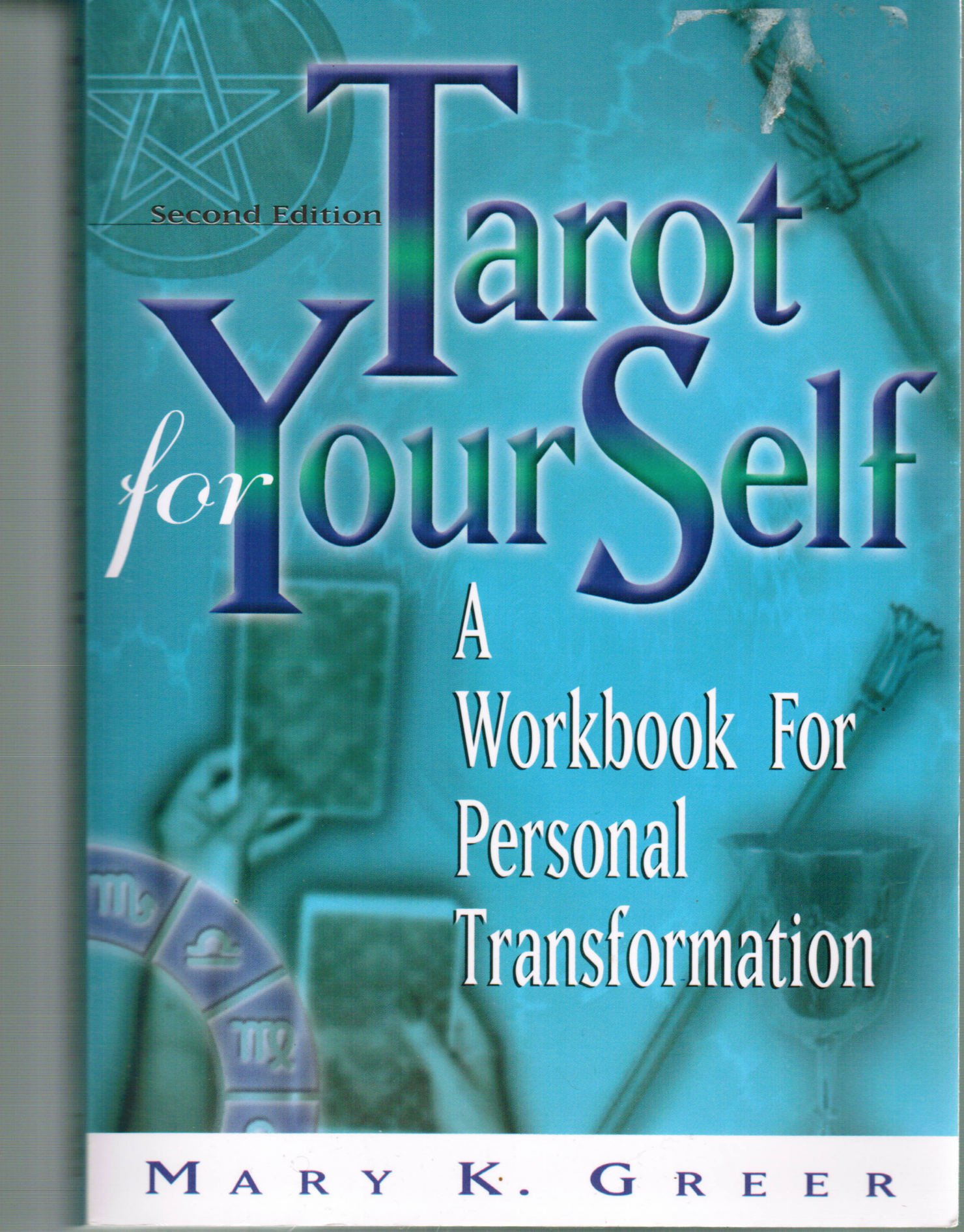
Second Edition
Tarot
for YourSelf
A
Workbook For
Personal
Transformation
MARY K. GREER

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Preface

More than 20 years have passed since I began writing *Tarot for Your Self*. Its working title was *Personalizing the Tarot* in that I hoped you would use this book to establish your own relationship with the cards and to create life-affirming changes that you chose for yourself. This is not to say that other uses of the Tarot such as metaphysical study and meditation, fortune telling, or historical research are not valuable and worthy—they are. I felt, however, that plenty of books had already been written on these subjects. On the other hand, there was a rich area of experimentation and practice about which little was being written, simply because all the books said never to read Tarot for yourself. It was time to bring it out of the closet and to share what I and my students and friends were discovering. Since then, many people have told me that I wrote the book they wanted to write. This book started with class handouts and my own journals. If you keep a journal, as I recommend here, you will one day discover that you have, indeed, written your own book.

I have seen copies of *Tarot for Your Self* with personalized covers and markers throughout, and ones that have been put in ring binders so that pictures and journal pages can be added. Those who have written in their copy from the very beginning say that it becomes a treasure chest, full of their own insights, growth and development, and brings new understanding whenever they re-read what they have written. They recommend not worrying about being simplistic or silly—just put something down—its significance may only be apparent later.

If I were to emphasize just one thing, it would be that there are lots of rules, but that rules are made to be broken. *Taboo* comes from a Polynesian word that means "sacred or holy" rather than simply "prohibited." It suggests that great power is available, but that the tabooed thing must be approached in the proper way, with respect and with consciousness. In using Tarot for yourself I find that an attitude of sacred play serves well, since Tarot began, after all, as a game. When working with this book, if you aren't sure you are doing something right, then do whatever makes sense, and later evaluate the results. Put your cards in any wrapping you choose. Shuffle in a way that feels comfortable. Make up a spread. I see rules as being like recipes in a cookbook: follow them when trying out something for the first time, and then modify them to suit your taste or available ingredients. When working in magical realms for the first time, you may want to be a little more careful, but with the material in this book, feel free to play.

In no way do I advocate throwing out all other Tarot books and just making it up as you go along—as should be quite clear from my bibliography. But, there are many ways to learn about or use Tarot. I believe this book has filled a significant gap in what has been written. By all means, expand your knowledge of Tarot by learning what a creator has to say about his or her deck, and explore all you can about the history of Tarot (a fascinating subject, for which, see Appendix B). Eventually you may find that everything you study can be related to the Tarot. When reading in almost any subject area, I take notes in "taroteeze." By noting a relevant Major Arcana card in the margins next to an important idea, I am able to put together ideas from other parts of a work, or among different works, and thus make exciting discoveries.

This revised edition contains everything from the original with a few clarifications and corrections, and a rewritten history chapter. I have also added several helpful charts, material on what I call the "Hidden Factor (Shadow) Card," and advice on reading reversals. Appendix A now contains reversed meanings for all 78 cards and expanded interpretations of the Minor Arcana number cards. I've included more works in the bibliography and updated references and resources.

In the early 1980s I still wanted to believe that the origins of Tarot were ancient, mysterious, and occult, even if I didn't really believe the myths about Egypt and the gypsies. Historical scholarship by Michael Dummett, Thierry DePaulis, Ron Decker, Stuart Kaplan, and Robert O'Neill, among others, have amply demonstrated that Tarot was, in all likelihood, invented in Northern Italy in the first half of the fifteenth century, as I discuss in Appendix B. I want to especially thank Robert O'Neill, Tom Tadfor Little, and James Revak for their comments, although they are in no way responsible for the results, my mistakes, nor my opinions.

Correspondences to astrology, the Hebrew letters, and the Qabalistic Tree of Life are those of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn (founded in 1888). Since the creators of the most influential decks of the 20th century (the Rider-Waite-Smith and Crowley-Harris [Thoth] decks) were members of the Golden Dawn, these associations have become common in the English-speaking world. There are many other sets of correspondences including those advanced by Eliphas Lévi (the standard for the Marseilles Tarot) and C. C. Zain (Brotherhood of Light), and new ones are being proposed all the time. Please feel free to substitute your preferred system in the text. Make this book your own.

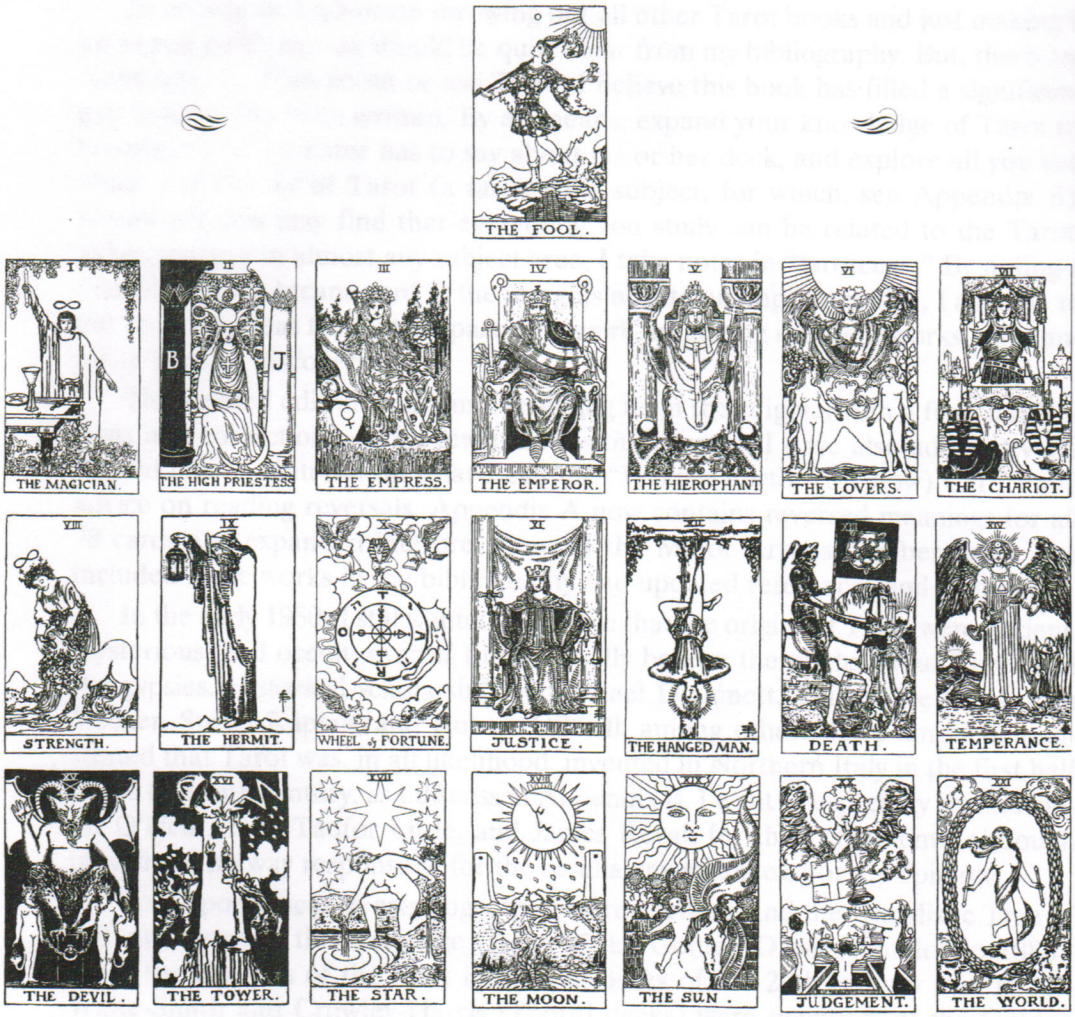
For all those who wonder about my daughter Casimira, who appears in examples in this book, as I write she is completing her senior year at the University of New Hampshire with a term abroad in Australia. She's done well, despite the long hours I've spent writing books. She says she doesn't believe in Tarot—but is not averse to a look at the cards when there's a difficult decision to be made.

A blessing on all your Tarot readings,

Mary K. Greer

September 4, 2001

Nevada City, California



FROM THE RIDER-WAITE-SMITH deck, originally published in 1910: the illustrations were by scene designer Pamela Colman Smith under the direction of occultist Arthur Edward Waite. The Major Arcana cards are laid out in three rows of seven cards each with the Fool (zero card) placed above the others. The first seven cards represent the body; the second seven, the mind; and the third, the spirit. If you add a number from the bottom row to the number from the top row directly above it, then divide that number by two, you have the number of the card between them. The number 11 is the arithmetical mean of all the diametrically opposed cards such as 1 and 21, 8 and 14, etc. According to Paul Foster Case, the top row refers to powers and potencies; the middle row to laws or agencies; and the bottom row to conditions or effects. Thus you can say that the power of Card 1 works through the agency of Card 8 to modify the effects of Card 15, and so on.

Introduction

Now we can see the real use of the Tarot pack. It is for living in and arranging our lives with. The cards are the exchange-symbols between inner and outer life.... Altogether the Tarots are a most valuable collection of psycho-physical currency convertible into either dimension.

—Wm. B. Gray, *Magical Ritual Methods*

The traditional focus of Tarot, at all levels of skill, is to read the cards for others or to meditate upon their symbols. Yet, every Tarot practitioner also reads the cards for him- or herself. This widespread practice expresses a basic need for self-understanding that the Tarot is uniquely well suited to fulfill. *Tarot for Your Self* is the first book to focus directly upon this personal use of the Tarot and provides, through the workbook format, a place for you to keep a record of your process.

Tarot for Your Self is a tool for achieving self-knowledge. It is designed to actually teach Tarot, rather than merely explain it, and to help you apply Tarot to your real-life situations as a practical resource.

It is intended to serve both beginning students and advanced practitioners by introducing a variety of approaches to the Tarot. These include: meditations, rituals, spreads, mandalas, visualizations, dialogues, charts, astrology, numerology, and affirmations, all directed toward greater self-exploration. By examining your past, present, and future potential, you will learn to deal more effectively with your problems, recognize your choices, and clarify your goals. To begin this path to self-knowledge all you need is this book, a Tarot deck of any design, and a pencil.

What Tarot Is

The Tarot of today is a Western occult psychological and philosophical system, as well as a card game. It consists of 78 cards divided into what has come to be called the Major and Minor Arcana. The 22 cards of the Major Arcana represent in archetypal symbols wo/man's journey through life, a journey that Carl Jung envisioned as the process of individuation.

The remaining 56 cards consist of 16 Court Cards and 40 "pip" or number cards. They are divided into four suits: Wands, Cups, Swords, and Pentacles, which equate to a standard playing card deck as Clubs, Hearts, Spades, and Diamonds respectively. Each suit has four Court Cards—King, Queen, Knight, and Page (or Princess), and cards numbered Ace through 10.

Because the Tarot relies on the universal language of symbolism, its influence has, over several centuries, spread throughout the world unrestricted by language barriers or semantics. And, since symbolism is also the language of the unconscious, the use of the Tarot tends to activate the intuitive mind, or right-brain center. Because of this, the cards have, since the 18th century, been most commonly used for "psychic" divination based on a variety of layouts, one of the most popular being the Celtic Cross.

A reading consists of shuffling the deck, selecting the cards, arranging them in a particular pattern or layout, and interpreting the meaning of the entire symbolic picture in relation to your question, or the current influences in your life.

But working with the Tarot should not be confined merely to random choices of cards. Each card, especially among the 22 Major Arcana, embodies an entire philosophical and psychological text, and any one of them can be selected as a subject for meditation or visualization.

Tarot for Yourself

Because it is difficult to be objective about your own problems, most Tarot books suggest ways of reading for others, but discourage reading for yourself. They point out the tendency to read your own desires and fears into the cards; and since most spreads are not designed to offer new options or choices for action, the reader is left with a sense of helplessness.

The Tarot should be approached, not merely as a means for divination, but as a potentially dynamic tool for personal growth and transformation. I have written this book to share with you methods that grew out of my own personal experiences and those of my students. It is dedicated to making the use of Tarot for yourself a powerful and enlightening adventure.

Before you begin, here are several ways to avoid the usual difficulties and confusions of reading for yourself:

1. You don't have to interpret the cards! Do a reading as part of a journal entry and simply observe how the cards relate to what you have written.
2. Tape-record your self-readings and explain everything aloud, just as though you were reading for someone else.
3. Spend time with one reading. Look at it from several different points of view. Leave it out on your dresser to look at.
4. If there is a card that is particularly confusing or upsetting, get to know it through meditation or visualization.

5. Have a friend assist you. Exchange readings in which each of you reads your own cards, but offers commentary and feedback to the other.
6. Use the Tarot for purposes other than readings, such as creating mandalas or stories, or simply describing situations through the symbolism of the cards.

Which Deck to Choose

Since working with Tarot involves relating to symbols, it is important to choose a deck with which you can feel comfortable and familiar. *To get the most from the exercises in this book, you will need pictures on all the cards*, whereas many European decks use abstract designs (similar to modern playing cards) on the Minor Arcana. Any of the following Tarot decks would be suitable for use here, although they only begin to suggest the variety available. Since first writing this book in the early 1980s hundreds of new Tarots have been published and dozens more appear every year. You may enjoy trying these exercises with different decks and even comparing the results of a reading with multiple ones.

The following are only a small sample of available decks. For instance, I've mentioned only a few of the many "cultural decks" based on world mythologies.

Deck	Comments
Rider-Waite-Smith	Published in 1910. The first deck in which all the Minor Arcana had pictures. Conceptualized by Arthur Edward Waite, illustrated by Pamela Colman Smith, and based on the Golden Dawn, it has influenced most of the decks that follow. (RWS)
Alchemical	17th c. alchemy based.
Ancestral Path	Multi-cultural.
Aquarian	60s art deco.
Baseball	Excellent use of the baseball metaphor.
Connelly	Modifies traditional images that Connelly felt were too scary.
Enchanted	Magical, fabric art.
Gendron	Computer graphics.
Halloween	Playful.
Hanson-Roberts	Redrawn RWS, fairy-tale style, non-threatening.
Hudes	Renaissance, mapmakers.
Legend	Arthurian, Grail myth.
Morgan-Greer	Brightly colored, portrait-style close-ups.
Mythic	Based on Greek myth.

Nefertari's	Egyptian, gold-embossed backgrounds.
New Palladini	By the artist of the Aquarian deck.
Robin Wood	Neo-pagan, Wiccan.
Royal Fez Moroccan	A 12th-century look.
Sacred Rose	Byzantine, stained-glass inspired.
Shape-Shifter	Shamanic merging of animals and humans.
Spiral	Ornate, qabalist, metaphysical paintings.
Universal Waite	Recoloring of the RWS deck.
VisionQuest	Native American.
William Blake	Based on Blake's art and ideas.
Witches	Neo-pagan, qabalist.
Xultun	Mayan-based.
Thoth	Completed in 1945. Conceptualized by Aleister Crowley, and illustrated by Frieda Harris. Golden Dawn correspondences.

The following decks have influences that combine both Thoth and RWS:

Cosmic Tribe	Computer manipulated photo collage.
Light and Shadow	Elegant back and white linoleum cuts.
Motherpeace	Round, feminist.
Nigel Jackson	Pagan. Air; Fire.
Sacred Circle	Celtic sacred sites.
Voyager	Photo collage.
World Spirit	Multi-cultural, shamanic.

In a class of their own:

Celtic Wisdom	Celtic myth.
Osho Zen	Buddhist influence.
Merryday	Fairies, elves, and modern magicians.
Shining Tribe	Shamanic, earth-based.
Wheel of Change	Country pagan. No people on the Number Cards.

European Classics:

Marseilles, Italian, Classic, Ancient, Minchiate, and most Egyptian-style decks have simple suit designations. While wonderful to read with, these generally require memorization of card meanings rather than the kinds of reading techniques taught in this book.

I have used the Rider-Waite-Smith and Crowley-Harris (Thoth) decks as my basic referents in writing the text and in all correspondences between the Tarot, astrology, numerology, Hebrew letters, etc., as summarized in Appendix C.

Rational and Intuitive Thinking

All of us are familiar with the rational-logical way of thinking. It is the way we were taught in school, and it is the way society encourages us to operate throughout our lives. Intuitive thinking is based on "insight," the acceptance of an innate harmony in the universe and a meaningful connection between the past, present, and future, between ourselves, and everything that exists.

The exercises in this book will encourage the use of your intuitive abilities in a systematic way. The workbook format provides a place to record your progress on the path of self-evaluation, a process that can then be continued in a creative and spontaneous manner throughout your life. Your tools are the visual symbols of the Tarot, which transcend the limitations of verbal thinking. Together, they will facilitate the use of both intuitive and analytical thinking in a balanced and harmonious way.

How to Use This Book

Whether you are a beginner or a more advanced practitioner, it will be to your advantage to work your way through the book chapter by chapter. You will experience the cumulative effects of the way the exercises have been arranged to build the confidence and expertise needed to use the Tarot for yourself as well as for others.

Always remember that this is a workbook: don't just read the exercises, *do them,* and write down your results. It is especially important that you do the beginning exercises spontaneously, not looking up the meanings of the cards, but discovering the unique significance they have for you and trusting your choices. After you've established your own rapport with the symbols, you can begin using the interpretations in Appendix A to expand your knowledge of the symbols. There you will find key questions to pinpoint the specific purposes of the cards in your layouts, and affirmations to program the highest qualities of each card into your thought patterns.

Use this book as a journal, a place to record not only the results of the exercises, but your own personal growth: the insights, thoughts, and experiences that occur as a result of your work and meditations. As in any journal, be sure to date your exercises and entries: month, day, and year.

It is important at all times to be uninhibited and spontaneous in your writing. You do not have to show your work to anyone unless you wish to.

The exercise worksheets can be photocopied for your personal use. See the section "Charts" in the Subject Directory for those that would be most useful. However, the formats of these worksheets are meant to be suggestive, not prescriptive, and you should feel free to write in them any way you wish, or on other sheets.

Developing Intuition

Since one of the main purposes of this book is to help you develop an awareness of your intuition and how it works, here are a few suggestions with which to approach the exercises:

1. Always write down your impressions and images spontaneously. Write down even those ideas you started to reject; don't censor your thoughts!
2. Be free, open, and expressive. Don't worry about spelling and punctuation. Criticism and editing have their place in formal writing, but not in this book.
3. If you write something that seems to be wrong at the time, put a single line through it, so it can still be read. You may see that comment in a different light in retrospect.
4. If you are right-handed, try writing with your left (or vice versa). Although it seems awkward at first, it may free you from rigid patterns of expression.
5. If you get stuck, write the last word over and over until a new thought presents itself—and it will.
6. Fantasize. Lie. Reach for the incredible, the unusual. Into what uncharted realms and surprises can your mind take you?

If writing is not enjoyable or appropriate for you, try taping your impressions, using the same ground rules as above; or verbalize your impressions to a partner. You can even act out the majority of these exercises, or find some other artistic means of expression. The important thing is to express and objectify your intuitive awareness so that by becoming conscious of your behavior patterns you will be free to change them.

The Photographs and Illustrations

At the beginning of each chapter is a photograph or illustration of Tarot cards laid out in a pattern that can help you understand the relationships, interconnections, and deeper meanings of the cards. Their teachings are unlocked primarily by intuitive insight through contemplation of the patterns.

You can learn about the structure of the Tarot and about your own psychic structure from meditating on the visual interrelationships of the cards as explained in the notes accompanying them. Some authors have discussed insights they have had through particular patterns, and I have tried to refer you to those sources in the suggested readings. But, as indicated by the term "meditation," the significance of each pattern is personally and individually divulged, never fully apprehended through verbal means. I have included them here in this book as an indication of a possible further direction for your studies.

Sample Exercise

Stop right now and get a pen or pencil and write "Rose" in the space following this paragraph. For five minutes write down every thought that enters your head as you contemplate roses. Use word association, memories, and your sense impressions. Write as quickly as possible. Include such thoughts as, "This is silly—I hate roses anyway—what good will this do?" All thoughts are important and must be captured. If images come to mind, capture them in short word pictures. For example:

> *"Rose red, red rose. Thorns hurt. Scent overwhelms. Blood red and fingers torn but I can't stop myself from stealing the neighbor's rose. Watch the petals blow full, then fall—pool like dried blood."*

This example would never win a writing contest, but that is not the point. Humor is a good way to get you started. Think of the most absurd associations you can, be sarcastic or nutty; after all, you are the Fool beginning a new journey....

Roses appear frequently in the majority of Tarot decks. When you have completed your intuitive writing exercise, *but not before,* look through your cards at the way the rose has been used in your deck. Do any of the thoughts you've written give you insights as to why the rose might have appeared in a particular card?