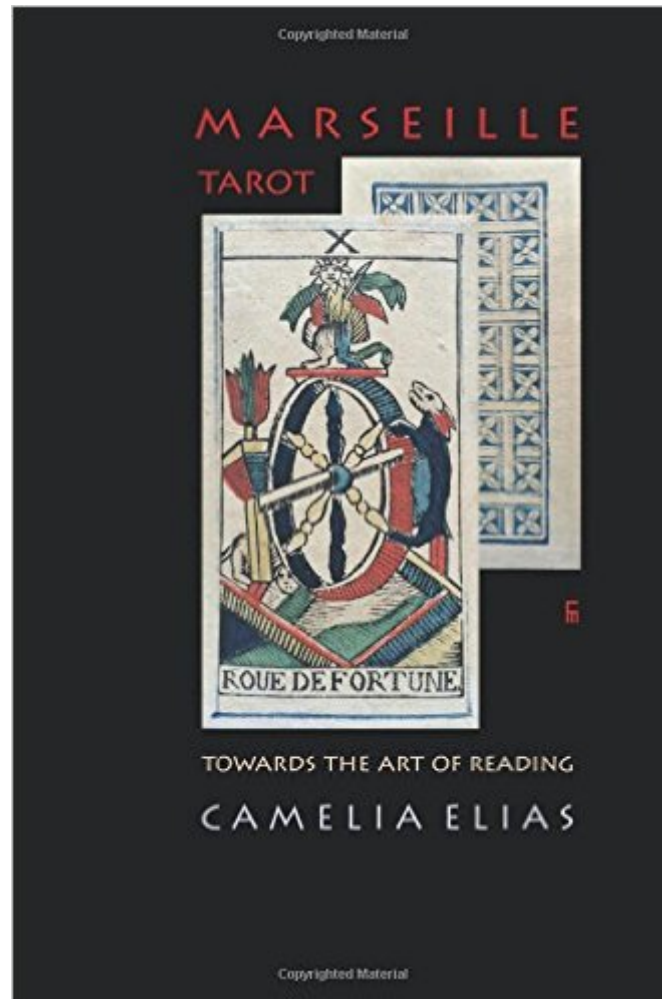


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MARSEILLE TAROT: TOWARDS THE ART OF READING



Synopsis

This book aims to cover four basic questions: Why do we read cards? What's so special about the Marseille Tarot? How can the cards uncover our blind spots? What does it mean to live a magical life, when we allow the stories that the cards tell us to offer solutions to our real problems? The book is also the first to introduce the readers to the wonderful and strange cards of Carolus Zoya, a most rare and unseen Tarot de Marseille deck made in Turin at the end of 1700.

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Customer Reviews

I love Elias' very direct approach to things - even though it sometimes has me mumbling to myself, and even though I don't always agree with her. Let's start at the beginning - Elias' stated purpose with this book is to cover the following four basic questions: 1. Why do we read cards? 2. What's so special about the Marseille Tarot? 3. How can the cards uncover our blind spots? 4. What does it mean to live a magical life, when we allow the stories that the cards tell us to offer solutions to our real problems? The images in this book are from Carolus Zoya's Tarot de Marseille, a rare Tarot deck made in Turin at the end of 1700. The deck is from the private collection of K. Frank Jensen, and the images are being used with his permission. Elias notes that context is everything, and that the answer to the question unfolds from the question itself via the images in the cards. In her readings she combines the cunning-folk method of reading (based on making logical inferences about the meaning of the cards) with the visual argument method (which relies on the subjective and individual art of perceiving). "Marseille Tarot" features full-length readings, based on real-life

tarot consultations, which is a tremendous boon to understanding Elias' method of reading. The stories that evolve in Elias' readings are based on first hand observation of the categories of Embodiment (human, animal, celestial), Function (to lead, to split, to cut, to illuminate), Gesture (sitting, walking, pointing, howling), and Voice (silence, loudness, beyond the verbal).

There are several problems with this book and I highly doubt that anyone could learn to read the Marseilles Tarot, or any Tarot, with it as an instruction manual. It seemed like a vanity publication to me. Let's start with the Minor Arcana. Elias has essentially taken the old Hedgewytchery cartomancy system for playing cards and adapted it to the Marseilles Minors. This is her alleged "cunning folk" influence...basically adopted from an old defunct website. Her explanation of the numbers at pages 115-116 is essentially a prose summary of the old cartomantic poem that used to appear on the Hedgewytchery site. And yet, since the author is an academic, she can't really say too much about the system without plagiarizing. Thankfully, she doesn't, but that makes the section incomplete. She also adapts the Hedgewytchery suit system to the Marseilles suits at pages 122-123. That doesn't work. Diamonds are Coins, yes, but Coins are not Spring. In the Tarot tradition, the Suits are attributed to the first sign of a Zodiac that starts a season. Batons = Fire = Aries = Spring. Coupes = Water = Cancer = Summer, and so on. Of course, anyone can assign anything to any symbol that they like. But these old traditions are so well known, they should not be discarded lightly. The Major Arcana section isn't much better. Each card has some keywords and functions assigned to it -- pretty general information that you can find for free on the internet. Each card has a health indication with it, as well, but many of the assignments seem arbitrary: Justice is respiratory problems (although, traditionally, the Lovers represent the Lungs). The Pope's health indicator is insomnia, while the World gets viruses.

Full disclosure - I had the great experience of meeting this wonderful author on a recent visit to Denmark and witnessed firsthand the meaningful work she is doing to catalog & preserve a large, impressive Tarot deck & book collection being donated by historian (& mutual friend) K. Frank Jensen to Roskilde University, where Camelia Elias also happens to be a professor of American Studies. Having then dined at her lovely home with shared friends, where she offered to do a group reading with graciousness and camaraderie, which inspired me with warm tidings and a desire to read this book. I have enjoyed following the amusing, & often sage postings on her Blog & Facebook. And so I came to 'Marseille Tarot: Towards the Art of Reading' already an enthusiastic fan of Camelia. That said, I was delighted with the generous amount of useful material and that her

way of sharing a down-to-earth approach to card reading (which she calls the "cunning-folk method") was a beautiful reflection of her candid & charming personality. Another bonus is this book has full-color images of an unusually sweet version of the ancient Tarot de Marseilles style cards (from the end of 1700, Turin Italy). Camelia Elias takes a hands on and practical approach to card reading and believes context is everything and so if the cards address the querent's issues in a direct manner, they do so because a question frames their meanings & the reader's response.

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