

**Heaps of Images:
Tarot Cards in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer***

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[1] At first glance, the representation of tarot cards in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* appears to be completely ignorant. With deeper analysis, however, the tarot cards used in Season Four indicate a certain level of tarot scholarship. The first major tarot moment in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (hereafter referred to as *BtVS*) happens in the Season Two episode “What’s My Line?, Pt. 1” when vampire Drusilla does a card reading to help find a specific “key” (B2009). This example of tarot resembles the misrepresentation of the Wiccan religion found in Buffy’s best friend Willow. In her essay, “Where’s the Religion in Willow’s Wicca?” Christie Golden points out that Willow’s witchcraft draws on Wiccan elements primarily for entertainment value rather than religious accuracy. Like Willow’s practices, the way Drusilla interacts with her tarot cards appears to be a Hollywood version of tarot rather than a realistic representation. Some elements are real, but others are thrown to the wayside: she lays her cards out in the same way all tarot readers do, however, her cards are not arranged in any established tarot spread. In Season Two, it seems as though the show wildly appropriates tarot just as it does the Wiccan religion, disregarding the disciplinary practices of tarot divination to rely upon its use as a narrative tool. The cards drawn in “Primeval” (B4021), look as though they could belong to the Rider-Waite deck, the most standard deck of tarot cards. The cards, Spiritus (for Willow), Animus (for Xander), Sophus (for Giles), and Manus (for Buffy), are actually amalgams of real tarot cards created to make specific thematic connections to the characters they are associated with. The following episode, “Restless” (B4022) is a four-part dream sequence dealing with the personal associations each character has to his or her particular card. *BtVS*’s depiction of tarot cards evolves over time, growing from an unaware, romanticized version of the cards in Season Two to a relatively more researched composite deck in the last two episodes of Season Four.

[2] It is no coincidence that the season’s final episode “Restless” is of similar structure to T. S. Eliot’s epic poem about a tarot reading, *The Waste Land* (1922). Whedon, a graduate of Winchester College with a penchant for quoting Shakespeare, was likely exposed to the poem at some point in his academic career. In the Season Four DVD commentary Whedon explains that “Restless” was about “combining the totally surreal with the totally mundane...it then became a question of basically writing poetry”

(quoted in Wilcox 163). Rhonda Wilcox’s article “Poetry: T. S. Eliot Comes to Television: “Restless’ ” explores the parallels between “Restless” and *The Waste Land*. What Wilcox fails to explore in depth, however, is that each section of Eliot’s five-part poem corresponds to a tarot card. On line 43, “Madame Sosotris, famous clairvoyant,” the tarot reader, begins to draw cards. Each card corresponds to a part of the poem; the first card describes the first section, and so on. For example, the third card she draws is “the man with three staves,” or the Three of Wands (Line 51). The third section of the poem is called The Fire Sermon and begins with a description of someone standing above a barren river, just like the man who stands with three wands above a desert gulch on the Rider-Waite Three of Wands. The structure of Eliot’s poem appears to be directly based off of an example diagram of a Celtic Cross Spread in Arthur Edward Waite’s 1911 companion to the Rider-Waite deck titled *The Pictorial Key to the Tarot*. Each section of Eliot’s poem focuses on a different tarot card, the same cards depicted in Waite’s diagram and referenced by Madame Sosotris during her reading in the first section. One of the cards Eliot describes, the “Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,” is particularly ambiguous, sparking debate among scholars for the past century as to which exact card he is referencing (line 49). Upon deep analysis of Eliot’s writing influences, though, it is clear that the Belladonna card is actually an amalgamation of the queen cards. It seems as though the *BtVS* team applied this same idea of card combination when creating the cards at the end of Season Four. Willow’s cards follow the same logic as Eliot’s tarot card descriptions: parts of the real tarot symbolism of various cards have been combined to create a new tarot deck which is in the spirit of traditional decks. While the *BtVS* creators may not fully understand the traditional practices of tarot, it is undeniable that in developing the tarot deck for “Primeval” and “Restless” they, like Eliot did for his poem, researched particular elements of tarot card meanings to create important tarot symbolism within the cards they create for Willow. The writers, however, prioritized plot value over accuracy.

[3] Tarot readings are a form of divination that has been practiced for centuries. There are a myriad of tarot decks in circulation, each with its own art and symbolism. The Rider-Waite deck (sometimes referred to as the Waite-Smith deck) is the most popular and standard set of tarot cards. The cards, which were designed by Arthur Edward Waite, drawn by Pamela Colman Smith, and published by William Rider, were first released in 1910. Waite synthesized his knowledge of the occult and tarot reading practices to create this first standard, universal deck. In his 1911 companion titled “The Pictorial Key to the Tarot,” Waite gives written explanations for each of the cards and describes several different spreads to read them. A spread, or a tarot reading, is made up of several cards arranged in a particular layout. Meaning is then derived based on the card and its placement within the spread. Seventy-eight cards make up the Major and the Minor Arcanas of a tarot deck. The Major Arcana consists of twenty-one numbered

cards and The Fool, which is card zero. The other fifty-six cards make up the Minor Arcana, and are split up into four different suits corresponding to the elements: Wands (fire), Cups (water), Swords (air), Pentacles/Disks/Coins (earth).

[4] The twenty-two cards in the Major Arcana are steps in a traditional hero's journey arc. Joseph Campbell first defined the hero's journey in his book *The Hero With A Thousand Faces* as a seventeen-step journey (although Christopher Vogler has updated this to a twelve-step arc for media in his influential book *The Writer's Journey*) that every major character must go through (see fig. 1). This mythic arc is universal and can be applied to almost any work. Joseph Campbell himself wrote an essay titled "Symbolism of the Marseilles Deck" in which he breaks down the monomyth within the Major Arcana.¹ The first card of the Major Arcana is The Fool, or the original naïve state of the protagonist. The second card is The Magician, who initially calls the fool to adventure and from there sends him through the "twenty numbered picture cards [that] follow...[which] suggest the graded stages of an ideal life, lived virtuously according to the knightly codes of the Middle Ages" (Campbell 11). Campbell notes that the tenth and mid-point Major card, the Wheel of Fortune, is a symbol for "the great test of young on entering either marriage or a life career" (16). The Tower card, a symbol of destruction of old behaviors as a means for rebirth, is the sixteenth Major card and seems to directly correspond to the eighth "ordeal, death and rebirth" step in the monomyth (Vogler 3). Finally, the "return with the elixir" comes with The World card (Vogler 2).

[5] While this is just a cursory introduction to tarot scholarship, these basic concepts are more than sufficient to assess the first example of tarot in *BtVS*. In the Season Two episode "What's My Line?, Pt. 1.," vampire foe Drusilla plays with her tarot cards (which the episode frames as her specialty) while her lover Spike attempts to decipher a cure for her apparent post-traumatic stress disorder. Drusilla approaches her cards in the same way she approaches most activities, like a child playing a game. It appears as though the cards are just another of her games until she speaks the line "Can't help you...not without the key" as she points to the bottom center card in her spread (B2009). The spread itself appears to be a variation on the Celtic Cross Spread. Instead of lining four of the cards off to the right of the crossed cards, Drusilla lays these cards in the empty corners of the spread, making a rectangle of cards around the central crossed ones (see fig. 4). The problem with the authenticity of this spread is that Drusilla sees actual images depicting the future in her cards. Real tarot cards are not so literal, but

¹ The Marseilles deck is one of the oldest known tarot decks, first seen in 1392 Paris. While this is not the same tarot deck the rest of this paper focuses on, given the methods through which Arthur Edward Waite developed his deck it can be assumed that the Rider-Waite deck is a direct descendant of the Marseilles deck.

rather are open to interpretation and meant to provide a loose guide instead of explicit directions.

[6] The cards Drusilla draws are accurate depictions of the Rider-Waite deck. In the long shot of the spread it is easy to visually identify several Rider-Waite cards including The Nine of Swords (bottom left corner) and The Emperor (top right corner). These cards have not been altered from their original appearance; even the correct colors remain intact. Accordingly, it is surprising when the camera zooms in on the particular card Drusilla points to on her line “the key” and reveals a card that does not exist in the Rider-Waite deck. It depicts what appears to be a corpse lying down in front of a stone columned building—a mausoleum, in fact, as the next part of the episode confirms (see fig. 5).

[7] Later in the episode, Drusilla returns to her cards and uses them to draw out the monsters they depict. She lays out three cards, each representing a new plague specifically designed for Buffy and the Scoobies (see fig. 6). The first card here is The Devil, although the card has been significantly altered from the Rider-Waite card. His horns and wings have been erased and a simple crown rests on the Devil’s head. Instead of holding one palm open and the other around a torch, this version of the Devil crosses his arms. The entire image is zoomed in and cropped, leaving just the heads of the lovers in frame (see fig. 7). The lovers are presumably Buffy and Angel, as they are on a date when Drusilla’s first monster, which bears a striking facial resemblance to the Devil Card, attacks them (see fig. 8). The next card Drusilla draws depicts some sort of insect. This arguably relates to the maggot man that worms his way into the Summers’ household, although this horrifying encounter does not come until “What’s My Line?, Pt. 2” (2010). Drusilla’s third plague card, one depicting a leopard emerging from some foliage, does not appear in either parts of “What’s My Line?” as Buffy stops the vampires’ plot before it can manifest.

[8] Drusilla’s inaccurate use of tarot mirrors Willow’s inaccurate practices as a Wiccan. As Christie Golden summarizes in her article “Where’s the Religion in Willow’s Wicca?” Willow is what Golden calls a “Hollywood Witch,” which is different from a “Real Witch” (a person who casts spells and may or may not believe in a higher power). A true “Wiccan,” which Golden defines as “a follower of a religion that believes in a god and goddess, works with natural energies, and incorporates spell casting into ritual,” cannot be found within the Buffyverse (160). The Wiccan religion is centered on the Rede, “An if it harm none, do as you will” (Lewis 303). Wiccans typically follow a Book of Shadows, which is a rigid guidebook to the Wiccan brand of witchcraft. Lady Sheeba’s *Book of Shadows* is broken down into three sections, laws (of which there are 162), rituals (spellcasting), and Sabbats (eight holy days throughout the calendar year to

honor the religion's gods and goddesses). These sections are specific down to every slight motion and syllable. Wiccan tradition also asserts "The Threefold Law" which is essentially the concept of karma. This philosophy, coupled with the Wiccan Rede "might have given Willow pause long before she became 'addicted' or tried to thwart the natural order by raising Buffy" (Golden 164).

[9] While all Wiccans are witches, not all witches are Wiccan. There are many witches who choose to create their own path and approach to witchcraft, incorporating elements of the Wiccan tradition without being bound to its strict rules. Spellcasting and divination, for example, are witchcraft practices that are not necessarily Wiccan. It would appear as though Willow is somewhere between a real witch and what Golden refers to as a "Hollywood Witch" (since she actually has supernatural powers). The problem is in the labeling of Willow as a "Wicca." Willow's spellcasting is nothing like the rituals described in *The Book of Shadows* and, as Golden and Winslade point out, inconsistent with Wiccan tradition. The ritual associated with spell casting does involve ingredients, even for Real Witches, but "They're more like the sage, rose quartz, and green candle ingredients than the eye of newt and fawn blood that we've seen on *Buffy*" (Golden 164). Wiccans, when spell casting, "open the circle" in the same way each time (a complicated process involving salt, water, white candles, an altar, and drawing a circle from East to East) and incorporate several other Wiccan ritual standards into their spellcasting (Sheeba 38-39). None of these standard rituals are ever present in Willow's craft.

[10] By connecting Willow to the Wiccan religion, the show should then be obligated to accurately represent Wiccan culture, as it would dignify any other religion. As J Lawton Winslade argues in his article "Teen Witches, Wiccans, and 'Wanna-Blessed-Be's': Pop-Culture Magic in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*," with the rise of the "neo-pagan goddess-oriented spirituality movement" the term Wicca gives mainstream legitimacy to a religion of witchcraft (Winslade). The *BtVS* creators attempt to legitimize Willow's practice by the same logic, making Willow's Wicca the "real magic" vs. the UC-Sunnydale's "wanna-blessed-bes" from the episode "Hush" (Winslade). Beyond name-dropping, the Wiccan tradition has no bearing on Willow's craft; "if one goes by what we've seen on the show and in the various official books such as *The Watcher's Guide*, nobody connected with the show has done a lot of research into what being a Wiccan means" (Golden 161).

[11] Willow uses tarot cards and other stereotypically occult objects to cast spells or call upon gods who have no actual bearing on the Wiccan Religion. Tarot is a form of divination, which historically has nothing to do with the Wiccan tradition. Tarot card readings began as a novelty and became a practice associated with witchcraft when

Christianity first threatened all pagan traditions. Willow's Season Four use of tarot cards comes from the same superficial treatment the *BtVS* creators used in defining Willow's powers. The way Willow uses tarot cards is grossly incorrect (although the cards themselves suggest the writers to have some knowledge of tarot card symbolism—more on that later). Tarot cards are meant to be a personal spiritual guide, much like a sacred text, with readings and spreads to help understand personal struggle within the universal journey. In the introduction to her book *Tarot of the Spirit* Pamela Eakins describes how she “began to perceive the depth of the tarot's subtle and exquisite ability to describe the human spirit, human relationships, and in general, human psychology” (xv). Tarot is a divination tool for spiritual reflection, not one used in rituals and spell casting.

[12] Willow uses tarot cards in the penultimate episode of Season Four in a ritual that extends into the final episode of the season. While the context for which Willow uses the cards is inconsistent with the goals and practice of tarot, the cards themselves indicate knowledge of both poetry and tarot symbolism. In the DVD commentary for that episode, “Primeval” writer David Fury notes “The spell,” referring to Willow's tarot ritual “is to kind of give everybody their due about what they bring to the part, about why they're important to the show and why they're important as a team...Xander is the heart, Giles is the mind, Willow is the Spirit, Buffy is the hand. And those four entities together are a very powerful force” (B4021 DVD Commentary). With this mindset, the *BtVS* Team created tarot cards aesthetically similar to the Rider-Waite deck that played on traditional tarot symbolism to represent each of the Scoobies.

[13] It is no secret that Whedon's background is well read and educated. His *BtVS* Season Four finale “Restless” (for which he provides the script and direction) is an ode to T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and the preceding episode functions to set up a parallel tarot reading that works in tandem with *The Waste Land*'s symbolic spread. It is possible to write a monograph-length explication on the correlation between “Restless” and *The Waste Land*, but due to space, I focus here on key parallels. Rhonda Wilcox has written an in depth chapter on the connections between “Restless” and Eliot's poem, however, she only mentions the tarot connection instead of delving deep into the influence of Eliot's tarot scholarship on the episode. Both “Restless” and *The Waste Land* create a lexicon of allusions, highlighting Whedon and Eliot's academic strengths. The sections of *The Waste Land* are each self-contained, yet flow like a dream into one another, just how the dream sequence in “Restless” flows from Willow, to Xander, to Giles, to Buffy.

[14] *The Waste Land* was originally criticized for its “fragmentary, nonlinear organization,” each section dealing with a different major theme (Wilcox 163). As Eliot indicated in his notes, the poem is about the myth of the Fisher King who must be reborn

to revive the “dead desert land (the waste land of modern life)” (Wilcox 163). For Eliot, it is the fragmented structure that creates a dream sequence. For Whedon, his medium allows him much more ease in conveying the absurdity of dreams. Wilcox notes that Madame Sosostri’s tarot reading in *The Waste Land* functions “on one level for cheap fortune-telling; however, her words also genuinely foretell the need for rebirth; she tells the truth in spite of herself: ‘I do not find the Hanged Man [the savior]. Fear death by water’ – Fear it, but is what is needed” (Wilcox 164-165). Like Madame Sosostri, Willow uses tarot (although in Willow’s case these are actually “Tarot-like, large, named picture cards”) to “identify each of the four main friends: Spirtus, spirit, for Willow... Animus, Heart, for Xander; Sophus, Mind, for Giles; and Manus, the Hand, for Buffy” (Wilcox 165). As Fury pointed out, each of these cards corresponds to the characters’ respective role in the foursome, though it is important to note that these four characteristics “Spirit, Heart, Mind, and Body can be seen as aspects of one person” (Wilcox 165). The four together is that “powerful force” Fury mentioned (B4021 DVD Commentary).

[15] The tarot spread structure of *The Waste Land* forces the poem to become as self-reflexive, just like tarot readings. As for the self-reflexive nature of “Restless,” Wilcox asserts that:

Though Buffy refuses to be controlled by the first Slayer (she tells her, ‘You’re not the source of me’), still she recognizes that Sineya has shown her something within herself (the ‘roots that clutch’); and by the first episode of the following season, Buffy is asking Giles to help her explore that wilder side within. Thus the battle being fought in “Restless” can be seen as a struggle with the self (166).

In the desert with Sineya, Buffy holds a deck of what appear to be tarot cards, but in this shot the picture on the top card is a moving image of the four Scoobies together. This image of the four friends united in spirit is what gives Buffy the strength to overcome Sineya. She must both find the strength within herself and within her support group. In response to Sineya’s statement “The Slayer does not walk in this world,” Buffy recites some of the most poetic lines in the episode: “I walk. I talk. I shop. I sneeze. I’m going to be a fireman when the floods roll back. There’s trees in the desert since you moved out. And I don’t sleep on a bed of bones. Now give me back my friends” (Wilcox 171). The line about floods rolling back is a direct reference to the flooding rebirth in the myth of the Fisher King and in *The Waste Land* itself. Buffy’s sequence with Sineya fleshes out the fourth quarter of the episode, the quarter associated with Buffy’s tarot card. Overall, it seems that the biggest similarity between the two works is a sectional structure with each segment based around a particular tarot card (or cards).

[16] T. S. Eliot uses tarot cards as key symbols in *The Waste Land*. According to Betsey Creekmore's 1982 essay titled "The Tarot Fortune in *The Waste Land*," Eliot had access to Waite's 1911 tarot manual. The tarot spread highlighted in this manual is the "Ancient Celtic Method of Divination," or, the Celtic Cross Spread – the same spread Drusilla uses a variation of in "What's My Line?, Pt. 1." In Waite's manual, "The Pictorial Key to the Tarot" or the diagram of the Celtic Cross lists examples of cards in the various positions. Given that the Rider-Waite tarot deck and accompanying manual were the only mass produced tarot cards at the time when the poem was written, it seems as though Eliot saw this diagram and wrote *The Waste Land* based upon these particular cards and their locations in the spread (see fig. 9). This is evidenced by Eliot's reference in lines 372-373: "Cracks and reforms and burst in the violet air/ Falling towers." This Tower is the sixteenth Major Arcana card and is the representation of "what will come," the final card drawn, in Waite's spread example. While Eliot does not reference The Tower in the same way he references the first five cards of the spread, his use of the word tower at all indicates his knowledge of the other cards included in this particular spread. It appears as though the first five cards dealt (including the signifier card, even though this card is technically card number zero in the spread) directly correspond to the sections of the poem. For example, The Wheel of Fortune is the fourth card drawn, and is therefore the unifying symbol for the fourth section of the poem. Tarot cards dictate the structure of the poem in the same way Whedon's cards establish the four separate dream sequences in "Restless."

[17] According to Creekmore, the first signifier card must be Death in response to the poem's epigraph's question written in Greek "May I die" (Creekmore 911). This entire reading therefore becomes about the "death-in-life of the Waste Land which the protagonist wishes to escape through death to rebirth" (Creekmore 911). The first card Eliot explicitly references, though, is the "drowned Phoenician Sailor," which represents the main character receiving the tarot reading (Eliot line 47). The tarot card that visually depicts this scene (and the death as indicated by the Death signifier card) is the Rider-Waite Ten of Swords, although this card is not included in the actual spread (see fig. 10). Madame Sosotris goes on to draw the "Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks," or the Queen of Pentacles, although there seems to be several conflicting viewpoints as to whether this is actually the Queen of Pentacles, Cups, or Wands, or even the Two of Swords (Eliot line 49)².

² It is also thought that this card is perhaps reversed:

That the card is to be understood as 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 women 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 (Creekmore 912).

[18] The “lady of the rocks” seems to indicate the Queen of Cups, as she quite literally has a pile of rocks at her feet. She is also “pictured gazing at her symbol,” which could refer to either the Queen of Cups or the Queen of Pentacles. Early scholarship on the Belladonna card associated it with the Two of Swords, however, this has been disproven as the description in Eliot’s poem clearly does not match the visuals of this card. As Creekmore explains in her article, Eliot goes on to describe the Belladonna card further as having a “‘burnished throne,’ mention ‘fruited vines,’ and ‘cupidons’ (one of which ‘hid his eyes behind his wing’)” on the back of the Queen’s chair (912). The cupidons and fruited vines are certainly present in the Queen of Pentacles; however, the “burnished” or polished description does not make sense. The Queen of Pentacles’ throne is no different than the plain unfinished stone chair sported by the Queen of Cups and the Queen of Swords. The Queen of Wands’ throne arms are adorned with what appear to be golden lions and the chair is backed by a display of shining beasts. Creekmore also cites Robert Currie’s scholarship that the Belladonna card’s meaning within *The Waste Land* is most consistent with how the Queen of Wands is described in character; “a dark woman, countrywoman, friendly, chaste, loving, honorable” (913). Another definition of the Queen of Wands describes her as a “proud and strong woman...[one who] possesses a magnetic personality and has a sincere interest in the welfare of others” (Levitt 90). The Queen of Wands definition seems consistent with the fiery woman in *The Waste Land*’s second section who recounts “When Lil’s husband got demobbed, I said/ I didn’t mince my words, I said to her myself...make yourself a bit smart” (lines 139-142).

[19] Given this scholarly debate, it seems as though Eliot created a card that is really an amalgamation of a few different minor arcana Queen cards; she sits atop a pile of rocks like the Queen of Cups, her throne is carved with cupids and placed among vines like the Queen of Pentacles, and her shimmering throne and honest character are akin to the Queen of Wands. It is through this same spirit of combination that the *BtVS* team created Willow’s tarot cards at the end of Season Four. The tarot cards created to represent each character in “Primeval” reflect combinations of multiple real tarot cards.

[20] In “Primeval” (B4021) Willow uses these tarot cards in a ritual to produce the spirit of the original Slayer. Three of the four cards used in this spell are displayed in “Primeval,” although the fourth card is not revealed to the viewer until almost the end of the next episode, “Restless.” There is no significance in the layout of these cards as

This is interesting to note because when Willow draws the card that corresponds to Eliot’s Belladonna the shot frames her card upside down. Given further analysis, it seems as though Whedon is not wise to the complication of meaning when a tarot card is reversed.

Willow is using tarot cards in a nonsensical way. The first card she draws is Spiritus (Spirit), which depicts a woman floating above a river. It seems as though she has a radiant halo above her and pieces of her dress fly away from her levitating body like wings (see fig. 11). At first, it appears there is little significance to this card, as it does not visually align with any particular card in the Rider-Waite deck.

[21] Just like the Belladonna card of *The Waste Land*, this card is an amalgam of the four suits' Queens. The Spiritus card Willow draws for herself is quite visually similar to the Two of Swords, depicting a single, white clad figure in the center of the card. This is an interesting compositional choice given the past (albeit debunked) association of the Belladonna card and the Two of Swords. On the Two of Swords, a person is seated and blindfolded, holding two swords pointed in opposite directions. On the Spiritus card, this image is combined with those of the various suits' queen cards (see figs. 12 and 13). Now, the singular figure becomes regal; her swords transformed into her extended arms draped in flowing fabric. She floats instead of sits mid frame. Her radiant halo indicates her Queen status.

[22] The Queens of the Minor Arcana are all strong heroines and leaders, champions of female power. The Queen of Swords, in particular, symbolizes a woman who is stronger when alone or not in a relationship – an interesting point, since the extent of Willow's magical powers can only be explored once her partner is eliminated.³ These are all prosperous cards depicting feminine power. The Two of Swords is an air element card, blending “the duality of the number two with the abstract mental qualities of air” (Levitt 121). This is the Spiritus (Spirit) card, not the Sophus (Mind) card, which explains the duality. Willow is a character who combines her intellect with her other talents, be that witchcraft or, in earlier seasons, purely her spirit. That is why she draws the Spiritus for herself instead of the Sophus; she does not rely solely on her intellect as Giles does, she has another skill to supplement that aspect of her power. Eliot deliberately described his Belladonna card in an ambiguous way so that readers of his poem might recognize the card as any of the strong Queens. It is in this same spirit that Whedon created his tarot deck for “Primeval” and “Restless.”

[23] The next card Willow draws is the Animus (Heart), for Xander. The card looks like a knight with a sword on a horse. It appears to be a visual combination of Death and the four suits' Knights (see figs. 14 and 15). The word “animus” is also a

³ Willow does learn to develop and control her powers with the aid of others, however; only Willow alone may release the unrestrained total of her power. She begins her journey from studying Jenny Calendar's notes, learns to control her magic through her partnership with Tara, and even later learns to re-control her powers in her lessons with the Devon Coven. The true extent of her powers, however, as seen when she becomes Dark Willow and in her “drawing down” ceremony in the series finale, are only evident when Willow works alone (Golden 163).

masculine word, referring to the personification of “masculine psychological tendencies” typically in a female, as Jungian theory establishes (Kessenich). These male tendencies include both positive and negative qualities such as “brutality, recklessness, empty talk...enterprising spirit, courage, truthfulness, and in the highest form, spiritual profundity” (Kessenich). Xander’s card is therefore meant to be an amalgam of several tarot cards that share this “animus” quality: the Knights and Death. Death is a card of change, indicating a change in situation, not always a literal death. Like the Knights, Death sits atop a horse.

[24] Each of the Knight cards seem to indicate a different direction one might take after a great change or death of a situation. The Knight of Wands is an “active Knight on a quest for adventure, action, travel, and excitement” (Levitt 92). The Knight of Swords also emphasizes active changes, urging readers to “network, communicate, talk to many people, and orchestrate an open brainstorming session. Strive to create sharp ideas quickly” (Levitt 132). The divinatory meaning of the Knight of Cups, on the other hand, is “if you are stuck or stagnant, he will bring good luck, inspiration, advancement, new opportunities and friends, and emotional fulfillment,” emphasizing that factors outside the self will help the situation (Levitt 112). This is similar to the fourth and final Knight card, the Knight of Pentacles, which emphasizes caution and thoughtfulness in action in this “time to rest” (Levitt 150). Death is also one of the cards explicitly referenced in *The Waste Land*. It is the signifier card that begins the reading, in fact. Xander, as the heart of the Scoobie group, is one of the most relatable characters on the show. Whedon has at times even described Xander as a manifestation of his youth; in “The Zeppo” (3013) for example, Jack Lynch is the “Michael Bay-type [who] picked on Whedon” growing up while “Xander is of course Joss Whedon” (Lavery 13). This is why Xander gets *The Waste Land*’s signifier card.

[25] The third card Willow draws (and the final one the viewer sees in “Primeval”) is Sophus (Mind), which is associated with Giles. The card looks just like the Rider Waite deck’s Hermit, number nine in the Major Arcana. There are a few other shapes added to the cropped and zoomed image, but the resemblance to the Hermit is striking (see figs. 16 and 17). Nine is a significant number in tarot and is generally recognized as a reiteration of the Three and Six cards. While The Hermit is not referenced in *The Waste Land*, the Three of Wands is. The third section of Eliot’s poem is titled “The Fire Sermon” and the third card drawn in the Ancient Celtic Spread Eliot based his poem on is The Three of Wands. Wands represent the element of fire. Eliot also refers to “the man with three staves” on line 51, which is a literal description of the image on the Three of Wands. This section of the poem has a lyrical flow to it and makes numerous references to song, an interesting parallel to Giles’ performance in his dream section. The Three of Wands is a card that deals with “wanting to explore new options”

whereas The Hermit is card about self-reflection in the face of great change. This is almost exactly the struggle Giles has been having inside his mind: whether to continue as Buffy's (more or less unneeded) Watcher or to return to England and explore his own life.

[26] The fourth and final card Willow draws is the Manus (Hand). This card, meant for Buffy, does not appear on screen until Buffy dreams of it in "Restless." The card depicts two hands, wrists crossed, one hand in a fist, the other open face. Above is a half moon oriented like a cup. According to professional tarot readers, the half circle is a symbol for five (Venefica). Because humans have five fingers and five toes, five becomes a number linked to physicality. Five is also always a card of strife in tarot. When Tara (note that her name recalls the word "tarot") gives the card to Buffy in the dream, she does so with the purposefully poetic line: "You think you know what's to come, what you are. You haven't even begun" (B4022). She functions as a sire to Buffy just as Tiresias does in *The Waste Land*. Tara, "like Tiresias, is a character who has crossed sexual boundaries and now acts as a wise observer in strange places" (Wilcox 170).

[27] Buffy's desert sequence directly parallels the fifth section of *The Waste Land*. Eliot makes multiple references to hands throughout lines 419 to 422 in this part. There are two hands on Buffy's card; ten fingers total. The tarot significance of the number five manifests here in the image of two hands, five fingers each, equaling ten fingers: the polarizing conflict symbolized by a five card is therefore doubled. The tenth Major card, the Wheel of Fortune, is the card that Eliot highlights for his fifth and final section of *The Waste Land*. The Wheel of Fortune is the crowning card in the spread implied in the poem. The crown, according to Waite, is "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" (Creekmore 914). The Wheel of Fortune is ironically a card that indicates "lack of chance and concomitant fatalism" (Creekmore 914). Visually, the Wheel of Fortune is suspended in a pale blue sky amongst clouds with yellow gold accents in each corner (see fig. 18). The Manus card is quite similar, sporting the same sky scape and coloring the yellow half moon at the top in the same golden yellow displayed on the Wheel of Fortune (see fig. 19).

[28] The Wheel of Fortune is a card that indicates change, but the Hebrew iconography included on the Rider-Waite version of this card implies the coming change has been predetermined. Creekmore then notes that since this card is a "symbol of cause and effect...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" (Creekmore 920). It is incredibly fitting that this is Buffy's card. The Wheel of Fortune

is essentially a miniature monomyth. It is the midpoint in the Major Arcana and symbolizes the hero's journey. As Richard Roberts describes in his essay "The Hermetic World-Picture in The 'Wheel of Fortune,'" The Wheel of Fortune displays four zodiacs, Taurus, Leo, Scorpio, Aquarius, which are the same zodiac symbols printed on the final Major Arcana card, the symbol of nirvana, The Universe card. Roberts explains, "the esoteric meaning latent in both cards is that human life and destiny in the mundane 'world' interacts with influences transcending the mundane" (193). The Wheel of Fortune is its own self-contained arc while simultaneously furthering the greater journey; in this same way "Restless" is a stand-alone character development episode in the middle of a seven-season story arc. Throughout the series, Buffy struggles to reconcile her predetermined destiny as the Slayer with her own personal identity. At the end of Season Four, Buffy is reaching the end of her freshman year of college. Since the series began in high school, each season seems to take up the time of one academic school year. This is typically a transitional point for students, the end of freshman year marking the time when teenagers evolve into young adults. Season Five becomes significantly darker, highlighting the more adult struggles Buffy must now face with the addition of a sister to take care of and the death of her mother. The end of Season Four is therefore a transitional episode, one where Buffy must face great change but also recognize that much of this change has been predetermined by her destiny.

[29] Overall, *BtVS* does not represent tarot accurately. Drusilla's games in Season Two are an affront to scholars of tarot. Her layout, while based on the Celtic Cross Spread, is made up, as are some of her important cards. There is, however, significant improvement in tarot's representation in Season Four. The cards in Season Four, while not directly copied from the Rider-Waite deck, are drawn within the same aesthetic style and present particular elements of tarot symbolism consistent with Eliot's poem's representation of tarot. This strongly suggests that the *BtVS* writers researched and/or consulted some authority on both tarot and *The Waste Land* to make the cards in Season Four. Whedon did not make completely arbitrary cards to further the plot, like he did in Season Two with Drusilla's "key" card (B 2009). In Season Four, the cards are specifically designed to correspond to a particular *BtVS* character and the tarot cards drawn in *The Waste Land*: Spiritus (Spirit) for Willow, Animus (Heart) for Xander, Sophus (Mind) for Giles, and Manus (Hand) for Buffy.

[30] It could be argued that Whedon's tarot comes indirectly from his understanding of *The Waste Land*, but the tarot representations in "Primeval" and "Restless" display too much knowledge of tarot for this to be entirely the case. Instead, it seems as though Whedon is applying the same ambiguity Eliot did when describing his Belladonna card. The *BtVS* writers created specific composite cards that both follow the same order Eliot used in his poem and, as Fury said, connect directly to Buffy and the

Scoobies' characteristics.⁴ The team must have researched the tarot representation in *The Waste Land* before creating the tarot cards used in "Primeval." Their knowledge of Eliot's tarot research is suggested by the Spiritus card's resemblance to the queen cards and The Two of Swords: Whedon researchers analyzing *The Waste Land* must have come across the tarot debate associated with the Belladonna; otherwise how could The Two of Swords be visually included here? The esoteric meaning of The Two of Swords also seems to be included in Willow's Spiritus, which indicates knowledge of tarot beyond *The Waste Land* on the team's part. Certain elements of tarot were researched and incorporated into the cards created for "Primeval" and "Restless."

[31] Whedon's representation of tarot cards fits into the popular culture tarot trope: writers appropriate elements of tarot to fit more easily into the story the cards are meant to aid. Almost all media that has shown tarot has represented it in a literal way, frequently using the imagery of the Major Arcana and nothing more. Few examples exist in film, although Disney's *The Haunted Mansion* uses three cards in the opening credits to "[represent] the tale of Master Gracey and his lost love: The Lovers, Death, and the Three of Swords (which represents loss and sorrow)," however, the cards are never arranged in a tarot spread or show being accurately read ("Tarot Motifs"). There are a handful of other TV shows with representations of tarot, but again, most of these are visual homages to The Hanged Man or Death rather than accurate readings. According to TV Tropes, the HBO show *Carnivàle* has some more realistic representations of tarot, but it seems as though this is one of the few exceptions to the rule. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer's* representation of tarot continues on in the spirit of T.S. Eliot; employing the plot motivating elements of tarot while ignoring the more inconvenient parts of the art of card reading.

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<http://www.whedonstudies.tv/watcher-junior-the-undergraduate-journal-of-whedon-studies.html>

⁴ It is worth noting that the Death card is drawn 3rd in "Primeval" rather than first as it is in *The Waste Land*.

Appendices

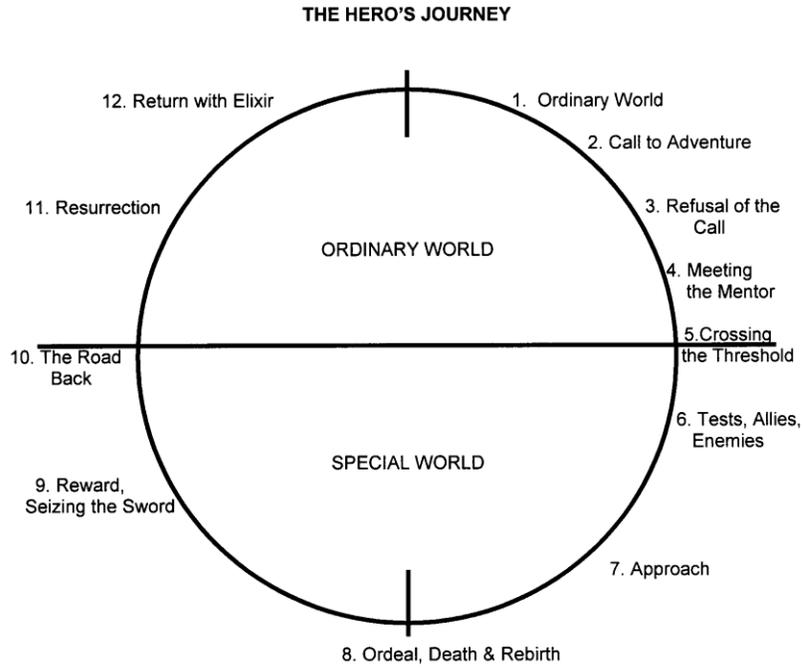


Figure 1. Diagram of the monomyth by Christian Vogler.

http://www.thewritersjourney.com/hero's_journey.htm

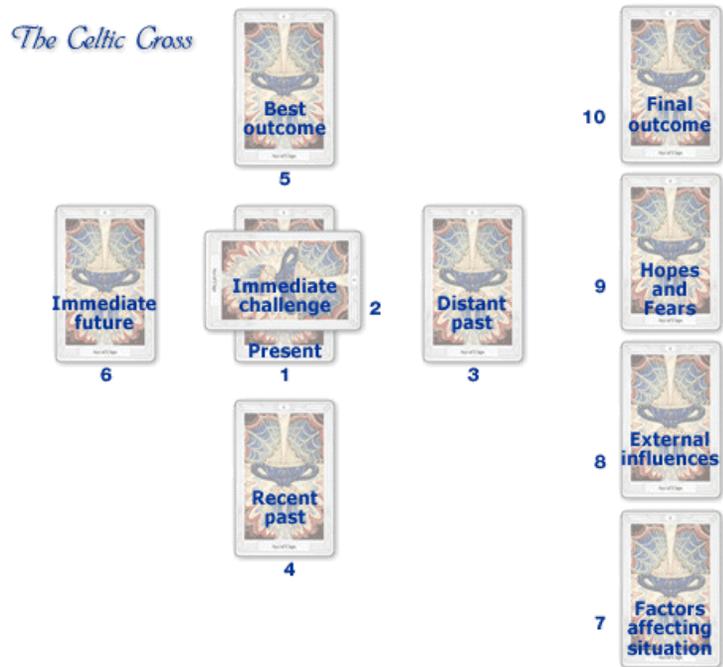
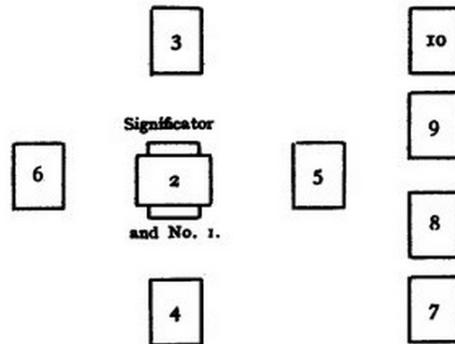


Figure 2. Basic Celtic Cross Spread, image from Angel Paths

<http://www.angelpaths.com/spreads3.html>



The Significator.

1. That covers him
2. What crosses him.
3. What crowns him.
4. What is beneath him.
5. What is behind him.
6. What is before him.
7. Himself.
8. His house.
9. His hopes or fears.
10. What will come.

Figure 3. Waite's version of the Celtic Cross Spread.



Figure 4. Drusilla's almost finished spread from "What's My Line? Pt. 1" (B2009).



Figure 5. Drusilla's "key" from "What's My Line? Pt. 1" (B2009).



Figure 6. Drusilla’s second reading from “What’s My Line? Pt. 1” (B2009).



Figure 7. Rider-Waite Devil card.



Figure 8. The manifestation of The Devil from “What’s My Line? Pt. 1” (B2009).

ANCIENT CELTIC METHOD OF DIVINATION*

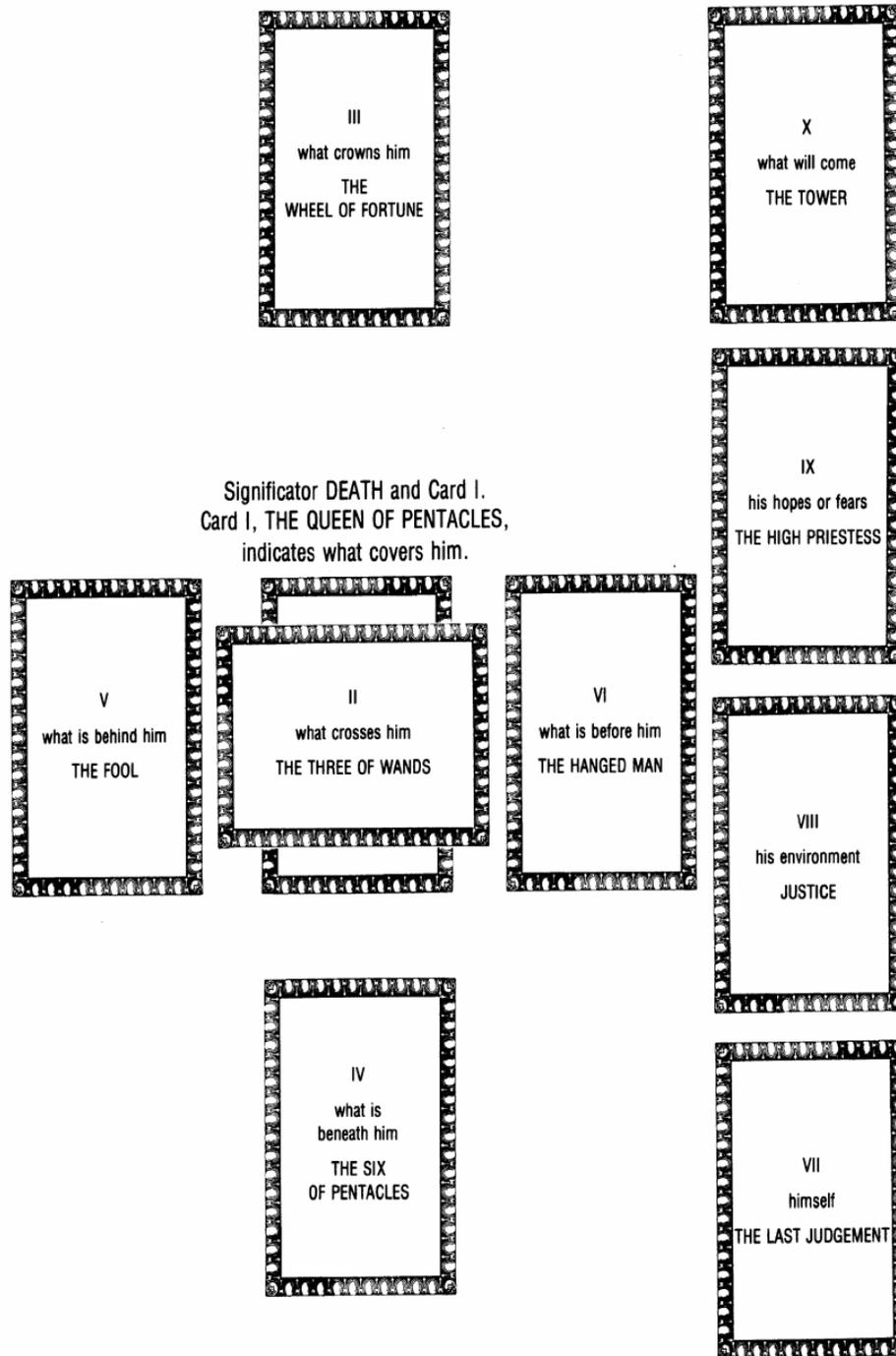


Figure 1

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

Figure 9. Waite’s example of a Celtic Cross Spread from “A Pictorial Key to the Tarot,” reprinted from “The Tarot Fortune in *The Waste Land*” (Creekmore 910).



Figure 10. Rider-Waite Ten of Swords card.

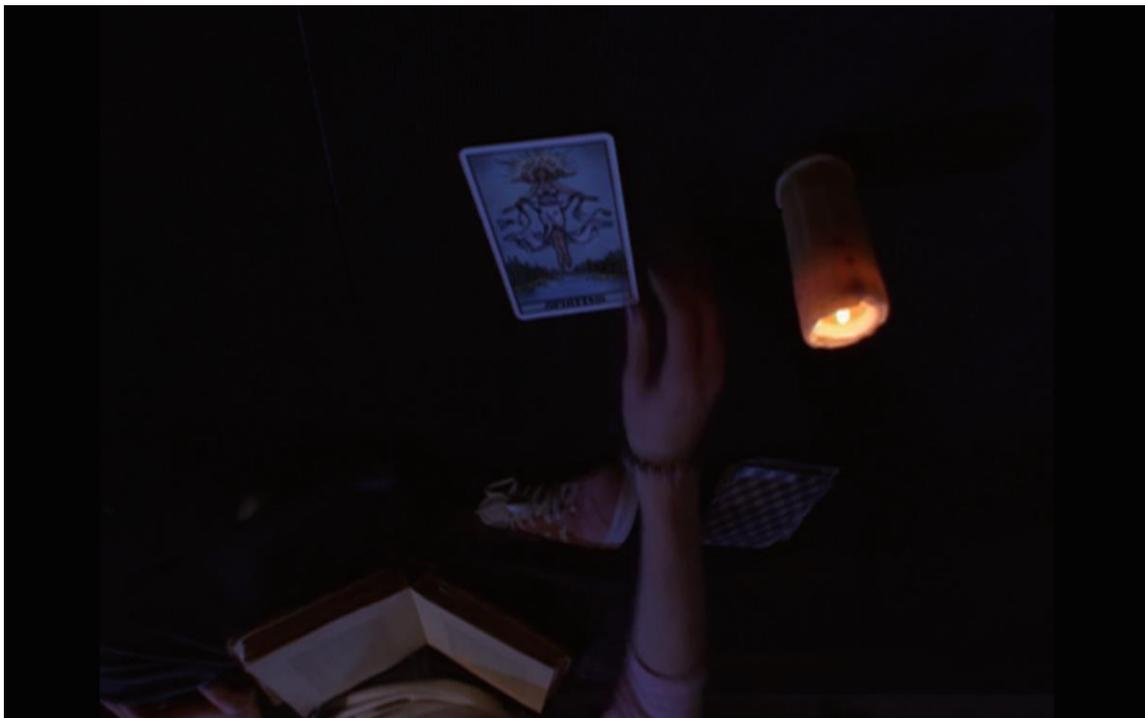


Figure 11. Spiritus card from “Primeval” (B4021).
Please note image is rotated 90 degrees to enable easy viewing.



Figure 12. Rider-Waite Two of Swords card.



Figure 13. Rider-Waite Minor Arcana Queen cards.

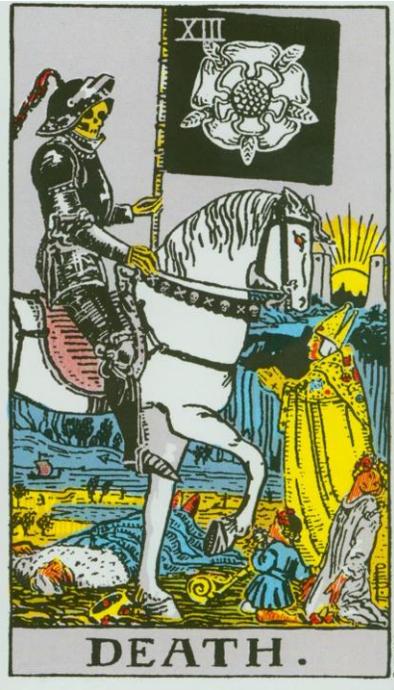


Figure 14. Rider-Waite Death card.



Figure 15. Rider-Waite Minor Knight cards.



Figure 16. Sophus card from “Primeval” (B4021).

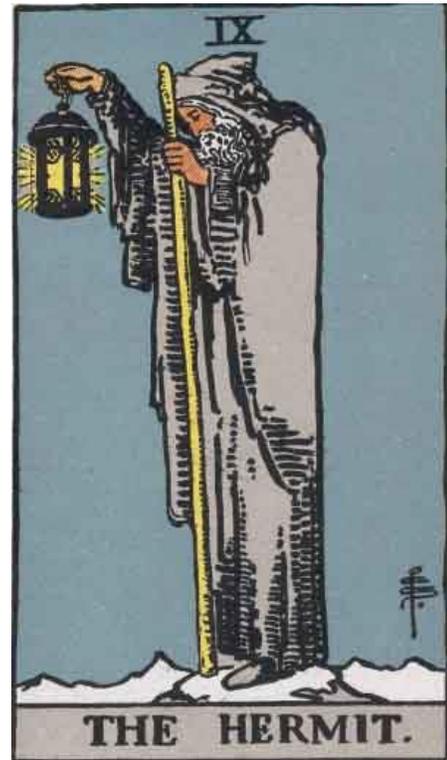


Figure 17. Rider-Waite Hermit card.



Figure 18. Manus card from “Restless” (B4022).
Please note image is rotated 90 degrees to enable easy viewing.

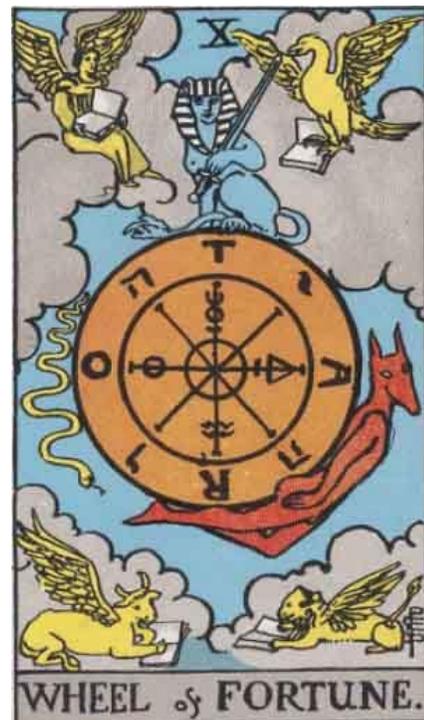


Figure 19. Rider-Waite Wheel of Fortune card.

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