

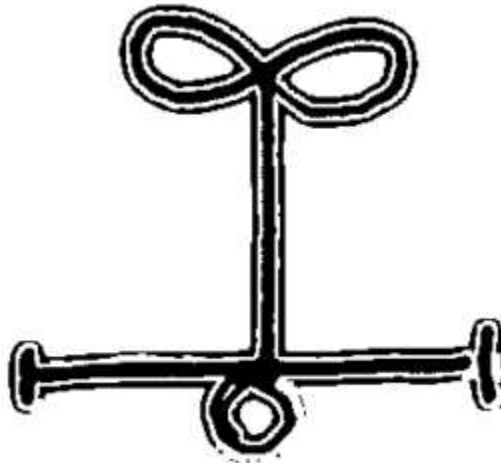
What is the Oracle of the Hypogeum?

The Oracle of the Hypogeum is a deck of 48 cards, each card based upon a sacred symbol from the Ancient Quatrian culture. The Quatrians used these symbols to help **remythologize their landscapes**, both internal and external.

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Although specific traditions and customs varied from biome to biome, the ideas represented by these glyphs were universal. They could be found, individually or collectively, on everything from doorposts to road signs to tattoos. They were said to have been taught to humans by ANTHUOR, the Quatrian deer power, who communicated the symbols via shapes seen in the murmurations of starlings. The starlings took flight from within the Hypogeum, a mysterious stone chamber central to Quatrian myth.

As ubiquitous within Quatrian culture as corporate logos are in Late Capitalist neoliberalism, the primary use for the Symbols seems to have been a way to express meaning across a variety of cultural contexts. Just as someone living in Southeast Asia might recognize the “Golden Arches” as representative of McDonald’s, so a Quatrian from a sub-polar settlement would understand that the symbol for “Life Force” (*vimna*) depicted a plant emerging from a seed:



This symbol may have been used literally for horticultural purposes, but could also be used to identify healers, mothers, food stores, etc.

Every society practiced some form of what we now refer to as “Divination,” and the Quatrians were no exception. That said, our understanding of divination (via Tarot Cards, the I Ching, etc.) depends on a much different conception of *time* than that of the various societies of Quatria.

Many attempts have been made to explicate the way this society considered time, with varying degrees of success. Translating this concept into something conceivable by our modern sensibilities and habits has proved exceptionally difficult. The simplest way to explain this attitude would be that Quatria exists *outside* of what we see as “past, present, and future.” As such, “fortune telling” becomes rather pointless.

Instead, Quatrians conceived of experience as a kind of “bubbling up” of instances from an underlying Ground of Being. Instead of our linear timeline, or even something cyclical, “time,” in Quatria, resembled the surface of a lake, and “instances” as susurrations on the face of the water.

It may help to consider time as an enormous shoal of sardines. No single sardine can conceive of the entire school; instead, each individual fish can only react to its nearest neighbors. If a predator approaches from beneath, the fish closest to the predator move to flee it, then their neighbors, then theirs, etc. By the time the fish at the top of the school receive the cue to flee, it doesn’t matter to them what caused the initial movement. Indeed, the sardines at the top of the formation may never even know whether it was a shark or a barracuda that caused them to need to flee.

Quatryan “divination” seems to have been used to identify other factors causing the entire singularity at which the reader found herself. Thus, the diviner uses the cards to quite literally **make a map**, of consciousness or otherwise.

The Oracle of the Hypogeum consists of the following:

32 Entity Cards

8 Magicians

8 Monsters

THE ENTITIES: OVERVIEW

Imagine a map. Think of the symbols, the landmarks, the elements that a traveler would need to navigate to find not only her destination, but also her current location—the space in which she currently exists. Now take that map, collect the symbols that represent the landscape. **These are the Entities.** Rocks (ACHO), geographical features (MOUNTAIN, FOREST), experiences (MYSTERY, SILENCE), spirits and powers (ANTHUOR, BARBARO, THE MUSICIAN), and more.

The order of the cards doesn’t matter when ‘resetting the cards,’ as with Tarot, but the most common sequence is:

- The first six cards (**ANTHUOR, BARBARO, ACHO, THE MAIDEN, THE MUSICIAN, THE VERNOW, MEMLEN**) are the *Pre-Manifest Powers*. These are the deep powers and places that exist eternally and withstand outside of space/time.
- The next six cards (**THE BUORTH, SKY, MOUNTAIN, FOREST, PLAIN, CAVE**) are the *Places In Which Things Manifest*.
- The next six cards (**HUMAN, ANIMAL, PLANT, FUNGUS, INSECT, ANIMALCULE**) are the *Entities That Manifest*.
- The next seven cards (**FIRE, AIR, WATER, EARTH/SOIL, LIFE FORCE, LIGHT, SHADOW**) are the *Forms in Which Things Manifest*.
- Finally, the last six cards (**MYSTERY, SILENCE, TIME HUNTER, GOLDEN EGG, WORMWOOD, THE STONE BOOK**) are *The Mysteries of Manifestation*.

The map changes every time the deck is shuffled, from second to second. Influences that are geographical, psychological, spiritual, and LIMINAL take their places within a map of time and space that allows the reader to gain a deeper understanding of her place, or the place in which her querent (the person for whom the reading is being done) exists. A skilled reader could deal out the entire deck and find a landscape as legible and useful as a fold-out map marked with an “X” for treasure. The Entities are landmarks, through which wander not only the querent, **but also the Monsters and Magicians.**

THE MAGICIANS AND MONSTERS: OVERVIEW

To understand the role of the Magicians and Monsters, it helps to learn about the Solstice Traditions of Ancient Quatria.

According to the [Teachings of Mavani and Iktion](#), on or around First Frost (in the Northern Climes) or the beginning of Water Season (approx. Nov. 1st in the Northern Hemisphere), eight primordial monsters with beast-like heads emerge from the Hypogeum, a Deep Place which opens for three days, and begin causing havoc upon the land. These demons— *the Therioanthropic Monsters* — are remnants of the prior world, who seek to throw the current world into eternal darkness.

The names of the monsters vary from telling to telling, but the most common names, and the attributes of each demon, are listed below:

Gnew — *Ruler of Smoke* — *Wolf-headed*
Gneuth — *Ruler of Stench* — *Sow-headed*
Weweu — *Ruler of Labor* — *Scorpion-headed*
Wehneh — *Ruler of Strife* — *Hyena-headed*
Brekoax — *Ruler of Spite* — *Frog-headed*
Kehket — *Ruler of Shame/Guilt* — *Serpent-headed*
Djerr — *Ruler of Waste/Pollution* — *Bird-headed*
Djuewet — *Ruler of Anxiety* — *Hare-headed*

On Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year, the Hypogeum reopens. Anthuor and his Eight Magicians ride forth from the bright chthonic realms, carrying hazelwood staves covered in vines and thorns. Every other day, one of the Magicians binds one of the Monsters with the vines, and lashes it with the thorns, returning it into the Hypogeum for another year.

The names and attributes of the Magicians are:

Yan — *“The Temperate”* — *Grape and Blackberry*
Tan — *“The Kind”* — *Honeysuckle and Nettle*
Tether — *“The Calm”* — *Sweet Pea and Rose*
Mether — *“The Bountiful”* — *Gourd and Locust*
Pip — *“The Joyous”* — *Poison Ivy and Hawthorn*
Azer — *“The Hilarious”* — *Wonga Wonga and Thistle*
Sezar — *“The Wondrous”* — *Nightshade and Devil’s Club*
Akker — *“The Giver”* — *Ivy and Holly*

The battle between the Magicians and the Monsters, although ritually tied to the turning of the year, is eternal. This is a mystery play, and within the Oracle of the Hypogeum, the cards representing the Magicians and the Monsters chase one another and flee from each other within the map created by the Entity cards.

The Oracle is a song. The Magicians are whole notes on the octave. The Monsters are the sharps and flats. The Entities are the staves, the clefs, the sheet upon which the Monsters and Magicians create chords.

Sometimes a reader will only draw entities, and sometimes magicians and monsters. But, depending upon the sequence in which they are drawn and the relationships they have with the cards which surround them, the meaning can change accordingly.

READINGS

There is no wrong way to read the cards, but the Quatrian diviners left us a few suggestions.

Readings using the Oracle are typically read using pairs of cards. The simplest reading (**Short Reading**) uses two cards. The deck is shuffled or ‘flipped through’ and two cards are drawn. The first card is the **prevailing current**, or most significant aspect of the reading, and the second card is the **underlying current**, or secondary aspect of the reading. The reader then intuitively understands the meaning of the reading based on her understanding of the situation, as well as the symbols on the cards. If she so desires, she can also ask follow-up questions using the same process.

If a Magician is drawn as the prevailing current and a Monster for the underlying current, the Monster has been “Captured,” or Defeated, by the Magician, and the reading is favorable. The Monster card may be removed from the deck for the remainder of the session if there are any follow-up questions.

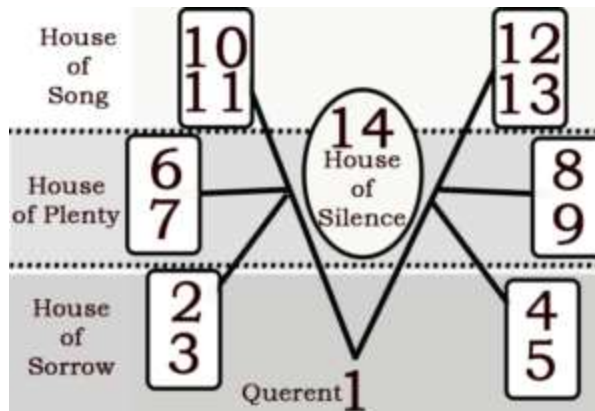
Conversely, if a Monster is prevailing, it has evaded capture and the Magician in question must be removed from the deck for the remainder of the session if there are any follow-up questions.

Two Magicians work together to bring harmony to the querent, and two Monsters indicate a darker place in which the querent currently resides.

ANTHUOR, as the One Who Withstands, always captures Monsters, and **THE VERNOW**, as an Unpleasant Surprise, always evades Magicians.

The more common spread during the Classical Quatrian period mirrored the antlers of Anthuor. The Quatrians recognized that all maps contain multiple paths to a destination. The **Long Reading** provides the reader with two different paths by which the querent can identify a possible goal or outcome, and provides context via the Quatrian Houses, four “Liminal Spaces” in which experiences can manifest..

The deck is shuffled or ‘flipped through’ and the top 14 cards are dealt in the following order:



The cards are then read as follows. Begin with:

1. The current situation; the querent at the moment of the reading.

Now each “branch” represents one possible “path” forward through the Houses. The reader may read either in numerical order (1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14), or “up” each path (1,2,3,6,7,10,11,14 or 1,4,5,8,9,12,13,14). Each pair is read according to the rules of the Two Card spread, but a proficient reader will note unseen relationships between the cards in different houses.

2, 3 then 4, 5. The House of Sorrow. Obstacles to be overcome.

6, 7 then 8, 9. The House of Plenty. Resources and positive influences available to the querent.

10, 11 then 12, 13. The House of Song. The end result; something the querent will ‘create’ depending upon which path is chosen.

14. The House of Silence. Unseen influences working behind the scenes in both paths. *If ANTHUOR appears in the House of Silence, the most favorable reading must be applied in cases where the meaning is otherwise ambiguous.

THE MEANING OF THE CARDS

I. THE ENTITIES – Features in the Landscape, both active and passive

The Entities are ordered based on a traditional Quatrian understanding of experiences humans can have, from most to least common. Everyone experiences Anthuor, but few are able to descend into the depths of the Hypogeum to find the Stone Book.

General meanings for the Entity cards are given below, but the reader should by no means feel limited by these cursory descriptions. The reader should take everything into consideration when reading the cards: her own knowledge and experience, her own associations for each symbol, her relationship with the querent, etc. What “**THE BUORTH**” means to one person may be completely different than what it means to another (for example).

- **Anthuor.** Wild energy and potential, but the kind that the diviner has no control over. A system which persists in the face of great turmoil or trouble. The origin of a thing or situation. Amplifies the effect of other cards, except monsters, which are automatically negated by Anthuor.
- **Barbaro.** Power, but powerful ambiguity. The end of a system, caused not by outright destruction, but by the inability of some party to act. A kind of temporal malleability.
- **Acho.** Stability. A firm foundation. Sentience within the inanimate.
- **The Maiden.** Like Hermes, Messenger of the Gods, the Maiden acts as a conduit between the Hypogeum and “reality.” And, like Artemis, the Maiden is both the act of questioning (hunting), and the results thereof (the hunted).
- **The Musician.** A major change within the power of the querent to make.
- **The Vernow.** Unexpected trouble. Worshiped as a deity by the Monsters. Automatically negates the magicians. Reverses the effect of other cards.
- **Memlen.** The session must immediately be closed to avoid attracting the attention of unwanted negative energies and entities with questionable intent. A new session may be started at least one hour after the Memlen appear.
- **The Buorth.** Heaven. Wisdom to look for answers from ancestors. A perfected state. Completion.
- **Sky.** Moving from one world to the next. The ability to ‘unstick’ oneself from a sticky situation. Moving house. Sustenance.
- **Mountain.** The most nakedly auspicious symbol as concerns wealth, wellness, the body, etc. An increase in the flow of positive energies into the querent’s life.
- **Forest.** Growth. Community. Interdependence.
- **Plain.** Exposure. Monotony that one can escape by viewing the details.
- **Cave.** Going deep, into places not usually visited, that become sanctuaries. Ancestral contributions that require thought to unravel. Safety, unless a bear’s in there. Sometimes a literal cave.
- **Human/The People.** The querent, specifically. Home, community. A default state.
- **Animal.** Something obvious.
- **Plant.** Knowledge hidden in plain sight. A slow, contemplative process with big rewards.
- **Fungus.** A vast network underneath something mundane. The visible aspects can be toxic, delicious, or enlightening. Communication across a long distance, either space or time.
- **Insect.** Small, considered motions that don’t waste energy. Small changes at the onset gradually turning into huge changes. A tiny representative of a large force that could easily destroy the planet if they could only get organized.

- **Animalcule.** Raw, unfettered magic. A minuscule change without which a system would collapse. Transformation/inner alchemy.
- **Fire.** The root of Fire. Passion. Meaning depends on card context.
- **Air.** The root of Air. Intellect. Meaning depends on card context.
- **Water.** The root of Water. Emotion. Meaning depends on card context.
- **Earth/Soil.** The root of Earth. Physicality. Meaning depends on card context.
- **Life Force.** Inner vitality/strength. A shared power. Art. Something available to all. Health, wellness.
- **Light.** Purifying exposure. An ultimate energy transferred from the sun, through a plant, into a person. A directed source of inspiration (i.e. from something external acting as a spotlight).
- **Shadow.** Darkness for sun lovers, but cool shade for those who thrive in it.
- **Mystery.** An initiation. Confronting one's darkness in order to understand life and death. Descending into the Hypogeum via the Imaginal Realm and finding an answer.
- **Silence.** Silence.
- **Time Hunter.** Something from the querent's past—or future!—manifests. At the most mundane level, bureaucracy.
- **Golden Egg.** A gift given by the final survivors of an ancient culture. Something valuable found in the wilderness. The Golden Gift of the Sasquatch. A double-yolked egg.
- **Wormwood.** A resetting of the landscape. Digging up the garden at the end of the season. Destruction, but in order to restore.
- **The Stone Book.** A new story. A shift of the timeline. Reshuffle the deck and begin a new reading.

II. THE MAGICIANS – “Positive” or beneficial forces working on behalf of ANTHUOR.

Imagine Santa, but eight Magicians pull the sleigh and a wondrous deer spirit (Anthuor) drives. The Magicians are associated with plants, whose power was preeminent to the Quatrians.

Yan. The Temperate. Grape and Blackberry. Yan, the First Magician, is kind and mild. Yan deescalates bad situations, and provides sweetness and contentment. Grape is cultivated, as are Yan's influences, but Blackberry, often invasive, represents Yan's wilder side. Blackberries heal the scarred soil beneath, and grapes are sweet, refreshing, and delicious.

Tan. The Kind. Honeysuckle and Nettle. Tan means kindness both received and delivered. Honeysuckle cannot be eaten, but the scent and the flavor produced by its flowers represent the kind of kindness the querent will receive, or give. Nettle is a useful plant, but only after one learns how to safely use it.

Tether. The Calm. Sweet Pea and Rose. Tether provides the kind of simple calmness one experiences just before falling asleep. This Magician is, perhaps, the most peaceful of the Magicians. Tether can

represent happiness in love and relationships. As with Sweet Pea and Rose, even though the flowers wither/fall, the plants in question produce delightful and useful fruit.

Mether. The Bountiful. Gourd and Locust. Mether helps the querent recognize and benefit from all positive currents flowing in her direction. The Bounty in question might not be physical, and may be slowly accumulating, but it's definitely happening. Like the gourd, Mether not only can be used in many ways, but when left in one's compost, will produce fertile soil and sometimes additional gourds. And, like the locust, Mether increases the fertility of any soil into which it is planted.

Pip. The Joyous. Poison Ivy and Hawthorn. Pip! What does Poison Ivy have to do with Joy? To the Quatrians, poison ivy represented joy when one finally stopped itching! Pip is the kind of "joy" one experiences when something particularly vexing has been overcome. Hawthorn, sacred to Anthuor, brings joy in both winter (when the berries appear, colorful and useful as a medicine for the heart), but also in spring when the white flowers snow upon children.

Azer. The Hilarious. Wonga Wonga and Thistle. Azer is freaking hilarious. As opposed to joy, hilarity may be more fleeting, but the absolute release of sheer comedy is immensely helpful for the querent. Wonga Wonga (*Pandorea pandorana*) isn't inherently funny— the querent has to define what makes it funny. Thistle is dangerous, but in the proper hands, is delicious, and artichoke flavored.

Sezar. The Wonderful. Nightshade and Devil's Club. Sezar defeats Monsters by disguising itself as a toxin, which can be neutralized if the querent knows how. Black Nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*), in Western culture, is a poison according to "common knowledge," so toxic it's destroyed and befouled as often as possible. However, *Solanum nigrum* is actually completely safe to eat when identified correctly. It's made into pies, cooked as greens, and generally just fine. Devil's Club, a horrifying collection of spikes and thorns, is a ginseng relative whose roots are powerful medicine. When initiated into Sezar's mysteries, one cannot help but experience success.

Akker. The Giver. Holly and Ivy. Akker gives gifts. Holly and Ivy— both so prolific that in some places they're considered invasive— have long been associated with protection against malevolent influences. Often, when looking at plants, one only considers the physical benefits: how can I eat this or how can this be used as medicine? Holly and Ivy, however, provide gifts which aren't so obvious, as does Akker.

III. THE MONSTERS – "Negative" or Unfortunate influences from an old world, who are keeping things interesting but who need to be defeated by the Magicians.

Gnew. Ruler of Smoke. Wolf-headed. Smoke not only obfuscates; it also makes breathing difficult. Gnew is an all-pervasive, general nastiness.

Gneuth. Ruler of Stench. Sow-headed. Stench of the kind represented by Gneuth is like just a tiny amount of dog poop on your shoe. You'll never find it, and nobody will point it out to you. You need to either keep cleaning the shoes or just get new ones.

Weweu. Ruler of Labor. Scorpion-headed. Labor that doesn't matter is like holding a scorpion that just keeps stinging you over and over. Weweu is the "protestant work ethic"— meaningless work that doesn't benefit the querent.

Wehneh. Ruler of Strife. Hyena-headed. Strife happens. Wehneh makes the strife within the querent's life more meaningful and significant. Wehneh also waits to feed off of the remains of whatever strife has caused.

Brekoax. Ruler of Spite. Frog-headed. Spite directed at the querent doesn't have to have a reason. Brekoax revels in spite for spite's sake, and the querent shouldn't look for a 'reason' for a bad situation.

Kehket. Ruler of Shame/Guilt. Serpent-headed. Shame and guilt are insinuated into the querent's by Kehket. This is one of the worst Monsters, as it can infect even positive experience.

Djerr. Ruler of Waste/Pollution. Bird-headed. Any surplus for which the querent doesn't have a plan becomes pollution. Djerr celebrates overages: too much, too fast, too intense. The Bird-headed Monster is an avalanche. How do you survive an avalanche?

Djuewet. Ruler of Anxiety. Hare-headed. Like the hare on the moors, anxiety lifts its head above the grasses and then *bolts*. Djuewet wants the querent to run away as fast as possible.

At Liminal.Earth, we're interested in revitalizing this extraordinary cartographical tool. Watch this space for interesting updates, tips, and tricks for using the Oracle in your own divination sessions.

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As a living document, the Oracle is also a perpetual work in progress. The Oracle of the Hypogeum can also be a deeply personal method for self discovery. We are always happy to receive your feedback, insights, methodologies, questions about possible interpretations, etc. You can contact us at info@liminal.earth, or find us on social media:

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