



The Tarot Fortune in The Waste Land

Author(s): Betsey B. Creekmore

Source: *ELH*, Vol. 49, No. 4 (Winter, 1982), pp. 908-928

Published by: [The Johns Hopkins University Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2872904>

Accessed: 26/03/2014 16:43

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The Johns Hopkins University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *ELH*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

THE TAROT FORTUNE IN *THE WASTE LAND*

BY BETSEY B. CREEKMORE

While Madame Sosostris' Tarot fortune has increasingly been recognized as a significant structural and symbolic aspect of *The Waste Land*, analyses of the fortune and of its relation to the rest of the poem have been impeded by a number of critical blind spots. Among those that might be cited are biographical uncertainty about Eliot's knowledge of the Tarot, the incorrect provenance of the cards provided by Jessie Weston in *From Ritual to Romance*,¹ the relative obscurity of the work of Arthur Edward Waite and Pamela Colman Smith, and a general disregard for the significance of a "Waitean" influence on the part of those Eliot scholars who are aware of the probable source of Eliot's knowledge.

Robert Currie, expanding and improving upon theories advanced by Gertrude Moakley, has demonstrated that Eliot's knowledge of the Tarot was derived from a manual published by Arthur Edward Waite in 1910 as an explanatory adjunct to the "rectified" Tarot pack of cards drawn by Pamela Colman Smith to his specifications. Currie also argues convincingly that Eliot's knowledge of Waite's "Christianized" and symbolic (rather than emblematic) Tarot was more than cursory and that the Tarot fortune is more than incidental to the meaning and movement of *The Waste Land*.

However, Currie stops short of attempting to explicate a coherent fortune, which would justify serious scholarly attention to the Tarot as an essential symbolic or structural element of *The Waste Land*. In dealing with Madame Sosostris' references without postulating an overall framework in which they relate to each other and to the poem, Currie may have been led astray by Moakley, or he may have failed to heed the passage he cites from Waite indicating that "individual reflection" provides meaning for the cards, since "the pictures are like doors which open into unexpected chambers or like a turn in the open road with a wide prospect beyond."² Such a fortune is, however, told by Madame Sosostris, and the poem reflects—and reflects upon—the fortune.

The proof presented by Moakley and Currie that the Waite-Smith pack was known to Eliot rests partially upon the description in Madame Sosostris' fortune of the picture on the Three of Wands and Eliot's association of this card with the Fisher King. In identifying other cards, however, both Moakley and Currie deal principally with divinatory meanings advanced by Waite, failing to take account either of evidence provided by the pictures on the cards or of supporting, clarifying, reflecting statements in the rest of the poem.

Tarot divination entails a formulaic system which provides the structure of the fortune. The cards turned over by the "diviner" yield meaning in relation to the structure. Waite's *Pictorial Key to the Tarot* contains a formula known as "An Ancient Celtic Method of Divination." Waite claims that this method of "working" the cards is preferable to all other methods because it is simple and requires few cards. According to Waite, "the way of simplicity is the way of truth."³

The Ancient Celtic Method, previously unpublished, but held by Waite to have been in private usage in England, Scotland, and Ireland for many years, is extolled as being appropriate for any sort of divination, but is "the most suitable for obtaining an answer to a definite question."⁴ In addition, the pattern which the cards of the completed divination form is that of a cross within a cross, reflecting visually Waite's addition of Christian precepts and symbols to the Tarot cards (*Figure 1*). There can be no doubt that if Eliot knew Waite's manual, he knew of the Ancient Celtic Method of Divination. That he has Madame Sosostris tell a fortune, rather than including references to Tarot cards in some other way, indicates that a coherent structure is being utilized, and the method published and advocated by Waite clearly would be the most probable structure to be employed.

Eliot begins the fortunetelling scene (l. 43) by describing Madame Sosostris as a "famous clairvoyante," as having a "bad cold," and as being "known to be the wisest woman in Europe." He moves immediately from third person description (l. 46) to a dramatic monologue in which she tells the fortune of the protagonist. The device of the dramatic monologue allows the assumption of familiarity with both the ritual of the fortunetelling and with the cards. Her statements, then, are indications, rather than explanations, of the divinatory and symbolic meanings of the cards in relation to the ritual.

ANCIENT CELTIC METHOD OF DIVINATION*

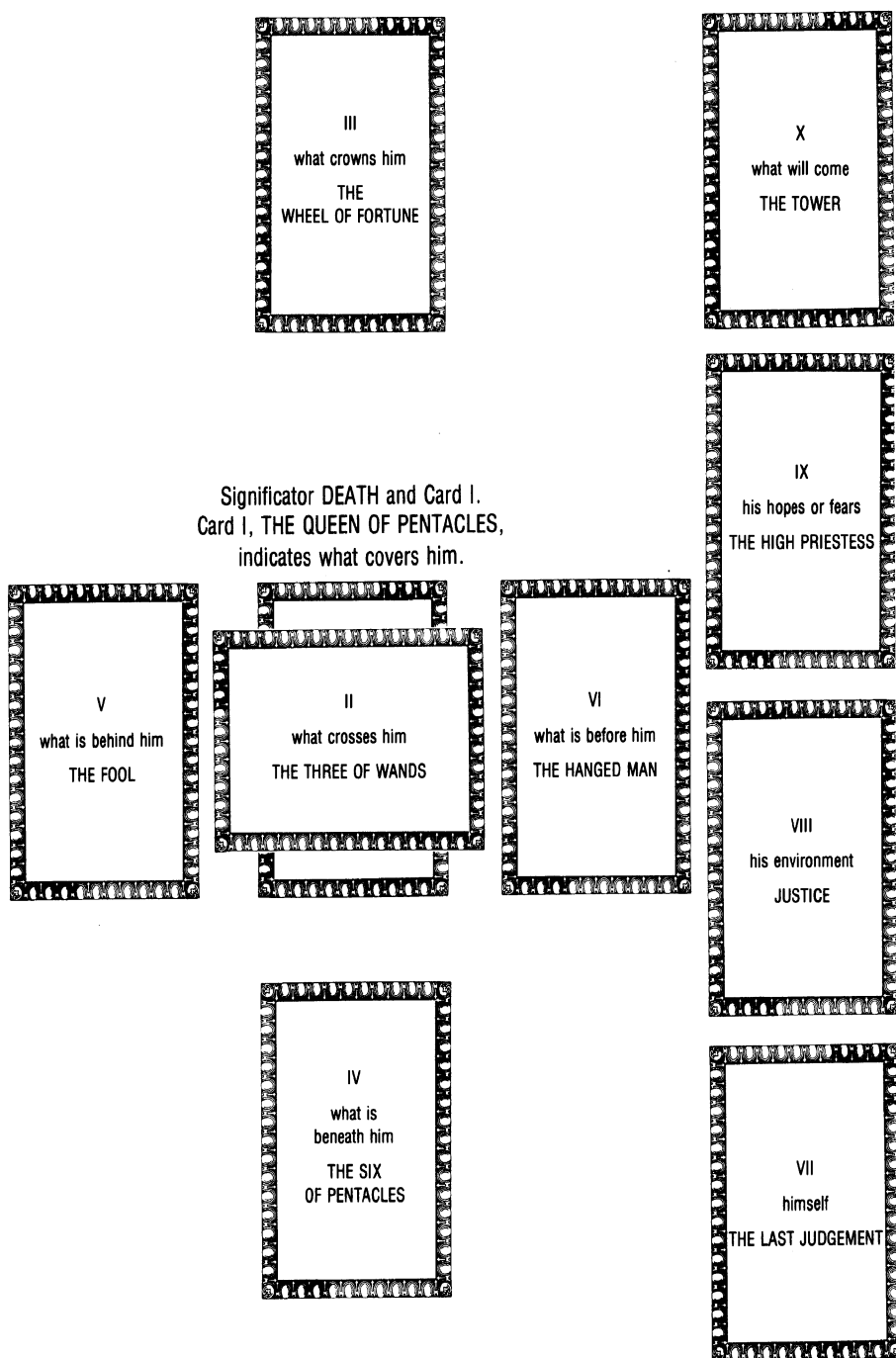


Figure 1

* Reprinted with permission, from Arthur Edward Waite, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot* (New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1959), p. 305.

The fortune is told to answer the question: "May I die?" In the epigraph which precedes the poem, the Sibyl of Cumae yearns to die, and it is the death-in-life of the Waste Land which the protagonist wishes to escape through death to rebirth.

Madame Sosostris, following the Ancient Celtic Method of Divination, first chooses a card from the pack which she perceives represents the "querent and/or the query which has been made."⁵ This card is called the "Significator Card." She chooses Trump XIII, "Death," which represents the query of the protagonist, the death-in-life which is the condition of dwellers in the Waste Land, and the possibility of redeeming death. (See illustrations of the eleven cards of the Fortune.)

Madame Sosostris begins the fortune by describing the Significator Card: "Here . . . / Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor, / (Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)" (ll. 46-48). The Tarot Trump "Death," in Waite's pack, has on it a dead man lying by an ocean; a ship stylized in the manner in which a Phoenician bark might be rendered; an image of Death, partially hooded, neither male nor female, riding on a white horse; and a banner, carried by the image of Death, on which is emblazoned a flower.

It is to the center of the flower that Madame Sosostris calls the protagonist-querent's attention with an allusion to Ariel's song in Shakespeare's *Tempest*: "Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!" The flower is the deadly nightshade, in the center of which are waxy, pearl-like balls which contain the poison of the flower. Ariel's song, which describes a death that becomes a type of rebirth, is linked to the symbolism of the Significator Card, for Trump XIII has on it not only death images, but also "the sun of immortality" which shines between two pillars in the upper right-hand corner. One of the meanings of the card is that the actual fact of death is an instrument of progress.⁶

As Currie points out, the "Drowned Phoenician Sailor" is not the name of a Tarot Trump in Waite's pack or in any other. The picture on Trump XIII, however, functions precisely as Waite intends: as a catalyst which evokes individualized association. Currie repeats, without conviction, Moakley's theory that the Ten of Swords is the card meant because its divinatory meanings ("Whatsoever is indicated by the design; also, pain, affliction, tears, sadness, desolation")⁷ describe the milieu of the Waste Land. The picture on the card ("Whatsoever is indicated by the design"), however, does not suggest drowning but prevention of movement from the rocky

ledge to the sea beyond by the ten swords which impale the prostrate figure. Moreover, the dead man's head is turned so that no eyes are visible, and nothing else on the card would trigger an allusion to Ariel's song.

After she had selected the Significator Card, Madame Sosotris would begin to tell the fortune. Following the ritual specified by Waite, she would place the Significator Card on the table face upwards. Then she would shuffle and cut the other 77 cards of the pack three times, keeping the faces of the cards downwards. She would next turn over the top card and place it on top of the Significator Card, saying: "This covers him. This card gives the influence which is affecting the person or matter of inquiry generally, the atmosphere of it in which the other currents work."⁸ Madame Sosotris does not repeat the formula but describes the card: "Here is Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks, / The lady of situations" (ll. 49-50).

The card described is the Queen of Pentacles. According to Waite, this card suggests a dark woman who could be said to have greatness of soul. She is pictured gazing at her symbol (the pentacle) and may "see all worlds therein,"⁹ or, as Eliot says, she is the "lady of situations." The Queen sits upon a throne carved of rock, so she is also the "lady of the rocks."

The card has laudatory qualities if, when it is turned over from the top of the pack, it is right side up. If it is upside down, it has the meanings of "certain evil, suspicion, suspense, and mistrust."¹⁰

That the card is to be understood to be reversed as it appears in the fortune is indicated by the use of the word "Belladonna." The capital letter evokes association with the Italian glorification of woman in the trecento (*La Bella Donna*); since, however, the descriptive phrase is one word, the poisonous belladonna, contained in the waxy pearls at the center of the nightshade displayed on the Significator Card, is also involved.

The poem itself mirrors the cards and their meanings and serves to clarify which cards are indicated in the truncated ritual. The picture on this card is alluded to in the opening lines of "A Game of Chess," which describe the "burnished throne" (l. 77), mention "fruited vines" (l. 79), and refer to "cupidons" (one of which "hid his eyes behind his wing" [ll. 80-81]). The card contains a throne and fruited vines. On the back of the throne is a "cupidon"; a second cupidon, with its face partially obscured, appears on the bottom right panel of the throne.

Currie rejects Moakley's association of this card with the Two of Swords because of the incongruity of its picture and Madame Sosostri's description. His contention that the description "lady of the rocks" is more apt for the Queen of Wands than for the Two of Swords is certainly true, but it is a far less apt description of the Queen of Wands than of the Queen of Pentacles. This is the more true when the references in the poem itself are considered. There are no "fruited vines" in the picture on the Queen of Wands, and her throne is decorated with beasts, not "cupidons."

In the case of this card (Queen of Wands), Currie not only bases his association on interpretation rather than evidence, but also forces the divinatory meanings to serve his purpose. The meanings of the card are "a dark woman, countrywoman, friendly, chaste, loving, honorable." If reversed, the meanings are "good, economical, obliging, serviceable."¹¹ *Only* when the card appears "in certain positions and in the neighborhood of other cards tending in such directions"¹² can it assume meanings of "opposition, jealousy, even deceit and infidelity," as Currie proposes. No evidence is presented which would suggest that these meanings have been transferred to the Queen of Wands because of the relation of the card to other cards within a ritual of fortunetelling.

The next card Madame Sosostri turns up is "the man with three staves" (l. 51). The fortunetelling formula for this second card is "this card crosses him. It shows the nature of the obstacles in the matter."¹³ As both Currie and Moakley have written, the "man with three staves" is an excellent description of the Three of Wands in the Waite Tarot pack, although not in any other of the many Tarot packs. The divinatory meanings for this card are "established strength, enterprise, effort, trade, commerce, discovery."¹⁴

The card shows the back of a man ("at my back" [ll. 185 and 196]) looking out over the sea where there are ships depicted in the same stylized manner as those on the Significator Card (Trump XIII). Beyond the sea is a jagged range of mountains. The man stands in green vegetation interspersed with rocks, and the three staves he holds are living boughs. The color of the water in this card is important because it looks like desert sand, while water is blue in all other cards in which it is shown. The ships' sails are full, but the vessels appear to be stranded in the desert, linking the card to the wind crossing the brown land (ll. 74 and 75). The card is linked to the Significator Card by the stylized ships, to the "one-eyed merchant" by its divinatory meanings, and to the "Hanged Man" and

Frazer's *Golden Bough* (as Currie has shown) by the living staves. The card is also integrally associated with the one that follows it. Its arid images are associated with those of Ezekiel's vision, and the source of the wind which has filled the ships' sails is linked to the "great rushing" described by Ezekiel.¹⁵

The third card of Madame Sosostris' fortune is the Wheel of Fortune ("and here the Wheel" [l. 51]). The third card is placed vertically above the Significator Card and "crowns" it. The third card represents "the querent's aim or ideal in the matter; the best that can be achieved under the circumstances, but that which has not yet been made actual."¹⁶

The Wheel of Fortune is the Tarot symbol of cause and effect and also signifies lack of chance and concomitant fatalism. The card itself combines Egyptian symbols with those from Ezekiel. Each of the four corners of the card contains one of the "living Creatures" of Ezekiel's vision, and Waite indicates that other representations on the card (e.g., the letters of the Divine Name interchanged with the word "Taro") follow Ezekiel's understanding that the divine presence is always present, though unheeded.¹⁷

The fourth card of Madame Sosostris' fortune is "the one-eyed merchant" (l. 52), a perfect description of the Six of Pentacles. The fourth card, which is placed vertically below the Significator Card, is to describe "the foundation or basis for the matter, that which has already passed into actuality and which the Significator has made his own."¹⁸ The merchant on the card weighs money in a pair of scales and distributes it to the needy. His act is testimony to "his own success in life as well as to his goodness of heart."¹⁹ The card is represented in the poem by "Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant" (l. 209). Mr. Eugenides is linked to the "drowned Phoenician sailor" of the Significator Card by the association with Phoenician and Syrian merchants who promulgated the mystery cults. The card, which comes from the pack reversed, offers an inverted image of the theme of sterility seen in the card showing "the man with three staves," and of a people isolated from the supernal, which Ezekiel's vision describes.

Currie suggests that Madame Sosostris' reference may be an "exceedingly subtle allusion to the Magician . . . were Eliot to have known, not only the tarots, but their relationship to the horoscope."²⁰ Currie quite appropriately does not argue for the card as definitively that referred to by Madame Sosostris. Indeed, the reading of Eliot's disclaimer which he advances one page earlier

would seem to preclude a sophisticated knowledge of tarots and methods of divination other than those offered by Waite. Certainly the card itself carries no physical resemblance to a “one eyed merchant”; the Magician has two eyes, and no hint of trade is depicted.

Madame Sosostris says of the fifth card in the fortune: “and this card, / Which is blank, is something he carries on his back, / Which I am forbidden to see” (ll. 52-54). The fifth card is placed at the side of the Significator Card away from which the figure on the Significator Card faces. The card is, therefore, placed at the left of the Significator Card “Death.” The fifth card explains “what is behind him. It gives the influence that is just passed or is just passing away.”²¹

The card Madame Sosostris has turned up is Trump 0, “The Fool.” The reason that Madame Sosostris turns up a card “which is blank” is that the trump number is 0. In the Tarot, zero does not denote an absence of meaning, but rather refers to the principle of “no thing,” of essence, from which all things of this world proceed and to which they all return.²² A mortal cannot fully grasp this principle. “The Fool” is a “prince of another world on his travels through this one.”²³ He is the spirit in search of experience. “His countenance is full of intelligence and expectant dream, and the edge of the cliff has no fear for him.”²⁴ There are ten patches on his tunic, each of which is a Wheel of Fortune. “The Fool” is the emissary of the providence manifest in the “Wheel of Fortune,” and as such he is referred to by the phrase “0 you who turn the wheel” (l. 320).

Currie opines that Madame Sosostris is referring to one of the two blank cards included in the Waite-Smith pack, but this would be plausible only if a fortune were not being told. The blank cards are not “wild cards” or “jokers” but were included to allow students of the Tarot to design additional cards in accord with their acquired wisdom. These cards provided the opportunity to “individualize” syntheses of meanings. In the context of the ritual of divination, the cards would not be blank. Either they would be excluded, or they would contain depictions prepared by the diviner. Within the framework of the fortune, the reference is appropriate for The Fool, who carries a closed bundle on his back and who, through the symbolism of the card, embodies fatalism and evokes election, providing an appropriate reading within the ritual.

The Tarot formula for the sixth card is “this is before him. It shows the influence that is coming into action and will operate in

the near future.”²⁵ The sixth card is placed on the side the Significator faces (the right side, in this case) and completes a cross, with the Significator Card, already covered and crossed, in the center. Madame Sosostris says: “I do not find / The Hanged Man” (ll. 54-55). The sixth card is Trump XII, “The Hanged Man.” Currie recognizes the Hanged Man as the card to which Madame Sosostris refers but considers the reference a literal notation of absence of the card. Madame Sosostris’ statement that she does not see the Hanged Man is more likely an indication that the card has come from the pack reversed. It is Trump XII, but when reversed the figure is not as suggestive of an upside-down hanged man as of the Fisher King—of Frazer’s Hanged God who had to die in order to cause rebirth. The reversed figure, with its definite halo, is in the general shape of a cross and appears to be poised upon and to lean against living boughs.

Waite says that the card expresses “the relation, in one of its aspects, between the Divine and the Universal. He who can understand that the story of his higher nature is embedded in this symbolism will receive intimations concerning a great awakening that is possible, and will know that after the sacred mystery of Death there is a glorious mystery of Resurrection.”²⁶ In the poem, the reference to the card is “He who was living is now dead” (l. 328).

Currie’s linking of cards with Madame Sosostris’ fortune ends at this point, even though he grants that the fortune continues. In the placement of the Tarot cards for the Ancient Celtic Method of Divination, the seventh card begins a line of cards to the right of the cross-within-a-cross formed by the Significator Card and the first six cards of the fortune. The seventh card signifies “himself—that which is the Significator querent—whether person or attitude in the circumstances.”²⁷

Madame Sosostris says, “Fear death by water. / I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring” (ll. 55-56). The Tarot card being referred to is Trump XX, “The Last Judgement,” the picture of which Madame Sosostris is describing. According to Waite, the “great angel” is encompassed by clouds but he blows his trumpet, to which a banner with a cross is attached. Below the angel is a circle of persons standing in their coffin-barges on a body of water, all of whom exhibit “wonder, adoration, and ecstasy.” The card depicts the last judgment and the resurrection of the natural body, and also symbolizes the purifying aspect of love. It is “the card

which registers the accomplishment of the great work of transformation in answer to the summons of the supernal—which summons is heard and answered from within.”²⁸

The specific reference to this card in the poem follows immediately the allusion to the Hanged Man: “We who were living are now dying / With a little patience” (ll. 329-330). The dead have been awaiting the last judgment to be freed from their death and to be resurrected. The death by water to be feared is the possibility that the judgment may be damnation rather than salvation, with the supplicants being cast from their coffin-barges into the water rather than raised to grace.

Following the statement which refers to the seventh card, it is generally assumed that Madame Sosostri’s fortune is over, that she drops her role as diviner and, as a simple gypsy, gives the protagonist a mundane message to deliver to a mutual friend. Her “Thank you” (l. 57) would then refer to payment for the fortune, and would end it. The fact that Madame Sosostri’s fortune has not been a disjointed parlor trick but has been woven into the symbolic movement of the poem, and the fact that the poem describes accurately at least one—and possibly three—more Tarot cards, indicate that the fortune is not over. The light tone of the dramatic monologue and the fact that Madame Sosostri had a bad cold suggest that the “thank you” may be thanks for a conventional “bless you” in response to a sneeze. In any case, the lines that follow are a continuation of the fortune, which she hurries to complete.

The phrase “dear Mrs. Equitone” (l. 57) indicates that Madame Sosostri has turned over the eighth card, which, placed above the seventh card in the line of cards to the right of the cross, means: “his house, that is his environment and the tendencies at work therein which have an effect on the matter—for instance, the influence of immediate friends, position in life, and the like.”²⁹ The card to which Madame Sosostri refers is Trump XI, “Justice.” The “Justice” of Trump XI is that meted out to every man according to his works. It is not spiritual but secular justice: the pillars behind the figure open into knowledge of moral principles for the world of man. This justice “differs from spiritual justice which is involved in the idea of election,” according to Waite.³⁰

The fact that Madame Sosostri refers to “dear” and “Mrs.” Equitone indicates that she is a friend of the protagonist, which is

consistent with the divinatory meaning. The Latin-Greek neologism “Equitone,” moreover, is an apt reference to the scales of justice in balance.

Worldly justice is a reflection of some of the qualities of spiritual justice. The next card of Madame Sosostris’ fortune is “The High Priestess” (Trump II), in which spiritual justice is symbolized. Madame Sosostris may indicate a shift to this card with the statement, “Tell *her* I bring the horoscope myself” (l. 58, my italics). Madame Sosostris is “the wisest woman in Europe” (l. 45), and the trump “The High Priestess” has been understood in Tarot symbolism to stand for “Occult Science,”³¹ of which Madame Sosostris is the representative in *The Waste Land*. The spiritual justice symbolized by “The High Priestess” belongs, according to Waite, “to a mysterious order of Providence, in virtue of which it is possible for certain men to conceive the idea of dedication to the highest things. . . . It is analogous to the possession of the fairy gifts and the high gifts and the gracious gifts of the poet.”³²

As the ninth card in the Tarot fortune, the card is placed above the eighth card in the line to the right of the Significator Card and “gives the hopes and fears of the querent in the matter.”³³ The protagonist of *The Waste Land* hopes for truth in the fortune and for meaning, although that meaning involves death. In the poem (ll. 359-367) the mantled figure with whom the protagonist walks may be the High Priestess, who can imply the truths of the spiritual world but not speak them. According to Waite, the High Priestess is, in a manner, the “Supernal Mother,” and this aspect is alluded to in “maternal” lamentations which immediately follow (l. 368).

Finally, Madame Sosostris says, “One must be so careful these days” (l. 59). She has been hurrying to finish the fortune and has laid down the previous two cards rapidly, giving cryptic indications of the cards, as one might well do if the querent were thoroughly familiar with both the method of divination and the symbolic meanings of the cards. When Trump XVI, “The Tower,” is turned up, Madame Sosostris reacts to its meaning, rather than describing the card or its symbolism.

As the tenth card, the Tower represents “what will come, the final result, the culmination which is brought about by the influences shown by the other cards that have been turned up in the divination.”³⁴ As Waite instructs the diviner: “It should embody whatsoever you may have divined from the other cards on the table, including the Significator itself and concerning him or it, not ex-

cepting such lights upon higher significance as might fall like sparks from heaven if the card which serves for the oracle, the card for reading, should happen to be a Trump Major.”³⁵

“The Tower” is a Trump Major and, according to Waite, symbolizes “the ruin of the House of Life, when evil has prevailed therein, and above all . . . the rending of the House of Doctrine . . . a House of Falsehood. It illustrates also in the most comprehensive way that ‘except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it.’”³⁶ The two persons on the card, living sufferers, stand for “the literal truth made void and its false interpretation.”³⁷ The card has also been seen as the “chastisement of pride and the intellect overwhelmed in the attempt to penetrate the Mystery of God.”³⁸

In “What the Thunder Said” there are three references to the card. Lines 372-373 describe the “Falling Towers” of ancient and modern secularized civilization; line 383 refers to “upside down” towers, and line 394 presents a “flash of lightning,” as seen on the card. The description of the Chapel Perilous (ll. 389-390) is additionally associated with the depiction and meanings of the card. The tenth card of the fortune combines the meanings and symbols of the preceding cards and forms a new, insightful synthesis.

THE FORTUNE

Significator Card: Trump XIII, “Death”

The Waste Land is a place of “Mortality, destruction, and corruption,”³⁹ The card also signifies that the actual fact of death is an instrument of progress; thus, to escape the death-in-life of the Waste Land, the protagonist may and must die in order to be reborn.

Card I: “The Queen of Pentacles” (reversed)

The protagonist’s world is characterized by “evil, suspicion, suspense, and mistrust.”⁴⁰ These elements are embodied in and exemplified by the role of women in the protagonist’s world.

Card II: “The Three of Wands”

Concern with human effort and human enterprise stand in the way of release from the death-in-life of the Waste Land, and has made woman an instrument of lust instead of love. “Established strength, enterprise, effort, trade, commerce, and discovery”⁴¹ are secular values, not spiritual principles.

Card III: Trump X, "The Wheel of Fortune"

"Fortune, success, elevation, luck, and felicity,"⁴² like the values the Three Wands sets forth, are worldly attributes. Since the Wheel of Fortune is the Tarot symbol of cause and effect, and in the denial of chance the card implies fatalism, the best the protagonist can do is to understand that the concept of election, of making the wheel turn by one's own efforts and volition, requires Divine purpose.

Card IV: "The Six of Pentacles"

The acquisition of worldly treasures and their distribution for self-aggrandizement are realities of the Waste Land. Although currently there are "presents, gifts, gratification, and present prosperity,"⁴³ "the present must not be relied upon."⁴⁴

Card V: Trump 0, "The Fool"

The protagonist has passed beyond the state in which "The Fool" exists, not knowing "that he is on the brink of a precipice."⁴⁵ The "folly, mania, extravagance, intoxication, and frenzy"⁴⁶ which are manifest in the Waste Land and are unknowingly believed to be good, are now understood by the protagonist to be obstacles to be overcome.

Card VI: Trump XII, "The Hanged Man" (reversed)

Now that the protagonist has recognized that worldly virtues are folly, he may begin to know the "wisdom, circumspection, discernment, trials, sacrifice, intuition, divination, and prophecy"⁴⁷ which are required for the "glorious mystery of resurrection" which follows the "sacred mystery of death."⁴⁸

Card VII: Trump XX, "The Last Judgement"

The protagonist will stand to be judged after the death which is an instrument of progress. Recognition that resurrection is possible entails recognition that the judgment may provide salvation or damnation. The card signifies that the protagonist "has answered, from within, the call of the supernal."⁴⁹ He will undergo "change of position, renewal, outcome."⁵⁰

Card VIII: Trump XI, "Justice"

The "equity, rightness and probity" of worldly justice is "the moral principle which deals unto each man according to his works."⁵¹ This justice would be the principle of judgment held by close friends of the protagonist and "merited by his position in life."⁵² This justice is analogous to spiritual justice, but leaves no room for election. Thus, while it is a governing principle of the Waste Land, it must be transcended.

Card IX: Trump II, "The High Priestess"

"The hopes and fears"⁵³ of the protagonist are that Madame Sosotris, through her role as representative of Occult Science, can divine "the future yet unrevealed."⁵⁴ "The High Priestess" provides for spiritual justice, for election, which is a necessary element for true judgment and subsequent resurrection. Madame Sosotris provides the means by which death-which-leads-to-rebirth can be achieved.

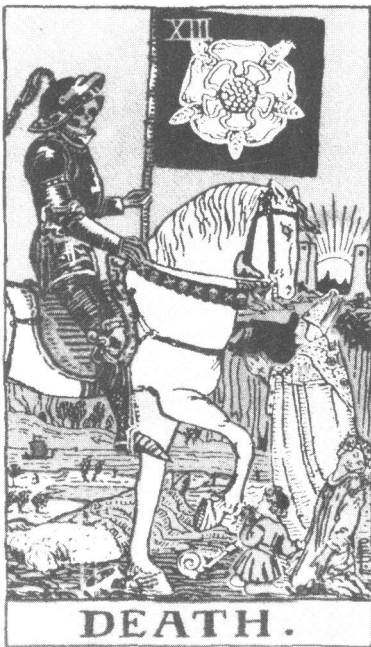
Card X: Trump XVI, "The Tower"

What will come to the protagonist is "misery, distress, adversity, indigence, calamity, disgrace, deception, ruin."⁵⁵ The things held to be of value in the Waste Land will be excised, and the protagonist will, from the ruin, from the dissolution of the doctrines and subjugation of pride, be able to be reborn. The death which must precede rebirth is total dissolution, is a violent rending of basic values and beliefs—an exorcism of false doctrine and worldly precepts. It is by this ruin, however, that the death depicted in the Significator Card can give way to the promise of immortality which the card also contains. The protagonist may and must die in order to be reborn, but now fully understands what must transpire and may begin to prepare for death.

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

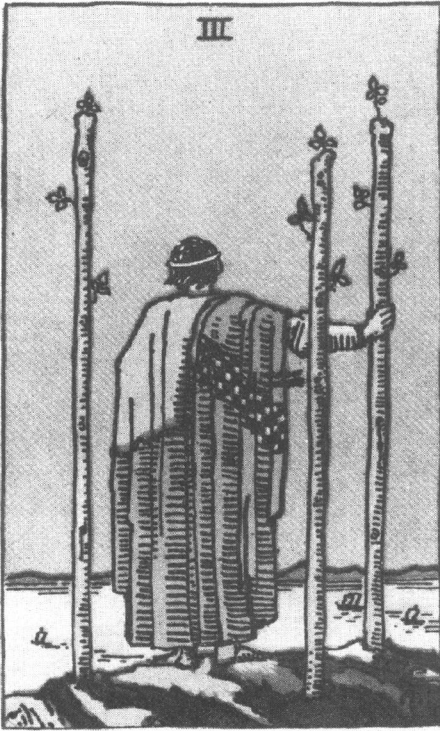
THE ELEVEN CARDS OF THE FORTUNE*

Card I

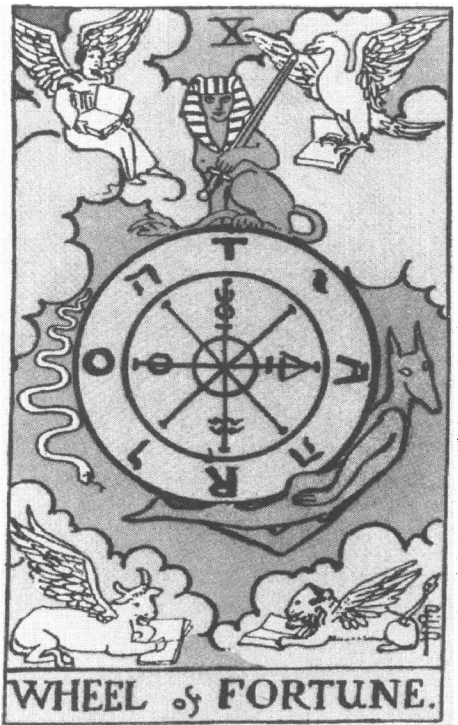


Significator Card

* Reprinted with permission, from Arthur Edward Waite, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot* (New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1959).



Card II



Card III

Card V



Card IV



Card VI

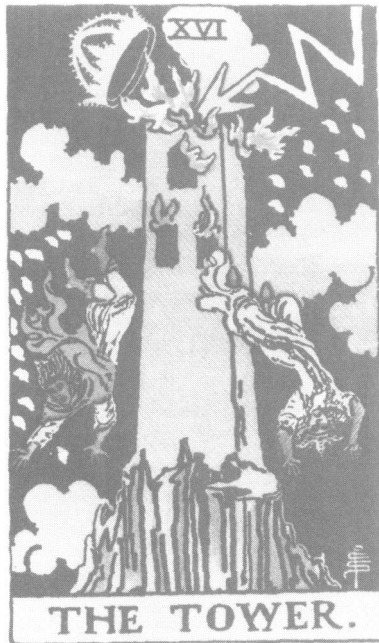


Card VII

Card IX



Card VIII



Card X

FOOTNOTES

¹ Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920. All quotations of *The Waste Land* are from T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems, 1909-1962* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, 1963).

² Robert Currie, "Eliot and the Tarot," *ELH*, 46 (1979), 733. Currie quotes from Arthur Edward Waite, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot* (London: 1911), p. 169. Gertrude Moakley's article, "The Waite-Smith 'Tarot,' A Footnote to *The Waste Land*," appeared in *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 58 (1954), 471ff.

³ Arthur Edward Waite, *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot, Being Fragments of a Secret Tradition under the Veil of Divination* (New Hyde Park, New York: University Books, 1959), pp. 299-305. All other page number citations are to this edition.

⁴ Waite, p. 299.

⁵ Waite, pp. 300-301.

⁶ Waite, p. 120.

⁷ Waite, p. 234.

⁸ Waite, p. 301.

⁹ Waite, p. 256.

¹⁰ Waite, p. 256.

¹¹ Waite, p. 172.

¹² Waite, p. 172.

¹³ Waite, p. 301.

¹⁴ Waite, p. 192.

¹⁵ Ezekiel 3: 12, 13.

¹⁶ Waite, p. 301.

Betsy B. Creekmore

927

¹⁷ Waite, p. 108.

¹⁸ Waite, pp. 301-302.

¹⁹ Waite, p. 270.

²⁰ Currie, p. 727.

²¹ Waite, p. 302.

²² For an expanded explanation, see Paul Foster Case, *The Tarot: A Key to the Wisdom of the Ages* (New York: Macoy, 1947), pp. 29-36; Bazil Ivan Rakoczi, *The Painted Caravan* (The Hague: L. J. C. Boucher, 1954), pp. 27-28; and the "Preface" by Arthur Edward Waite to Papus, *The Tarot of the Bohemians*, trans. A. A. Morton (New York: Samuel Weisner, 1967), pp. v-xviii.

²³ Waite, p. 152.

²⁴ Waite, p. 152.

²⁵ Waite, p. 302.

²⁶ Waite, pp. 116 and 119.

²⁷ Waite, pp. 302-303.

²⁸ Waite, p. 148.

²⁹ Waite, p. 303.

³⁰ Waite, p. 112.

³¹ Waite, p. 76.

³² Waite, pp. 112 and 115.

³³ Waite, p. 303.

³⁴ Waite, p. 303.

³⁵ Waite, p. 303.

³⁶ Waite, pp. 132 and 135.

³⁷ Waite, p. 135.

³⁸ Waite, p. 135.

³⁹ Waite, p. 285.

⁴⁰ Waite, p. 256.

⁴¹ Waite, p. 192.

⁴² Waite, p. 285.

⁴³ Waite, p. 270.

⁴⁴ Waite, p. 293.

⁴⁵ Waite, p. 301.

⁴⁶ Waite, p. 286.

⁴⁷ Waite, p. 285.

⁴⁸ Waite, p. 119.

⁴⁹ Waite, p. 148.

⁵⁰ Waite, p. 286.

⁵¹ Waite, p. 285.

⁵² Waite, p. 112.

⁵³ Waite, p. 303.

⁵⁴ Waite, p. 282.

⁵⁵ Waite, p. 286.