

As We Like It: *Ariel's* Forewords: Plath, and Hughes Pay a Mystic Debt to the Bard

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Literary scholars have long-identified references to alchemy, gnosticism, and forms of the occult woven into the fiber of literature as old as Dante and Shakespeare. In fact, the word *occult* means *hidden*, and what better way to hide a spell than within the incantation of a prayer, hymn, or poem? In pre-common era South Asia, the word for poet, *kavi*, meant *seer* (Longman, 15). Jumping ahead centuries, one can see mysticism illuminating the work of the great Persian poet Rumi, the transcendentalism of Blake and Emerson, and the hermeticism of Yeats and Eliot, to name only a handful.

Sylvia Plath, as well as her husband Ted Hughes, were probably known best for their tragic marriage and Plath's suicide. However, the couple was also widely acknowledged to have played with the occult, and scholars such as Keith Sagar, Dr. Ann Skea, and Ekbert Faas have found definite, intentional poetic structure and references to alchemy and hermeticism in Hughes' work, as well as Hughes' own personal books and documents on the subject, a Hughes favorite being Franz Bardon's *Initiation into Hermetics, a Course of Instruction of Magic Theory & Practice* (Skea).

The bounty of poetry and prose from Sylvia Plath's short life also incorporates an ordered system of symbols and formulae, best demonstrated in her posthumous collection *Ariel*, as well as throughout the work of Hughes.¹ Scholars have tended to dismiss Sylvia Plath's fascination with the occult as simply playing games with her husband. But in his 1992 book, *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*, Hughes introduced revelation after revelation about the Bard's own occult system, the "Tragic Equation" that utilized myth, hermeticism, alchemy, astrology, and other occult methods.

It seems that as he grew older and more successful, Hughes took more public risks revealing his inspirations and methods to friends and colleagues. In a 1979 letter to a theater

¹ A partial interpretation by Julia Gordon-Bramer of Plath's poem "Death & Co.," as well as an enlightening overview of this system, "Sylvia Plath's Spell on *Ariel*: Conjuring the Perfect Book of Poems through Mysticism and the Tarot," was published in Indiana University Northwest's *Plath Profiles* 3 in summer 2010. An interpretation of "Fever 103°" appears in *Plath Profiles* 4, Summer 2011.

director friend, Ted Hughes wrote, "there seems to me plenty of evidence that Shakespeare was involved with some group of Rosicrucian or other society whose main concerns were Hermetic magic (as in Giordano Bruno) and an esoteric resolution of the religious conflicts of the day—pursuing those interests quite deliberately and methodically" (*Letters* 411). In 1991 he explained even more with regard to his Shakespeare book: "The business of Occult Neoplatonism. One can't just refer to this and assume that even Shakespearean scholars will understand and supply the rest. 400 years of cultural suppressive dismissal aren't going to be lifted willingly simply to indulge me" (596).

As Plath's biographers have noted, Plath was extremely devoted to her husband and was his willing pupil in all sorts of writing, meditation, and breathing exercises. Both Plath and Hughes were avid readers of primitive folktales, Greek, Celtic and Pagan myth, Carl Jung's theories of symbolism and alchemy, and more. Additionally, Hughes was a devout astrologer who sent his work out only when the stars deemed it auspicious, while in Plath's *The Collected Poems*, she wrote of strengthening her work with help from "Pan," dabbling with the Ouija board and crystal gazing, as well as referring to a "taroc pack" in her famous poem, "Daddy" (223). Plath displayed her use of mythology, mystical imagery and symbols in her work out for all the world to see, correctly assuming that readers would either not recognize them, or if they did, they would not take her seriously.

When one reads Plath after understanding the key based upon the Qabalah and hermeticism, radically new interpretations of her poetry are revealed. It becomes more than clear that Plath's most obvious meanings have been completely missed. Plath's poem, "The Detective," is not the dark personal narrative endlessly burdened upon her legend, but rather a tribute to Dartmoor, Sherlock Holmes, and the work of Agatha Christie. Plath's "Daddy" is no longer an Electra-fueled rant against her father. Instead it addresses the Daddy of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, as well as Joseph Conrad's great novel, *Heart of Darkness* and being controlled by the primitive subconscious. Plath's once-inscrutable poem, "The Courage of Shutting-Up," is revealed as an impassioned reflection on the treatment of hermaphrodites in history, the myth of Hermaphroditus, and the torture of witches (which hermaphrodites were once often thought to be). Seen through the lens of Plath's mystical system, her poetry and prose becomes much less about personal mythology and more about a universal one. Sylvia Plath's poetry is seeing new life, completely changed from the standard interpretations.

William Shakespeare, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and T. S. Eliot, as well as William Blake, W. B. Yeats, Geoffrey Chaucer and Dante purposefully wove mystic symbolism and narrative into the balance of their own work, tapping into the reader's subconscious to create a subliminal yet intense experience that Ted Hughes called "passive ritual drama." In *Shakespeare and the Goddess of Complete Being*, Hughes writes:

The unstated assumption of passive ritual drama is that controlled reenactment of those phenomena on the mythic plane is necessary – is somehow an essential nutrient – for external life on the realistic plane. In this way, passive ritual drama serves as something more than a communally organized social bonding at the normally preconscious level, though it does that too. It acts as a natural form of deep therapy, where the mythic plane holds the keys to healthy, vitality, meaningfulness and psychic freedom on the outer plane. For those keys to be turned in the locks, releasing the benefits, the doings of the mythic plane need to be externalized and shared. The historic experience of all people is like that of modern therapists: it confirms the truth of the assumption. (106)

Hughes goes on to explain ritual drama as having been a tool for religion, Hermetic societies, and magicians "as a large-scale application of the technology of making a spell, working on the assumption (archetypal and instinctive) that a deliberately shaped ritual can reactivate energies on the mythic plane so powerfully that they can recapture and reshape an ego that seems to have escaped them on the realistic plane" (107).

Hughes, and most likely Plath too, counted on both the average reader and the serious academic to lack any understanding or interest in a spiritual structure. What may initially read as exciting, inventive language, weird and difficult symbolism, and impassioned, impulsive thoughts are actually quite intentionally loaded with the weight of hermeticism: occult practice tapping into psychological archetypes, mythology, ancient ritual and more. A reader, learned or otherwise, who is oblivious to the system might thus fall completely under its spell.

"I feel that my poems are obscure," Ted Hughes told writer Eilat Negev in 1996. "I give the secret away without giving it. People are so dumb they do not know I've given the secret away" (Koren 226).

The Overlooked System

For generations, few writers dared to make public their involvement in the occult for fear of condemnation and ridicule by society and possible damage to their reputations as academics and members of social standing. Yeats and Eliot were both openly members of the Hermetic Order of

the Golden Dawn, and their reputations suffered for it. In 1979, Ted Hughes was quoted as saying: "...Auden dismissed the whole of Eastern mystical and religious philosophy, the whole tradition of Hermetic Magic... the whole historical exploration into spirit life at every level of consciousness, the whole deposit of earlier and other religion, myth, vision, traditional wisdom and story in folk belief, on which Yeats based all his work, everything he did or attempted to bring about, as 'embarrassing nonsense" (*Poet and Critic* 79).




Like Auden, many serious-minded academics tend to dismiss the more esoteric references in Plath's poetry without consideration. Whether one is a believer or not, it is indisputable that each poem in *Ariel* exactly corresponds with the tarot/Qabalah, a method used by one of Plath's favorite stars in the literary canon, William Shakespeare. To be explained shortly, one can see that the six facets to each poem in *Ariel* is in direct accordance with the six sides of the Qabalah Tree of Life—a sort of road map to how the universe works, and a course upon which all mystical systems operate. These facets begin with the Qabalah/tarot facet (outlined below) followed by the corresponding Hermetic sciences of alchemy and astrology/astronomy, mythology, history, and arts and the humanities. These six facets share one or more united themes, supporting each other to deepen the intuitive and subconscious impact of these creative works. Carl Jung would have called these facets *synchronicities*. Jung wrote: "these forms of psychic orderedness are acts of creation in time ... we must regard them as creative acts, as the continuous creation of a pattern that exists from all eternity, repeats itself sporadically, and is not derivable from any known antecedents" (142).

For the poems included in *Ariel*, Sylvia Plath relied on the Rider-Waite tarot deck, which was developed in the early 1900s by the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.² The Rider-Waite deck is designed to mirror the Qabalah, celebrating its twenty-two major arcana cards corresponding to the ten stations and twenty-two paths of the Tree of Life. Hermeticism also gifts this tarot deck with the representations of alchemy, astrology, Greek myth, enochian chess, numerology, gematria and other occult sciences that complement and correspond to the Qabalah.³






² According to world-renowned tarot expert, Mary Greer, the Rider-Waite Tarot was the deck most widely available in America and Britain in Plath's time.


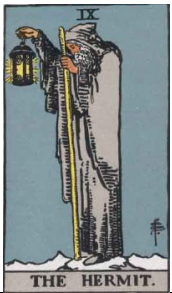



³ In order to differentiate their approach from the ancient Jewish system of Kabbalah, and the Christian mystics' Cabbala that followed, the Golden Dawn's system adopted the spelling "Qabalah."






The best way of understanding and interpreting each Plath poem in *Ariel* is to line the poem up in order with its corresponding tarot card, using the poems' language and the cards' imagery to directly call upon the reader's subconscious. *Ariel*'s twenty-first poem, "Poppies In October" for example, is the corresponding poem to the Judgement [sic.] card number 20 (starting from card zero), the picture of which is perfectly depicted within Plath's words of "sun-clouds", the red cross of an "ambulance," "a sky," "Palely and flamily," the "late mouths" crying open, the "forest of frost" and "dawn of cornflowers" (*Ariel* 19). Depending upon how they fall, upright or reversed, each tarot card has two unique and powerful meanings. For the uninitiated, the tarot's major arcana break down in meaning as the following:⁴





Card #	Tarot Card	Tarot Card Meaning
#0	The Fool 	Innocence; naiveté; purity; the self; the child; birth and beginning; lack of discipline
#1	The Magician 	Confidence and over-confidence; a student seeking mastery; deceit and tricks; wit
#2	The High Priestess 	Mystery; inner wisdom; secrets, the Magician's lover; silence, independence; shyness; a spinster

⁴ Note: the Golden Dawn switched card numbers 8 and 11 for better correspondence with the Kabbalah. Traditional Kabbalists, and the classical and contemporary mystic poets such as Plath and Hughes, kept to this system above.

<p>#3</p>	<p>The Empress</p>  <p>THE EMPRESS.</p>	<p>Harvest; abundance; creativity and production; The Great Mother; female energy; pregnancy; sloth and gluttony</p>
<p>#4</p>	<p>The Emperor</p>  <p>THE EMPEROR.</p>	<p>Control; structure and order; discipline; conflict; cruelty; a battle; lack of emotion</p>
<p>#5</p>	<p>The Hierophant</p>  <p>THE HIEROPHANT</p>	<p>Fame and reputation; society; institutions such as church and school; religion; dogma; manner</p>
<p>#6</p>	<p>The Lovers</p>  <p>THE LOVERS.</p>	<p>Choice; ideal match; excitement; romance; confusion; anticipation; intensity; adultery</p>
<p>#7</p>	<p>The Chariot</p>  <p>THE CHARIOT.</p>	<p>Success; honor; victory; speed; movement; evolution; transition; recklessness</p>

<p>#8</p>	<p>Justice</p> 	<p>Rules and order; rightness; decision; courts; revenge</p>
<p>#9</p>	<p>The Hermit</p> 	<p>Truth; inner wisdom; isolation; a quiet mind; shedding light on a subject</p>
<p>#10</p>	<p>The Wheel of Fortune</p> 	<p>Gambling; winning and losing; legacy; fortune; a turning-point; significance</p>
<p>#11</p>	<p>Strength</p> 	<p>Strength; integrity; ferocity; ease. Winning out with love.</p>
<p>#12</p>	<p>The Hanged Man</p> 	<p>Tension; waiting; learning; introspection</p>





<p>#13</p>	<p>Death</p>  <p>DEATH.</p>	<p>An end to the old ways; separation; waiting for change</p>
<p>#14</p>	<p>Temperance</p>  <p>TEMPERANCE.</p>	<p>Encouragement; invitation; consideration; determination; energy; balance and moderation (or lack of); alchemy and endurance</p>
<p>#15</p>	<p>The Devil</p>  <p>THE DEVIL.</p>	<p>Material and sensual pleasures; immaturity; selfishness; sin and addiction</p>
<p>#16</p>	<p>The Tower</p>  <p>THE TOWER.</p>	<p>Sudden, shocking change; destruction; pain and misery; total loss</p>
<p>#17</p>	<p>The Star</p>  <p>THE STAR.</p>	<p>Resolution; promise; hope; tribute; happiness</p>




#18	<p>The Moon</p>  <p>THE MOON</p>	<p>Dreams; mystery; the unknown; shadow self; subconscious; torment; sadness and depression</p>
#19	<p>The Sun</p>  <p>THE SUN</p>	<p>Celebration; joy; acclaim; perfection; over-doing pleasure; lies</p>
#20	<p>Judgement</p>  <p>JUDGEMENT</p>	<p>Revelation; exposure; defining moment; accountability</p>
#21	<p>The World</p>  <p>THE WORLD</p>	<p>Accomplishment; achievement; sum of life experience</p>




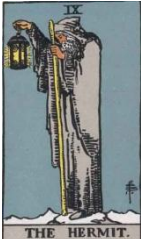

Plath took the poems in *Ariel* beyond the major arcana, to include the minor arcana, the court cards, and the suits themselves. The minor arcana consists of ranks one through ten, as does a regular deck of playing cards, corresponding to the four suits. The court cards of Kings, Queens, Knights and Pages. There are four suits of pentacles, cups, swords and wands to correspond with the elements of earth, water, air and fire. One does not need to be a tarot acolyte to see the underlying mystical structure quietly at work in much great writing.






While it would take several lifetimes to examine the mystical systems that influenced the great bodies of work by Dante, Shakespeare, Yeats, Coleridge, Eliot and others, a quick look at Shakespeare's famous soliloquy by the character Jaques in *As You Like It* (Act II, Scene VII) illustrates how the system works with literature in a nutshell. The tarot card number, picture and






meaning which mirror a station on the Qabalah is given shown with the corresponding Shakespeare soliloquy on the right. Shakespeare's character Jaques begins his speech with the World card:

#	Tarot Card	Tarot Card Meaning	Shakespeare's Lines	Comments
Card #21	The World 	Accomplishment; achievement; sum of life experience	All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players: They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts, His acts being seven ages.	v. 138 - 142
Card #0	The Fool 	Innocence; naiveté; purity; the self; the child; birth and beginning; journey into life; lack of discipline	At first the infant, Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms.	v. 142-143
Card #1	The Magician 	Confidence and overconfidence; a student seeking mastery; deceit and tricks; wit	And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel And shining morning face, creeping like snail Unwillingly to school.	v. 144-146
Card #2	The High Priestess 	Mystery; inner wisdom; secrets, the Magician's lover; silence, independence; shyness; a spinster	And then the lover, Sighing like furnace,	v. 146-147


Card #3	<p>The Empress</p>  <p>THE EMPRESS.</p>	Harvest; abundance; creativity and production; The Great Mother; female energy; pregnancy; sloth and gluttony	with a woeful ballad Made to his mistress' eyebrow.	v. 148
Card #4	<p>The Emperor</p>  <p>THE EMPEROR.</p>	Control; structure and order; discipline; conflict; cruelty; a battle; lack of emotion	Then a soldier,	v. 148
Card #5	<p>The Hierophant</p>  <p>THE HIEROPHANT</p>	Fame and reputation; society; institutions such as church and school; religion; dogma; manner	Full of strange oaths and bearded like the pard,	v. 149 "pard" is Middle English for 'leopard' or 'panther.' The Church of England was called a 'panther' in John Dryden's famous poem of 1688, "The Hind and the Panther." Monks, priests and bishops of Shakespeare's time often wore beards.

Card #6	<p>The Lovers</p>  <p>THE LOVERS.</p>	Choice; ideal match; excitement; romance; confusion; anticipation; intensity; adultery	Jealous in honour,	v. 150
Card #7	<p>The Chariot</p>  <p>THE CHARIOT.</p>	Success; honor; victory; speed; movement; evolution; transition; recklessness	sudden and quick in quarrel, seeking the bubble reputation	v. 150-151
Card #8	<p>Justice</p>  <p>JUSTICE.</p>	Rules and order; rightness; decision; courts; revenge	Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice, In fair round belly with good capon lined,	v. 152-153 See footnote on page 6 regarding Justice and Strength card positions.
Card #9	<p>The Hermit</p>  <p>THE HERMIT.</p>	Truth; inner wisdom; isolation; a quiet mind; shedding light on a subject	With eyes severe and beard of formal cut, Full of wise saws and modern instances;	v. 154-155
Card #10	<p>The Wheel of Fortune</p>  <p>WHEEL OF FORTUNE.</p>	Gambling; winning and losing; legacy; fortune; a turning-point; significance	And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts	v. 156

Card #11	<p>Strength</p>  <p>STRENGTH.</p>	Strength; integrity; ferocity; ease. Winning out with love.	Into the lean and slipper'd pantaloon,	v. 157
Card #12	<p>The Hanged Man</p>  <p>THE HANGED MAN.</p>	Tension; waiting; learning; introspection	With spectacles on nose and pouch on side, His youthful hose,	v. 158-159
Card #13	<p>Death</p>  <p>DEATH.</p>	An end to the old ways; separation; waiting for change	well saved, a world too wide For his shrunk shank; and his big manly voice,	v. 159-160
Card #14	<p>Temperance</p>  <p>TEMPERANCE.</p>	Encouragement; invitation; consideration; determination; energy; balance and moderation (or lack of); alchemy and endurance	Turning again	v. 161
Card #15	<p>The Devil</p>  <p>THE DEVIL.</p>	Material and sensual pleasures; immaturity; selfishness; sin and addiction	toward childish treble, pipes And whistles in his sound.	v. 161-162

Card #16	<p>The Tower</p>  <p>THE TOWER.</p>	Sudden, shocking change; destruction; pain and misery; total loss	Last scene of all, That ends this strange eventful history, is second childishness and mere oblivion, Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.	v. 162-165
Card #17	<p>The Star</p>  <p>THE STAR.</p>	Resolution; promise; hope; tribute; happiness	<p><i>Duke Senior speaking:</i> Welcome. Set down your venerable burthen, And let him feed.</p> <p><i>Orlando speaking:</i> I thank you most for him.</p>	v. 166-168
Card #18	<p>The Moon</p>  <p>THE MOON.</p>	Dreams; mystery; the unknown; shadow self; subconscious; confusion and torment; sickness; sadness and depression	<p><i>Adam speaking:</i> So had you need: I scarce can speak to thank you for myself.</p> <p><i>Duke Senior speaking:</i> Welcome; fall to: I will not trouble you As yet, to question you</p>	v. 169-171
Card #19	<p>The Sun</p>  <p>THE SUN.</p>	Celebration; joy; acclaim; perfection; over-doing pleasure; lies	about your fortunes. Give us some music; and, good cousin, sing.	v. 171-172
Card #20	<p>Judgement⁵</p>  <p>JUDGEMENT.</p>	Revelation; exposure; defining moment; accountability	<p>(Song) Blow, blow, thou winter wind. Thou art not so unkind As man's ingratitude; Thy tooth is not so keen, Because thou art not seen, Although thy breath be rude.</p>	"Amiens" (the song) v. 173-178 Note the wintery picture of the card.

⁵ British spelling, as is on the Rider-Waite tarot deck.

Card #21	<p>The World</p> 	Accomplishment; achievement; sum of life experience	<p>Heigh-ho! sing, heigh-ho! unto the green holly: Most friendship is feigning, most loving mere folly: Then, heigh-ho, the holly! This life is most jolly.</p>	<p>v. 179-182</p> <p>After the World card, the circle begins again.</p>
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(From William Shakespeare's *As You Like It* (2.7.143-182))

As readers can see, references to the major arcana run throughout Jacques' soliloquy in *As You Like It*. The tarot's major arcana represents the circle of life, expressed as the Kabbalah's Tree of Life. Tarot cards had probably not reached the Bard in 16th Century England,⁶ but Jewish and Christian mystics and alchemists abounded, and the Kabbalah/Cabala was well-known, from which the tarot is based.

The System Today





If one looks at Robert Lowell's 1966 "Foreword" to the first American edition of Sylvia Plath's *Ariel*, this ancient system emerges again. The poet Robert Lowell, friend and teacher for Plath and Hughes, was a known practitioner of mysticism, and he applied this Shakespearean-Qabalah structure with a heavy hand as he introduced a then largely unknown Sylvia Plath to the world.⁷





Here is a walk-through:

Tarot Card	Tarot Card Meaning	Lowell's words
<p>The World, #21</p> 	Accomplishment; achievement; sum of life experience before beginning at zero again.	<p>"in the last months of her life"</p> <p>From page vii, first paragraph</p>


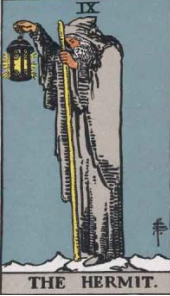
⁶ The Rider-Waite tarot deck was designed in England by Pamela Coleman Smith and Arthur Waite in the late 1800s. Earlier tarot decks were around Italy and elsewhere from the 1400s on, but there is no evidence that they had reached England at that time.





⁷ In 1959, Plath audited Lowell's Boston University poetry writing class, English 306, a class that included Anne Sexton, George Starbuck, and others. Plath's journals are full of dinners and visits with the Lowells over the subsequent years (*Journals* 694).




<p>The Fool, #0</p> 	<p>Innocence; naiveté; purity; the self; the child; birth and beginning; journey into life; lack of discipline.</p>	<p>"rushed out" "Sylvia Plath becomes herself" From page vii, first paragraph</p>
<p>The Magician, #1</p> 	<p>Confidence and over-confidence; a student seeking mastery; deceit and tricks; wit.</p>	<p>Lowell's use of the word "imaginary," as well as Plath's adverbial qualities, "newly," and "wildly." From page vii, first paragraph</p>
<p>The High Priestess, #2</p> 	<p>Mystery; inner wisdom; secrets, the Magician's lover; silence, independence; shyness; a spinster.</p> <p>The High Priestess sits with her foot upon a crescent moon, representing the feminine 28-day cycle of the menses. She is usually older, spiritual, and has no need for approval.</p> <p>In her reversed (upside-down) position, the High Priestess can be bitter and "sour" against men, transitioning into the Empress' similar reversed character as an angry mother.</p>	<p>"subtly" "hardly a person at all—or a woman" The "poetess" as "super-real, hypnotic, great classical heroines" "feminine, rather than female" "everything we customarily think of feminine is turned on its head" "coolly amused, witty, now sour" From page vii, first paragraph</p>
<p>The Empress, #3</p> 	<p>Harvest; abundance; creativity and production; The Great Mother; female energy; pregnancy; sloth and gluttony.</p> <p>Lowell addressed the vengeful women of mythology, in accordance with the Empress in her reversed, negative position.</p>	<p>"...now fanciful, girlish, charming..." "...who can laugh at herself as 'cow-heavy and floral in my Victorian nightgown'" "now sinking to the strident rasp of vampire—a Dido, Phaedra, or Medea" From page vii, first paragraph</p>






<p>the Emperor, #4</p> 	<p>Control; structure and order; discipline; conflict; cruelty; a battle; lack of emotion.</p>	<p>Ideas of Plath laughing at herself, repetition, and plot; "language never dies in her mouth"</p> <p>From page vii, first paragraph</p>
<p>The Hierophant, #5</p> 	<p>Fame and reputation; society; institutions such as church and school; religion; dogma; manner.</p>	<p>Plath's "personal, confessional" style and controlled "manner"</p> <p>From page vii, second paragraph</p>
<p>The Lovers, #6</p> 	<p>Choice; ideal match; excitement; romance; confusion; anticipation; intensity; adultery.</p> <p>Lowell's choice of words for the Lovers card heavily corresponds to Plath's chosen poem for the same card, "Lady Lazarus."⁸</p>	<p>"feeling is controlled hallucination" "a fever" "She burns"</p> <p>From page vii, second paragraph</p>
<p>The Chariot, #7</p> 	<p>Success; honor; victory; speed; movement; evolution; transition; recklessness.</p>	<p>"on the move, a walk, a ride, a journey, the flight of the queen bee. She is driven forward by the pounding pistons"</p> <p>From page vii, second paragraph</p>


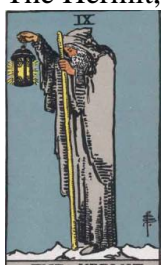



⁸ "Lady Lazarus" corresponds with the Lovers card in *Ariel: the Restored Edition* only.





<p>Justice, #8</p> 	<p>Rules and order; rightness; decision; courts; revenge.</p> <p>This card was switched in position with Strength, the eleventh card, but traditionalists, such as Lowell, Plath and Hughes, kept to the original order.</p> <p>The judge is Athena, the soldier-goddess who summons those to her court. She has trained hard to fight and is considered a match or greater than any god or man. She is "machinelike" in the way that reason rules before emotion. In court, the judge seeks to learn the truth. Athena never married and is considered to be androgynous and cold to men. Her garment might well be Shakespearean.</p> <p>Lowell dips backward for a moment into the preceding card, The Chariot, with his reference to Ariel as Plath's horse, and "galloping relentlessly", then returns to Athena's Justice card qualities.</p>	<p>"The title <i>Ariel</i> summons up Shakespeare's"</p> <p>"slightly chilling and androgynous spirit"</p> <p>"but the truth"</p> <p>"Dangerous, more powerful than man, machinelike from hard training"</p> <p>From page vii, second paragraph</p>
<p>The Hermit, #9</p> 	<p>As one card's meanings often touch the next to follow it in the major arcana, the ideas of "slightly chilling" time alone, high on "top" of a mountaintop, and "truth" are shared by the Hermit and Justice.</p> <p>The Hermit's neck is outstretched and he risks his life on such a precarious mountaintop.</p> <p>In the Hermit's reversed position, he can be somewhat torturous, as Plath's corresponding poem to this card, "The Jailor," was.</p>	<p>"slightly chilling" and "the truth"</p> <p>"with risked, outstretched neck"</p> <p>"death hurdle after death hurdle"</p> <p>"topped"</p> <p>"She cries out"</p> <p>From page vii, second paragraph</p>




<p>The Wheel of Fortune, #10</p>  <p>WHEEL of FORTUNE.</p>	<p>Gambling; winning and losing; legacy; fortune; a turning-point; significance.</p>	<p>"starting pistons, snapping tapes, and new world records broken"</p> <p>From page vii, second paragraph</p>
<p>Strength, #11</p>  <p>STRENGTH.</p>	<p>Strength; integrity; ferocity; ease. Winning out with love, not brute strength.</p> <p>Lowell dips back into the Wheel card in moments with "of metal," and "almost pure motion," before returning to Strength's characteristics.</p>	<p>"What is most heroic in her, though, is not her force"</p> <p>"modest, womanish touch"</p> <p>"she can endure"</p> <p>From page vii, second paragraph</p>
<p>The Hanged Man, #12</p>  <p>THE HANGED MAN.</p>	<p>Tension; waiting; learning; introspection.</p> <p>The halo of enlightenment around the Hanged Man's head looks almost like a bee hive against the tree trunk.</p>	<p>"the great stasis in his vacuous night"</p> <p>"paralysis"</p> <p>"being stripped"</p> <p>"a circus sideshow"</p> <p>"tied down"</p> <p>"prim English landscapes"</p> <p>"bee hives"</p> <p>"yew trees"</p> <p>"hooks"</p> <p>From page vii, second paragraph and page viii, first paragraph</p>
<p>Death, #13</p>  <p>DEATH.</p>	<p>An end to the old ways; separation; waiting for change.</p> <p>The Death card's Grim Reaper, in his black boots and black suit of armor, bears a flag with the Rosicrucian White Rose, the mouth of the flower wound-like.</p>	<p>"black boot"</p> <p>"wounds"</p> <p>"flowers with mouths like wounds"</p> <p>"Belsen's lampshades made of human skin, Hitler's homicidal iron"</p> <p>"suicide, father-hatred, self-loathing, nothing is too much for the macabre gaiety"</p> <p>From page viii, first paragraph</p>

<p>Temperance, #14</p>  <p>TEMPERANCE.</p>	<p>Encouragement; invitation; consideration; determination; energy; balance and moderation (or lack of); alchemy and endurance.</p> <p>The Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn leader Aleister Crowley called this the "Art" card.</p> <p>The idea of disintegration is part of alchemy, as one must destroy the impure to create perfection.</p>	<p>"of her control" "her art's immortality" "life's disintegration" "The surprise, the shimmering"</p> <p>From page viii, first paragraph</p>
<p>The Devil, #15</p>  <p>THE DEVIL.</p>	<p>Material and sensual pleasures; immaturity; selfishness; sin and addiction.</p> <p>The couple in the picture is naked, or "unwrapped." The word "present" refers to the materialist world.</p>	<p>"unwrapped" "present" "into the red eye, the cauldron" "and the lover, who are always waiting for her"</p> <p>From page viii, first paragraph</p>
<p>The Tower, #16</p>  <p>THE TOWER.</p>	<p>Sudden, shocking change; destruction; pain and misery; total loss.</p> <p>The two people pictured on the card might be likened to helpless babies. One has a "frill" collar. The Tower looks like an Ionian column. The woman wears a gown and one can see her "two little feet".</p>	<p>"Death, her own abrupt and defiant death"</p> <p><i>(He quotes Plath's words):</i> "how badly" "the babies look in their hospital" "Frill at the neck" "the flutings of their Ionian" "Death-gowns" "Then two little feet"</p> <p>"peculiar, haunting challenge" "will recoil" "overawed shock" "painfully wonder why so much of it leaves them feeling empty, evasive, inarticulate" "I often hear the serpent whisper"</p> <p>From page viii, third paragraph</p>





<p>The Devil, #15</p>  <p>THE DEVIL .</p>	<p>Robert Lowell then does what Hughes is famous for in his own work, and reverses the order, playing with the idea of the great cosmic wheel:</p> <p>Material and sensual pleasures; immaturity; selfishness; sin and addiction.</p>	<p>"empty, evasive and inarticulate," "the serpent"</p> <p>From page viii, third paragraph</p>
<p>Temperance, #14</p>  <p>TEMPERANCE.</p>	<p>Encouragement; invitation; consideration; determination; energy; balance and moderation (or lack of); alchemy and endurance.</p>	<p>"Come"</p> <p>From page viii, third paragraph</p>
<p>Death, #13</p>  <p>DEATH .</p>	<p>An end to the old ways; separation; waiting for change.</p> <p>It takes great courage to face death.</p>	<p>"courage"</p> <p>From page viii, third paragraph</p>
<p>The Hanged Man, #12</p>  <p>THE HANGED MAN.</p>	<p>The Hanged Man's punishment is said to be just or "right." In reverse, he can be known for his audacity.</p>	<p>"rightness, audacity"</p> <p>From page viii, third paragraph</p>
<p>Strength, #11</p>  <p>STRENGTH.</p>	<p>Strength; integrity; ferocity; ease. Winning out with love.</p>	<p>"ease of inspiration"</p> <p>From page viii, third paragraph</p>



<p>The Wheel of Fortune, #10</p>  <p>WHEEL OF FORTUNE.</p>	<p>Lowell's mention of "Egyptian" also refers to the Sphinx pictured upon the wheel in this card.</p> <p>Notice how the wheel looks like the bottom of a bullet. There is also a bird ("chicken") in the right-hand corner.</p>	<p>"turn back," and gambling again with "Russian roulette," "game of 'chicken," and "the wheels"</p> <p>From page viii, third paragraph</p>
<p>The Hermit, #9</p>  <p>THE HERMIT.</p>	<p>"[T]hose millennia" refers to time and waiting. The Hermit is said to represent the Greek god, Chronos, Father Time.</p> <p>The Hermit is both "humble" and "lofty", perched high in the "heaven" of his mountaintop.</p>	<p>"those millennia," "heaven of the humble," "lofty"</p> <p>From page viii, third paragraph</p>
<p>Justice, #8</p>  <p>JUSTICE.</p>	<p>Justice sets all laws and order, which would include patterns.</p>	<p>"set patterns"</p> <p>From page viii, third paragraph</p>
<p>The Chariot, #7</p>  <p>THE CHARIOT.</p>	<p>Success; honor; victory; speed; movement; evolution; transition; recklessness.</p> <p>"Savage" and "debauched" would refer to the Chariot's reversed (upside-down) meanings of doing anything for his success.</p>	<p>"celebration" "savage and debauched"</p> <p>From page viii, third paragraph</p>
<p>The Lovers, #6</p>  <p>THE LOVERS.</p>	<p>Plath's corollary poem in <i>Ariel</i> for the Lovers card, "Lady Lazarus" illustrates these same ideas.</p> <p>Choice; ideal match; excitement; romance; confusion; anticipation; intensity; adultery.</p>	<p>"damned" and "glad to burn out his body" for "continuous intensity" "This poetry and life"</p> <p>From page viii, third paragraph, and page ix, first paragraph</p>





<p>The Hierophant, #5</p> 	<p>Fame and reputation; society; institutions such as church and school; religion; dogma; manner.</p>	<p>"career" "life, even when disciplined" From page ix, first paragraph</p>
<p>The Emperor, #4</p> 	<p>The Emperor is known to make harsh, unfeeling judgments; he is older, smart, and knows what matters, reflecting the ideas of poignancy and realization from experience.</p>	<p>"simply not worth it," "poignant" "looking back to realize" From page ix, first and second paragraphs</p>
<p>The Empress, #3</p> 	<p>The creative Empress "lies" on her couch with a "blaze" of yellow in the background. She is the great, pleasant ("checks and courtesies") mother, and so the word "laborious" applies to childbirth here.</p> <p>Lowell dances back and forth between the Empress and the preceding card, the High Priestess, with the Empress's "nervous, giggly, gracious" attributes to counter the sterner High Priestess's qualities.</p>	<p>"Sylvia Plath's irresistible blaze lies," "in the checks and courtesies of her earlier laborious" From page ix, second paragraph</p>
<p>The High Priestess, #2</p> 	<p>Notoriously shy, the High Priestess is aloof and mysterious. The card resembles a "high window," and the High Priestess has the view. At her feet is a yellow floor ("yellow brick"), and the columns to her left and right, which represent columns from wise King Solomon's Temple, look like "concrete pillbox filling stations." Lowell's physical description of Plath also fits the High Priestess card the best.</p>	<p>"shyness" "I see her dim" "of a high window, viewless unless one cared to look down" "yellow brick" "square concrete pillbox filling stations" "willowy, long-waisted, sharp-elbowed" "a brilliant tense presence embarrassed by restraint. Her humility and willingness to accept what was admired seemed at times to give her an air of maddening</p>

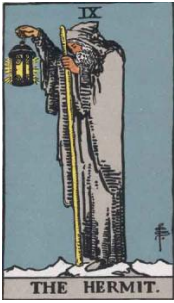


		docility that hid her unfashionable patience" From page ix, second paragraph
<p>The Magician, #1</p> 	<p>The Magician is a performer, so he is bold and showy. The word "unchanged" represents his immaturity prior to real life experience. The Magician's card is number one, a fine correlation with Lowell's mention of Plath's "first book." His facial expression is somber in the picture, fitting "dolor".</p>	<p>"...and boldness"; "She showed us"; "unchanged"; "first book"; "somber, formidably expert"; "flair for alliteration" "dolor"</p> <p>From page ix, second and third paragraphs</p>
<p>The Fool, #0</p> 	<p>Lowell admits the Fool's behavior himself, not considering or realizing Plath's greatness at the time. The small white dog at the Fool's feet is the "mongrel" of which Lowell quoted Plath. The Fool is getting ready to blindly step off a cliff, or in this case, a "sand-spit."</p>	<p>(Quoting Sylvia Plath): "a mongrel working his legs to a gallop" and "off the sand-spit." "wit and directness" "none of it sank very deep into my awareness" "never guessed"</p> <p>From page ix, third and last paragraphs</p>
<p>The World, #21</p> 	<p>Lowell has combined Plath's suicide with the Fool's gesture, while bringing it back to the idea of completion with the words "triumphant fulfillment."</p> <p>The pears may be echoing the shape of the wreath, or even the woman's breasts pictured on the card.</p>	<p>"The pears fatten" (Quoting Plath again) "at her appalling and triumphant fulfillment"</p> <p>From page ix, last paragraph</p>




With this understanding of the system, even a casually-trained eye can see that Frieda Hughes, daughter of Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes, played the same game in her almost ten-page long "Foreword" of *Ariel: the Restored Edition* (2004). Beginning with her own childhood represented by the Fool card, Frieda Hughes tours the reader straight through the tarot's major arcana cards three and one-half times.



Tarot Card	Tarot Card Meaning	Frieda Hughes' words
<p>The World, #21</p> 	<p>Accomplishment; achievement; sum of life experience before beginning at zero again.</p>	<p>"by my mother, Sylvia Plath" "as she left it."</p> <p>From page xi, first paragraph</p>
<p>The Fool, #0</p> 	<p>Innocence; naiveté; purity; the self; the child; birth and beginning; journey into life; lack of discipline.</p> <p>The Fool, while numbered 0, is considered to be the first tarot card in the Major Arcana.</p>	<p>"As her daughter I can only approach it, and its divergence from the first"</p> <p>From page xi, first paragraph</p>
<p>The Magician, #1</p> 	<p>Confidence and over-confidence; a student seeking mastery; deceit and tricks; wit.</p> <p>The Magician is known for his great ego, corresponding to the "purely personal" and suicide, when he has no confidence or ego left (the reversed, or upside-down meaning) The Magician has black hair. It is a spring day, as lilies are in bloom.</p>	<p>"edited by my father, Ted Hughes" "purely personal perspective" "When she committed suicide" "a black spring"</p> <p>From page xi, first paragraph</p>
<p>The High Priestess, #2</p> 	<p>Mystery; inner wisdom; secrets, the Magician's lover; silence, independence; shyness; a spinster.</p> <p>The High Priestess is the dark, quiet, spiritual and mysterious mother, and here, Frieda Hughes speaks of her mother's suicide. When the High Priestess is reversed, she is angry and bitter toward men, deepening the meaning of the suicide.</p> <p>The High Priestess holds a Jewish</p>	<p>"When she committed suicide" [...] "my mother left" "containing a manuscript" "mid-November"</p> <p>From page xi, second paragraph</p>





	<p>holy manuscript, the Torah.</p> <p>Mid-November is a chilly time, corresponding with the High Priestess' cold nature.</p>	
<p>The Empress, #3</p> 	<p>Harvest; abundance; creativity and production; The Great Mother; female energy; pregnancy; sloth and gluttony. When the Empress is reversed, she means death and the lack of creation.</p> <p>Befitting the Empress, Frieda Hughes speaks of the great number of poems Plath wrote in those last months before her death.</p> <p>"Death & Co." reflects the reversed meaning of this card. "fourteenth of that month" may reflect the second week of a menstrual cycle (Plath's poem "Thalidomide", corresponding with this card, reflects this menstrual meaning).</p>	<p>"Death & Co." "fourteenth of that month" "contents" "She wrote an additional nineteen poems before her death, six of which she finished [...] and a further thirteen in the last eight weeks of her life."</p> <p>From page xi, second paragraph</p>
<p>The Emperor, #4</p> 	<p>Control; structure and order; discipline; conflict; cruelty; a battle; lack of emotion.</p> <p>Frieda Hughes is reflecting the cold order and heartless replacements of the Emperor in the way her mother did with the corresponding poem, "The Applicant."</p> <p>The Emperor's order and structure is all over this couple of paragraphs with its cleanliness, the titles tried out, the chronological order and ultimate rearrangement of the manuscript by her father (a very Emperor-like thing to do).</p>	<p>"These poems were left on her desk with the manuscript." "The first cleanly typed page of the manuscript gives the title..." "Of the two sheets that follow, alternative titles had been tried out, each title scored out in turn and a replacement handwritten above it. On one sheet the title was altered from <i>The Rival</i> to <i>A Birthday Present to Daddy</i>. On the other, the title changed..." "Chronological order" "rearrangement of the working manuscript."</p> <p>From page xi, third paragraph and xii, first and second paragraphs</p>




<p>The Hierophant, #5</p>  <p>THE HIEROPHANT</p>	<p>Fame and reputation; society; institutions such as church and school; religion; dogma; manner.</p> <p>The Hierophant's society and reputation would most certainly encompass wide-spread publication.</p>	<p>"first published" "the order" "U.S. publication" "U.K. publication"</p> <p>From page xii, second paragraph</p>
<p>The Lovers, #6</p>  <p>THE LOVERS.</p>	<p>Choice; ideal match; excitement; romance; confusion; anticipation; intensity; adultery.</p>	<p>"He then chose..." "There was no lack of choice."</p> <p>From page xii, third paragraph</p>
<p>The Chariot, #7</p>  <p>THE CHARIOT.</p>	<p>Success; honor; victory; speed; movement; evolution; transition; recklessness.</p>	<p>"an advance on her earlier work." "transitional poems" "a selection of them was published in <i>Crossing the Water</i>" "But toward" "began to appear here and there among the transitional" "They had an urgency, freedom, and force"</p> <p>From page xii, third paragraph</p>
<p>Justice, #8</p>  <p>JUSTICE.</p>	<p>Rules and order; rightness; decision; courts; revenge.</p>	<p>"From this point" "the distinctive <i>Ariel</i> voice"</p> <p>From page xii, third paragraph</p>





<p>The Hermit, #9</p> 	<p>Truth; inner wisdom; isolation; a quiet mind; shedding light on a subject.</p> <p>In reverse, the Hermit is sometimes viewed as cruel, corresponding with Plath's poem for the Hermit, "The Jailer".</p> <p>The Hermit has a "jut of the odd, dark head" and stands upon a mountaintop, or in this case, "the elm's hill."</p>	<p>"an otherworldly, menacing landscape" (<i>Quoting Sylvia Plath</i>): "This is the light of the mind, cold and planetary. / The trees of the mind are black. The light is blue. [...] I simply cannot see where there is to get to."</p> <p>"poise, tranquil and melancholy—the calm before the storm"</p> <p>(<i>Quoting Sylvia Plath again</i>): "You said you would kill it this morning./ Do not kill it. It startles me still./ The jut of the odd, dark head, pacing // Through the uncut grass on the elm's hill."</p> <p>From page xii, third paragraph and fourth indented paragraph; page xiii, first paragraph and second indented paragraph</p>
<p>The Wheel of Fortune, #10</p> 	<p>Gambling; winning and losing; legacy; fortune; a turning-point; significance.</p>	<p>"poems came with increasing frequency, ease"</p> <p>From page xiii, second paragraph</p>
<p>Strength, #11</p> 	<p>Strength; integrity; ferocity; ease. Winning out with love.</p>	<p>"...and ferocity, culminating..." "major poems"</p> <p>From page xiii, second paragraph</p>

<p>The Hanged Man, #12</p>  <p>THE HANGED MAN.</p>	<p>Tension; waiting; learning; introspection.</p> <p>The Hanged Man is often called "The Scapegoat," as Assia Wevill, Ted Hughes' other woman, might have been called.</p> <p>The Hanged Man's halo is a gold "thatch" and the gray background of this card gives a "black and white" feeling.</p> <p>The Hanged Man is forced to learn the hard way, as Plath was.</p>	<p>"before she died." "connected visits" "a woman who had incurred my mother's jealousy" "My mother, somehow learning of the affair" "came to stay" "our thatched black and white cob house" "for a long visit" "Tensions increased"</p> <p>From page xiii, third paragraph</p>
<p>Death, #13</p>  <p>DEATH.</p>	<p>An end to the old ways; separation; waiting for change.</p> <p>The Grim Reaper of the Death card travels from one phase of life to the next.</p> <p>The Death card might represent Ireland as we see a Catholic bishop pleading forgiveness, and water with a Celtic ship.</p> <p>There are two small children on the card witnessing the carnage.</p>	<p>"My mother proposing separation" "though they traveled to Galway" "I witnessed as a small child." "My mother ordered my father out of the house."</p> <p>From page xiii, third paragraph</p>
<p>Temperance, #14</p>  <p>TEMPERANCE.</p>	<p>Encouragement; invitation; consideration; determination; energy; balance and moderation (or lack of); alchemy and endurance.</p> <p>Temperance is a card of alchemy, putting one's mind to a task, and working things out or balancing.</p> <p>There is a crown "up" at the top of the mountain peaks, as London has a crowned family.</p> <p>The angel looks like a "Christmas" angel.</p>	<p>"My father went up to London" "and then around Christmas" "her apparent determination" "reconsider" "'We were working towards it" "Deciding against" "my mother moved"</p> <p>From page xiii, fourth paragraph</p>





<p>The Devil, #15</p>  <p>THE DEVIL.</p>	<p>Material and sensual pleasures; immaturity; selfishness; sin and addiction.</p> <p>The material world and financial security of the Devil is sketched out in everything Frieda Hughes' father left Plath. It is no accident she mentions "Fitzroy Road" as Fitzroy is an Anglo-Norman word meaning "bastard son of the king," implying illegitimacy.</p> <p>The "other woman" addresses sensual pleasure over morals---the Devil's forte.</p> <p>W.B. Yeats was known for his endeavors into the occult.</p> <p>Note the male and female figure in chains are small, like children with a babysitter.</p> <p>The list of money, materials and possessions is very much the Devil's domain.</p> <p>Assia and David Wevill were no doubt chained together in marriage like the couple in the card.</p>	<p>"once Yeat's house" "Fitzroy Road" "Until her death, my father" "babysitting" "had left her with their house in Devon, the joint bank account, the black Morris Traveller (their car), and was giving her money to support us. When my mother died, my father had insufficient funds to vover the funeral, and my grandfather, William Hughes, paid for it." "the other woman" "she remained living primarily with her husband"</p> <p>From page xiv, first, second and third paragraphs</p>
<p>The Tower, #16</p>  <p>THE TOWER.</p>	<p>Sudden, shocking change; destruction; pain and misery; total loss.</p>	<p>"when their serious differences began" "Event" "that winter" "dismayed to see their private business made the subject"</p> <p>From page xiv, fourth paragraph</p>





<p>The Star, #17</p> 	<p>Resolution; promise; hope; tribute; happiness.</p>	<p>"beginning with the word 'Love' and ending with the word 'Spring'" "clearly geared to cover the ground" "the resolution of a new life"</p> <p>From page xiv, fifth paragraph</p>
<p>The Tower, #16</p> 	<p>Frieda Hughes reverses direction for a moment, returning to the Tower in her father's style.</p>	<p>"all the agonies and furies" "The breakdown of the marriage" "my mother's other pain"</p> <p>From page xiv, fifth paragraph</p>
<p>The Star, #17</p> 	<p>And then, a return to the forward direction of the major arcana.</p> <p>The woman on the Star card grips her water pitchers, carefully pouring. It is a springtime pastoral scene.</p>	<p>"given it direction" "It brought a theme to the poetry" "The <i>Ariel</i> voice was there already in the poems" "It was as though it had been waiting, practicing itself, and had found a subject on which it could really get a grip."</p> <p>From page xiv, fifth paragraph</p>
<p>The Moon, #18</p> 	<p>Dreams; mystery; the unknown; shadow self; sickness; subconscious; confusion and torment; sadness and depression.</p> <p>"Berck-Plage" is a Plath poem about, among other things, a home for the elderly, reflecting the sickness of the Moon card, and the fear of the unknown beyond this life.</p> <p>The Moon is a card of the subconscious, and so Hughes writes of "digging up everything" as a reference to repressed memories and emotions.</p>	<p>"digging up everything that must be shed in order to move on." "Berck-Plage" "about the funeral that month" "tangled with the grievous loss"</p> <p>From page xiv, fifth paragraph, and page xv, first paragraph</p>


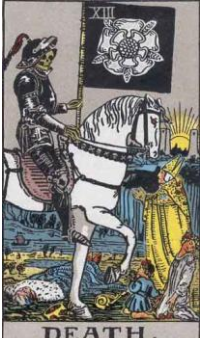


<p>The Sun, #19</p> 	<p>Celebration; joy; acclaim; perfection; over-doing pleasure; lies.</p> <p>The Sun card is a very bee-like yellow and full of sunflowers. Sunflowers grow on tall "stalks".</p>	<p>"she was a child" "that summer" "who had been an expert on bees" "his presence stalks" "the U.S. version of <i>Ariel</i>" "the U.K. edition" "asked by BBC radio to read some of her poems for a broadcast"</p> <p>From page xv, first paragraph</p>
<p>Judgement, #20</p> 	<p>Revelation; exposure; defining moment; accountability.</p> <p>The Judgement card pictures an angel announcing news from heaven, and here, Hughes writes of "a broadcast" and "introductions."</p> <p>Judgement Day is not a time to boast, and so Hughes writes that her mother "makes no mention of herself." The figures in the foreground of the card are naked, rising out of coffins like a "stable at the bottom" from a wintery ground, befitting December. The naked and exposed bodies are the "sheep" of God.</p> <p>Macadam is a Scottish method of road construction using layers of stone with a cement-type coating. The hills of the Judgement card look like macadam.</p>	<p>"she wrote her own introductions" "dry and brief" "makes no mention of herself" "expose herself" "she did not need" (<i>Frieda Hughes quotes Plath:</i>) "at a slow, cold walk" [...] "of macadam to the stable at the bottom. It is December. It is foggy. In the fog there are sheep."</p> <p>From page xv, second paragraph</p>
<p>The World, #21</p> 	<p>The World card is a card of completion, success, and happiness.</p> <p>The center figure of this card represents the hermaphrodite; the perfect alchemical union between male and female. With this in mind, references to Ariel fit both Shakespeare's Ariel from <i>The Tempest</i>, a fairy played by both men and women.</p>	<p>"finished in January 1963" "first published" "the title poem" "Ariel"</p> <p>From page xv, second paragraph</p>





<p>The Fool, #0</p>  <p>THE FOOL.</p>	<p>The cycle of the major arcana, the wheel of life, whirls around again for another go. Now, the reader is back at zero with Hughes, back at the Fool and his newness.</p>	<p>"These introductions made me smile" "understated commentaries" "pared down"</p> <p>From page xv, third paragraph</p>
<p>The Magician, #1</p>  <p>THE MAGICIAN.</p>	<p>The Magician is clever, sharp and skillful with his tricks.</p>	<p>"sharpest points of imagery and delivered with tremendous skill."</p> <p>From page xv, third paragraph</p>
<p>The High Priestess, #2</p>  <p>THE HIGH PRIESTESS.</p>	<p>The High Priestess, is a mature woman, the crone of the mythological three women⁹/white goddess of maiden, mother and crone. Her mental and spiritual powers of concentration make her the most powerful woman in the Tarot deck.</p>	<p>"I imagine my mother reluctant to undermine with explanation" "concentrated energy"</p> <p>From page xv, third paragraph</p>
<p>The Empress, #3</p>  <p>THE EMPRESS.</p>	<p>There is water pouring around the background of the Empress, who is the great creative mother.</p>	<p>"she'd poured into her verse."</p> <p>From page xv, third paragraph</p>




⁹ Plath's play, "Three Women" addresses the triple goddess idea, featuring maiden, mother and crone.





<p>The Emperor, #4</p> 	<p>Frieda Hughes uses the shaman-like word of "dismembered" here, as well, suiting the Emperor.</p>	<p>"to preserve its ability to shock and surprise" "my father had faced a dilemma" "extreme ferocity" "dismembered those close to her"</p> <p>From page xv, third and fourth paragraphs</p>
<p>The Hierophant, #5</p> 	<p>The society which the Hierophant represents is shown as Hughes writes of all the family members, neighbors and acquaintances that show up in Plath's poems when the poems are taken at a literal level.</p>	<p>"her husband, her mother, her father, and my father's uncle Walter, even neighbors and acquaintances" "a broader perspective in order to make it more acceptable to readers, rather than alienate them" "should be represented"</p> <p>From page xv, fourth paragraph, and page xvi, first paragraph</p>
<p>The Lovers, #6</p> 	<p>The idea of "wanting" in the Lovers card is clear, however the Lovers is also a card of choice. Here is the choice against, or to turn down.</p> <p>The extreme nature is the couple's nakedness in the pictured Garden of Eden.</p>	<p>"I simply wanted," "turned down" "extreme nature"</p> <p>From page xvi, first paragraph</p>
<p>The Chariot, #7</p> 	<p>The Chariot's speed and conquest is revealed in the editors' possession of some poems and their quick publications.</p>	<p>"editors still in possession" "published them quickly"</p> <p>From page xvi, first paragraph</p>





<p>Justice, #8</p>  <p>JUSTICE.</p>	<p>The Justice card bears Athena holding scales in one hand, and a sword in the other, so Frieda Hughes' word for some Plath poems, "lacerating," fits well here. The poem mentioned was "Lesbos," and Athena was also the feminine warrior goddess, never to take up with a man and presumed a lesbian.</p>	<p>"My father left out some of the more lacerating poems." "Lesbos" "was taken out" "so wickedly depicted" "would have been much offended"</p> <p>From page xvi, second paragraph</p>
<p>The Hermit, #9</p>  <p>THE HERMIT.</p>	<p>The Hermit is said to represent Father Time, and so the poem "Stopped Dead" fits well. As he is older, "my father's Uncle Walter" also fits.</p> <p>The Hermit is high on top of a mountain, and for him to drop something would be the end of it.</p> <p>The reference to "taken out" in this case means The Hermit's self-imposed isolation.</p>	<p>"Stopped Dead" "my father's Uncle Walter" "was dropped" "he might otherwise have taken out"</p> <p>From page xvi, second paragraph</p>
<p>The Wheel of Fortune, #10</p>  <p>WHEEL OF FORTUNE.</p>	<p>As turning wheels can stop dead, and the Hermit dropping something could also mean the end to a bounty, these images might double as transitions into the Wheel of Fortune. The fame of the words "well known" that follow is also in the Wheel's domain.</p> <p>When The Wheel of Fortune card falls in reverse (upside-down) it means loss, and so "omissions" would fit here too.</p>	<p>"published" "in periodicals" "already well known" "omissions"</p> <p>From page xvi, second paragraph</p>
<p>Strength, #11</p>  <p>STRENGTH.</p>	<p>"Magi" fits the magical strength of the woman in the Strength card. Hughes continues focusing on the negative meanings now, writing of "Barren Woman" and using words like "weaker" in line with the Strength card's reversed meaning.</p>	<p>"Magi" "Barren Woman" "considered weaker"</p> <p>From page xvi, second paragraph</p>

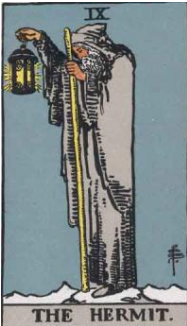



<p>The Hanged Man, #12</p> 	<p>This time, Hughes is using language for the criminal/scapegoat pictured on the card: prisoners have "contents lists" of their possessions; brackets may be likened to handcuffs or shackles; and the prisoner's isolation from society appears in the rest.</p> <p>Additionally, now the yellow halo around the Hanged Man's head could be a swarm of bees as he hangs in the tree (Hughes mentions the Bee poems and "The Swarm" poem in particular also in this paragraph).</p>	<p>"my mother's contents list" "with brackets around it," "not included," "reinstated"</p> <p>From page xvi, second paragraph</p>
<p>Death, #13</p> 	<p>For the Death card, Hughes notes all the poems that were left out, or in other words, "killed" from the first publication of <i>Ariel</i>. The mention of the "original manuscript" is important here too, as the Death card is a card of transition from one phase to another, just as the manuscript became a new version.</p>	<p>"The poems of the original manuscript my father left out were..."</p> <p>From page xvi, third paragraph</p>
<p>Temperance, #14</p> 	<p>Temperance is a card of alchemy and balance, and at this point in the major arcana cycle, Hughes writes of the poems her father put into the edited manuscript that Plath hadn't intended to include.</p>	<p>"The poems he put into" "Mary's Song" "my mother's Collected Poems and included" "This inclusion brought my father's arrangement"</p> <p>From page xvi, fourth paragraph, and page xvii, first paragraph</p>
<p>The Devil, #15</p> 	<p>Because the Devil card often deals with fame and reputation, his darker, negative side shows in Hughes' comments about the public scrutiny of her father's arrangement of <i>Ariel</i>, and his being criticized for making changes.</p> <p>The reference "for all to see" reflects the peoples' nakedness on the card.</p>	<p>"public scrutiny" "he was much criticized" "the extracted poems" "for all to see" "a profound respect"</p> <p>From page xvii, second paragraph</p>

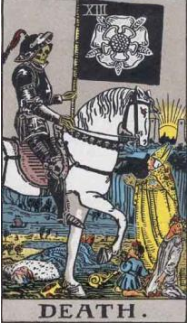


<p>The Tower, #16</p>  <p>THE TOWER.</p>	<p>The Tower card is full of spite and fury, as it handles matters in the harshest, most painful way possible.</p>	<p>"in spite" "one of the subjects of its fury" From page xvii, third paragraph</p>
<p>The Star, #17</p>  <p>THE STAR.</p>	<p>The Star card carries the reader to the place of hope again.</p>	<p>"work was <i>the</i> thing" "the care of it" "tribute and a responsibility" From page xvii, third paragraph</p>
<p>The Moon, #18</p>  <p>THE MOON.</p>	<p>The weird Moon card's sickness, depression and troubles show next in Hughes' words, but in the Moon's darkness and melancholy lies a muddied but creative well to draw from, and Hughes refers to this too.</p>	<p>"the point of anguish" "killed herself," "strangers, possessed and reshaped" "symbolic" "this possession of my mother" "the wider vilification of my father" "the clay from her poetic energy" "invented to reflect" From page xvii, fourth paragraph</p>
<p>The Sun, #19</p>  <p>THE SUN.</p>	<p>The Sun is glory, celebration and success, things becoming reality, and the metaphorical light being shed upon a subject.</p>	<p>"the inventors" "possess my real, actual" From page xvii, fourth paragraph</p>





<p>Judgement, #20</p> 	<p>"Lady Lazarus" is the poem to be mentioned for the Judgement card, comparing the rising angel picture to the poem's imagery, as well as referencing the corpses rising from the dead.</p> <p>Hughes uses language of speaking about the dead with the lack of resemblance to who was once alive and the idea of dissection.</p> <p>Lazarus, of course, was the biblical character whom Jesus raised from the dead.</p> <p>"The moment" and "applied to her whole life" are akin to Judgment Day.</p>	<p>"now a woman who had ceased to resemble herself" "Lady Lazarus" "dissected over and over" "the moment" "applied to her whole life"</p> <p>From page xvii, fourth paragraph</p>
<p>The World, #21</p> 	<p>We see another crossover meaning as the World also takes on that idea of the culmination of a life's work. This is The World's completion and self-actualization.</p>	<p>"applied to her whole life" "to her whole person" "the total sum of her experience"</p> <p>From page xvii, fourth paragraph</p>
<p>The Fool, #0</p> 	<p>Both positive and reversed traits of the Fool card show next, beginning the cycle for its third time.</p> <p>Hughes uses the words which reflect the Fool card's precariousness. She mentions her younger brother for the first time here, as well as the Fool's naiveté in the words, "it was strange to me."</p>	<p>"leveled at" "which fell to him on her death" "my brother" "Through the legacy" "it was strange to me"</p> <p>From page xvii, fifth paragraph</p>





<p>The Magician, #1</p> 	<p>The Magician in reverse is the heartless con-artist and illusion-maker.</p>	<p>"cruel things" "bore no resemblance"</p> <p>From page xvii, sixth paragraph</p>
<p>The High Priestess, #2</p> 	<p>Hughes gives us loads of the stern-yet-gentle High Priestess' traits in a stream of adverbs</p>	<p>"quietly" "lovingly" "strictly"</p> <p>From page xvii, sixth paragraph</p>
<p>The Empress, #3</p> 	<p>The Empress, the great mothering card, surfaces in Hughes' next words about the two mothers in her life: her step-mother, and the memory of her mother, Sylvia Plath, watching over her.</p>	<p>"sometimes fallible" "brought me up" "my stepmother" "the memory of my mother" "I felt as if she were watching over me" "a constant presence."</p> <p>From page xviii, first paragraph</p>
<p>The Emperor, #4</p> 	<p>The organized man in control, the Emperor, shows up again in his positive and negative aspects.</p>	<p>"my father's editing" "to 'interfere' with the sanctity of my mother's suicide"</p> <p>From page xviii, second paragraph</p>





<p>The Hierophant, #5</p> 	<p>The Hierophant's church and institutional meanings show in the same line's "sanctity," creating another overlap.</p>	<p>"deity" "enshrined and preserved"</p> <p>From page xviii, second paragraph</p>
<p>The Lovers, #6</p> 	<p>The Lovers has that dreamy, dazed quality found in Hughes' repeated word, "miraculous."</p>	<p>"miraculous" "everything associated with her <i>was</i> miraculous" "because my father made it appear so" "even playing me"</p> <p>From page xviii, second paragraph</p>
<p>The Chariot, #7</p> 	<p>The Chariot card's competition and energy show in Plath's temperament.</p>	<p>"ferocious temper and a jealous streak"</p> <p>From page xviii, second paragraph</p>
<p>Justice, #8</p> 	<p>That Chariot is then contrasted with the following Justice card's "temperate and optimistic nature," and its reverse qualities of punishment, where Hughes writes of her mother destroying her father's work.</p> <p>On the card, Athena holds the scales to balance reason and the law.</p>	<p>"temperate and optimistic nature" "destroyed my father's work" "once by ripping it up and once by burning it. I'd been aghast that my perfect image of her, attached to my last memories, was so unbalanced." "inasmuch as she was an exceptional poet, was also a human being" "restoring the balance" "it made sense" "the exception, not the rule"</p> <p>From page xviii, second paragraph</p>




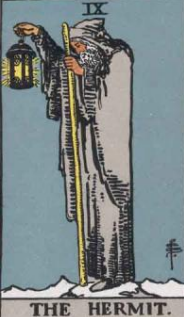
<p>The Hermit, #9</p>  <p>THE HERMIT.</p>	<p>The Hermit is in solitude and quiet seeking the truth.</p> <p>The opposite or reversed meaning of the Hermit is someone with one or more companions.</p> <p>On top of his high mountain, there is a reason for the Hermit's elevation, too.</p>	<p>"generally quiet" "hardworking and companionable" "I needed to know the truth" "to help me understand my own." "if I had ever been in doubt" "the reason for her elevation"</p> <p>From page xviii, second and third paragraphs</p>
<p>The Wheel of Fortune, #10</p>  <p>WHEEL OF FORTUNE.</p>	<p>The Wheel's good fortune and reputation appear again, with good and bad depending upon how the card falls.</p>	<p>"the feminist icon" "Ariel's notoriety" "an extraordinary manuscript"</p> <p>From page xviii, third paragraph</p>
<p>Strength, #11</p>  <p>STRENGTH.</p>	<p>The Strength card's qualities of love, life and work show here.</p> <p>The woman on the Strength card is a calming influence, also working to dispel the earlier doubt of the Hermit.</p> <p>The mountain in the background is blue, like the English Heritage plaques.</p> <p>The loving woman on the card is of Victorian English style, fitting London.</p>	<p>"my doubts were dispelled" "my mother was accorded" "a blue plaque" "on her home in London" "English Heritage" "to celebrate the contribution of a person's work to the lives of others" "to celebrate their life" "where they did the living" "proposed"</p> <p>From page xviii, third paragraph, and page xix, first paragraph</p>
<p>The Hanged Man, #12</p>  <p>THE HANGED MAN.</p>	<p>The Hanged Man's difficult situation is in accord, and hanging is sometimes a method of suicide.</p> <p>Criminals often approach wearing a veil or hood before hanging.</p> <p>"English heritage" might also apply to the Hanged Man method of execution.</p>	<p>"suicide" "unveil" "it was in place" "had been led to believe"</p> <p>From page xix, first paragraph</p>


	<p>Since the Hanged Man is also considered to be "the scapegoat," the phrase "had been led to believe" applies.</p>	
<p>Death, #13</p>  <p>The Death card shows a skeleton on a white horse, holding a scythe and a banner with a skull and crossbones. Two children are in the foreground, one being held by the skeleton. The card is labeled 'DEATH' at the bottom.</p>	<p>Thirteen is the number of the Death card, and there are two withering children pictured in the foreground on the card.</p> <p>The Death card is also a card of transformation, however, and of moving out of one phase and into another. That said, Hughes' discussion of her parents' first London home, the new book and new baby also fit.</p>	<p>"thirteen poems" "two sick children" "killed herself"</p> <p>From page xix, first and second paragraphs</p>
<p>Temperance, #14</p>  <p>The Temperance card shows an angel with wings, holding two golden goblets. The card is labeled 'TEMPERANCE' at the bottom.</p>	<p>Hughes brightens things up again talking about her mother's living and being productive, qualities of the card to come next, Temperance.</p> <p>The goblets in the angel's hands might be said to resemble bell jars.</p> <p>The twenty-one months Hughes mentions is an echo of the tarot's major arcana. The angel is certainly a Colossus, and Temperance is very much about things being balanced enough for birth, happiness, work and good health.</p>	<p>"where they had lived for twenty-one months" "<i>The Bell Jar</i>" "<i>The Colossus</i>" "gave birth" "she had truly lived" "happy and productive"</p> <p>From page xix, second paragraph</p>
<p>The Devil, #15</p>  <p>The Devil card shows a horned, multi-breasted figure with a tail, holding two chains. Two nude figures are chained to him. The card is labeled 'THE DEVIL' at the bottom.</p>	<p>The national press and the newspapers write of rumors, reputations, and other ego-related subjects of the Devil's domain.</p> <p>The word "unveiling" is used in the sense of nudity this time.</p> <p>The Devil's ignorance is shown with "I was unaware."</p>	<p>"outrage" "the national press" "accosted" "unveiling" "in the wrong" "cried" "the newspapers" "I was unaware"</p> <p>From page xix, second paragraph</p>

<p>The Tower, #16</p>  <p>THE TOWER.</p>	<p>The Tower is the inevitable destruction, when even confession cannot help.</p> <p>Hughes mentions the gravestone place of death, reflecting properties of the Tower card. The Tower, of course, is made of stone.</p>	<p>"they confessed" "where she died"</p> <p>From page xix, second and third paragraphs</p>
<p>The Star, #17</p>  <p>THE STAR.</p>	<p>Hughes again brightens her language in accordance with the happier, hopeful, celebratory Star card which can also denote fame and commemoration.</p>	<p>"commemorated" "won an award" "I wanted her life to be celebrated, the fact that she had existed, lived to the fullness of her ability, been happy"</p> <p>From page xix, third paragraph</p>
<p>The Moon, #18</p>  <p>THE MOON.</p>	<p>Hughes moves back into the Moon's darker, depressive side.</p>	<p>"...and sad, tormented"</p> <p>From page xix, third paragraph</p>
<p>The Sun, #19</p>  <p>THE SUN.</p>	<p>Hughes returns to writing of the properties of the Sun card. The birth is a reflection of the pictured baby. The valiance is in the riding of the pony and waving the flag.</p> <p>In reverse, the Sun can be burn-out and depression. The term "dogged her" touches back on the previous Moon card's meaning and picture.</p>	<p>"and ecstatic, and given birth," "extraordinary in her work, and valiant in her efforts" "the depression that dogged her throughout her life"</p> <p>From page xix, third paragraph</p>

<p>Judgement, #20</p>  <p>JUDGEMENT.</p>	<p>Judgement rises once again to call the souls and evaluate the work of their lives, as well as the trials and tribulations they had to carry.</p> <p>The people on the card are naked and the woman is certainly in need of a dress.</p>	<p>"emotional experience" "pieced together" "to make a wonderful dress" "she wasted nothing of what she felt"</p> <p>From page xix, third paragraph, and page xx, first paragraph</p>
<p>The World, #21</p>  <p>THE WORLD.</p>	<p>The World card's last appearance in Hughes' "Foreword" shows the focus on a woman, in a circle almost as a direct target.</p> <p>The World is the card between the "volatile emotional state" of Judgement and the Fool standing at "the edge of the precipice."</p>	<p>"she was able to focus and direct" "her incredible poetic energy to great effect" "her extraordinary poetic achievement, poised as she was" "between her volatile emotional state"</p> <p>From page xx, first paragraph</p>
<p>The Fool, #0</p>  <p>THE FOOL.</p>	<p>We return to the Fool card a final time, with Frieda Hughes describing his picture perfectly.</p>	<p>"the edge of the precipice. The art was not to fall."</p> <p>From page xx, first paragraph</p>
<p>The Magician, #1</p>  <p>THE MAGICIAN.</p>	<p>Frieda Hughes gives us a last run through the first ten cards which represent the most significant personal experiences of life.</p>	<p>"vision and experience"</p> <p>From page xx, second paragraph</p>

<p>The High Priestess, #2</p>  <p>THE HIGH PRIESTESS</p>	<p>Hughes uses words here about the High Priestess' powerful quietness and emotion. The High Priestess is the most powerful woman in the Tarot deck. She is an elder, and can be choosy and particular.</p> <p>Frieda Hughes also refers to her mother in this paragraph twice, also representing the High Priestess' feminine power and that she is an elder of the narrator.</p>	<p>"at a particular" "emotional turmoil" "harnessing of her own inner forces" "speak for themselves"</p> <p>From page xx, second paragraph</p>
<p>The Empress, #3</p>  <p>THE EMPRESS.</p>	<p>We return to the creative, maternal Empress. She is often portrayed as fat, or even gluttonous in reverse, and so Hughes using the word "crammed" fits well here.</p>	<p>"My mother's poems" "crammed into the mouths" "reinvention" "breathe life into her again"</p> <p>From page xx, third paragraph</p>
<p>The Emperor, #4</p>  <p>THE EMPEROR.</p>	<p>The Emperor is all business, all science, no heart, and so he corresponds with Hughes' words of single-minded ambition and control, and the Emperor's slightly cruel reversed quality of mockery.</p> <p>The Emperor does not mince words—think of Plath's poem, "The Applicant," which corresponds to that card</p>	<p>"writing straight fiction" "get the writer enough notice" "achieves any purpose" "to parody the life" "dissected, analyzed, reinterpreted, reinvented, fictionalized, and in some cases completely fabricated" "It comes down to this"</p> <p>From page xx, third paragraph</p>
<p>The Hierophant, #5</p>  <p>THE HIEROPHANT</p>	<p>The sometimes dogmatic, societal Hierophant is revealed a final time, this time with Plath's perspective of the world and management of her subjects.</p>	<p>"viewed her world" "the manner" "pinned down her subjects with a merciless eye"</p> <p>From page xx, third paragraph</p>

<p>The Lovers, #6</p>  <p>THE LOVERS.</p>	<p>The Lovers watch each other in their card's picture, corresponding with Hughes' mention of perspective and observation.</p> <p>The knowledge is now referring to Adam and Eve, after eating of the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden, the symbolism of the Lovers card.</p>	<p>"put into perspective" "the knowledge" "observations"</p> <p>From page xx, fourth paragraph</p>
<p>The Chariot, #7</p>  <p>THE CHARIOT.</p>	<p>The Chariot's movement is visited here one last time.</p>	<p>"changed, evolved and moved on"</p> <p>From page xx, fourth paragraph</p>
<p>Justice, #8</p>  <p>JUSTICE.</p>	<p>Justice illustrates all facets of a person who is weighed by Athena in the court. She considers all angles and uses balance and reason, based on experience and teachings of the past.</p> <p>Athena's skill in both mercy and severity is well-known, and "honed" is a reference to both her mind and her sword.</p> <p>The Justice card's reverse meaning of punishment shows here too.</p>	<p>"as my mother would have done" "build upon all the writings over the years" "best demonstrate the many complex layers of her inner being" "Honed and practiced" "caught in the act of revenge"</p> <p>From page xx, fourth and fifth paragraphs</p>
<p>The Hermit, #9</p>  <p>THE HERMIT.</p>	<p>The Hermit is an old man representing Chronos, Father Time, and so Hughes uses time-referencing words here. She has now also switched to the subject of her father.</p> <p>Because the Hermit is a recluse, he may said to be shy.</p> <p>In reverse, the Hermit can be a victim, and Hughes writes that her</p>	<p>"years" "latterly" "my father" "ultimately he did not shy away"</p> <p>From page xx, fifth paragraph</p>

	<p>father had become a victim himself. The Hermit removes himself from people, or does not do so, in reverse, fitting Hughes' words about her father.</p>	
<p>The Wheel of Fortune, #10</p> 	<p>Frieda Hughes concludes her "Foreword" on a high note, with the blessings and good luck of the Wheel of Fortune.</p> <p>The major arcana is split, with the first ten cards representing the personal life, and the second ten cards representing the universal. The Fool and the World card cap off the journey and unite the sides of life to create a cycle. The "two histories," therefore, "are one."</p>	<p>"its mastery" "new, restored edition" "in that moment" "the basis for the published <i>Ariel</i>" "has its own significance" "the two histories are one"</p> <p>From page xx, fifth paragraph, and page xxi, first paragraph</p>

Just as Plath had once predicted in her own journals, Hughes became the literary lion, England's celebrated and beloved poet laureate, in 1984. Several years later, Hughes began to expose Shakespeare's systems of double language, ritual pattern, and the mythic and tragic equation. Yet, for all his honors and acceptance, he was likely too afraid of public ridicule and condemnation to admit to or sketch out the system that Sylvia Plath, his mystic-oriented friends, his daughter, and he himself regularly used to ensure their professional, if not personal, success. It seems that Shakespeare, Lowell, Hughes, his daughter and assuredly others, did or do not believe that the world was smart enough for them; that this world's stage is not yet ready to be freed from these captivating literary spells, and that we will continue to willingly ignore the carefully manipulated systems on which so many of our great works hang. Whether or not this is true, what does it say about our modern-day culture, our taboos, that for the last handful of centuries everyone has missed it?

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