

Little, Big: Tarots and cycles

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 04 May 2000

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Adam Stephanides — 04 May 2000, 09:20

mantis wrote:

This was actually =Adam= who wrote that (and we thank him for using those citations all over the place).

You're welcome. That's one good habit, at any rate, I derived from my years in grad school.

Adam also argues against my numerology/cycles by saying that the number of fairies is 52 =now=, that it was more before; thus the magic number =cannot= be 52. Well, sure, you can believe that . . . but I think there are two things: first, the magic number for the Alice & Co. is 52, or thereabouts (since after all that is the number that go through and take up their stations); there is no guarantee that the previous (or "old") magic number was 52.

[snip]

So you see where I'm heading with this: the old "real" Tarot reflects the old order of fairies. The shifting of numbers, arranged from high to low as if a sequence across time, reflects their real dying off. Through the history of the real Tarot deck, from many cards to fewer, we see reflected the hidden history of the fairies.

An ingenious scheme to save your theory, and one which neatly solves the problem of the number of cards, which had occurred to me, if only vaguely (I never saw alga's piece). I see two objections, though.

1) The repeated statements, in the conversation between Sophie and the returned Lilac, that the number of fairies left is "so few" ("A Parliament," VI, 2) suggest that the number remaining is only a small proportion, and that there were originally hundreds or even thousands, too many for any tarot deck. I seem to recall Sophie's shock when she first guesses that there are only fifty-two left, which would support the same conclusion, but I can't find the passage.

2) If the current number of Drinkwaters isn't equal to the original number of fairies, then what reason is there to think that the Drinkwaters replacing the fairies is a cyclical event at all? As far as I can remember, the only "race" of fairies we ever hear about are the ones the Drinkwaters interact with. (Even if we accept the Bramble-Drinkwater theory of concentric worlds as accurate, this doesn't imply successive types of fairies, since it's said explicitly that one race of fairies occupies all the inner "worlds.")

--Adam