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***Tarot and Other Meditation Decks: History, Theory, Aesthetics, Typology*, 2nd edition by Emily E. Auger**

Laurel Stevens
Independent Scholar

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Tarot and Other Meditation Decks: History, Theory, Aesthetics, Typology, 2nd edition by Emily E. Auger

Abstract

Book Review: In the second edition of *Tarot and Other Meditation Decks: History, Theory, Aesthetics, Typology* author Emily E. Auger examines Tarot's relationship to art movements, literature, and film. This expansion on the first edition adds a more in-depth appendix, additional research to enhance the existing sections, and a new section focusing on the influence of the shadow on both Tarot itself and the other mediums Tarot influences.

Additional Keywords

tarot; meditation decks; book review

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de Bodard, Lois McMaster Bujold, Octavia Butler, Zen Cho, Suzanne Collins, John Crowley, E.R. Eddison, Edward Fenton, Frances Hardinge, Nalo Hopkinson, Marlon James, N.K. Jemesin, John Kessel, George MacDonald, Patricia McKillip, William Morris, Nnedi Okorafor, Helen Oyeyemi, Kim Stanley Robinson, Nisi Shawl, James Thurber, G. Willow Wilson, Kai Ashante Wilson, Patricia Wrightson—and that is just a sample. The last chapter, “How Fantasy Means and What it Does: Some Propositions,” is a virtual manifesto of fantasy. This is a bravura performance.

—Glenn R. Gray

GLENN R. GRAY received his MLS from the University of Maryland, College Park, and he spent two years in the United Kingdom as a Fulbright scholar. He lives in Maryland where he works as an archivist for the federal government.



TAROT AND OTHER MEDITATION DECKS: HISTORY, THEORY, AESTHETICS, TYPOLOGY. Second Edition. Emily E. Auger. Jefferson NC: McFarland, 2023. 368 p. ISBN 9781476686790. \$39.95.

EMILY E. AUGER IS A RETIRED ART HISTORIAN and author of numerous pieces on Tarot and meditation decks, with some of the more recent, aside from this text, being *Alchemy in the Tarot Temperance Card* in the online journal *Coreopsis* and *Cartomancy and Tarot in Film 1940–2010* from the University of Chicago Press. She founded and chaired the “Tarot and Other Divination Methods” area in the Pop Culture Association as well. In this second edition of *Tarot and Other Meditation Decks* Auger has added a fourth chapter discussing the shadow work and the intersection of digital technology with Tarot itself and the media on which it has exerted influence. The first edition was published in 2004, and this second edition has almost two more decades of Tarot to cover. The existing chapters were updated with additional research, although this research does not expand into potential updates since the 2004 publication. Auger brought in details and research she had previously omitted from the first edition, such as Mary Greer’s research. Terminology was changed in the case of major and minor arcana with trumps, courts, and pips and callouts of the *Rider-Waite Tarot* changed to the *Rider-Waite-Smith Tarot*. Her Preface to the second edition is thorough in breaking down the differences between this edition and the first, and quite useful in determining if the updates are relevant to particular research needs.

Although Auger's background as an art historian shines in section one, "Tarot and Visual Art," it is section two, "Tarot and Literature," that may be of most interest to *Mythlore* readers. Each section does reference literary works, but it is this section that explores the details of Tarot in literature above the occasional reference. Section two covers the development of fiction and fantasy, mythology in fantasy, the genres in Tarot, and Tarot in popular literature and film.

Auger begins the "Tarot and Literature" section with a brief historical overview of the development of genre before honing in on romance and its eventual intersection with modern fantasy. Romance and diaries are where the intersection of literature and Tarot emerges, with twentieth-century Tarot books being the latest example of diary-esque meditative literature. Recently Tarot, much in the way of the novel, has developed an importance in relation to both individual and subjective life. Contemporary Tarot blurs the boundaries between fiction and nonfiction, and has development that can be traced alongside the development of literary subgenres. This overview then focuses in on Fantasy, both in terms of art and literature.

Myth acts as one of the sources of inspiration for Fantasy. This can happen literally through a retelling of mythology, or metaphorically with the usage of motifs, archetypes, and quests. The meaning of Tarot design and symbology often has a structure to it that can be tied into myth. The Arthurian cycle is frequently one that many Tarot decks make use of. Myths and their well-known elements identify links between internal and external worlds when those elements are utilized by Tarot. Analysis of the Other or Quests in literature echoes the message of transformation that contemporary Tarot communicates with its structure and characters. Questions and answers play a major role in Tarot, and the posing and answering of these questions appear throughout Fantasy literature and art. Many of the genres that can be ascribed to Tarot connect to literature directly as well.

Utopian and Heterotopian may be literature subgenres related to place, but the properties of utopias and heterotopias apply to Tarot as well. Specific decks can make use of the existing utopias and heterotopias to communicate a subjective exploration for the Tarot querent. Fictional lands rely on maps to communicate with a reader and Tarot decks rely on physical card spreads to act as maps to guide querents through the cards. Interpretation is up to the reader on both literature and Tarot regardless of genre. The Gothic intersects with Tarot as well. Supernatural elements abound in the Gothic and are used to create tension, setting, or uncertainty. Motifs and uncertainty in Gothic literature rely on the same sense of discomfort that the Tarot evokes when using similar visual imagery to Gothic literature. Detective puzzles and science fiction genres considered with aspects of reality both continue building on this pattern where

Tarot and literature interweave their symbology and structure. Aside from emulating elements of literature, Tarot itself also exists with popular media.

Popular literature and film make use of Tarot's reputation and have been doing so for decades. Charles Williams scholars may be interested in reading the subsection of section two, "Tarot in Popular Literature and Film" in the first edition as well as this updated second edition. The first edition quotes more from Williams's *The Greater Trumps* that was removed to make way for identifying a wider range of films and novels in the second edition. Aside from a comprehensive listing of films and novels making use of Tarot from as early as 1932, this last part of section two covers the stereotypes assigned to characters making use of Tarot, associations of good and evil tied to Tarot directly, and relations between the structure of Tarot and the narrative structure of the film or novel. Literature and Tarot interweave their myths and allusions to varying works of literature and art in a variety of contexts.

Section one, "Tarot and Visual Art," covers a variety of artistic periods and symbology present in those periods that both influenced Tarot and was influenced by Tarot. This section covers the structure of Tarot decks and is the most informative about Tarot in general. It acts as an art history lesson tied specifically to Tarot. Section three, "Tarot as Tarot," goes into detail on the varying different types of Tarot decks that exist and how the types can overlap with artistic expression. Both of these sections heavily reference existing decks and examples present in the appendices as the history and deck types are explained.

Section four, "Tarot and the Archetypal Shadow," covers the increase in Tarot and Tarot related items due to technology as well as the Jungian concept of archetypes that can be identified in the idea of shadow with Tarot. Kickstarters and Tarot-related merchandise such as jigsaw puzzles are the tip of the iceberg in this section. This section expands to cover a wilder field than the previous three sections, with the idea of shadow in Tarot being explored in subsections on books, novels, and films about Tarot, as well as a subsection focused specifically on Tarot decks being designed around the concept of shadow as an archetype. The last subsection covers diversity and inclusivity in contemporary Tarot. The amount of information that is corralled into this one section is impressive, but fitting this much in does mean that some of the subsections come off as exceedingly brief.

This second edition adds to an already useful work on Tarot scholarship, and while there is still more to be done in this area, that is the joy of active scholarship. Auger's work here serves as a solid foundation forward for anyone looking into Tarot itself as well as Tarot and its relationship with art, literature, and film. Aside from the specific relationship between Tarot and literature called out above in this review, art historians may find Auger's point

of view on these topics of interest to their field. This book may also be of interest to scholars interested in Arthurian studies, as Auger often draws on the Arthurian and Tarot overlap, from the Fisher King myth to the archetypes represented by the characters of Arthuriana, for her examples throughout all four sections. The addition of the fourth section, the small changes to the first three sections, and the updated appendices do make this a worthy second edition with new information to be obtained on the part of the reader.

—Laurel M. Stevens

LAUREL M. STEVENS is an independent scholar of varied interests with a BA in English from Westminster College and an MA in Literature and Language from Signum University. Stevens first began literary research with Tolkien, but has an expansive love for all imaginative literature. Some of her latest areas of interest have been dark academia, non-human narrators, and contemporary fantasy and science-fiction novellas.



THE ARCHETYPE OF THE DYING AND RISING GOD IN WORLD MYTHOLOGY. Paul R. Rovang. Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 2023. 224p. 9781666917086. \$100.

LONG CONSIDERED AN IMPORTANT CONCEPT in world mythology, the dying and rising god has been called into question by scholars who suggest this archetype only arose after Christianity spread across the Mediterranean Basin. Against this recent trend, Paul R. Rovang frames his work, *The Archetype of the Dying and Rising God in World Mythology*. Rovang argues that scholars who have proclaimed the archetype dead do so only because their definition of a dying and rising god is too narrow, thus eliminating candidates that would otherwise fit into the category. In chapter one of his work, Rovang argues against the prevailing trend of declaring the dying and rising god passé. He then demonstrates the presence of this archetype throughout world mythologies in chapters two through four. He focuses exclusively on Jesus in chapter five and argues that, while in some ways, Sir James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* is outdated, its assessment of the story of Christ aligning with pre-existing narratives of dying and resurrected deities still makes more sense than arguing that the archetype began with the New Testament. Chapters six and seven focus on post-traditional literature. Chapter six examines T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* and its roots in Arthurian legend. Rovang's concluding chapter discusses the archetype as seen by Joseph Campbell, Northrop Frye, and Carl Jung, pointing