

Bewitching Technologies GUIDEBOOK v.0.5

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for the game
Bewitching Technologies
<https://bewitchingtechnologies.link/>

2024

Bewitching Technologies is a tarot-inspired oracle game and play environment that positions both computing and law as technologies that are necessarily shaped by social and political forces. This approach to both computing and law as ‘technology’ refers to their use as non-neutral tools: Both computing and law may be understood as distinct techniques which implicate power relations and claims of authority in their forms. Correspondingly, their form necessarily shapes their content, its possibilities and limits.

This guidebook (v.0.5) collates oracle card images and captions from the Bewitching Technologies game, and offers alt text describing the image and visual components for each of its 22 oracle cards. It also presents additional visual or artistic context where necessary.

The guidebook can be used as a standalone reference or as an add-on tool in the Bewitching Technologies gameplay. Future versions of the guidebook shall seek to improve accessibility as well as offer detailed descriptions of the in-game characters, patterns and oracle cards along with recommended readings.

Dilan

Exeter, Devon
November 2024

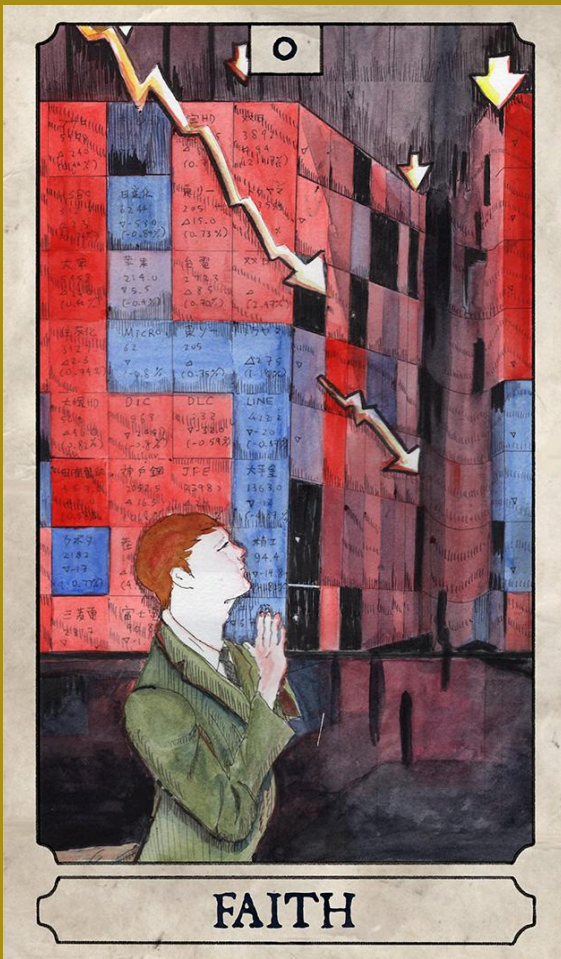


Faith

From law to computation, faith is an essential component of all technology. This card is a reminder that in times of crisis, faith is your friend. Yet faith must be interrogated. For without doubt, there is no faith; only gullibility.

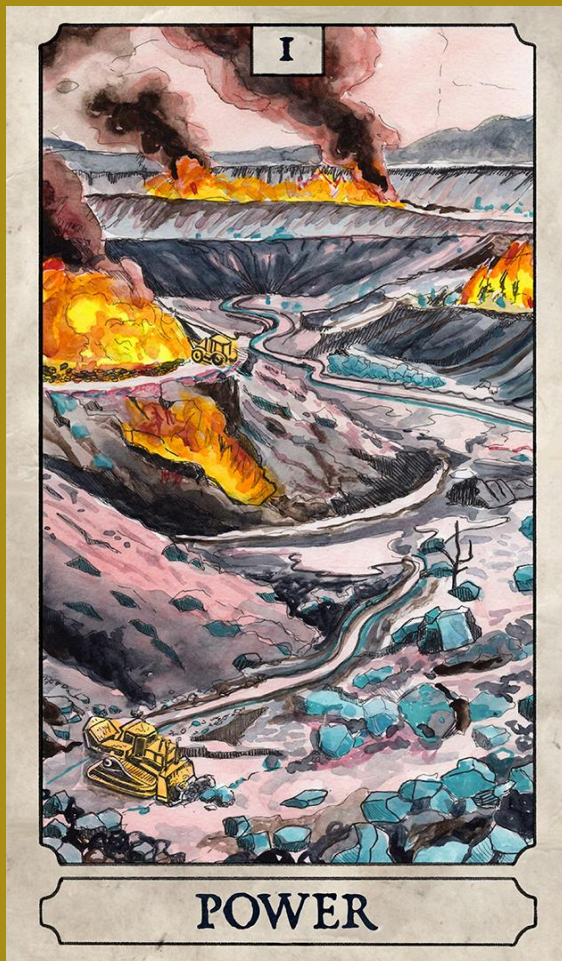
The card depicts a light-skinned masc-presenting person in a green pinstripe suit with folded hands. It seems they are praying. There is some earnestness and anxiety in their demeanor as they look up to various graphs, numbers and information, which all seem to indicate a negative prognosis. Downward pointing arrows seem to abound.

The setting in the image could be a stock exchange. Lost investments or speculative bubbles? Or this could be a construction site. Subprime lending? Broken promises, empty buildings, and the threat of homelessness lurk in the background. What are they praying for? What are they praying against? The surface below is dark, shiny, and reflective. Is it the slick floor of a corporate office or another unaccounted-for oil spill?



1

Power



Through their devastation of lands and seas, fire emerges to fuel your legal and computational technologies. But there is a price to pay. There is always a price. Who is made to pay it is the real question.

On the card, one could decipher a longshot of a devastating mining landscape. Hills of slag and dust as far as the eye can see and as much as the lungs can bear. The skies are black with smoke from fires which rage across the land. Yellow industrial machines excavate the land to dig out coal and perhaps other minerals used for producing electric power. Labouring miners working on atrocious daily wages and in despicable conditions may be scattered about, hidden from sight. The fire seems to emanate from the mines, yet the work of mineral extraction continues unabated to feed the infrastructures of computation and law.

The scene is reminiscent of the burning coalfields of Jharia, which under the auspices of historical and continuing colonialism of settler cultures have been burning for at least a hundred years since 1916. So far, this has resulted in 37 million tonnes of coal consumed by fire and significant ground collapse alongside fatal levels of air and water pollution in local communities. Simultaneously, mining these coalfields fuels the local economy as well as power-hungry networks around this world, especially in global north geographies.

2

Cyborg



The components of our technologies are bewitched because they come from the land ... Be it the mines of silicon chips or the trees of legal paper codes. Magic does not live above, suspended as if beyond the mundane. Magic is practical and material.

The image on the card seems abstract and like all the other cards, is open to several interpretations. One may see a tree or a forest in various shades of green, standing tall against a sky, whose blue filters through some gaps in the green canopy. One may also see a giant humanoid figure whose torso is made of wood, bark and leaves. The figure seems to stand as if with its legs apart, its feet planted firmly into the ground. A tiny human figure can be discerned walking towards this giant on a yellow path flanked on both sides by green bushes, shrubs and moss. The tiny person walks in the direction of the space between the giant's legs, presumably to enter the lovely, dark woods beyond. The head of the humanoid figure in the image may be perceived as constituted of a red floating flower growing out of several entangled tree branches. Does one also see microchips or circuit boards in this humanoid figure? Can one decipher eyes or breasts on this figure or are they just tree hollows? Flecks of red are scattered upon this figure's body... Is it blood? Or fire? Gears? Or soft petals shed by a flower?... Is this humanoid figure a forest spirit or a colossal robot? An alien monster or just a strangely shaped tree in a vast virile forest?

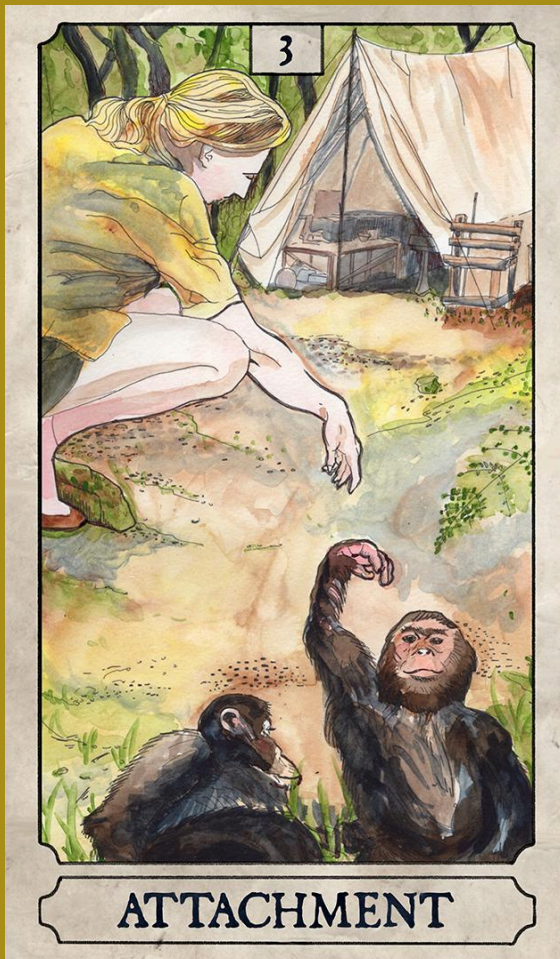
3

Attachment

What—who are you trying to save with your computational and legal technologies and what does this saviour gesture say about you? The relationship to the Other — woman, machine, robot, racialised and casteised others, the unhoused and the deprived, animals and land — must step beyond hope or fear.

The image on the card shows a light-skinned human person with blonde hair who is femme presenting. They are wearing a khaki shirt and shorts. The person is crouching on their haunches to extend a hand from above towards a couple of chimpanzees sitting in grass that appear at the bottom of the image. One of the chimpanzees looks at the viewer while raising a hand in the direction of the human person but bending it away at the wrist, as if in defiance. The other chimpanzee is looking away, uninterested in this whole encounter. In the background, a tent stands in front of a forest.

The image evokes a well-known photograph of British primatologist and conservationist Jane Goodall with the infant chimpanzee, Flint in Gombe, Tanzania in the 1960s. That photograph itself is reminiscent of Italian artist Michelangelo's *The Creation of Adam*, a fresco painting from 1512 illustrating the Biblical creation narrative from the Book of Genesis, where God gives life to Adam, who is widely regarded as the first man in biblical lore.

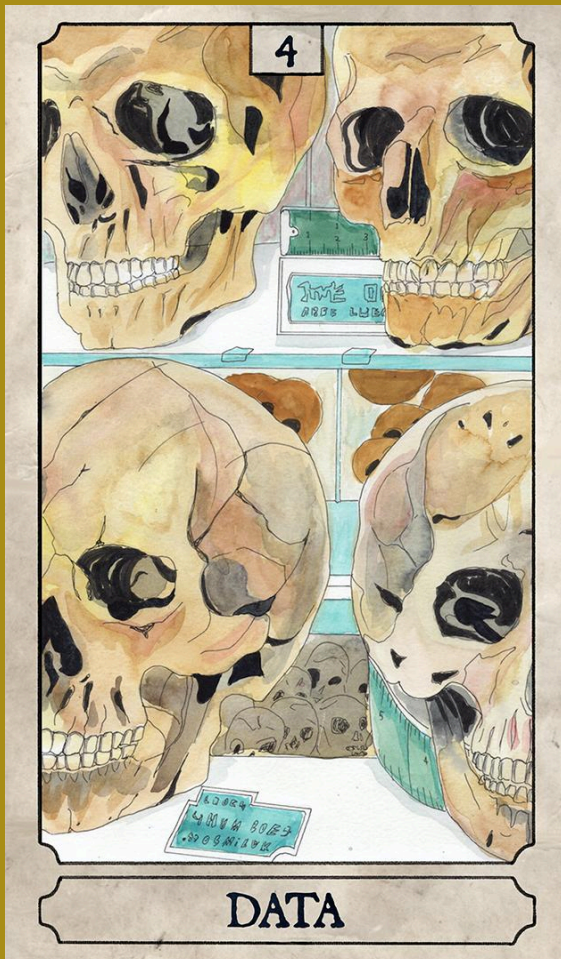


4 Data

Data is dead. Data enthusiasts are grave robbers and death cultists. Data is a mechanism of transforming life into executable bits and bytes. And neither modern legal nor computing technologies seem to survive without data. What does this tell you?

The card depicts a close-up of four human skulls arranged side-by-side—two of them on the top and the other two on the bottom—as if in a museum exhibit or a shelf in a scientific archive. There appear to be labels next to these skulls identifying their provenance. One may also discern scientific diagrams and measuring tools in the image. In the background, we see a storage space containing what seems like hundreds more human remains waiting for examination and classification.

This image is reminiscent of scientific large collections of human remains that are displayed or hoarded in several global north institutions like the Morton Cranial Collection in the Penn Museum in Philadelphia, the Museum für Naturkunde in Berlin, the British Museum in London, Musée de l'Homme in Paris, and the Australian Museum in Sydney, to name just a few. Many of these remains belong to people forced into slavery as well as peoples formerly colonised and genocided in Asia, Africa, Americas and Australasia.



5

Civilisation



The White/Settler/Dwija (Wo)Man's Burden runs through both legal and computational technologies. What drives this ostensibly 'noble' burden of civilisation and its progress when it can just be dropped?

The card depicts a long-haired, light-skinned bearded humanoid person in a white protective suit that may be advanced space-age armour. The person has their arms outstretched to carry a large blank white sphere on their back. The sphere is marked with lines that could correspond to latitudes and longitudes on a globe. The person seems as if suspended up in the sky, for behind them we see a bird's eye view of what may be a suburban landscape.

This image could be read as a reference to the iconic image of Atlas, the titan from ancient Greek mythology who is condemned for eternity to hold up the celestial sphere signifying the cosmological order and the place of the Earth within it. The image could also be understood as a reference to The White Man's Burden, a racist and colonial trope in vogue since the 18th century but brought into particular prominence by the English poet Rudyard Kipling. The trope advocates for a moral duty on the part of white peoples of European descent to colonise and 'civilise' Indigenous and peoples of colour. This moral reasoning is justified on the contrived basis of white racial superiority.

6

Resourcing



The reduction of life to its rationale, the reduction of processes to their purpose. The appearance of this card prompts you to reflect on how both legal and computing technologies play this reduction game called resourcing.

The image on the card shows a brown spotted bovine animal that looks on straight ahead in contemplation. Its hooves are black and teats seem full and heavy with milk. It is standing upon what seems to be a ledge surrounded by what could be either water, ice or moss. Some green grass grows around the ledge and the animal's hooves. Floating around the animal are various mineral rocks, metallic coins, and/or circular clay tablets. One of them also depicts a similar bovine animal in a side profile. A few piles of coins or clay tablets are also stacked on the ledge.

In front and around the animal lie several other objects including a bottle of milk, a can of beef and a miniature picture of an estate of grassy land with white buildings on it, presumably used as a cattle farm. There is also a golden key lying in the middle that seems to link these objects to a golden coin, stacks of silver and metal ingots that may constitute money mints. The animal has been domesticated and reduced to its products and the exchange value it brings. It is now a resource.

7

Extraction

How are extracts of labour implicated in computational and legal technologies? How these technologies are born of and sustain extraction from both humans and not-humans is what you must centre and attend to now.

The card depicts a bird's eye view of a factory floor with a number of human workers of unidentified gender. They are wearing black, red and orange uniforms. It seems that they are engaged in manufacturing electronic circuit boards by doing the intricate and time-consuming work of arranging, joining and assembling conducting wires in the right positions on a miniscule printed laminate. Several tables for the manufacturing assembly line are seen. The work is labour-intensive and a strain on the body and the eyes. Several wires hang from a metal ceiling, presumably to support lighting for the work that occurs in long shifts.

The image evokes many such factories manufacturing electronic circuit boards that run on low-waged feminised labour in Asia. The cheaply costed circuit boards are then shipped to cater to the demands of technological infrastructure. The labouring bodies extracted from remain oft-invisible.



8

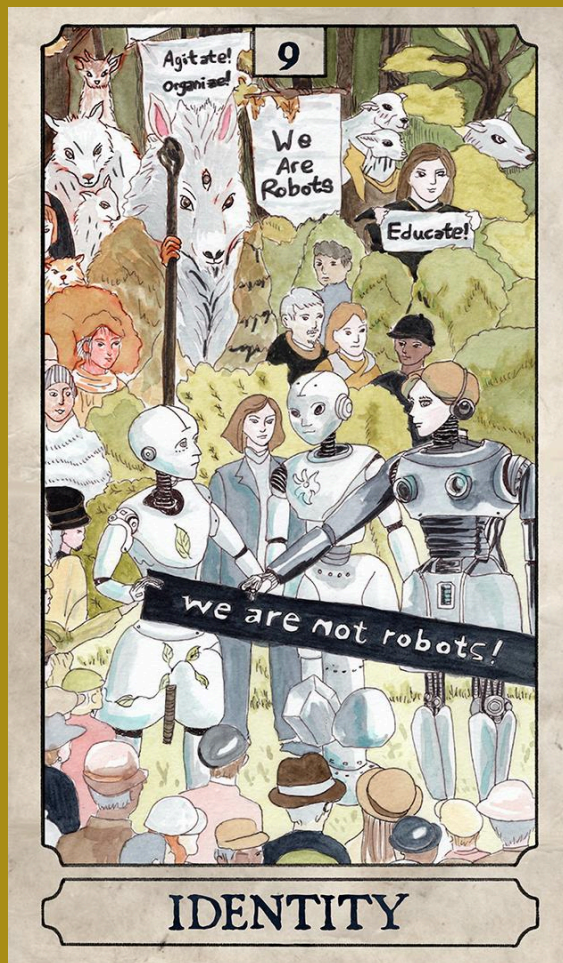
Optimisation



In the game of optimisation, time time time see what became of me. What is the lure of optimisation, for both legal and computational technologies? How do your technologies relate to the dimension of time?

The card shows a strange blue-coloured humanoid figure with a heavy torso and shorter legs that look deformed. The figure is draped in several clocks, watches and timekeeping devices. Several more clocks also float about in the void behind it. They are painted in the surrealist style of the 20th century painter Salvador Dalí and are particularly reminiscent of his 1931 painting, *The Persistence of Memory*. The humanoid figure on the card seems to have developed a hunchback from carrying all these mechanics of time. It seems to sip on the gear mechanics of a clock while holding what could be a timesheet or checklist using a limb-like appendage protruding from its thigh. The figure intent at work engaged in what seems like agricultural labour. Perhaps at a plantation? The green bushes in front of it seem scattered with gold coins. The figure has clocks for its eyes and in the middle of its forehead and also wears clocks for shoes, perhaps indicating how its sight and movement have been compromised by timekeeping devices. But have they been compromised? Or just been made more efficient and optimal? Could this figure be understood as a mechanical man? Or just another human cosplaying as a machine?

9 Identity



Technologies of law and of computation shape the concept of the self, and then police its boundaries. To humanise or to dehumanise, which is the way? Or might there be a third direction into which you shall step?

The card illustrates a complicated scene with crowds of several kinds of people. It seems that some are protestors, others are counter-protestors, and yet others are spectators or onlookers. Alternatively, it is perhaps some sort of parade. In the centre of the image stand two androids clad in white silicone skin, a human-machine hybrid with a metallic body and femme face, and a femme-presenting human with dark hair. Together they are carrying a black-painted banner with text in white that reads, "We are not robots!"

They are followed by human figures of various skin colours standing amongst green bushes. Behind them is a motley group of humans and wolf- and deer-like animals holding placards that say "We are robots", "Agitate! Organise!" and "Educate!" Tall trees as if in a wooded area stand behind them.

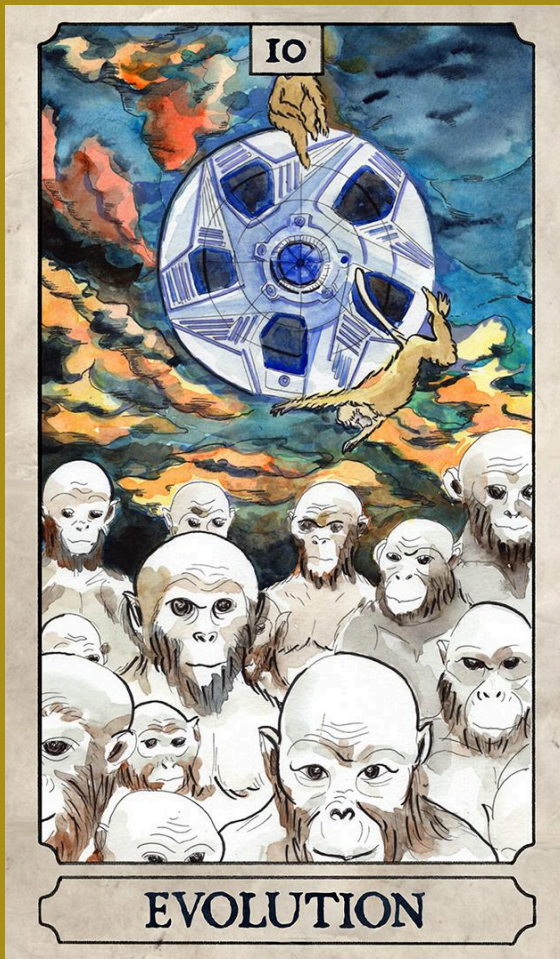
In the front of the picture, facing away from the viewer are several human figures standing together as onlookers to witness this scene of protest or parade.

10 Evolution

The promise of progress is the time bomb on which civilisation's technologies of computation and law tick. But growth can be a hallucination to keep you chained and away from your being.

On the card, we see several hominids of various types and ages gathered in a group. They are facing the front. Some of them look at the viewer, some examine each other. They are covered with hair on their bodies, face, and chest but have bald heads. More often than not, their foreheads are wrinkled, indicative perhaps of their thinking minds? Many of them certainly do look clever and self-congratulatory!

In the background, grey and blue clouds gather against a yellow and orange sky. Suspended in the sky above the hominids, we see a white space-age shape which could be a disc or sphere, but looks like a wheel from this angle. It has a royal blue shuttle door at its centre and a design within its circular shape that is reminiscent of the five pointed star. On the top of this space-age disc, sphere or wheel which seems to be turning in slow motion, there sits an ape or hominid of an older and more primitive kind. Another ape or hominid of a similar kind leaps in tandem with the wheel's motion, drawn in by gravity.



11

Scales

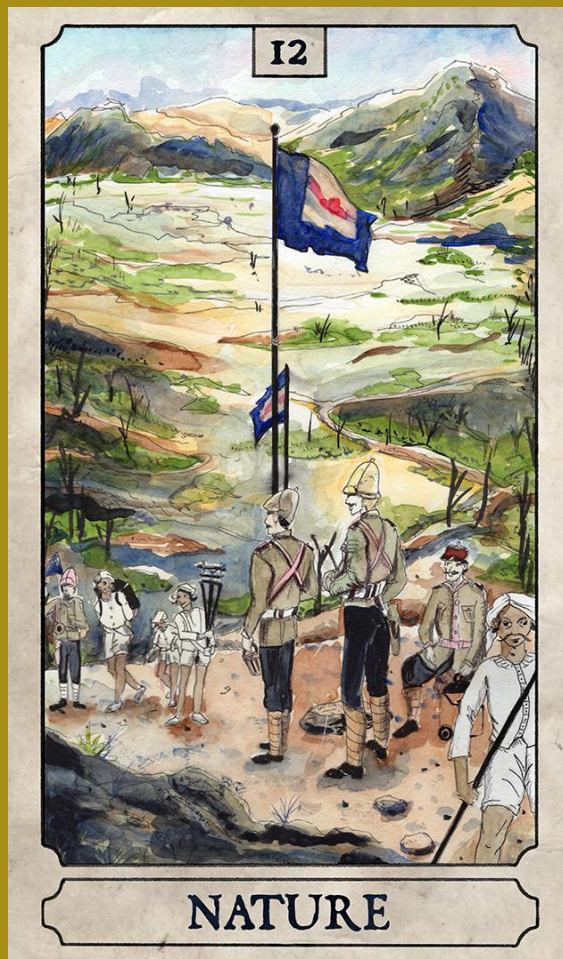
At large scales, everything seems smaller. At small scales, things seem graspable. The perspective from below makes injustice visible. The view from above heightens the lust for accumulation. Yet the scales always seek to be balanced. Figure how your technologies orient with the scales and where.



The image on the card is framed by a wooden archway with green and brown leaves. In the centre of the card, a giant light-skinned and masc-presenting person with dark hair stands dressed in a white suit and tie with a black pocket square. The person is holding a large elaborate wooden staff in their right hand. From the top end of the staff, green leaves sprout, and a string connects to a beam balance scale. On the left scale, gold seems to pour in from a cluster of buildings on the left side of the picture, which could be a factory. A portion of gold then pours into a container placed below the scales. It seems that it is then converted into containers of food placed on two trolleys underneath. From this, animals and humans, who look tiny in comparison to the giant holding the scales, partake. The tiny humans are dressed much more humbly and are accompanied by a sheep or goat. A container shaped like a beaker or a light bulb is placed at the bottom. The gold from the right scale is sneakily rerouted and hidden behind the giant person with the scales. A dog barks at this person.

12

Nature



Nature is a man-made category, which legal and computational technologies will look to either rape or to save. Measure for measure. Nature will also be used as a justification for the most heinous violence, because civilisation is something to covet.

The card depicts what could be a military geological survey exercise. In the centre of the image, three light-skinned officers dressed in khaki uniforms stand guard while three dark-skinned people carry and set up heavy-looking geological survey equipment up a hill. The latter are dressed in turbans and traditional white cotton shirts and lungis. On the left, a fourth uniform officer seems to direct the placement of the survey equipment. In the background, two flags coloured blue, red and white stand, perhaps marking the areas where the geological survey has already been completed. In the far distance, more hills coloured green and brown stand against a blue sky. A few trees stand in the landscape, but most seem stunted or cut down. The scene is reminiscent of the colonial geological surveys carried out to measure, classify and map large tracts of land across Asia, Africa and Australasia for military and administrative control as well as natural resource exploitation or “management.” While low-waged ‘native’ labour and aboriginal knowledges of the land were extensively leveraged to produce accurate survey maps, they were rarely acknowledged.

13

Frontier

At the frontier, dark magic awaits. The foreigner, the witch, the wild, the unfamiliar. Grappling with alterity requires gumption. How do your legal and computational technologies feed the fear of the frontier, the wonder of the frontier, and the dreams of taming it or rendering it useful?



The card image shows a scene in a cave or a dark underground passage lit by some yellow ceiling lamps. Is it a temple or an abandoned mine shaft? In the centre, a dark-skinned femme-presenting person with long white hair stands at the top of some steps. The person holds a distinct pose, left shoulder higher than the other, the left arm outstretched. Is it pointing towards something? In the right arm, the person holds a red stick or rod from which flecks of red emanate. Is it fire, blood or flower petals? Similar flecks adorn the long dress worn by this person. On the bottom of the steps, a group of light-skinned people and a child stand dressed in colonial fashion. One of them points to the dark-skinned person, while the others whisper amongst themselves. A general sense of awe and fear seems to surround them. Is the dark-skinned person trying to scare them? Or warn them of a danger? Or are they just in a trance? It is unclear. The image may remind of a racialised engraving in Mary Evans Picture Library/Everett Collection, of the Black Native American woman Tituba, accused and persecuted in the Salem witch trials.

14

Symbiosis

Mycelial tracks in silicon microchips. How do technologies of law and of computation connect– the world, the planet, the solar system, and each other? Fungal networks of symbiosis converge and diverge from your settled vision of law and technology. Make it make sense. Tell that story.

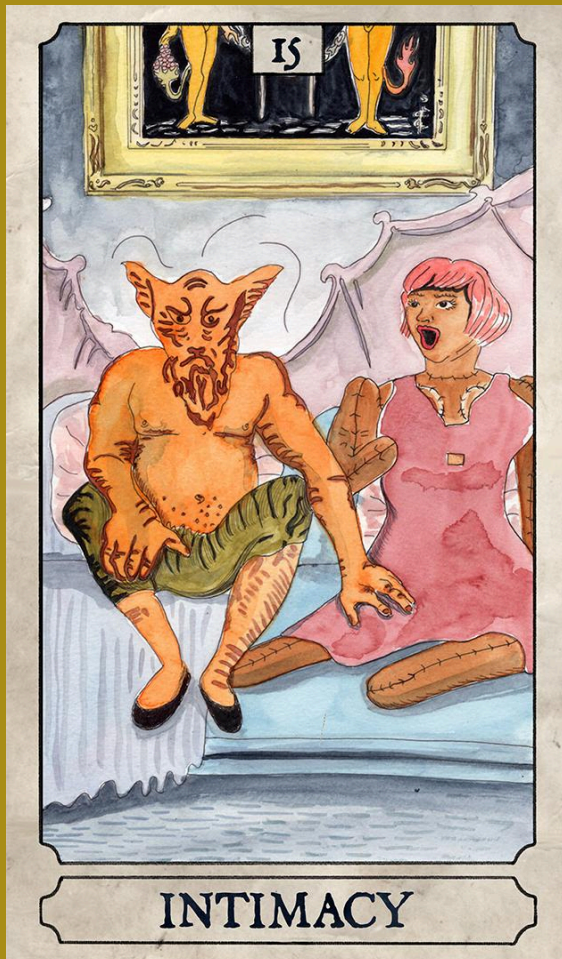
The card illustration seems to show a network of mushrooms or mycelial fungal tracks. They are arranged in white and blue coloured grids, which is unusual. The grid structure however is reminiscent of the circuitry in a microchip. At some of the nodal points in the grid, there are raised circular platforms that are coloured green. Blue, pink and brown mushrooms with curved tops stand on these platforms. The base of these platforms also seems supported by mycelial networks in noodle-like structures that could be mistaken for tree roots.

In the space between the grids, dark green vegetation seems to flourish. The image may also conjure the vibe of a city with its network of vegetation and fungus, its circuit connections and non-human inhabitants.



15

Intimacy



Legal and computational technologies bewitch you in the most intimate of ways. This is realised by engineering your desires. True desire is your communication channel with the land, but some are pounced upon and made addictive. To disrupt your communes...Remember opium?...And the pursuit of happiness?

The card depicts a demonic creature with large wings, bare torso, and pointy ears sitting on the edge of a bed coloured blue with a white sheet on one end of it. The creature is frowning at the viewer with its mouth turned downwards in what could be interpreted as a sullen look. But there may be other interpretations. The creature's arm is placed on the thigh of a femme-presenting humanoid figure with brown skin and pink hair. The figure wears a short pink dress or negligée. It is a substantially busty figure with an open mouth and no legs beyond the thighs. There are arms but no hands. One may see stitches running along the figure's arms, thighs and neck. Or are they scars? Is the figure a doll or a robot or a human amputee? It is unclear. The illustration may remind some viewers of the media images of electrical engineer and AI programmer, Sergio Santos with the sex robot Samantha. On the card, behind this tableau and above the bed hangs a large picture such that the viewer may only discern the bottom half. Two pairs of light-skinned humanoid legs joined by chains may be seen.

16

Consumption

Technologies of law and computation facilitate and are facilitated by consumption. Consumption is an act of eating. It is also an infectious disease that constricts your breathing. Trace the globally-distributed supply chains of any product across the planetary or solar systems. You shall know.



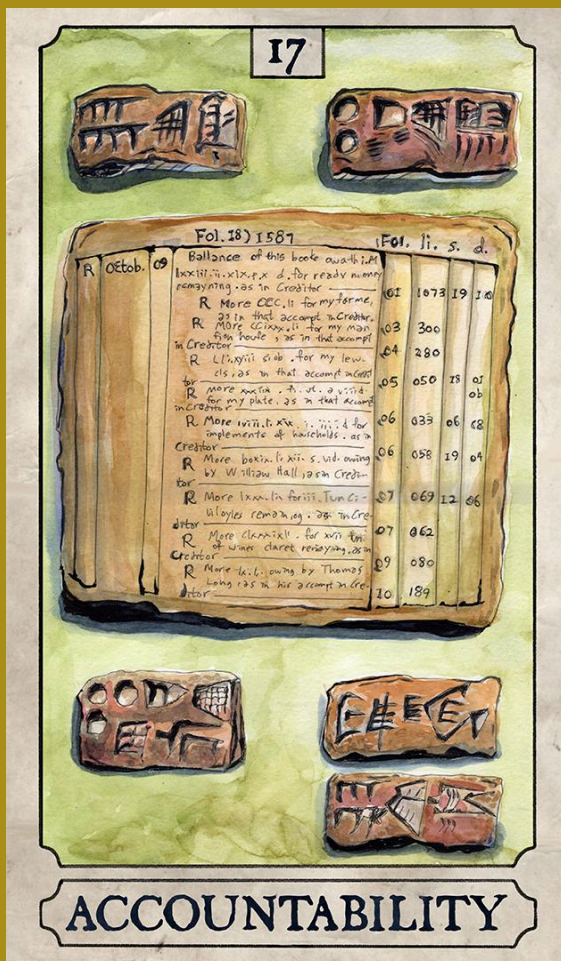
The card illustration shows a mountain of electronic waste, as if in a dump. The dumped pile of waste seems to include laptops, phones, mainframes, large monitors and screens as well as computational parts like microchips, circuit boards, keyboards, and cooling fans. In the centre of the illustration sits a dark-skinned masc-coded person amidst this dump. They are holding a couple of the dumped electronic items in their hands including what looks like a phone and a DVD player or a computer part. It seems that they are sorting through this electronic rubbish, trying to find items worth salvaging. Their hands are bare and they do not wear any protective gear. Left of this person sits a lighter-skinned person similarly clad and engaged in similar activities. They hold a calculator in one hand and are coughing, looking pale and sickly. The illustration seems to hark to the large e-waste dumps and the workers who sort through them for little money and no safety gear across various locations in Asia and Africa. E-waste from the Global North is often shipped and ceremoniously dumped here as part of 'recycling.'

17

Accountability

Some hold the cult of numbers brings about balance. Others, that counting is indispensable for accountability. Yet there are those who assert that commensurability is both overrated and devastating. Reflect on how and why your legal and computational technologies place their trust in quantities.

On the card, we see an image of a document from a folio in the centre. The document illustrates double-entry bookkeeping, an accounting system popularised in 16th century Venice. Earlier accounts of the double-entry bookkeeping practice are also found in Korea. This accounting system mandates the recording of every transaction into two accounts: one, credit and the other, debit. It is said to have transformed trading practices by improving accountability through the transparent use of numbers that can be compared against each other for consistency.



The document in the card image shows a folio title dated to the 1500s on the top of the document. The document shows 8 columns. The leftmost three columns consist of an initial and a name, followed by a serial number. The middle column consists of descriptions of the goods bought and sold. The four columns on the right account for credit and debit accounts. Around this folio lie clay accounting tablets in indecipherable scripts from ancient civilisations like Mesopotamia, Harappa and China.

18

Yearning

Yearning is not the same as desire. It is stupor, unrooted from material reality. Material reality consists of labour which oppressive technological design will happily erase. Which embodiments of labour do your computational and legal technologies write off the map? For which fantastical yearnings?



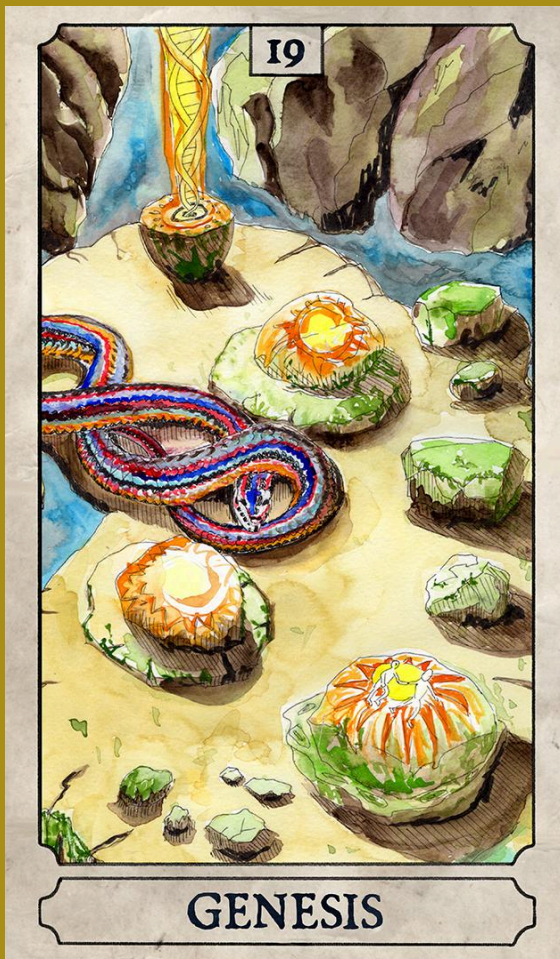
The illustration on the card depicts a human person with a greenish face wearing long gray and purple flowing robes and a pointy hat. They look like a popular depiction of a witch. The person carries a long stick that looks like a wand. Green swirls seem to emerge from it in the background. The person faces away from the viewer towards various household objects like brooms, water tubs and dishes, some of which have been anthropomorphised. They seem to use their wand to direct these objects to carry out domestic tasks, as if by magic...An anthropomorphised broom carries two pails of water, another broom sweeps the air while a tub of water floats about, the dishes seem to wash themselves. The scene is an interesting study of the 'magical' yearning for technology that makes everything 'easy' and removes the need for labour.

The scene looks similar to the representation of Mickey Mouse clad in wizard robes to direct household objects to perform tasks in the animated 1940 Disney film, *Fantasia*.

19

Genesis

What origin stories sustain your technologies? Narratives of origin and originality enchant both the legal and computational and grant them mystical authority. Simultaneously, they enact problematic power relations. Contradictory pathways of renewal. Pay heed for genesis does more than you think.



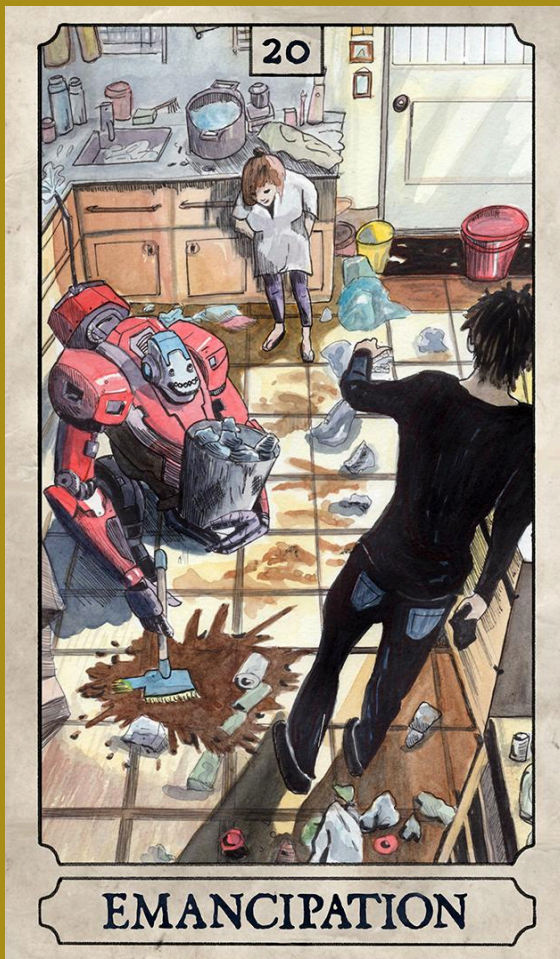
The image on the card shows a rocky land outcrop that is surrounded by water from what seems like a river or a spring. On this outcrop, there lies a giant multicoloured snake containing all the shades of the rainbow. This could be a reference to *Garranga'rreli*, the Rainbow Serpent, who is a powerful creation ancestor known by many Indigenous or Aboriginal peoples in Australia. The snake is coiled in a way that seems to form the symbol of infinity over and over.

Several stones surround the snake; some are covered with green moss, and others are painted in circles coloured yellow and orange. Some of these could be interpreted as the sun, some others are sea creatures. But it is unclear. The stone on the furthest end of the outcrop is shaped like a drum or a nutmeg. Upon its flat top surface, concentric circles are drawn. The outermost circle is orange or red with rays emanating out. Two more circles inside are coloured brown and black. From the inner circles, a projection of the double helix structure of a DNA molecule rises up into the sky.

20

Emancipation

Gendered politics and housework. Racialised politics and plantation work. Casteised politics and sanitation work. Legal and computational technologies as emancipation promise upliftment and deliverance from all! So take note of who-what gets emancipated and at whose-what's expense. Structural magic!



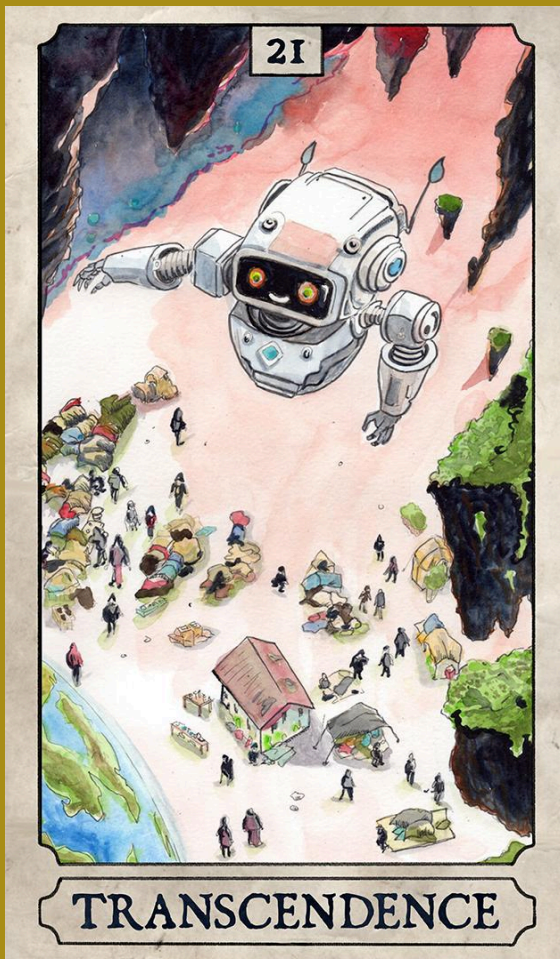
The card depicts a household scene, perhaps in a kitchen, which is quite messy. A light-skinned, dark-haired masc-presenting lithe figure clad in black stands with their back to the viewer. Their left arm is raised such that it is parallel to the floor, and in their right arm, they seem to hold a wallet. Opposite this, stands a light-skinned femme-presenting figure with light brown hair bent at the waist. It is difficult to discern their expression or to follow their gaze. But it seems that they are either looking at the floor which is quite full of rubbish and spills; or towards a red-coloured machinic contraption like a robot, which stands ahead, to their right. The robot has a broom in one hand, a waste bin in the other and sweeps the floor, trying to clear a spill on the floor. It is perhaps a household robot meant for domestic work. It wears a smile on its face. On the kitchen counter, there also seem to be unwashed dishes. The femme-presenting figure may be supervising the robot; or bowing before the masc-presenting figure. Or smiling in glee; or crouching in fear. It is hard to tell.

21

Transcendence

The search for solutions is a search for transcendence. Computational and legal technologies may promise to raise you above the uncertainties of earthly life and grant you access to the “full picture” from a higher vantage point. But the lower you go, the more space there is to enact change.

On the card, one sees a space-age robot, floating up above the world. The robot’s face looks like a computer monitor or screen, the back of which has a protruding shape. The screen is dark and displays what look like two multi-coloured eyes and a curve below it that could be perceived as a smile. The robot has two arms but no legs and a white outer casing. Below the robot is land, with some houses and people walking about. On the right side, one can also discern some cliffs with green vegetation. On the left, we see a bit of the Earth’s iconic view from outer space with blue oceans and green continental mass. This may indicate that the robot is in outer space and floating above alien land, but it is unclear.



The robot may be a nod to CIMON (Crew Interactive Mobile Companion), a lightweight AI drone that has served as an ‘emotionally-intelligent’ human companion to astronauts on the International Space Station. Long-term investment in AI companions like CIMON is also supposed to assist in the human settlement and colonisation of outer space.