

the JCdeck; fairies

The Urth list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 07 May 2000

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Adam Stephanides — 07 May 2000, 09:43

mantis wrote:

The decks of cards John Crowley invents and uses in first THE DEEP (1975) and much later LITTLE, BIG (1981) are remarkably similar

Not that similar (at least according to alga's essay); TD removes the numbers and suits from the "people" cards, and cuts down the number of trumps much further. Aside from the features they both derive from the Tarot, the only similarity is the number of people cards.

But LB is set on our world, and our world has a real set of cards that we know as "Tarot." So it seems to me that the JC deck is either the "true" original, of which all Tarot are just poor imitations (shades of Zelazny's Amber and/or its deck of cards); or the JC deck is a final version (endproduct of Tarot-as-secret-history-of-fairies, as I mentioned before) and is "true" because it has been tweaked by the fairies themselves; or the JC deck has no relation to Tarot, because it is based upon playing cards, with a few new "action" cards thrown in.

Well, the LB deck is clearly based upon Tarot; its suits have the same names as do the Tarot suits, and in both the trumps are numbered starting with zero. Of your other two alternatives, the first is more likely than the second, for reasons I gave earlier. But it seems most likely to me that the LB deck is simply a variation of the Tarot deck, neither "initial" or "final" necessarily, and not "truer" than ordinary Tarot in any metaphysical sense, though specially adapted for explicating the Tale (whether by their inherent nature or because the fairies have "supercharged" them).

I doubt that the second really occurred to John Crowley, but I dreamed it up as a way of answering the relationship between the Tarot and the JC deck (since both do exist in the world of LB, iirc).

Yes; the regular Tarot is referred to explicitly in "Something Horrific," II, 1.

Re: fairy bloodlines, Adam's arguments seem less and less arguments than agreements with alga. He writes that the fairies are not interested in reproduction, but he also says that they do want a one-to-one substitution of themselves when they go to the next level in

. . . well, this is "zero population growth" reproduction; reproduction =is= biological survival; it fits with what alga is saying--not that they want to multiply in such numbers as to swarm over the Earth (Adam's "mate with as many humans as possible" strawman), but to multiply in numbers sufficient to start the colony in the next world, when it becomes vacant.

It seems kind of pointless to argue with you about whether I disagree with alga. But since my position is apparently unclear, I'll go over it again. The Drinkwaters have become fairies, but there is no sign that the original fairies (whom I will just call "fairies" for convenience) look upon them as of the same race as themselves. The fairies' goal is not the production of new fairies, which is what "reproduction" means to me. Nor would I call the Drinkwater-occupied outermost fairy world a "colony" of the fairies; at any rate, the fairies will have no contact with it once they

themselves go further "in."

Adam likewise argues against the notion of a fairy bloodline, insisting that Alice & Co. are all 100% human, but he also writes that there is only one kind of fairy.

My assertion that there was only one kind of fairy (as far as we knew) was meant to refer to before the Drinkwaters moved in, and was meant as an argument against the idea of this event as cyclical. The Drinkwaters become fairies too (though I was late seeing this); whether they are really "the same type" as the original fairies I don't know.

So then I guess Adam is arguing the human colonization of the next world as a truly new event (a sort of "Firebase Alpha"),

Yes, in the sense that it's not cyclical; no, in the sense of non-humans moving into fairyland.

with
further human journeys of conquest inward ahead;

I don't see this as taking place. My sense is that the Drinkwaters are fixed in the roles the fairies have placed them in, and will not change except to act out the fairy-tale adventures planned for them. As in ES, they have "become parables." (You can see I lean towards the negative view of the ending.)

or perhaps a human group
that has been made fully fairy. Through hardware (genetics) and/or
software (theosophy).

Yes. The latter rather than the former (which is my principal difference with alga).

That is to say, Adam agrees with alga: there is only one race of fairy, and Alice & Co. is fairy as much as the old fairies were/are; and the fairies are the ones and the only ones who plumb the worlds-in-worlds.

In regards to these points, I do agree with alga. Do you agree also?

As for "bringing the cards in line with the house," no, no, no: it is the other way around. JC invented the cards years before, for TD: he built the house around it.

Yes, the fact that a fifty-two card deck also appears in TD does suggest something more is going on than my guesses in my earlier post. But I don't agree that JC built the house around the cards. The house has several calendric attributes, of which the fifty-two doors is only one.

And yes, I use the toy from "In Blue" (from NOVELTY) to peg the number of inner worlds in LB at five:

Which would also argue against your "eternal cycle" theory, it seems to me: after five repetitions, the first group of fairies would be unable to go inward any further.

--Adam