

Tarot Skills for the 21st Century

Mundane and Magical Divination

by Josephine McCarthy



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Dedicated to my awesome husband Stuart Littlejohn, for being my joy. And to my sister Cecilia Lindley, for being my north star.

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Introduction

I began working with a tarot deck in my mid-teens back in the 1970s. It triggered an awakening to many things for me, both mystical and magic. It is now forty-five years later, and tarot, along with the broader concept of using cards for divination and mystical-magical thought, have been constant life companions for me.

At this point in my life and work, I thought it was about time that I wrote a guide to tarot, to cast a light on a path that can be far more profound than it initially appears. I looked around first to see if there was a guide that dug into the esoteric depths while also providing shallow waters for the budding tarot reader to paddle in. I could find no such book—which is not to say that one does not already exist, just that I could not find it.

I decided to write a book that was not too long, and that would be usable by both a beginning tarot reader and an experienced everyday tarot reader—and also by an esoteric seeker of the magical Mysteries. I will not know if I have succeeded in this quest, or failed miserably, until this book is properly put to the test by its readers.

I have laid out basic steps, mundane interpretations, esoteric and magical technical explanations, and layouts both mundane and esoteric; and I have also dipped briefly into the history behind the Rider-Waite tarot, including some of the inspirations that Waite drew on. His Rider-Waite deck has become the *lingua franca* of card

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divination, the work on which numerous modern card divination decks are based.

Since Waite's day, many card designers have also drawn on the deep well of learning that they have acquired from the Rider-Waite tarot to develop new and exciting decks that move completely away from its system. Some are simply artistically pleasing, and some are astonishing in their reflection of magical evolution.

Hence though this book is designed for a card reader to use with any type or design of deck, the Rider-Waite deck is used both to illustrate the layouts, and as the reference point for the deep meanings of the tarot cards as Waite envisaged them. Once you have learned this universal language, you will have a foundation to launch from in your divination and magical adventures. May you adventure well!

— Josephine McCarthy, May 2020

Alterius non sit, qui suus esse potest

Let he who can belong to himself belong to no other.

— The motto of Paracelsus¹

¹Hirschvogel 1538.