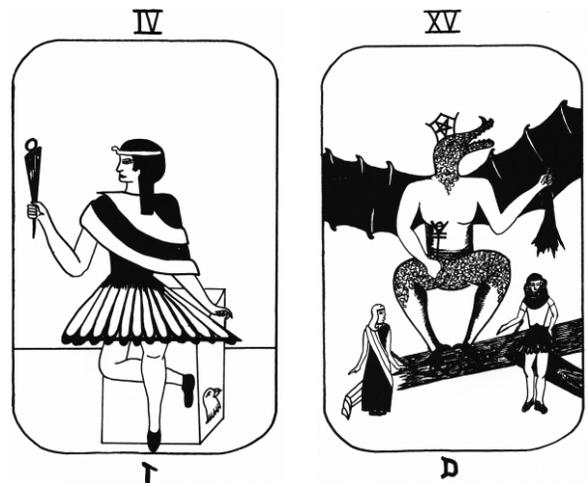


Another Egyptian tarot followed a decade or so later - *The Prophetic Tarot* by Rudolfo Benavides, published originally in Spanish in Mexico, 1969. Later this was issued in English. The book develops an apocalyptic interpretation of the tarot, using the tarot images in conjunction with selectively chosen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



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

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



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



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

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

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



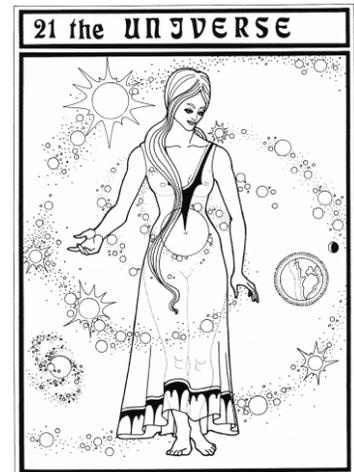
Jan Woudhuysen *Tarot Therapy* book 1979 (also published under the title *Tarotmania*), subtitled 'A guide to the subconscious' included some very charming designs by Louise Aaltje for the Major arcana. As far as I know these were never issued as an actual tarot deck. This has become quite a well known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





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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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