

FIN DE SIÈCLE KIPPER

by *Ciro Marchetti*



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INTRODUCTION

by **Ciro Marchetti**



FROM BIEDERMEIER TO VICTORIA

In July of 2015, while in Berlin for a few days, I met with Johannes Fiebig from the publishing house AGM-Urani/Königsfurt-Urania. We spent a few hours in a charming rooftop restaurant in what had been until recently communist East Berlin. We discussed various aspects of cartomancy publishing. We also exchanged some gifts, including various decks. One of his gifts to me was a copy of the original version of the Kipper. Johannes asked if I would be interested in producing an updated version of this deck. Apparently it was a cherished system with a history and following, principally in its native Germany, but was in decline in terms of current use and popularity. This same publisher had also

released the German edition of my Gilded Reverie Lenormand deck and its companion book. Johannes felt that Kipper might benefit from a similar approach of redesign and style.

Projects of this nature require a significant investment of time and effort. The public response to the finished item can be unpredictable, especially when it involves changes to something people are used to or familiar with. I was not enthusiastic about such a commitment and so I initially declined. Nevertheless, during the next few days and my travels back to Barcelona where I was spending the summer, I had a lot of spare time as well as the gifted Kipper deck on my hands. If only for casual curiosity, I looked through various cards with a little more attention. As I had done with previous projects, I used these initial viewings as a test. I took advantage of my lack of knowledge of the cards to imagine without preconceived ideas or bias what they might mean. In the case of this Kipper deck, the challenge was even more authentic, as the titles were only in German, which I could not read. Unlike tarot and

Lenormand, there were no swords, knights, kings, or magicians, nor any snakes, mice, dogs or storks to provide even basic clues. The Kipper deck is comprised mainly of people in various poses, a selection of nondescript buildings, and lots of glaring wallpaper patterns everywhere. This exercise resulted in my conclusion that these images were not particularly effective. With the possible exception of the Coffin card, the others were unclear in their symbolism. There seemed no visual rationale that supported their intended meanings. Even the poses in such cards as 32 and 33, while certainly more dramatic, were nevertheless inscrutable to me. Were the men in these examples being depicted as troubled, experiencing headaches (probably from seeing too much of that glaring wallpaper) or simply seated and resting? Similarly with so many other cards, the males and females, their facial expressions and poses did not convincingly project the varying personalities and roles that the cards are intended to represent. To me, the figures gave no clue as to the meanings that have been associated with them by Kipper readers.

No disrespect intended to the deceased illustrator of these original images, but as a professional graphic designer throughout my career in marketing and advertising, I have always worked with imagery as a tool to project and communicate as efficiently as possible. From this perspective I initially found the original Kipper to be lacking. But with that said, I can still appreciate (as I did when working on the Lenormand project) that this doesn't diminish its effectiveness as a divination tool in the hands of a reader. Once their meanings are understood and a reader becomes familiar with them, then the confusion diminishes.

Indeed, as with both tarot and Lenormand, older traditional and classical decks enjoy a reverence despite their objective flaws. In fact, subjectively, it adds to their charm, and provides a nostalgic connection to the past, along with a stamp of approval, of having stood the test of time and use. To encroach on that perspective with any new take on a theme is guaranteed to be met with mixed reactions, hence my initial hesitation to take

on this project. But I continued to be intrigued. I discussed the idea with my friends at U.S. Games Systems, my American publisher, and they were unanimous in their encouragement.

I took advantage of a trip to Munich a month later to visit museums, castles and generally embrace the environment in which the original deck was set. This was also an opportunity to share time with a German friend of mine, Morwena, who is also a reader of Kipper, and had the first opportunity to see the cards in action. By now I was impressed by the subtlety that the deck could provide and decided to take on the challenge of producing my own version of it. After more thought I felt there was indeed an opportunity to provide a fresh face, literally, to these characters from the past and in doing so provide a more compelling set of imagery to a new audience. But to achieve this in the way that was beginning to formulate itself in my mind, required a change of setting.



The title, *Fin de Siècle*, literally translated means “end of the century”, but is commonly understood to refer specifically to the turn of the 19th century. As such, it’s a few decades after the period of the *Biedermeier* in which the original *Kipper deck* is presumed by many to have been based. I have moved the location from the original Bavarian setting to that of Victorian Britain. There are several reasons for this. First of all, many of the social values and structure would have been shared by both locations, not least by the husband of Queen Victoria herself. The changes brought about by Britain’s Industrial Revolution provide a wider and more extreme set of circumstances.

The relatively fast transition from an agricultural to a manufacturing-based economy brought with it rapid change in demographics and location. Following the Napoleonic Wars, Europe was enjoying relative peace but was experiencing economic turmoil. The aristocratic land-owning class was struggling to maintain its relevance and more importantly its source of wealth. Change was in the air.

Raw materials, mainly in the form of cotton and wool from the colonies, were now being turned into cloth with the aid and increased productivity of mechanical inventions. These machines were powered by water, coal and steam. The only missing ingredient that was needed to fully maximize the potential was manpower, or to be more precise, female and child labour.

Workers who had previously worked the land and whose lives would have been in large part dictated by their land-owning employers were now leaving for rapidly growing towns and cities. This new-found freedom manifested itself in many ways, not least in personal relationships. Meeting and interacting with members of the opposite sex would have been restricted by rural employers, who discouraged such relationships. Any resultant offspring would have meant mostly unwanted burdens and limitations on the working capacity of their employees. In these new urban circumstances, not surprisingly, social interaction changed dramatically. This newly transported popu-

lation did indeed find each other and Britain experienced a dramatically increased birth-rate. However, this newly changing society did not have the resources and infrastructure to adequately take care of the growing population. Squalid conditions, lack of rudimentary plumbing, running water and sewage disposal led to rampant disease. Despite high rates of infant mortality, the population growth overwhelmed both the parents and the state. However, the excess populace was taken advantage of by a growing need for labour and the specific need of Victorian Britain's industry for so many young, nimble and cheap hands.

Factories spread throughout the land crammed with the latest mechanical wonders. Furnaces burned to produce the iron that was used to build bridges and railroads. Machines in turn spun the looms to produce the cloth that would turn Britain into the wealthiest and most powerful empire the world had known. Britain's Navy ensured the safety of the merchant steamships that would transport the incoming and outgoing goods. This period and time, as

with the Bavarian Beidermeire, represented the growth of the bourgeoisie. The void created by the eroding power and wealth of the aristocratic landowners was being filled by industrial and manufacturing tycoons. Social strata were being redefined. Activities for those with the financial means became increasingly centered around the home. The house provided a private family sanctuary from the outside world, but also an opportunity to display a family's position and social standing to friends, peers and other invited guests. Fashion in home furnishings and decor were not for mere personal aesthetics but were used to project one's status in society. However, such indulgences were far from being equally shared or accessible to the majority of the population.

With so many strange faces and newcomers from different backgrounds now living in close proximity, the challenge for all was not just to survive but to also know your place. Knowing (and accepting) who you were and where you fit within the social pecking order was crucial. Where and how you lived, how you

dressed, how you spoke and acted were means of projecting and defining your position. This period was certainly a dark one for the vast majority of the populace.

I felt the images of the original Kipper did not provide an adequate perspective of Victorian life. The cozy, domestic scenes depicted in many of the cards was an idealization also projected in much of the art of that period. The quintessential scenes depicting the “angel of the house” wife and mother, rosy-cheeked children, and contented bread-winning husbands, was the projected ideal that “decent” families should strive for. But this social propaganda belied the reality of economic and moral hypocrisy. The concept of charity and help was very closely attached to the perception of justified need. There were “good” poor, the elderly, and the infirm who were considered to be deserving of Christian charity. But the vast majority were considered “bad” poor, whose needs and dire straits were assumed to be due to lack of effort, rather than social conditions that were nearly impossible to escape from.

For Kipper to provide true insight into human relationships, I felt that the images needed to offer a wider and more realistic perspective, incorporating the good, the bad and the ugly aspects of human social interaction. I set out to provide a set of images that would collectively present more realistic scenes of the characters depicted and how they actually lived. For this reason, I have attempted to flesh out the deck with the addition of three supplemental cards: Poverty, Toil & Labour, and Community.

The other goal I have attempted to achieve with this approach is to make the circumstances of those days significant to today’s readers and querents. Despite the changes and improvements since Victorian times, core human nature remains the same. We still have our equivalents of economic injustice, social class and division. Mass migrations of people in search of a better life is still a global challenge along with the prejudice, intolerance, mistreatment and negative reception that might go with it. Today, the holes in our tattered jeans are more likely to be the creative whims from

the fashion houses of Milan, than the real wear and tear of what may have been our one and only garment in the past. Furthermore, we still clearly have diverse and contradictory views on key issues such as welfare and the moral responsibilities of wealth. In other words, despite the Victorian setting I used for aesthetic reasons and its relative similarity to Biedermeier, Kipper's underlying core message is still very much relevant today.



In the following pages you will find descriptions and card meanings from three different sources, all experienced readers of the Kipper system: Fortune Buchholtz, Stella Waldvogel and Susanne Zitz. The contributors represent different nationalities, backgrounds and possibly differing views in their approach and understanding of each card and how those images may interact with each other within a spread. This diversity was intentional on my part when I invited them to participate in preparing this guidebook. I provided each person

with reference images, but no prompting on my part as to the meanings. Their responses are therefore individual and independent of me and of each other. In many cases there is an inevitable similarity, which is to be expected; it means the images are fundamentally working to project their general intended role. However, where there are variations of interpretations, I also see that as a positive demonstration of the flexibility of both the images and underlying system. Kipper is a system that can embrace a reader's own intuitive interaction. It has the flexibility to adapt to the specifics of any given reading, the querent's particular circumstances and subject of the reading. On some occasions I have also included my own thoughts on certain images, but these are merely side notes to provide personal rationale.

I am assuming that for many people, the Kipper system may be relatively new to them. So I would like to emphasize again that this particular deck is an adaptation of the original and this guidebook is but a basic introduction. As such, I recommend that should you wish to

learn the system in greater depth, that you take advantage of other resources, specifically those of these three contributors.



WHY KIPPER?

by Fortune Buchholtz

Through *Ciro's* work I hope many non-German speakers can now be delighted by the deck's spirit, the *Kipper-geist*. Even in the brief time I've been working with *Ciro's* deck, it has astonished me with its directness, practicality and accuracy. Open yourself to the *Kipper-geist*—I believe it will likewise gently surround and captivate you.

HOW I READ THE KIPPER

Overall, I see *Ciro's* *Kipper* as a fun, complex 19th century novel. Like a Dickens work, it's replete with adventure, travel and personalities, a work touched with nostalgia, romance, social life and a sense of drama. Plus fainting.

The novelistic feel of the deck gives rise to elaborate, engaging story lines with rich cause and affect. Pun intended.

If you have any Lenormand experience, you'll slip into the *Kipper* like a silk glove. That is certainly my experience and is part of what makes reading *Kipper* such a pleasure. The reading style shares many common points with Lenormand. Generally, I read *Kipper* in lines of 5, squares of 9, stars of 13, and the Grand Tableau with Houses, as with the Lenormand.

As in Lenormand there are: 36 numbered cards based in 19th century daily life, elements of near/far, card pairing, directionality, signifiers, enabling cards and challenging cards. Some points of difference however exist. For example, the False Person, Card 8, can cause a "good card" to become its opposite when next to it. Cards can have a slightly different sense when in front of a signifier than when behind it, or above as opposed to below. The images have a little more power than in Lenormand, but still not as much as in contemporary tarot.

yourself with card meanings, but please don't feel that you have to memorize combinations or timing. I've included them for some of the cards here to give you an idea how the meanings can shift according to placement, and so that you can see the logic behind timing associations. It will help to think of a layout as a single panorama, with characters leaving one place and going to another, regarding people and objects on neighboring cards, gesturing and interacting. Money might spill on a card below, someone or something might be on the other side of a wall, roads lead to other cards. Good or neutral cards located below or behind the significator often take on a more negative meaning, because they can seem to be creeping up on the person. But cards landing above or ahead of the significator are generally a good sign. Since both significators face right, it doesn't matter whether you prefer to use facing directions or just read left to right. "Behind" the significator is always on the left, "ahead" is always on the right.

Of course, none of this is meant to suggest utter gloom if your significator has a lot of cards to the left of it. Sometimes left is just "the past". The logic behind timing is simple, and you can easily see how the cards suggest various seasons and time frames.



Marriage, for instance, shows a wedding, so it would be logical to say "June", "around your next anniversary", or, because of the cherry blossoms at the top of the card, "spring". You just have to find a timing association that fits the question.

I think that people who tend to be very visual will find these much easier to learn than Lenormand, but they have the same precision.

