



Tarot Association  
of the British Isles

# TABI NEWS

*Issue #4, June 21 2002*

## Welcome from the TABI Team

Welcome to the Midsummer edition of the TABI newsletter. Our Editor, Diana, is taking a break this issue due to the small matter of getting married in June – congratulations and best wishes from all us, Diana! Normal service will be resumed for the Mabon issue, being planned for launch around the Autumn Equinox on **23rd September 2002**. For interested writers, suppliers and colleagues, please be in touch over the next six weeks if you are hoping to see articles, reviews etc in this issue. Please send article submissions to Diana at: [news.submissions@tabi.org.uk](mailto:news.submissions@tabi.org.uk)

In the meantime we hope you enjoy this issue! Our planned interview with renowned tarotist Nina Lee Braden has unfortunately had to be postponed but we hope to bring this to you next issue, and we have plenty for more you:

- **Reviews**
- **Featured Spread**
- **Tarot Debates: thorny issues examined**
- **Tips for Pro Readers**
- **Rephrasing - a new look at a tough subject**

And much, much more...

With best wishes,

**Shelley King**

*Guest Editor*

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## What is TABI?

TABI stands for the Tarot Association of the British Isles, which is an independent not-for-profit organisation, dedicated to supporting the positive use and development of Tarot in the United Kingdom. TABI is run by volunteers with a passion for tarot and the esoteric. Please visit our website at <http://www.tabi.org.uk>.

## How to get the most from the newsletter

Clicking on the page numbers in the contents table will take you directly to the page you want to view. If you want to make the text on a page look larger, please go to “View” and set the option to “Fit Visible”, or the similar command that appears on your version.

## Availability, Notification of Accuracy of TABI News

We do our best to keep the information in TABI News up to date and accurate. If anything needs updating or correcting for future reference, please let us know. TABI News currently appears as a PDF file on the TABI web-site and on the databases of TABI's e-mail discussion lists. We send out notification of new issues of TABI News to reach a wide and interested audience and for each issue we endeavour to ensure that all contributors are kept informed of the release date. If you should wish to be removed from our mailing list, however, please email us: Editor: Diana McMahon; E-mail: [newsletter@tabi.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@tabi.org.uk)

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# What's new at TABI

*Shelley keeps us up to date with events at TABI*

## **Free Readings**

Our Free Reading service continues to be very popular, and is a great way for new readers to gain experience in a friendly and supportive atmosphere. If you would like further details on becoming a TABI Free Reader, please send a blank email to [reading@tabi.org.uk](mailto:reading@tabi.org.uk)

## **Training**

We've decided to make our training system, which is based on the free online course by Joan Bunning, a little more structured and pro-active with scheduled lessons and group exercises taking place on our private training list. The next course is due to start at the beginning of July, so if anyone would like further details please send an email to: [training.admin@tabi.org.uk](mailto:training.admin@tabi.org.uk).

## **Forums**

Our online discussion forums are now up and running at <http://www.tabi.org.uk/forums/> We have debates, card interpretations, deck reviews, an FAQ, shopping links and much more – come and share your views!

## **Future events**

TABI is a non-profit organisation, with funds raised being used to offset our administrative costs and hopefully in the future to arrange 'real life' events such as workshops or conferences. What would you like to see? Please send any ideas or suggestions to [admin.shelley@tabi.org.uk](mailto:admin.shelley@tabi.org.uk)

## **Situations Vacant**

Are you able to spare some time to help with administrative or creative projects at TABI? New volunteers and contributors are always needed. If you are UK based and interested in working with us at TABI, please send a blank email to [volunteering@tabi.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@tabi.org.uk)

# In Memoriam - Brian Williams

*By Mary K Greer*

*The tarot community has been greatly saddened by the recent loss of Brian Williams - here we are grateful to Mary Greer for the opportunity to share her experience of his memorial service ...*

Some of you probably didn't know Brian Williams, but he was a truly exceptional person - an artist, art-and-Tarot historian, fluent in Italian, and a gentle, loving, handsome human being who died last month. His many Tarot decks stand as landmarks in the field: the Renaissance, Angels, POMO (a great intro to modern art), Minchiate, and the soon to be released Ship of Fools Tarot decks (and books - including the book to Michael Goepferd's Light & Shadow Tarot).

About 16 Tarotists attended (4 of them flying in from various parts of the country), along with film-maker Matthew Kallis who is making a documentary on Tarot for either PBS or A&E, and many of Brian's friends from Italy (a couple of them helped with his Tarot tour of Northern Italy in September 2000). In addition the place was filled with his Berkeley friends and family.

When the minister invoked Brian, I privately drew a card from his POMO deck as a message from Brian - so that he could speak to us directly. The card was "9. Out of It." (= The Hermit). Description: "The bearded old guy on card 9, Out of It, points a flashlight into an empty corner." On page 22 (!) Brian wrote: "Our character is Out of It, like all these venerable incarnations, but also out of the game, out of the loop. . . . There are consequences of absenting oneself from the world, from the scene, from the rat race: delightful consequences and otherwise. There is peace and quiet, inner calm, perspective, detachment."

Andrea Savini read from Dante's Paradiso in beautiful Italian as well as English. Alessandro di Rocca read from the "business plan" Brian had written up for the first gay bar to be opened in Venice - it was hysterically Brian - in that he knew the cultural side of Italy better than most, but delighted in its scandals. His sister Genny told us how as a boy, Brian took her and his younger brothers to art museums and then "stole" their lunch money to buy prints of the masterpieces. Thalassa, dressed in a black lace Renaissance gown, did stand-up comedy revealing several of Brian's adult escapades.

His family gave away many of his original drawings and sketches, along with packets of his ashes and pieces of the beautiful pottery urn which was ceremonially shattered during the ceremony. Several guys walked around in costumes Brian made - like his leather Roman Charioteer outfit that showed off his beautiful knees.

Afterwards the Tarot group went out for pizza and drinks, hosted by Jeffrey Elliot, VP of the International Tarot Society. We inaugurated our first Patron Saint of Tarot - Santo Briano (there is no such name as Brian in Italian - so that's the name they've given him there).

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Visit the website: <http://www.tarocon.com>

# Featured Spread - The Two Card Reading

*By Troi*

*This issue Troi examines an overlooked classic - the Two Card spread...*

Following on from Diana McMahon's excellent article in the first TABI newsletter <http://www.tabi.contactbox.co.uk/newsletter/Pairs.htm> I thought it would be a good idea to offer up some further ideas for working with pairs and simple two-card spreads.

Most readers already know the value of drawing one card for a reading – it is amazing how much information one card holds in relation to particular question. However, the possibilities created by adding a second card are endless.

There are many ways to use pairs in a reading and I can only address a few of them here. Perhaps my suggestions will help you to find your own methods of developing your own two-card system.

Let us examine the area of relationships – as any reader will know, relationship issues account for the most frequently asked questions.

First of all, there is the simple drawing of two cards in response to a given question. No positional meanings need be allocated and the reading takes the form of comparing and contrasting the two cards. Placing the two cards side by side, first look at the images. Sometimes the cards automatically fall into the 'his point of view versus her point of view'. This is particularly the case when the cards are Court cards or illustrated Minor Arcana. I tend to mentally put the querent on the left as I look at the cards, with their partner (or potential partner) on the right

Ask yourself a few questions: are there human figures in the cards and do they appear to be interacting in some way? Are they facing each other or are they turning away? Does one look like s/he is trying to communicate with the other who appears to be ignoring all overtures? Without even delving into the actual meanings of the cards, it is possible to form an initial impression of the situation in question. What happens if you swap the cards around? Does this give a lead towards offering a possible solution?

Next, look at the finer details such as colour and symbols. Is one card full of light and sunshine whilst the other is grey and cloudy? Examining these points can give a clue as to the atmosphere surrounding the situation. Are there any shared symbols that emphasise a common link? Again, something may catch your eye and suggest a solution.

So, it is possible to carry out a complete reading based only on what you can see and what impressions you receive from the two cards.

But, there's more...

Now we can examine the suits and numbers of the two cards. If you wish you can incorporate other systems at this point, such as elemental dignities and numerology. Personally, I find that I never follow a particular order in my examination of the cards – the image, the suits, the numbers and the meanings all combine in a mish-mash. I then make a decision on exactly how I am going to untangle the threads of energy into some kind of structure that will produce a coherent and cohesive reading.

I feel that the actual numbers of the cards are very important and although I do not profess any expertise in numerology, a basic knowledge of the energy of numbers is essential in my readings. Combine this knowledge with the suit and your divinatory meanings are practically handed to you.

There are many ways that the meanings of numbers are expressed but here are my quick and easy favourites:

Ace – potential, beginning, inspiration, gift  
Two – relationship, balance, choices, waiting  
Three – expression, communication, growth, creativity  
Four – foundation, manifestation, stability, security  
Five – challenge, adventure, adjustment, instability  
Six – harmony, achievement, balance, triumph  
Seven – discovery, understanding, wisdom, options  
Eight – regeneration, movement, assessment, fine-tuning  
Nine – endings, attainment, integration, knowledge  
Ten – transition, pause, renewal, preparation (for the next cycle).

So if, in our unspecified relationship reading, a five and a nine appears, my first instinct might be to consider that the partnership may be about to reach an ending, and not a particularly easy ending at that. Or maybe a two and a three will point towards the relationship growing and developing towards stability. A six and an eight may indicate a good relationship that may be undergoing a shift of some kind.

And, of course, we mustn't forget the actual 'traditional' meanings for the cards. Do they support? Oppose? Does the second flow on from the first or is there an indication of conflict? Do they tell a story? Most importantly – do they suggest something that resonates with your own intuition?

There are readers who would be more comfortable assigning positional meanings before drawing the cards, and one of the most useful two-card spreads is dealt with in *The Heart of the Tarot* by Sandra Thompson, Robert Mueller and Signe Echols (Harper ISBN 0-380-80900-1). This book reduces the over-used Celtic Cross down to the first two cards. In other words, right down to the heart of the reading. The positions have been renamed 'the situation' and 'the challenge'. The authors stress the importance of asking the right question and go on to analyse each card as it appears in both 'the situation' and 'the challenge'. An extremely useful spread that can provide insight into almost any situation.

Using this technique and the information given in the book I carried out the following reading.

The initial question: When will I meet my soul mate?

Having gone through a phase of restating the question on the seeker's behalf and coming back round to the view where I don't see much value in so doing, for the purposes of this reading I will reformulate it.

Restated question: The issue is focused on my potential life partner. What do I need to know regarding the circumstances of our meeting? How can I enhance our chances of meeting in the first place?

You can see how this opens up the question and paves the way for a fuller, more in-depth answer.

Okay, for our imaginary querent I have drawn the following cards from the Robin Wood deck:

1. The situation - Two of Swords
2. The challenge - King of Pentacles

Two of Swords. A woman dressed in a flowing but simple white gown sits on some broken masonry. Her back is to the ocean, which is choppy but not stormy. Her arms are crossed in front of her chest and in each hand she holds an upward pointing sword. She wears a white blindfold and a stern, unhappy expression. It is night time and dark, raggedy clouds are scudding across the sky. There is a bright crescent moon above and slightly to the woman's left.

It appears that our seeker is reluctant to acknowledge the truth of her situation. She may be blocking off one or more avenues that might lead her to meeting her true love. It is possible that some past experience has caused her to build barriers around her thus discouraging potential lovers. Or she might have a specific vision of the man of her dreams that is preventing her from seeing the potential of someone she has already met.

King of Pentacles. The King sits on his throne in a lush, verdant garden. He is surrounded by grape-bearing vines. He wears a crown of leaves and holds a sceptre in his right hand and holds a golden pentacle with his left and lets it rest on his knee. His clothes are opulent - all greens, reds and gold. In contrast he appears to be wearing bedroom slippers on his feet. He is bearded and jolly-looking. In the far distance are cultivated fields, and beyond them a town or perhaps it is the king's castle.

I generally, but not always, view Courts as representing actual people who have a major influence in the situation. However, this card has appeared in the Challenge position - to me this may well be someone whom the querent has overlooked in her quest for love. She may well have dismissed this person as being too old or outside of her social sphere. The King of Pentacles may well challenge her ideas of romance as he is the most practical and down-to earth of all the Courts - a great catch but not every girl's dream of love ever after.

Essence of the reading: I would gently suggest to the seeker that she should firstly concentrate on analysing her own attitudes to love. She might need to examine if she has narrowed her choice down to a vision she holds close to her heart, thereby blocking off potential partners. I

might encourage her to focus on her self-esteem – she needs to be able to see herself worthy of receiving love before she is able to love another on an equal basis.

I would then ask her to think about her friends, co-workers, acquaintances, etc and emphasise the importance of developing good solid relationships with the focus on friendship first. She may well discover that love comes in all shapes and sizes and that a foundation of friendship is the best basis for lasting love.

I am sure that with practice, you will find that the two-card spread is one of the most useful for answering the myriad questions that you will be posed in your career as a Tarot reader. New readers tend to get hung up on huge ten card Celtic Cross spreads that merely confuse and overwhelm. Having carried out hundreds of one and three card readings for the free reading networks, and now mainly using two cards for my TABI readings, I have reached the conclusion that the twos have it – they tell you all you need to know about a situation and give many suggestions for further action. Happy pairing!

Sources:

Learning the Tarot by Joan Bunning (Weiser ISBN 1-57863-048-7)

The Heart of the Tarot by Sandra Thompson, Robert Mueller & Signe Echols (Harper ISBN 0-380-80900-1).

Power Tarot by – Trish MacGregor & Phyllis Vega (Simon & Schuster ISBN 0-684-84185-1)

Visit Troi's website at: <http://www.troi-tarot.com/>

# The Rules

*By Vivianne Kacal*

*Starting out in tarot can seem like a minefield of dos and don'ts - here Vivianne takes a light hearted look at some of the most commonly encountered 'rules'...*

To the public at large, tarot has an aura of mystery, with an attraction varying in degree from curiosity through to fear and loathing - with concomitant reactions to those of us involved in such a 'dubious' field, generously sprinkled with charlatans.

So if we, the public, have had our interest in tarot sparked and wish to penetrate its mysteries, what do we discover? Most beginners' books that we might pick up from a high street book shop tell us there are rules about tarot; we pick up several different beginners' books, and find that the 'rules' tend to differ quite widely from author to author - how do we decide who's right? We are novices, we have no way to judge.

Let's start by trying to summarize the most common "rules" that will be encountered: you must not buy your deck for yourself (advice ranges from getting a tarot reader to gift one to you, a friend to buy it for you, or even that you must steal it!). Having been the (not ungrateful) recipient of decks as gifts, I find the most interesting aspect is what it reveals about people's opinions of my tastes, and theoretically these are people who know me well! I don't use any of the decks I have been gifted but am glad to have received them, since it is the thought that counts. The learning experience of this is to always specify exactly which deck it is that you desire. Quite frankly however, if I had waited for a deck to be gifted me before starting to learn about the tarot I probably still wouldn't have a deck at all - or have learned anything about tarot.

Secondly, we learn we must wrap our deck in black silk and keep it in a wooden box, to avert negative vibrations; some authors go as far as to say you must make both items yourself - and so I could have done, had I wished my decks to be kept in bloodstained silk in a crooked box that fell apart every time I opened it. Negative influences can affect a deck, but this is far more likely to be a result of someone else handling it than stray emanations homing in on it; black silk and a wooden box will not prevent that. Being discriminating about who handles your deck, and thorough cleansing will.

Which brings us to rule 3: handling our decks. Many authors don't even discuss this, but simply tell us how the cards should be presented to the querent, and how the querent should shuffle them. In real life, the approaches to this are as individual as the tarot readers themselves - I know of some who never let anyone else handle their working decks (never call them control freaks); at the other extreme, there are some who let their toddler's sticky hands and mouths add a certain unique feel to their decks.

Fourth is how to actually go about learning to use the cards. More traditional authors give short (or long) meanings of the individual cards, and say that these must be memorized - the problem with this approach is that they rarely describe how to combine these individual meanings in conjunction with others, what the effect of the position in the spread might be, and how to

interpret these meanings in a cohesive manner that makes sense to the querent. More recent authors adopt a more proactive method, to encourage development of intuitive abilities, often including meditative and visualization techniques and practice. The theory behind this method is that the new reader, having got a thorough “feel” for each card, will then find it easier to relate them to each other, and to the querent, in a coherent way.

The fifth rule seems to largely depend on the age of the book: picking a significator to represent the querent. This is recommended in the older books, but is now considered to be old-fashioned; most suggest using court cards but there are a few who suggest using a card from the Major Arcana. How you choose a court card to represent your querent may involve simply physical characteristics, astrological assignments, temperament or a combination of any or all of these. The more modern view is to decide what card represents your querent but not to separate it, which gives it special significance in the position in which it occurs in a spread.

The penultimate rule decreed by many tarot authors is “Thou shalt not read for thyself”. The logic behind this rule is that you can never be truly objective in interpreting a reading for yourself – particularly if you are in any kind of personal crisis; depending on your personality, you are likely to skim over or disregard the things you don’t want to hear, or take the most negative aspects and focus on them exclusively.

All of these ‘rules’ recur as the subject of passionate debate amongst the tarot community, but perhaps the one that inspires the most heat is that of the purpose for which tarot should be used – divination vs. spiritual growth. Those in the divinatory school say that this is the reason for which tarot decks were originally designed; those in the spiritual growth camp say that this denigrates tarot, and reduces it to mere prediction.

So, having had the stamina, time and money to plough through say, twenty or thirty beginners’ books on tarot, what conclusion do we the novice eventually come to about the rules?

Most likely, we have absorbed both consciously and subconsciously much of the information presented about the ‘rules’ - and evolved our own peculiar approach, abstracting the things we like and feel comfortable with piecemeal from here and there; together with endless practice, we develop the unique styles and quirks that makes each tarot reader individual. And in turn, sometimes become as didactic as those same authors, who usually say that there is no right or wrong way in tarot; that it is totally subjective – just before they present us with their rules.

# To Rephrase or Not to Rephrase – What is the question?

*by Thrysse*

*Rephrasing can be a very useful tool for the reader, but is it always the best course of action? Thrysse has kindly agreed for us to reproduce her excellent and thought-provoking article, in which she presents the other side of this difficult issue and gives exercises to help readers develop their own personal methods.*

Rephrasing questions is a technique that is commonly used and taught to tarot students. It has a great deal of value as a learning tool, because it requires the reader to struggle with and set their own personal reading boundaries around ethics, personal empowerment, and reading style. There are indeed times when a question cannot or should not be answered as asked, but these are relatively few and generally deal with ethics violations. The remaining situations are those where the reader feels that the question would be more effective, empowering, or appropriate if worded differently.

However, there are a number of issues involved with rephrasing that have led me to become less comfortable with it over time. The following sections discuss 1) some reasons why rephrasing may be undesirable, 2) effective alternatives to rephrasing, and 3) if you need to rephrase, some tips and suggestions for doing so. I am aware that the ATA student materials promote rephrasing quite strongly, and nothing in this article should be taken as discouragement of that practice if it is what you are most comfortable with. The purpose of this article is simply to present an alternative point of view and to encourage each reader to actively think through the issue and explore your own personal choices and boundaries around the questions that clients ask.

## **Issues with Rephrasing**

Even though it is a very effective approach for beginning readers, many readers become less comfortable with rephrasing over time, for some of the following reasons:

1) It can come across as somewhat patronizing and the client may perceive a lack of respect or understanding of their concerns. I do not believe that clients are incapable of asking the question they really want to ask. The fact that we, the readers, may feel there are more empowering questions they could ask does not diminish the client's interest in their original question. They often do not understand that we have their best interests at heart, and may feel that we are simply not hearing them.

2) It is a well-respected and very helpful counseling technique to repeat back the client's questions or concerns in their own words. This lets them know you are really hearing them. When you rephrase their question, this sends the message that their question was somehow inappropriate or inadequate, and you know better than they do what they really should have asked. Even if you are right, this doesn't make them feel good and distances them from the reading, just when you want them to be most receptive.

3) Even after rephrasing, the answer to the original question often pops back up in the tarot reading - either in the cards themselves or in the reader's interpretation. The energy of the question is there and does not go away because we try to ask a different question. Many experienced readers have noticed that rephrasing can be ineffective – it just may not work. Remember that your mind, subconscious and higher self are all involved in the tarot reading, and the mental construct you have of the question may well be more important than the specific wording that your conscious mind gives it. Other parts of your self may think in images or more abstract concepts, and may not "get" the rephrasing.

4) On the occasions when clients have been asked, many have reported that they don't like rephrasing and feel offended by it (if you are not sure whether this is the case, I encourage you to try it). They may dismiss the reading if they don't feel their question is being answered.

5) Unless it is handled very carefully, it can be an obvious and clumsy way of dealing with a poorly worded question and may get the reading off to a negative start. There are other ways of dealing with a poorly worded question that are more subtle, friendly, and helpful than right off the bat dismissing the client's question and substituting one of your own, no matter how nicely you try to do it. And without a lot of practice, many readers don't do it that well.

### **Alternatives to Rephrasing**

An alternative approach may work well, most of the time:

- Letting them know you have concerns about the way the question is phrased \*without\* substituting one of your own
- Defining the card positions and meanings carefully so that the client is empowered even if they have not asked the question that way
- Reading the cards in such a way that the client gets the help they need without handing them the answers.

This preserves their original question while still providing, by example, the empowerment and tools they need. I believe this is a much more respectful and equally effective approach. For example: the client asks "Will I leave my husband?"

Here is an opening paragraph that avoids rephrasing this question, even though this question is clearly not one we would want to answer directly.

"Dear XXX,

Thank you for stopping by our web site for a reading! Your question is, will you leave your husband? XXX, only you can answer a question as important as this one. Your future is not predetermined and you can affect your fate through your own actions and free will. However, the tarot can assist you in looking at this situation and can give you helpful information with which to make this decision. For this question, we will use a three-card reading in which the first card represents strengths of your marriage, the second card represents issues or problems in your marriage, and the third card represents what will be most helpful to you in making a decision about whether to stay or leave your marriage."

This opening paragraph is respectful of the client, avoids rephrasing her question, and yet puts the burden of the decision squarely back in her hands while still providing valuable information to help her make her decision. Notice that the same issue of empowerment and choice that underlies rephrasing is handled by informing the client directly of their power of free will and through the reading itself – it is not necessary to actually change the question that is asked. The layout that the reader chooses and the way the cards are interpreted are much more important steps in giving the client an empowering reading than rephrasing their question. This also makes sure that the reader stays on track with the central issue of concern to the client (the decision she has to make about leaving her husband) and doesn't head off in another question by rephrasing this to a more general reading, such as "what does x need to know about her marriage".

### **Other alternatives to rephrasing:**

1) First, examine your motives for wanting to rephrase the question. If the reason is that it is a reading that is not unethical but is one you are just not comfortable with, you can pass it along to another reader on your network. For example, for a while I was not comfortable with pregnancy readings no matter how they were worded, but many readers are happy to do them. Timing readings are another category that some readers do and some don't. If you are not in a situation where you can pass along the reading, you have the right to set boundaries about the types of readings you will do. Let the client know in a respectful way that this is not a question you feel comfortable with, and why. Give them some options for rephrasing or asking different questions so that the choice is put in their hands.

2) If you are certain that the question is one that is outside the ethical boundaries of the group, then you can explain the ethical issues to the client and ask \*them\* to rephrase the question to fall within the scope of your personal or group ethics. This is much better than you doing it for them - because then it's their question again and they have learned how to phrase a good and ethical question. They are often grateful and interested to learn that tarot readers have a code of ethics, and this gives them a sense that we are responsible professionals, not fortune-tellers and entertainers.

### **Suggestions for Rephrasing a Question**

If you feel it is appropriate or necessary to rephrase a question, here are some suggestions:

1) Acknowledge to yourself and the client that you, the reader, are making this choice because of your personal views on how readings should be done. It is \*not\* because of limitations of the tarot or because there was anything actually wrong with the question that was asked (assuming it was ethical). I have seen rephrasings that start like this "Because the tarot can only answer one question at a time..." or openings that subtly make it sound like the client's deficiency for asking the wrong question. The tarot itself does not have these limitations - for example, there are many tarot spreads that handle multiple aspects of a client's life and the interactions between them. It is the reader's choice (and usually a good one for a one-card reading) to focus on one question. A better phrasing might be "I find that my readings are clearer if I focus on one question at a time. Since you seem most concerned about X, I have chosen this question for our reading today..."

2) Make sure you know why you feel it is necessary to rephrase the question, and explain this to

the client as above. Some readers seem to get into the habit of rephrasing every question, with little or no explanation to the client. They cannot learn to ask better questions unless you explain to them what the issues are.

3) It might be best to avoid the word "rephrase". Even though we know that what we are doing is rephrasing, the word itself may offend some clients. How about "I would like to ask the question this way..." or "Based on what you have told me, I would like to focus the reading on..."

4) Remember that each client and each question are individual and unique, and try to keep your reworded question as close as possible to the original question. Many readers use the rather generic rewording "What does X need to know about Y". This is an easy way out which is often much less specific than the original question, and has some semantic problems as well. What the client may most need to know about the situation may in fact be the inappropriate question they originally asked! And you, the reader, will find yourself with a reading that you are not comfortable with. Maybe what they truly most need to know is when they will get their money, or whether their husband is cheating on them. This is what the cards may show you, and you have not achieved your goal of avoiding this type of reading. Try making the rewording more specific and more empowering. For example, someone asks, "My husband seems really distant lately. Is he having an affair? I am worried I will lose him." Instead of "what do I need to know about my marriage?" - which may tell you that yes, he may very well be having an affair, try "what can I do to improve and strengthen my marriage?" This way you are sure to get a reading that is both empowering and avoids concrete predictions.

## Exercises

**Exercise #1:** Write an opening paragraph for a 3-card reading on the question "Should I quit my job and look for a new one? How will it work out if I do?" Handle this opening paragraph without rephrasing the question, and design a 3-card reading that will empower the client and give them the information they need without making their decisions for them.

**Exercise #2.** In your opinion, which of the following questions can be answered as is (Group A), which must be rephrased (Group B), and which are outside the boundaries of your personal reading ethics (Group C)? For those questions that need to be rephrased, write a sentence or two to the client explaining why they need to be rephrased and how you would suggest doing so. For the purposes of this exercise, assume that you can use three cards for the reading. For those questions that are outside the boundaries of your ethics, what related questions could you suggest to the client as alternatives? Note – these are all real questions I have received from clients requesting readings.

The purpose of this exercise is to help each reader find their own boundaries and comfort level with rephrasing. It is not important or necessary for us to all share a code of ethics or a single approach to rephrasing – it is only important that each reader work with these issues and actively think about them. For more on developing a code of ethics, see the related article:

[http://www.tarotmoon.com/articles/Code\\_of\\_Ethics/code\\_of\\_ethics.html](http://www.tarotmoon.com/articles/Code_of_Ethics/code_of_ethics.html)

1. When will I finally meet a man who will love and marry me?
2. How can I get along better with my mother-in-law?
3. I really need to know if my husband is having an affair!

4. I have a lawsuit going on right now. Will I win and when will I know for sure?
5. I am considering a new career as a writer. I am wondering whether this has any chance of success and whether I will be happy?
6. How can I keep my teenage son from getting in so much trouble?
7. Am I pregnant? If so, who is the father?
8. What is the name of my future husband?
9. I don't know the what the question is, but I really need to know the answer! (this is not a joke, I am serious)
10. Will I be able to sell my house before June 7?
11. Does Bobby love Heather or does he love me?
12. What can I do to improve my chances of getting a raise and promotion at work?

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For more articles and information about tarot, including readings, visit Thrysse's web site at <http://www.tarotmoon.com>

# Going Pro – tips for the Self-Employed Reader

by Vivianne Kacal and Shelley King

*This is the second of a number of articles that we plan to feature in TABI News, which will centre on themes connected to the experience of reading for other people. In this article we look at some of the practicalities of setting up a business.*

Deciding to put your tarot practice on a professional basis is a big step and one that many readers delay or even reject due mainly to a lack of confidence. Are you good enough to call yourself a professional? To make a living from your readings? Only you and your – hopefully! – satisfied querents can answer that, but practice, practice and more practice will give you a good start. Do as many readings as you can, in as many different settings as you can – face to face, at parties, at fayres, through the post, via email and in online chat. The more different media you are comfortable using, the more potential clients you can reach.

And when you've practiced all these to the point where you are as happy with your skills as you can be, you simply have to gird your loins and take the plunge. Act like you believe in yourself, even if you're actually struggling to do that - if you give off a confident aura, it bounces back off the client and reinforces you.

Once you've made the decision, the first issue you need to resolve is what you're going to charge. As a basic yardstick, the legal minimum wage is £4.10 per hour; and this is for what are generally considered to be low skilled jobs. But remember - tarot is *not* low skilled; we have all spent and continue to spend a lot of time studying our subject, practicing our art and honing our skills; we just lack formal qualifications. This isn't our fault, since there aren't any in the UK – and the US system has not been without problems. (*Editor's Note: see the next article for further information and comment on this subject*).

So in view of this, a charge of say £10 pounds for a half-hour reading doesn't seem unreasonable, does it? You might have different rates for different spreads or types of questions – a 78 card past life reading, for example, could attract a higher charge than a 10 card Celtic Cross due to the additional complexity required. You might also have different rates for readings done by post or email, dependent on your facilities and typing skills! Also think about whether you want to add on the cost of incidentals - if you are going to tape record live readings, will you charge for the cassette, throw it in for free or ask your querent to supply their own? Will you give away a small gift such as a crystal? For a postal reading, will you send a photograph of the spread? These are all things you need to think about, and take into consideration, when putting together your price list. Providing 'extras' may help to differentiate your service from others, but watch that profit margin! It is tempting to think that reading will bring in £20 per hour, which of course would make a very nice wage, but do remember that it is extremely unlikely you will be working seven hours straight, all day every day – take that into consideration when comparing potential tarot income with income from an existing job. Also bear in mind that once self-employed you will have no paid holiday or sick time – you do need to be realistic about your earning potential, especially if you are planning to make a living from your business.

Which leads us to advertising and promotion. As we have no nationally recognized certification of basic standards in tarot reading, the best way for a querent to find a reliable reader is by reputation – recommendation by word of mouth . This goes for psychics, clairvoyants et al. Your best source of new clients will always therefore be your existing querents – don't be afraid to give them your card or leaflets to pass to their friends. If they are pleased with their reading, chances are very high they will want to talk about it – all you are doing is helping them with the details!

Most of us these days have a computer – make it work for you. Print off a tariff or price list, add your ethics, a bit about yourself and your experience, what kind of readings you offer, what a complete newcomer can expect from a reading, etc. Then when someone says, "Oh I hear you do tarot readings," you will be adequately prepared – hand them your leaflet, pull out your diary or filofax and ask when they'd like to make an appointment. Try not to worry about seeming pushy – a lot of people are much shyer than you would think and may not ask you for a booking because they don't want to 'impose' – let them know that you will be happy to see them.

You might also want to consider having a note on your literature that says you charge for missed appointments - a lot of professionals do, and after all this *is* what we are presenting ourselves as. You will still retain control over this issue - if there is a genuine reason for a no-show and you don't want to levy the charge, you don't have to. But if you find that persistent appointment-breakers become a problem, you then have the option.

Another important issue to be aware of is income tax. You will be liable for tax on any profit you make, and it is essential to keep good records. You will need to keep details of all money you receive from clients, and all expenditure – any items you purchase solely for use in your business, which could include decks, books, incense, tapes, web-hosting fees, advertising, stationery etc. are allowable expenses and reclaimable against tax. If you visit clients in their homes, you will also be able to offset a percentage of the running costs of your car. Be careful to keep your business and personal finances separate, as this will make things a lot easier at tax time – having a bank account solely for your business is a good idea. You might consider taking a course in book-keeping, or alternatively you can employ an accountant to put your finances in order and liaise with the Inland Revenue on your behalf.

The Inland Revenue is in fact a good source of information about tax issues and of starting a business in general – visit their website at <http://www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/startinup/index.htm>

Most high street banks also offer an advice service – contact your local branch for an information pack or to make an appointment with a small business adviser.

# Divination Practice Without Borders - An Examination of Tarot Certification

*By Thrysse*

*In view of recent developments in the US tarot community, we feel this is an important issue for all responsible tarotists to consider and are pleased to reproduce the following thoughts...*

Since the issue of certification in Tarot has gained momentum in the last decade, one must consider whether sufficient parallels between disciplines such as business, medicine and law can be drawn to divinatory practice, and if so, whether it is worthwhile to pursue this model. The suspicion with which the unseen, the sacred and the uncanny are viewed in the modern world often causes practitioners of divination to operate in a sort of shadow realm which can make it difficult to achieve mainstream credibility. It is assumed that the proponents of Tarot certification are attempting to address this issue.

All human endeavors, be they art or religion, science or government, have produced charlatans and mediocrities as well as brilliant stars and careful, steady practitioners. However much we would like to protect ourselves against the former and avail ourselves of the latter, it is not always possible to ascertain which is which. The desire to guarantee consistent quality of practice has driven many professions and industries to establish accreditation boards and certification programs to augment and enhance their training. Whether they have succeeded is highly debatable. In the light of almost continuous scandals great and small, one cannot avoid questioning whether the certification offered in business and professional disciplines actually enhances the quality of services provided. One of the most crucial questions to be asked is: realistically, what can certification accomplish?

In undertaking the establishment of Tarot certification, many questions need to be addressed, not the least of which is how much power does a certifying agency have? How can a subject as broad in its interpretations and associations as Tarot be constrained by the necessarily restrictive conventions of academic study and the certification model? Does a certifying agency or accreditation board have the right of censure? Of endorsement? We must also ask why and to whom are those seeking certification giving their time, money and power. From whence does this power derive? Where does the money go? If the goal is to render divinatory services more acceptable and accessible to the mainstream and to ensure quality of service, are there other ways that this might be accomplished?

Groups such as the Brotherhood of Light and Builders of the Adytum have long offered a form of certification in their training systems. James Wanless offers certification in his Voyager system. These are specific systems certifying only within the parameters of their own structures. If someone has completed one of these systems of training and offers a reading, the querent may have an idea of the kind of reading they will receive, but not necessarily of the quality. However, there is no one-holy-catholic-&-apostolic body of Tarot thought, no standard curricula or canon. The number of different schools, interpretations, and systems is already enormous with no sign of diminishing proliferation. How can any one agency presume that its coursework and certification can cover more than a fraction of so broad a spectrum? Realistically, how can any

such body cover all aspects of practice, quantify such essential card reading skills as intuition, compassion and commitment to truth? Tarot is not a one-size-fits all pursuit, and standardization is not desirable. Tarot shares a crucial aspect with medicine in that good practice comes down to the quality of care, not the prestige of the school from which the practitioner graduated; different - even maverick - methodologies should be respected as long as they yield good results, and, in the words of Hippocrates, "harm none."

With the rise of certification structures within the Tarot world there also seems to be an increase in the prejudice - so prevalent in the day-to-to-day world - of those with certification or degrees towards those who do not. Let us be reminded that a degree verifies primarily that one has completed a course of study, and a certification acknowledges that one has passed an examination. Although this may indicate a certain knowledge level or skill set, it is no guarantee of quality practice that is beneficial to clients and colleagues. One is reminded of how a freshly minted MBA may falter when plunged into the maelstrom of modern business, whereas someone with a few decades of solid life experience and an up-to-date skill set can carry the day. We must not let the visible sign of course completion supersede actual life experience and extensive Tarot practice.

Our society's willingness to trust experts and designations over common sense, careful valuation and educated assessment seems to have increased proportionate to the proliferation of certified experts and accrediting bodies. In our everyday lives we must make decisions regarding selection of health care providers, legal advisers, financial planners, hairdressers, &c., awash in an excess of stimulation and a surfeit of information. Our reliance on certification alone cannot guarantee quality or satisfaction, be it a social worker or a yoga instructor. In these decisions we must be as "street smart" as "book smart," informed by knowledge as well as heeding our inner voice. We cannot allow ourselves to be impressed merely by letters after a name, or the name of the issuing institution on a certificate. It takes an enormous amount of knowledge to get through an average day, more now than at any point in human history; yet many of us make the same credulous mistakes that humans have made since recorded history. In the realms of divination practice and provision of service these concerns become especially important. We must be judged in the realm of the real rather than that of the academic.

Looking at the size of the worms in this can is potentially daunting. However, it is an issue that must be addressed. It may be wiser to form into fraternal organizations, professional societies, and institutes of study than to continue with formal certification models. Less hierarchical structure can actually encourage support and accountability among the community. Certifying agencies and academic bodies are often notoriously resistant to change, and the vibrantly growing Tarot community to needs to be as fluid and as accommodating to change as possible. We should resist forming monolithic bodies, and look to models of small, adaptable organizations that can offer instruction and support within specific disciplines and interact across a broad spectrum. No single entity should have more right than another to speak for the vast and diverse Tarot community.

We have reached the point where we must take a long hard look at how we face ourselves, our clients and the mainstream. Our strengths include our commitment to truth and healing, our unconstrained support for one another, and the gift that is Tarot. We must consider carefully what other cards we add to our deck.

# The Tarot Debate - Should you read for yourself?

by Sue Morris

*In the first of a series in which we will examine some traditionally thorny issues, astrologer and tarotist Sue Morris answers 'yes'...*

As someone who works with tarot for my own purposes, this question is an interesting one. I've occasionally done readings for others, but pulling cards for myself and doing my own readings form the bulk of my tarot work. My approach is along the lines of, surely it's better to be your own guinea pig than make harmful mistakes on other people. Without the confidence built from years of working with tarot for myself, I'm not sure I would even want to do readings for others. Many years ago I started to do readings for other people before I knew much about tarot - you know what it's like when you're young and fearless. Friends and family asked for readings, and I thought, ok, why not give it a try. Other people I knew were doing it too. It was great to have this freedom, but tarot touches on the personal aspects of a person and their life, their intimate hopes, fears and dreams, and if you don't know yourself, it's easy to get into deep waters. Nothing obviously bad happened, but I stopped using the tarot for many years. I mostly got busy with other things, but in hindsight I suspect it was also to do with the tarot itself, and the unnerving feeling that I was actually holding a tiger by the tail.

Let's look at this from the angle of another discipline. As an astrologer I learn that my own chart is a gift. It's the one chart I can get to know intimately, because it's the only chart I actually live. This is very different to looking at a chart in a one-off consultation, or even an ongoing client relationship where I revisit the chart every year or so. What better way to understand a planetary transit than to live through it? I know what it feels like to live my own chart day in day out, the good moments and the bad, the patterns that recur again and again until I can really name them as old enemies and friends.

Looking at this from another approach again, this time as an apprentice to a teacher in a spiritual group, here I learn that in the end I can never really transform myself, anyone or anything else unless I believe, in God, the Creator, Life, or whatever is sacred to me and brings me fully alive. We can lead a horse to water but we can't make it drink, and all the training in the world won't help me if when it comes to the crunch I don't believe in the sacred, if I don't choose to experience whatever that means to me, directly. So choosing to believe and awakening to the sacred becomes an everyday discipline, something I train myself in, like a musician practices and a martial artist practices, every day, until eventually it becomes part of who I am. It's like the story of a famous golfer who was congratulated on being lucky after winning a tournament. He said, "Yes. And do you know what, I practice being lucky every day."

So I'm quite surprised at the idea that you shouldn't do a tarot reading for yourself, because in apprenticeship, you can't live on other people's experience, you must engage and bring your own; and in astrology, studying your own chart is probably the most profound and rich key to understanding astrology you'll ever have. I pay attention to where a client's chart triggers my chart so I can be as aware as possible of the dynamics that might happen. So if a client's Mars

sits right on my natal Saturn I might be prepared for a more challenging and start-stop encounter. If their Neptune sits on my natal Jupiter I wouldn't be surprised if we got onto a subject, inspired each other and got carried away. I can't do this unless I read my own chart. I would miss out on a lot of rich information and understanding. What comes to mind is the inscription at the temple at Delphi, the place of the sun oracle, which says, "Know thyself". And the advice to all medics and healers, that says, "Physician, heal thyself."

That is not to say that I am always the best person to read my chart. I may know my chart better than anyone else because I live it every day, but it doesn't mean I don't have blind spots. For example I might live with another person, know them really well, including their quirks and habits, but I don't know everything about them and they will probably continue to surprise me out of the blue when I least expect it. I may even be too close to them to be objective, so I have my own personal blinkers that get in the way. Perhaps this is why some people believe that you aren't the best person to read your own tarot. It's the blinkers that are the problem. The way I live my chart, and the messages from my tarot, might be growing and evolving, while my way of understanding them might get locked and lag behind for a while. Rather like that feeling that someone always sees just one tiny aspect of you, not the whole you, and you're never allowed outside that nice tidy box they want to file you in. Maybe we sometimes do that to our charts, and it takes time, or more than one reading before we truly get a new message.

There are definitely instances when it isn't a good idea for someone to do a reading, and this depends on the person, the situation, and most of all, the attitude. Recently I heard someone say that if they get a tarot card they don't like, they just put it back! It was funny at the time, but it reminds me of an astrological speaker I heard some months ago talking about a Saturn transit in her chart. She was having a hard time with it, and she mentioned Saturn's name in a frustrated way, as if it were all the fault of the planet and nothing to do with her relationship with what Saturn symbolises. This worries me. It can't be a good idea to call for wisdom from outside ourselves, and then show basic lack of respect for the messages that come. It's plain bad manners, like ringing someone repeatedly and putting the phone down when they reply. If someone keeps doing this, what are their chances of continuing to get support from the universe, and what kind of PR job are they doing for humans in the world of the unseen? When we consult the tarot or astrology, are we honestly asking for guidance or are we demanding our needs are met, like overgrown toddlers? Tarot or astrology might not be the best tool if we are not open to self honesty, instead some form of counselling or a physical discipline might be a more effective first step, to release pent up feelings.

It is not just useful, it is essential to be as honest about what we are doing when reading our own tarot. Questions to consider are:

- Am I using the tarot to enhance or avoid taking responsibility?
- Am I prepared to be adult, responsible and receptive to the spread? So if I pull a negative card and reject it because I don't like it, what does that say about my receptiveness to life, to my true self?
- How do I create a listening or sacred space in which to do the reading? There are many ways of doing this internally, externally and energetically. You may have your own way of entering the stillness before a reading or call it something completely different. Some physical examples are cleaning the room, making sure of no interruptions by putting the answerphone on, having a bath or shower, meditating beforehand, burning dried sage or lavender essential oil, using a bell or drum to clear the space through sound.

- Am I prepared to make time for the reading later? This could be by keeping a journal, reflecting on the reading, considering if there are thoughts or behaviours that need to change, or paying attention to what happens in the days or weeks after the reading. Does a person, or a situation remind you of cards in the spread, and what does that reveal to you?

This is serious stuff, and so it should be, as tarot and astrology are ancient and profound bodies of knowledge that require respect. But that's not to say it isn't also fun. The joy and delight, the insight, help and wonder that is also part of reading the tarot is why we are called to it.

I find doing tarot readings for myself a valuable way of learning and training and above all, rich and thought provoking. It gives me the chance to engage in dialogue with my true self and the forces of life, to take responsibility and make my own decisions. But it requires discipline, a respect for the tarot and a high level of self honesty, such as the willingness to work with and learn from negative cards, to listen to messages I don't always want to hear, and to find a constructive way through. It also helps me to appreciate other tarot readers, for when I ask for a reading I am inspired by the uniqueness of their approach, how their language and the way they work with the tarot is special to them. They see things I don't see, just as I see things they don't see. Perhaps the most important thing is to have a healthy respect for the sacredness of the tradition and the body of knowledge; to know what our strengths and limitations are; and to work in the way that best suits us. And last but not least, to remain open to change and evolution in how we work.

# Deck and book review: - Tarot of the Sephiroth

*By all78degrees*

**Created by Dan Staroff, Written by Josephine Mori and Jill Stockwell**

**Published by USGAMESINC, <http://usgamessystems.com>**

**Deck: ISBN 1-57281-251-6 Book: ISBN 1-57281-325-3**

The premise of this deck is to bring tarot and the Tree of Life together. If I took this deck out of the box and wanted to be able to use it straight away I don't think that I could – or at least not to anywhere near its full potential, which is a shame. The reason for this is not because of the deck itself but rather the lack of information in the little white book (LWB). It is a big failing by both usgamesinc and the authors to produce such a unique deck but to back it up with a basic LWB.

Aside from the disappointing LWB, the deck itself, especially the art, is well done. The images are flat due to them being line drawings colored in by computer, but its style is consistent and the colors are vibrant.

So how does this deck use its Tree of Life connection?

I think it would be good to briefly discuss the connection between tarot and the Tree of Life first. The Tree is made up of ten spheres, or sephiroth. The spheres are connected by twenty two paths, which obviously must mean that the major arcana is based on the Tree of Life, right? Actually, no. Although the connection is a logical one, historically there is no evidence to suggest that when tarot was being formed, its creators or users had any awareness of the Tree.

The creators of this deck do however converge the two systems very smoothly. The minors reflect the energy of each sphere through elemental filters as each number is connected to a sphere. The design of the minors is pip-like with a sphere and its color as well as the number of cups, swords etc. and limited illustrations. It is possible that that this may put some readers off, as it can be harder to work intuitively with no scenes to spark the process. My own reading style is influenced to a high degree by the illustrations of each card, and I have had to pull the associations of the spheres' energy and elemental filter into a meaning. Although it has meant more work for me, I hope this approach will enhance and increase the meanings that I have for my other decks, and other readers may well find the same applies to them.

The courts show both a person and a quarter of a sphere. People often say that the court cards are hard to read because of the lack of personality shown in the image. In this deck though, the courts are well thought out and you are able to draw on the sphere associations as well.

Finally, the majors. These represent the paths between two spheres, but are still recognizable as majors. They have various symbols on them and astrological associations which are also in some of the minors. Neither the LWB or the accompanying book explain them so I am unable to say for sure what impact they have, although I think that they would have been well thought out and been based on older systems.

Now, back to the LWB. If I was a beginner could I read with this deck out of the box? Yes, but only just. The meanings presented are one-line descriptions of the card and a couple of keywords, with no mention of the spheres or paths. If you were new to the tarot this deck would not be an easy one to grow into as the LWB does not key you in to the system. Its only saving grace is the fact that its section on divination does not contain the Celtic Cross.

So if you can't use this deck out of the box what can you do? Buy the big book!

### ***Guide to the Tarot of the Sephiroth.***

I was lucky enough to get this as a set. I was apprehensive about buying this deck because of the reviews I'd read. It's taken two years for the accompanying book to come out, otherwise I might have bought it sooner. The book is one of the best that I have seen or bought for any deck. Why? Because it enhances my knowledge of the deck 1000% The deck transforms from being unusable to its full potential to being a deck that both beginners and old hands can use and enjoy. This is not to say that all the information is given on a plate - you have to work on it, but it gives you a lot of information to absorb and formulate ideas with.

The book itself starts with an exploration of the Tree and then moves onto the cards themselves. The left hand page is taken up with a black and white illustration and a one-line description of the image. The right hand side has sections on key symbols, keywords, associated spheres, sphere colors and notes from the creator. They are short and simplistic, but they are supplemented by additional information on the suits, spheres, numbers, courts, and majors. This is where the working bit comes in - you have to think about the associations and build up meanings. At the back is a section on divination which has tables of keywords, spreads, sample readings and tips.

My only niggle is that the authors perpetuate the myth that tarot is a system designed to work with the tree of life. This, as I was saying earlier, has no basis in historical fact. It's only minor issue though, and does not spoil my enjoyment of this deck. They have managed to produce a workable tarot deck that allows readers to use the Tree of Life to provide a source of meanings and also provides a key for tarot readers to access the Tree.

I recommend this deck to anyone with an interest in the Tree of Life, new and old.

### **Images**

Aeclectic Tarot: <http://www.aeclectic.net/tarot/index.html>

### **Availability**

The deck and book should be available from all leading booksellers.

# Book Review - 'Robin Wood Tarot, The Book'

*By Shelley King*

A Livingtree book / July 1998. ISBN 0-9652984-1-8 RRP \$14.98

The Robin Wood deck has long been one of my favourites; its similarity to the Rider Waite Smith makes it easily accessible, and its bright, clean art style and pagan influence make it personally appealing. I also use it a lot for readings; if tarot can be thought of as a friend, then this deck is the one who gives it to you straight, the one you go to for kind but no-nonsense common sense.

It was therefore good to find that the accompanying book has exactly the same feel – Robin Wood has a down to earth, practical approach which is friendly without being too casual, and informative without being either boring or patronising.

The book is a mid-size softback, 22cm x 14cm, and I was fortunate enough to obtain my copy signed by the author – purchase details to follow at the end of the review. The majority of the 250 or so pages, as expected, are taken up with Robin's descriptions and interpretations of her cards. There is a good sized black and white reproduction of the card at the top of each page, along with a physical description of its main points, the keyword or phrase – same as those given in the LWB – and a short divinatory meaning. The remainder is given over to Robin's personal thoughts about the card – what symbols she chose and why, what they mean to her and how she related them to the story inherent in each card.

Whilst this deck is not difficult to interpret – even without a lot of prior tarot knowledge – I found these essays greatly enhanced my understanding of the cards. There is so much more to be found, so many more layers and subtle nuances of meaning, when you are aware of exactly why the images were drawn or coloured a certain way, or why certain symbols were placed where they are. Or even when you realise that a symbol is there is the first place – even on the Three of Swords, one of the most 'obvious' visual images, there is more to be found. I had never noticed before that the middle dagger has a blue hilt with a guard that goes up on one side and down on the other, and a serrated edge. Without reading this book, I would not have appreciated that the blue represented spirituality and the guard balance; the serrated edge of this dagger therefore showing how truly heartwrenching the pain of accepting a spiritual – or 'home' - truth can be.

The Court cards particularly benefit from this kind of in-depth examination. Some decks appear to lose inspiration when it comes to the Courts, seeming to show little but repeated figures with different coloured hair, but whilst there is an element of pattern here – the Knights, for example, are all shown riding – there are also just as many 'extra' clues. It would be no surprise to any tarotist to say the Knight of Cups wears his heart on his sleeve, but how many have noticed that's *literally* true of Robin Wood's Knight? Likewise the Queen of Cups could on occasion become clingy or possessive, to hold on a little too tight – anyone infer that from the octopus stitched into the hem of her dress?

I liked the fact that the book gives just as much space to the minors as the majors – they may deal more in mundane reality than great philosophical truth, but in all honesty isn't that what most of our querents are interested in? I've always thought that authors or deck creators do both their creations and their readers a disservice when they give only formulas or pat divinity meanings for the minors, and it is nice to see them given just as much attention. It is worth noting that as Robin herself doesn't use reversals, there are no additional meanings given for reversed cards. Not that they are missed – the commentary usually touches on the more problematic end of the spectrum anyway.

Apart from the card section, there are some other extremely useful and interesting chapters. The piece on tarot history is one of the best I have seen in any 'general' book – succinct, well-researched, sensible and interesting – even, I would guess, for those who usually run a mile from such dryer elements of tarot study. She presents the facts, such as they are known, rather than propagating a myth or pet idea. I also loved the fact that this section is titled history *theories* – as opposed to the 'true' history, which I don't think anyone will ever describe as well as Robin: "No-one knows, and does it really make a difference?"

Also included is a history of the deck itself, which gives a lot of good background, and a useful list of common symbols and numerological associations. At the end of the book are additional chapters covering some ideas as to how tarot works, tips on beginning to read – which includes some simple but effective preparatory exercises in grounding and centering – a very good section on ethics and some spreads. Even the appendices are interesting – the allegory of the blind men and the elephant, the myth of Persephone, the pagan Wheel of the Year, rules for Tarocchi and some of the early sketches for the cards.

In summary, I would heartily recommend this book to anyone who has the deck and quite possibly even to those who haven't – the card information is just universal enough to let it have meaning for any RWS-type deck, and the non-deck-specific information would be of interest to any student of tarot.

#### Availability

This book is difficult to find in the UK. I obtained my copy from TABI member Heather Ward, who imports them, signed by Robin herself, directly from the US. Heather's site can be found at: <http://www.4witches.com> - see the 'Places to Go' section at the end of the newsletter

Robin's own site is at : <http://www.robinwood.com>.

## Places to Go

The latest offerings from the esoteric community, including **courses, shops and interesting purchases** not mentioned elsewhere in the newsletter

### **Fayres/Festivals/Conferences**

#### ***Cornwall New Age Festival***

November 22<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup>, Penmere Hotel in Perranporth. Enquiries to: David & Carolyn Bowyer.  
e-mail: [bo@obereth.co.uk](mailto:bo@obereth.co.uk)

#### ***Witchfest UK***

Nov 9th 2002 at Fairfield Halls, Croydon. From 10am to the Witching hour (!) - midnight of course. A complete day of talks and workshops given the by some of the most famous Witchcraft/Wiccan Authors and experts in the world, including:

- Vivianne & Chris Crowley
- Kate West
- Elen Hawke
- Teresa Moorey

To apply for tickets please send a SAE to BM Artemis, London WC1N 3XX or visit [www.witchfest.net](http://www.witchfest.net). Admission: advanced tickets for Children of Artemis members £10, Non-members £14 for tickets ordered before 31st August. Regular prices for tickets ordered after 31st August non members £16, members £12

#### ***PFNE Convention 2002.***

The Leeds Convention 2002, 7th September at The Swarthmore Centre , 10 - 6pm  
Guest speakers include:

- Pat Crowther
- Francis Cameron
- Kate Canary
- Jon Harper
- Mad Mick.....and many others.

For further information contact Barry on 07944592650 or e-mail :- [PFNE](mailto:PFNE)

***The 2002 Wessex conference***

12th October 2002 at the Dome in Swindon, From 9.30 a.m. to 10.30 p.m.

Speakers to include Dr Ronald Hutton and Pete Jennings. Other speakers on Astrology, Shamanish and more! Evening Fancy Dress and Band from 7.30pm

For further information e-mail :- [Wessex UK Pagans](mailto:Wessex UK Pagans)

Website for both of the above: <http://members.aol.com/torchoney/index.html>

**Stores, Outlets & Deck Publishers**

<http://www.4witches.com/pcs/wptarot.html>

4Witches Occult Shop, an online store with many new age and occult/witchcraft items as well as tarot decks, books, bags and reading mats. Sole UK suppliers for the Robin Wood book – signed by Robin! – and the Wolf Pack tarot, a beautiful 60 card black and white deck featured in the above link – for further details email to: [sales@4witches.com](mailto:sales@4witches.com)

## Things to Do

Our resources and links page: where can you find out more about tarot and esoterica online, usually where the links do not appear elsewhere in the issue. If anyone has material to add at any time please contact the editor, Diana McMahon: [news.submissions@tabi.org.uk](mailto:news.submissions@tabi.org.uk).

### **Resources**

<http://www.tarotspreads.com>

Useful database with details of many different kinds of spreads.

<http://jwrevak.tripod.com/>

Very informative site for beginners and advanced alike, with an excellent history section.

<http://www.thetarot.co.uk/index.asp>

Articles, events, a newsletter, a readers' directory and more.

### **Online Tarot Newsletters and Sites**

<http://www.tarotconsultant.com/>

New tarot e-zine.

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/TarotTips/>

The free weekly newsletter of The Tarot School, Tarot Tips provides practical suggestions on how to enhance your Tarot reading

<http://www.tapestrytarot.com/tapestry/index.htm>

Tapestry e-zine – packed full of articles and info

### **Tarot Deck Images/Reviews**

<http://www.astroamerica.com/t-menu.html>

No reviews, but a good selection of images – eight from each deck, including some minors

<http://www.spiritone.com/~filipas/Masquerade/Reviews/>

A collection of excellent reviews and images from Mark Filipas' personal collection (HOW jealous are we?...)

[http://handel.pacific.net.sg/%7Emun\\_hon/tarot/decksai.htm](http://handel.pacific.net.sg/%7Emun_hon/tarot/decksai.htm)

Descriptions rather than full reviews, and images

## **Automated Reading Sites**

<http://www.tarot.com>

<http://www.webtarot.net>

<http://www.cafenation.net/tradcoffeediv.shtml>

And now for something completely different... divination by coffee...

## **New Decks**

<http://users.stargate.net/~dajax/Portal-Two/index.html>

The Portal Tarot, a Majors Only meditative deck of incredible power and beauty. Contact the creators David and Traci via the website for more details.

<http://members.limitless.org/~morpheum/gallery.html>

The Vespertine Tarot, a very vibrant and exciting deck-in-progress by Danielle Sylvie Taylor, hopefully to be published soon.

## **Listmembers' Sites**

A few of the personal sites of our regular contributors...

*(Note: These are personal sites and not recommended or endorsed by TABI)*

Dark Flower's tAiNtEd TaRoT

<http://www.horrorseek.com/gothic/darkflower/TaintedTarot.html>

"Personal reflections on the ancient art of Tarot Card Reading, information, decks and books to buy, add your interpretations of the Tarot cards, free online Tarot spread and more..."

Troi: <http://www.troi-tarot.com>

Readings and tarot information

Mick: <http://www.north-node.com/>

An excellent site for anyone who wants to learn the basics of Astrology, and the Node-O-Rama forum is a friendly place to post any questions you have, however basic they are.

Aquatine: <http://forums.delphiforums.com/PaganLady2002/start/>

A tarot related forum designed to help everyone who is new to tarot as well as for more experienced readers who would like to share their knowledge, experience and ideas.

## **TABI's Own Links**

*The Tarot Association of the British Isles Web Site*

<http://www.tabi.org.uk>

*Past issues of the Newsletter:*

<http://www.tabi.org.uk/page.php?page=newsletter>

*To request a Free Reading:*

<http://www.tabi.org.uk/freereading/freeread.php>

*Discussion forums:*

<http://www.tabi.org.uk/forums/>

*UK Tarot Talk - our General Discussion List on Tarot, for readers of all levels, hosted on Yahoogroups.*

<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/UKTarotTalk/> - or go to the TABI home page for our direct link (see above).

Our lists for volunteers and students are available from the site and/or when you sign up for volunteering, reading or learning the tarot. See the TABI web-site for details.

We hope you have enjoyed reading TABI News. Please address all enquiries to the Editor  
[newsletter@tabi.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@tabi.org.uk)

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