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## ***Tarot*, by Jessica Hundley, and *Astrology*, by Andrea Richards**

Emily E. Auger  
*Independent Scholar*

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### Abstract

The repository PDF of this review includes an online-only supplement.

### Additional Keywords

mythology, mythopoeia, tarot, astrology

changed his evaluation of Chaucer's Tale to poor. (For the six-step pattern, see p. 261.) Presumably, suggests Bowers, Tolkien suddenly saw how close to Chaucer's plot he had come and his negativity about competitors came out.

As the title of Bowers's book indicates, his basic argument is that the influence of Chaucer on Tolkien has not been properly evaluated in the past because the amount of work Tolkien did on Middle English—specifically on Chaucer—was not available. Bowers discusses the new evidence in detail, with citations of his many sources. Some may find it exhaustive. But Bowers has made his case that the influence of Chaucer on Tolkien was great. This is a very good critical analysis. It belongs on the shelf beside Tom Shippey's *The Road to Middle-earth*.

—Joe R. Christopher



**TAROT.** Edited and written by Jessica Hundley. Essays by Penny Slinger, Johannes Fiebig, and Marcella Kroll. Taschen, 2020. 520 pp. \$40. Hardcover ISBN 978-3-8365-7987-2. The Library of Esoterica, Volume I. Series Editor Jessica Hundley.

**ASTROLOGY.** Edited by Jessica Hundley. Essays by Andrea Richards. Foreword by Susan Miller. Taschen, 2020. 520 pp. \$40. Hardcover ISBN 978-3-8365-7988-9. The Library of Esoterica, Volume II. Series Editor Jessica Hundley.

To live in the world without becoming aware of the meaning of the world  
is like wandering about in a great library without touching the books.

—Manly P. Hall, *The Secret Teachings of All Ages* (1928)

TUCKED AWAY IN BOTH *TAROT* AND *ASTROLOGY*, in the last paragraph under the last page title “For the Seekers: A Final Note on The Library of Esoterica,” this observation by Canadian-born author Manly P. Hall sums up the inspiration behind Taschen's Esoterica series. It should rightly be its epigraph. The editor and publisher's ambitious project has the stated goal of summarizing “ancient systems”—understood as “tools of the psyche” and “methods for self-exploration and meditation”—in order to inspire “readers to seek out knowledge, to study the teaching of scholars past and present [...] The hope is that The Library of Esoterica emboldens readers to begin their own journey down the dark halls of the arcane, to pull the dusty tomes from the shelves [...] to look up to the sky and read meaning in the movement of the

stars" (510) and, they might have added, otherwise benefit from the example of a not-so-faintly Trekkian spiritual directive in their lives.

The books themselves are designed to withstand the ravages of time and use. They are beautifully and sturdily bound with stunning covers, high quality paper, and quarter to full-page color illustrations on almost every page. Both are divided into relevant sections, including, along with short historical and topical essays, discussions of each of the Tarot trump cards and the suits in *Tarot* and the planets and signs of the zodiac in *Astrology*. The timelines included in both books are likely to be examined closely by serious readers, although more extensive versions of both are available elsewhere. The foreword to *Astrology* by virtuoso astrologer Susan Miller is also likely to be read with enthusiasm and interest.

The authors, Jessica Hundley and Andrea Richards, are well-published and successful professionals, but they are not known experts in the subject matter of their respective volumes. Hundley describes herself as a director, producer, consultant, journalist, and writer and editor of books for "such publishers as Taschen, Chronicle, Phaidon, Rizzoli, Princeton Architectural Press and Da Capo." A list of her numerous accomplishments can be found through the links at her website: <http://www.jessicahundley.com/ABOUT-CONTACT>. Richards is the author of *The 500 Hidden Secrets of Los Angeles* (2017), *Los Angeles Cocktails: Spirits in the City of Angels* (2017), *Girl Director: A How-To Guide for the First Time*, *Flat-broke Film and Video Maker* (2001), and other books. The authors' lack of specialization, coupled with the publisher's mandate, is perhaps what lends the finished books the lightness of being that is, in spite of the weightiness of all those pages and substantial covers, creating an effervescent buzz on social media as the latest must-haves for the esoterica enthusiast.

Unquestionably, the deliberate visual emphasis and presentation is well carried out in both books. All those full-page colour illustrations are enough to seduce the most budget-conscious Tarotist or astrology buff. Readers should be aware, however, that the aim of both volumes to merely summarize relevant past events and art means that close to a half of the illustrations date between 2000 and 2020 and by far the majority of those date between 2010 and 2020. The emphasis on the recent and perhaps less well-established artists means these volumes are likely to increase in value as visual surveys of sub-genres of early twenty-first century-art.

Earlier periods are not entirely neglected. *Tarot* includes samples from the better-known historical decks of the 1400s, a sampling from other periods, and of course a few Marseilles-style and Rider-Waite-Smith illustrations. Things tend to get a lot more Trekky, or rather, more trippy in the later 1960s and particularly after 1971 when Stuart Kaplan (U.S. Games) republished the classic

*Rider-Waite-Smith* deck (1909). The *Hoi Polloi Tarot* (1972) is one of the last, if not the last, *Rider-Waite-Smith* “clone” published before U.S. Games began asserting its copyright claim on the proto-type. Obviously, the *Hoi Polloi Tarot* is of some importance to the history at hand; still more importantly, Kaplan also inspired an ever-growing interest in Tarot art by commissioning and inspiring re-vised decks, such as the *Ukiyoe Tarot* (1982) and, directly or indirectly, an easy majority of the decks illustrated in both *Tarot* and *Astrology*.

Yet, except for a brief mention of his connection to the *Ukiyoe Tarot*, there is no explanation of Kaplan’s role in the history of modern Tarot. The decks are illustrated; it is left to the reader to seek out sources that explain them. Also left to the reader is the page-by-page searching for decks by artist, title, or date. Of course, search tools like lists of illustrations and indexes are rarely included in general interest books, but anyone with more than a passing interest in the subject matter will notice and lament their absence! (See the online supplement to this review for an annotated list of the illustrations from late 1960s through the early 1980s decks.)

*Astrology*, unlike *Tarot*, includes a great many illustrations that will be familiar to art history students, extending from the medieval *Très Riches Heures* by the Limbourg Brothers (15) and Persian manuscript illustrations (27) to Renaissance artists, such as Raphael (74-5), to twentieth-century Transcendentalists, such as Dane Rudhyar (42) and Agnes Pelton (50), and a wide array of others from across the centuries, such as Hilma af Klint (43), John Singer Sargent (46), Alphonse Mucha (47), Niki de Saint Phalle (54-55), Moreau (141), Man Ray (464), and so forth. There is some cross-over of artists from the earlier *Tarot*, and *Astrology* does include a number of Tarot cards and works by artists known in connection with Tarot, such as David Palladini (192-3) and Kim Krans (267, 308), and a few other images relevant to the history of Tarot, such as a Lenormand card (263), and a minchiate card from 1850 (430). Here, however, there are more direct portrayals of the classical deities associated with the stars and constellations that also figure prominently in myth. Also in keeping with its different subject matter, *Astrology* incorporates more illustrations of historical prints and drawings, pictures of astrologers, and intriguing objects, such as some Neo-Assyrian clay tablets recording the night sky in January 650 bce (22) and a 10th-century astrolabe (28).

Both books convey a sense that their respective histories are meaningful primarily because of all the twenty-first-century artists who have found them inspirational. The Tarot timeline is punctuated at its end by a note about how in the last two decades—that would be 2000 to 2020—“hundreds, perhaps thousands of new Tarot decks” have been produced around the world. The same observation could have been made in 2000; in fact, I’m quite certain more than one author did. Less easily attributable to a youthful perspective on

history is the fact that the books' bibliographies substantiate the erroneous impression that Tarot and Astrology were, with the exception of some important but obscure "predecessors," more or less invented by twenty-first century artists and practitioners. The preponderance of titles in the bibliography are recent and older books are attributed solely to their most recent republication date. In *Tarot*, for instance, Gérard Encausse's *The Tarot of the Bohemians* of 1889 is given a publication date of 1978; Arthur Waite's *Pictorial Key to the Tarot* appears to have been first published about five decades after it actually was; and it looks like Mary K. Greer only published two books worth mentioning—an absurd notion given the extent of her influence on contemporary Tarot practice and scholarship into the present day and *Tarot's* purported view of ancient systems as "tools of the psyche" and "methods for self-exploration and meditation." By contrast, the correct dating of Manly Hall's book, *The Secret Teaching of All Ages*, to 1928 makes it appear far more seminal than it actually was; even so, one wonders why it is not even included in the *Astrology* bibliography. Furthermore, the books' quotations are not reliable in that some "have been slightly condensed or edited for clarity" (see back page).

These failings, perceived as such from a scholar's perspective, are common to virtually all general interest titles, and should not dissuade readers tempted by the book covers. Both *Tarot* and *Astrology* will certainly be of interest, not only to students of Tarot and astrology, but also to authors, artists, and anyone just beginning their exploration of the roots of mythopoeia or in search of its contemporary iterations. Tarot and astrological images alike are archetypal, and as such they have correspondences to many other ancient and modern spiritual, cosmic mapping, and mythological systems and traditions. These traditions, with their associated oral, literary, and visual re-tellings and re-inventions, are the very stuff of mythopoeia and *Tarot* and *Astrology* will undoubtedly inspire many . . . To seek out strange new systems. To seek out new stories and new mythologies. To boldly explore archetypes in ways no one has done before (paraphrased from Star Trek television series 1966-1969, introductory speech delivered by William Shatner).

—Emily E. Auger



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AMONG THE BETTER-KNOWN HISTORICAL DECKS of the 1440s are the *Visconti-Sforza* (22-23) and *Visconti Brambilla Tarot* decks (130, 403, 462), *Mantegna Tarot* (24-5), *Sola Busca Tarot* (26-7, 235, 448), and *Estensi/Charles IV Tarot* (28-9, 251) and, from the 1500s, the *Goldschmidt Tarot* (364, 451). There are a few cards from older Marseilles-style decks (30-1, 52, 372, 461), Etteilla-related cards (32-3, 298), and a dozen or so from other classics, as well as one each from two different re-creations of the *Oswald Wirth* deck (215, 226). The *Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot* is represented (34-5, 63, 324, 401, 431, 442), as is Waite's later *Waite-Trinick* deck (49, 158, 203). Other decks familiar to Tarot historians also appear, such as the *Cagliostro Tarot* (64), *Knapp-Hall Tarot* (62, 138, 211, 302, 442, 458), *Thomson-Leng Tarot* (99, 437, 461), and *Brotherhood of Light Tarot* (11, 106, 128, 218). More intriguing are the images created in association with surrealist Andre Breton in the 1940s (38, 178, 500), and the Tarot-related work by artists such as Victor Brauner in 1947 (78), Susan Weil in the 1950s (129, 409), Betyr Saar in 1966 (492), the cover art created by an unknown artist for Charles Williams's 1932 novel *The Greater Trumps* in 1969 (511), and Leonora Carrington's "The Magic Witch" (499) and Bridget Bate Tichenor's "Tarotmaquia (506), both of 1975.

Here is a sampler of the illustrations from late 1960s through early 1980s decks included in *Tarot*. While some of the others are still readily available, quite a few have become hard to find.

- 1968 Justice poster insert for Halloween issue of *Eye Magazine*. James Cooper (239)
- 1969 *Thoth Tarot*. Frieda Harris and Aleister Crowley (Empress 110, Aeon/Judgement 387). Also by Harris, paintings of the Ace of Swords, 1938-43 (485)
- 1970 *Aquarian Tarot*. David Palladini. United States (Temperance 290, Moon 349, Sun 367, Judgement 380, Page of Cups 429)
- 1972/1979 *Andrea Picini Tarot*. Andrea Picini and Ugo Moretti. Italy. Trumps released in 1972 and full deck 1979 (Empress 115)
- 1972 *Hoi Polloi Tarot*. Unknown. United States (Ace of Cups 430).
- 1972 *Pop Rock Tarot*. A punch out Tarot deck. Julia Noonan and Julia Remine Piggm. United States (Sun 369, World 397)

- 1973 *Alitalia Tarot*. Gianni Novak. Italy (Papassa 90, Hermit 207, Ace of Spades/Swords 445)
- 1974 *Le Conchiglie Divinatorie*. Osvaldo Menegazzi. Italy (Chariot 170, Hermit 203, Star 331)
- 1974 *Pointer Tarot*. Rudolph Pointner. Austria (Lovers 152, Chariot 172, Hanged Man 252, Tower 322, King of Cups 436, 7 of Swords 446, Page of Pentacles 459)
- 1974 *Zigeuner Tarot*. Walter Wegmüller. Switzerland (Chariot 173); also the Neuzeit Tarot of 1983 (Tower 321)
- 1975 The Major Arcana of the Tarot as described by P.D. Ouspensky. Taylor McCall (artist). Illustrations based on writings of P.D. Ouspensky of 1913 (Fool 61)
- 1975 *Gentilini Tarot*. Franco Gentilini. 1975 (Moon 355, Knight of Pentacles 459)
- 1975 *Johannes Dörflinger Tarot*. Johannes Dörflinger. Germany (Judgement 386)
- 1975 *Tarot of Meditation*. Marty Yeager (artist) and Ken Hickenbottom. United States (Hermit 199, Death 266, Temperance 279, Devil 300, Star)
- 1975 *Mountain Dream Tarot*. Bea Nettles. United States (Temperance 279)
- 1976 *Tarot Balbi*. Domenico Balbi. Italy (Magician 71, Chariot 164, Ace of Wands 414, Ace of Cups 430)
- 1976 *Tarot of the Witches*. Fergus Hall. Scotland. The same deck appeared in the movie *Live and Let Die*, 1973 (Hermit 206, Wheel of Fortune 216, Temperance 282, Sun 367, 7 of Wands 421, 10 of Swords 443, 7 of Swords 469)
- 1977 *The Golden Dawn Tarot*. Robert Wang and Israel Regardie. United States (Fool 61, Magician 83, Temperance 288)
- 1978 *El Gran Tarot Esotérico*. Luis Peña Longo. Spain (Death 271, 10 of Swords 444)
- 1978-2002 *The Tarot Garden*. Located in Tuscany, Italy. Niki de Saint Phalle. France/United States (Star 491). Also Niki de Saint Phalle Tarot, 1987 (Empress 100, Devil 302)
- 1979 *Annabella Magic Noire Tarot*. Giancarlo Carloni. Italy. Commissioned for a L'Oréal perfume brand and published in Annabella magazine in the May 1979 issue (Papessa 98, Tower 321, Moon 348, World 398)
- 1979 *Barrios Tarot*. Álvaro Barrios. Columbia (Fool 65, Hanged Man 249, Temperance 286, Judgement 381)
- 1979 *Morgan-Greer Tarot*. Bill Greer and Lloyd Morgan. United States (Emperor 138, Ace of Rods/Wands 414, Queen of Swords 441, 9 of Pentacles 464)

- 1980 *Apología del libro de Thot Tarot*. Suarez. Spain. Trumps only after Brotherhood of the Light Tarot (Emperor 122, Magus 205, Death 272, Judgement 379)
- 1980 *Hermetic Tarot*. Godfrey Dowson. United States (Emperor 116)
- 1980 *Le Tarot magique*. Frédéric Lionel. Germany/France (Sun 363)
- 1981 *Tarot de Louttre B*. Louttre B. (Marc-Antoine Louttre-Bissière). France (Hermit 207)
- 1981 *Motherpiece Tarot*. Karen Vogel and Vicki Noble. United States (Fool 59, Judgement 385, 5 of Swords 447)
- 1982 *Le Tarot de la Réa*. Alain Bocher. France (Magician 74, Moon 351)
- 1982 *Ukiyoe Tarot*. Koji Furuta. Japan. Deck requested by Stuart Kaplan of U.S. Games. (Judgement 378, Ace of Pentacles 468)
- 1984 *Gareth Knight Tarot*. Gareth Knight. England (Temperance 281)

—Emily E. Auger

**EMILY E. AUGER** (Ph.D.) is the author of numerous books and articles, including *Cartomancy and Tarot in Film 1940-2010* (2016) and *Tarot and Other Meditation Decks* (2004), editor of the multi-author *Tarot in Culture Volumes I and II* (2014), and the area chair for Tarot and Other Methods of Divination at the Popular Culture Association / American Culture Association conference.