

The Sensing Salon

A Reading on Citational Practices

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Abstract

The text is a written rendering (heavily edited transcription) of the Sensing Salon held in Stockholm, on February 3, 2023, for the question: How to engage citational practices that support collaboration/make space within the institutional context? This collective reading is divided into three parts: (I) a Tarot reading done by the two of us, which includes explanations for the meanings of the cards, the positions, etc.; (II) a collaborative reading, which took the form of a free-flowing conversation, involving many if not most of those present; and (III) we close this documentation of the session with a reading of a Celtic Cross for one of the cards in the first spread, using a preliminary version of a deck we are in the process of developing, the *Echo Tarot Deck**. The layering of readings allows for the complexity and nuance the question for this reading demands. As we zoom in with this reading, a glimpse of another image of citational practices appears.

**The Echo Deck* was inspired by the poems of African American–Japanese American poet Ai Ogawa. A provisional version of deck, with all the cards still blank, was first used in readings during our residency at Amant in New York, in 2022.



Each division of this reading is itself an instance of a citational practice, that is:

(I) It registers the citation practice embodied in Tarot, as one learns to read the cards from others who have used it before. Each tarot reading is the rendering of meanings for cards that will then be learned by those participating in it. So it is assumed that, when reading alone, they will cite a previous reading.

(II) This reproduction of the collective reading, as noted above, keeps the first person singular (I) in the text but it does not identify or distinguish different speakers.

(III) In this last section, reading with the Echo Deck, the use of a different deck to read a card that appears in a particular position in the previous spread consists in a double citation movement: on the one hand, the Echo Deck's spread elaborates on the meaning of that card in the Rider-Waite-Smith Deck. On the other hand, the meanings of Echo Deck's cards that appear in the spread will be inflected by the Rider-Waite-Smith card they were used to elaborate.

There is much going on in the following. It is impossible to provide an introduction to a conversation which itself is also an experiment in citation. Enjoy!

I.

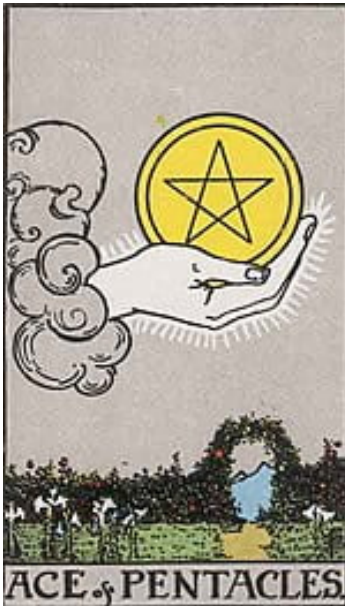
We'll say a little bit about each card, just short descriptions before we start to read it together. Feel free to join in at any point, perhaps you have different meanings or associations for a given card, or perhaps you do not know anything about the cards but notice something in the image. In any case you can always intervene and add onto our reading or ask questions.



Two of Pentacles

Let's begin with the first image, the card in position 1, the **Two of Pentacles**. This is a first rendering of the question of how to engage in a citational practice. At first, this card features a situation in which one has to juggle. How exactly? Well, this is the second card of the element of Earth, which corresponds to anything that has a material expression, to that which exists in time and space, and is accumulable. As you can see, the human figure appears to be juggling two coins in an infinite movement. The coins can be read as opposites, conflicting demands, that need to be balanced or juggled. Even if it's complex, the figure is following the rhythm of the

water behind them, which makes the action more joyous, more doable, kind of like a dance.



Ace of Pentacles

Like other cards, this one has this dual meaning: on the one hand, it refers to a situation in which there is too much to handle; on the other hand, it also indicates that it is doable (and even enjoyable) if one finds a rhythm. As a card of the suit of Pentacles, its basic referent is materialization; in particular it indicates that all that it is to be done in order to bring something into actuality (spacetime) is there. That is, while the first card of the suit, the **Ace of Pentacles**, refers to the potential, the seed, for materializing, the **Two of Pentacles** reminds us that we have that which is necessary for doing so. Now in the context of a previous conversation around the question, which framed citational practices' potential in terms of choice between revolution or reform, this first image seems to indicate that it may not be about that. It suggests that it is a 'doing.' Since the card indicates a duality that can be handled, like holding, applying, two opposite strategies.



Five of Cups

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The second image, the card in position 2, refers to what delimits the issue, something that plays out in it but it is not noticed or acknowledged. Here we have the **Five of Cups**. The suit of Cups corresponds to the element of water. As you know, water is that which connects at the material level, in terms of being that which enters in the composition of almost everything that exists. Customarily, it corresponds to feelings, emotion, and personal relations. The number five in the Tarot corresponds to challenges, difficult, disruptive changes after a period of stability or stabilization. This card more immediately expresses grief and loss. As you see, the figure is sad, curved over the cups that have been spilled. However, it also suggests something else, which is indicated by the fact that there remain two other cups still standing cups that are behind them. The person doesn't notice it but we do. More importantly, when this card shows in a reading, it is an invitation to look around, stop focusing on what was lost, and to attend to what remains. In any event, the issue, which is presented materially by the **Two of Pentacles**, is delimited emotionally by the **Five of Cups**.

These two cards, the **Two of Pentacles** and the **Five of Cups** constitute the inner cross, the initial figuring of the question, as being of a material nature with an emotional orientation. We could say at this stage that it may be about an emotional investment in citation, in the context of the institution. But it's still fuzzy.



Seven of Pentacles

The next card, in position 3, refers to what is manifested in the inner cross. It is about something that happened in the distant past or something operating currently, but unconsciously. It is the **Seven of Pentacles**, which is also about the material aspect. In the Tarot, the number seven refers to challenges. Here it is about being patient while waiting for rewards for work done. The person in the card waits, as the pentacles grow on the tree. When it appears this card indicates that the rewards for work done are on the way, but also that one needs to be patient and wait a bit longer, that is, the challenge here is to be patient, to wait.

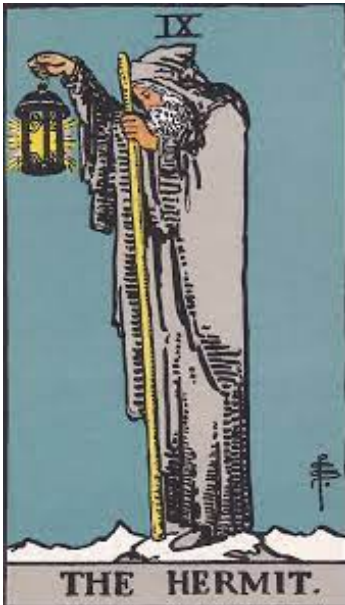


Ace of Swords

The next card, in the position 4, refers to the recent past, to something, an event or an encounter that has ushered this issue. Here we have the **Ace of Swords**, which, as the card number one, is about inspiration, the potentiality for something new. The suit of swords correspond to the element of Air, which is associated with the intellect, with a possible new way of thinking about something. It shows that the question is about a potential or a possible new way of thinking about something of an intellectual nature. This is coherent. It makes sense that a question about citation appears as a “doing” (**Two of Pentacles**) which results from an awareness of, or some indication of the potential for a new intellectual project (**Ace of Swords**). What is intriguing is the fact that it is delimited by a negative emotional disposition, sense or experience of loss (**Five of Cups**).



Nine of Wands



The Hermit

The following card, in position 5, refers to how the situation is perceived, how it is seen, is the **Nine of Wands**. The suit of wands correspond to the element of fire, which refers to creativity, generativity, inspiration. As you can see, the person in the **Nine of Wands** appears a little bit beaten up, watchful but showing signs of exhaustion, tired of so much struggle. The Major Arcana corresponding to the Nines is **The Hermit**. That is, the Nines recall the individual. This also seems to indicate an emotional dimension, as the image of the individual fatigued or beat up by trying to handle (**Nine of Wands**), the juggling of tools (**Two of Pentacles**) for a materializing (writing?), which appears as a feeling of loss, as something to be grieved instead of celebrated (**Five of Cups**). Of course, the **Seven of Pentacles** underneath indicates that the rewards are coming and the **Five of Cups** is also asking us to pay attention to the whole situation, and not concentrate only in one dimension.



Strength

Position 6 describes how this question unfolds or what it is really about (and not how we see it, as the previous

position), we have **Strength**, which is a Major Arcana. The woman in the card is gently opening the mouth of a lion, with grace. Like in the **Two of Pentacles**, as you see, there is the infinity sign on top of her head. This card is about the courage to face the lion, that is, uncontrollable instincts, passions, strong feelings. It is not about the use of physical force; her strength is wisdom. Given the preceding cards, **Strength**, appearing in this position, may be about inner growth, in the context of dealing with an emotional investment in tasks related to the particular kind of doing to which citation belongs, that is, writing.

These six cards complete the cross, the inner cross (positions 1 and 2) which figures the issue and the outer cross (positions 3, 4, 5, and 6), which gives its context of emergence (positions 3 and 4) and appearance (positions 5 and 6). The pillar of transformation, the next four cards, which form this vertical line, here to the left of the spread, provide more information about the context of appearance of the question.



Eight of Wands

At the bottom, the position 7 corresponds to us, that is, the querents, who are asking the question. We have the **Eight of Wands**. The suit of the Wands corresponds to the element of Fire. The number eight is a tool of the Major Arcana we just read, Strength. The **Eight of Wands** indicates something that is taking place right now, that is, the quick completion of a process that is immediate, achievement of goals.



The Magician

Next position 8 refers to the environment, in many possible ways it can impact the issue, that is, how it receives it, how it influences it, etc. Here we have another Major Arcana, **The Magician**, which is card number one. This is the figure of creativity, as it has the ability to work with all four elements (Water, Fire, Earth, and Air). In some decks, it is called the artist, but we can also call it the author. It is very much the figure of the subject.

Because of the many possible meanings of this position, we need to wait a bit, spend more time with this spread before attempting to say what **The Magician** is doing here.



Four of Wands

In position 9, which refers to hopes and fears related to the question, the **Four of Wands** refers to a coming together for celebrating something, a scene of sociality, such as a wedding celebration or an anniversary. In any case, it is about a stable collective, a community of sorts coming together in celebration.



Seven of Wands

Finally, the final card, in position 10, is the outcome or what would become the issue if nothing changes in the previous positions (in case it is a positive outcome) or if some adjustments are made (in case it is a negative outcome). Here the **Seven of Wands** indicate yet another challenge, but now at the level of creativity and inspiration. The person in the card is being challenged by many others poking them from below. However, as you can see, the person is in an advantageous position.

(Just quickly, before we move to the next two cards, there is a nice correspondence between the two 'completion' positions, that is, the 6th and the 10th, in which we have, respectively **Strength** and the **Seven of Wands**. This combination can be read as indicating that the dealing with the issue in a generative growth oriented way [**Strength**] takes us to a position of advantage in dealing with the challenges [**Seven of Wands**] related to a doing [**Two of Pentacles**] which can and does result in emotional loss [**Five of Cups**].)

Not everyone includes the next two positions the significator (top right) and the context (bottom right) in the Celtic Cross spread. We do because they offer referents to the reading, which are intrinsic to it, as you will see now.



Knight of Wands

At the bottom, the **Knight of Wands** refers to the context, the moment in which we are performing the reading. A Court Card, it corresponds to traits, abilities, or capacities which one may have or need and which may be presented by another person or persons. The Knights represent drives, energies related to each element. The **Knight of Wands** then tells us that right now, there is the motivation and the energy to look for inspiration, for change and transformation.



The Moon

At the top, in position 0, is the cipher, that is a key for reading the whole spread as well as the cards in their specific positions. Here we have a Major Arcana, **The Moon**, which corresponds to fears and anxiety, confusion, but also to intuition. In the image, you see two scared dogs, howling at the reflections of the moon, signaling confusion by the lack of light, and a crayfish coming out of the water, signaling the intuition and feelings. Unbothered by the "lack of clarity", the crayfish feels its way through and finds the path. **The Moon** both

indicates uncertainty and the confusion that arises from not knowing, and the tools through which not knowing can be navigated. As a key to this spread, The Moon tells us how to read it as perhaps referring to the emotions that are at play in doing, that we are not comfortable in this *doing*, even though the spread as a whole tells us that it is doable.

II.

In the collective reading, several aspects of the spread were highlighted, as we looked at the cards in connection with the question as well as other issues. When editing we decided not to identify the speaker. As an alternative citational practice, this rendering of the conversation presents each utterance as already the collective reading the spread, in which each person each member of that group, including the two of us is just subject of citation. Each will be still identified by the first-person pronoun (when used) but what has been said is not reproduced as it is in the recording. As said initially, the text has been heavily edited. Like any citation then, what has been said by those present has also been reworded in order to both make sense in the form of this particular text and in terms of the content particular to a reading of a Tarot spread

The initial focus was on the **Five of Cups**. We recalled how the fives in the Tarot are the tools of **The Hierophant**, which is the Major Arcana that figures the institution, in its conservative aspects. When it shows up, it's usually about feeling constrained by the institution and its requirements. In this spread it came out as the **Five of cups**, and seems to signal emotional attachments to the institution. It indicates that emotional investments come to the fore with this question about how to do citations otherwise. It seems that it is not letting go of citation altogether, which was a question raised initially, which was about why the concern with or interest in citation. Can it not be a revolution? right? But this card is already signaling the work to be done, which in this context seems to be obviously juggling what has to be done, and then also what one would like to bring – but doing it against a certain emotional investment or a certain sense of loss, or of losing something, while not attending to the two cups in the back.

An interesting note: **The Magician**, in position 8, indicates that the author (the one citing) is present in/as the environment. That combined with Four of Wands, the stability of the community, as hopes and fears, it makes me wonder if the emotional work here is the task of Strength.

Something else we need to figure out: the **Knight of Wands**, which is about change, travel, fast, quick, whatever, the **Seven of Pentacles** is asking for patience, and the eight of wands which again gives the sense of being too fast, too quick. It's as if the spread is advising us to wait, noting that it is all happening too fast. At the same time, **The Moon**, the cypher, is suggesting that this is not a question for which we will obtain an answer; well, not in the ways that we usually expect answers; rather you have to feel your way through the process, through confusion and uncertainty.

I wonder about this card, **Five of Cups**. That is, I'm thinking of feelings, like the past sorrow, past emotional baggage. I wonder if this figure is a reminder of what is lost, actually having seen those other cups, and then turned away. Or if it's about like, denial and not knowing the emotions, or like, having difficulty to actually deal with emotions, with the two cups that remain intact, behind.

Yeah, that goes nicely with the **Nine of Wands** on top because that figure is on the lookout and is waiting for more to come. Feeling like I have to defend it all, still, again! I had this strong feeling yesterday, and then I had this voice in me that said: if you actually feel it, it's not as much a big deal. So then I felt this emotion that was

quite overwhelming at first I thought, but that was kind of letting a wave of emotion come in, which was not comfortable. But it also had some joy in this kind of juggling.

The Fives can also be an adjustment, so an emotional adjustment that has been embodied.

It takes away the individual. If you think something like: the emotion is not mine, it comes from the past, the conditioning and it goes through, then it is less about you.

I was thinking, I mean, there is also a sense of security, with the Pentacles cards. So the way I see that, there is an emotional cost, which in some ways is quite high. You have **The Moon**, which is such an intense card, in all this sort of anxiety and kind of emotional struggle. And the **Five of Cups** which also signals emotional struggle. So actually, this is a generative situation. We can say, for example, that being in the institution, you can do a lot. But maybe it takes strength to balance these two things, and there is an emotional cost, with the sort of generative possibility of being able to do a lot, or make something happen. The costs are quite high, but the rewards are also quite high. And then you need strength to sort of negotiate that balance.

The Moon reveals a lot. The question comes as an intellectual question about citation and how to open space and support, but it's very charged emotionally, because it undermines certainty, because all those practices of citations establish authority, establish rules, establish ways of doing things, that gives us also the feeling of doing something right and not plagiarizing. It also means to address how to live without certainty. And maybe **Strength** is a tool, maybe we can think of **Strength** as a tool that allows us to exist with that uncertainty, which means also aiming to always deal with unexpected challenges that sometimes you might have to refuse, sometimes you have to break something, sometimes you have to help it.

I know, but it feels like **The Magician** is still ruling the game today.

I see this sequence, seven, eight and nine... is there a connection between those cards there?

I was thinking about that too. **Seven, Eight and Nine of Wands** refer to the end of a creative process, coming through its conclusion. That is something else to come, but there is no beginning. There is a beginning with the **Ace of Swords** but it's an intellectual beginning. It's not that temporal beginning

And the Nine of Wands is about how the situation is visible, how it's perceived, or how it's been thought about. It's been thought about as bringing an end also to a certain legitimization in the context of the question, the legitimizing process of citational practices. Maybe this tells us that both these two cards because this is very fast, but it also has to do with something that happens at once that it has been just a challenge, that also is sudden, and you have to face it. So that maybe it's something that is ongoing, that it's not the end of something and the beginning of something. But maybe you're right in the middle of it all; that it is more of a way of dealing with those issues, rather than ending a way of doing citations and starting another one, maybe.

What could be reflected in this waiting? Patience? But what's patience? In what sense? Waiting for what?

How long? It's not explicit in there, because it is unconscious. It is something that is being manifested, but it's about waiting, having done the work, you know, creating, cultivating and generating these things, and now just having to be patient, telling, like, just wait, it's just that you have to wait. Now, I think it's also in relation to the question, I mean, because it's about how to engage in a citational practice that supports collaboration. I was

looking at this very much in terms of a collaboration with a time of its own, no matter that you want to destroy the system, that you want to do something else. It's the labor of human, non-human, and everything coming together to become something and be materialized beyond what you can think, intellectually, your inspirational idea. There is something that is the time of the things existing and transforming, that is the larger collaboration, that you're working with.

Well, we asked a question about how to engage in citational practices that support collaboration and make a space within the given institutional context. Here we have the figure of the individual subject appearing, **The Magician**, in context within which the question is received and is about what the question is reflecting. Then, with the **Five of Cups** showing up indicating some emotional investment in that very institution (**The Hierophant**) where he (**The Magician**) rules.

It may also be about the strength to ask the question, both collectively, but also on your own and in your own way. Like every time you're challenged, every time that position is challenged, or every time you challenge that order, or that violation, I shouldn't do this, you know, or what does it mean to ask the question of citational practice, asking the question of how much that investment is playing out? Not only in the negative sense of this, since that emotional investment may also be what grounds your minimal existential security, knowing that you have the capacity to do something or write something, or honor the relationships that come in your writing, or support your argument.

I was thinking about the Lion, like it's also not about taming the lion. There is something for me, I think it's about the erotics. I think the lion is also calling for some other way of knowing that has to do with the erotic, and not just focusing on the institutions and our emotional investment in them...

Are you also saying that in addition to the emotional investment, there's also an erotic investment in that authority?

The **Five of Cups** sort of recognize that it's about perception. Like you're failing to recognize the potential of emotions. Not only the emotions attached to the institution but also to all those other ways, you were mentioning, of deciding not to feel alone. In a way it is like searching for collaboration without repeating that severing of the erotic, cutting it out because it has no space in there.

Also if you think about the question of how to engage, you can engage in a certain way for the pleasure of it and not the recognition that it will become another institutional way of doing things. In that sense, I think that **Five of Cups** is really about something that is going to be lost if you abandon the rules of the game, because the institution will remain. So coming to terms with that, that is an attachment that we just lost.

Maybe that which is opened up, actually. It is hard to let go of the attachment because it's so much about your existential security or like, safety. But actually, when you're able to let that go and turn around to these other two cups, you have this other pleasure that comes out that was, you know, that could have not opened up, because it's not an intellectual operation or another way. It's also the not-losing the pleasure, not losing that kind of erotic moment. I think that's also where a lot of conflicts come from, which reflect in our investment.

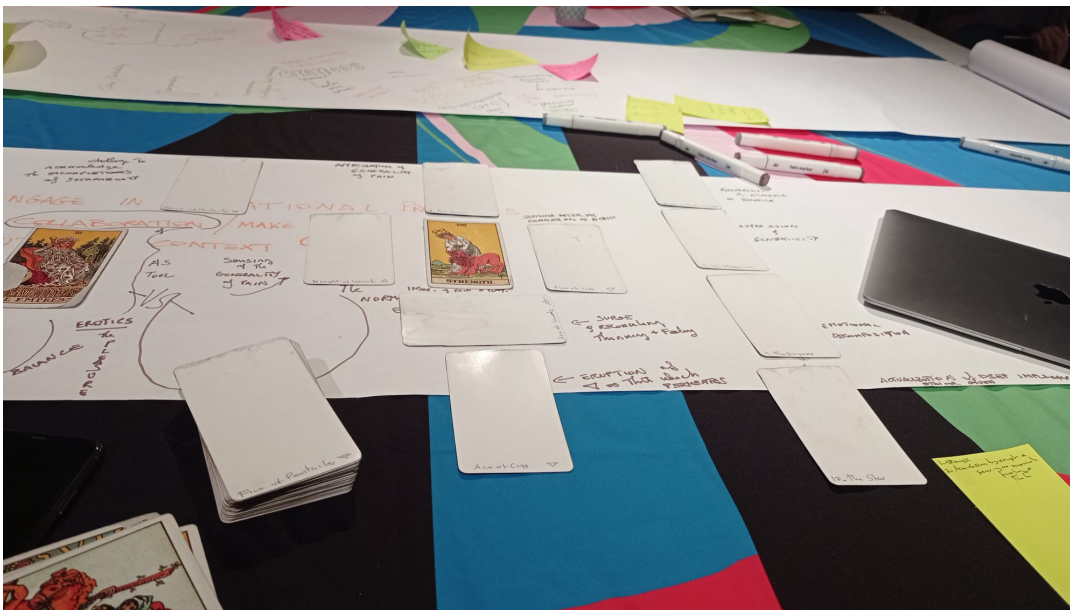
Just want to recall this shorter version of the question that you wrote down just to remind ourselves: how to engage in citational practices that support collaboration and make space within the given institutional context? I feel like we've slightly lost the citation practice. We've been talking a lot about institutions. It would be nice to

apply this a little bit more to the citation of practice to get this sort of vision of what that might be.

It's funny when we go back to the question and we look at the central card, we see somebody juggling two coins in a closed loop; it is funny because citation is a little bit like closing the loop. I cite something and I bring it in, and then I look for something else, and I bring it in... If we can read this as an image of citational practice It also shows a practice of how to build, with quite a lot of patience. I mean it is a lot of repetition, it is a practice, it requires patience..., yeah, yeah...lots of patience.

III.

We thought to maybe do another reading to zoom-in the card of **Strength**, which appeared before in position number 6, describing how the issues unfolds or what it brings.



For this reading we begin with the card of Strength. We place it in position 1 and then unfold a celtic cross spread around it using a preliminary version of Echo Tarot Deck, which we are in the process of developing. Through this spread we ask more information about the Strength card, which was in the position of the unfolding (position 6) in the previous reading. What is that Strength about?

The provisional meaning of **Strength** in this deck is the realization of inseparability.

In this spread it is delimited by the **Ace of Swords** in position 2 which is a surge of sensing, the possibility to reconcile thinking and feeling and to disinvest from formal thinking.

Underneath, in position 3, we have another ace, another beginning, the **Ace of Cups** which manifests the possibility to feel deeply implicated as the constitutive connection of matter.

Before Strength, in position 4, as the past we have the **Knight of Wands**, which was in the position of the context in the previous reading. In this deck the court cards are operators – like performers, they do something. The Knight of Wands is the sensing (thinking+feeling) of the elementality of personal pain which ignites matter's inherent transformability. It also indicates a beginning for it sparks the possibility of transformation.

The way Strength becomes visible or is perceived, is indicated by the card of **The Lovers** in position 5, which we read as an appreciation of the elementality of pain. The generality of pain, given at the elemental level, makes visible how everybody and everything also hurts, making the elementality of pain a possible ethical base guiding and supporting our thinking and acting (and citing).

The **Two of Cups** in the unfolding, position 6, indicates a sensation of an emotional connection beyond the individual. The personal pain is felt as an echo of the general, elemental pain, as a sensation of deep implication.

The Pillar of Transformation begins with position 7, describing all of us asking the question as **The Star**, which we read as complicity. A realization of deep implication which is given in/as the practice, a doing that takes collaboration as something given and already ongoing.

However in position 8, the environment, we find **The Emperor**, signaling on one hand that we are still moving within his realm, and on the other that the decomposition of emotional mastery is already manifesting.

Rather fittingly, in position 9, we find another traditional figuring of the subject, **The Magician**. In this position it may indicate the fear of that individual coming back or being reinforced but also, perhaps as a hope, a generativity that is not tied to the individual.

The outcome of the reading, in position 10, shows the **Eight of Pentacles**, which we read as a realization of sensing (thinking+feeling) as a practice, a doing that expresses elemental sociality. Eight is the same number as Strength and the Eight of Pentacles is the card of the apprentice, as well as of the master always working at it. The indistinction between the apprentice and the master indicates that this practice is about learning and teaching at once, while doing the work.

The last card at the bottom of the deck, describing the context in which we are performing this reading from, is the **Five of Pentacles**. It is felt as anxiety that shows how the emotional infrastructure of the subject (fear, guilt, shame, anger) disrupt morphosis, matter's capacity to transform and change.

As we go about reading the spread collectively we enter several lines of speculation. We begin to discuss the shift from the element of Air (Ace of Sword) to the element of Water (Ace of Cups) which is being manifested in this spread. It inspires a possibility of thinking about citation as an echo, a practice of resonating with others and of (re)generating spaces of resonance. We introduce **The Empress**, a central figure in this deck, as generosity, understood both as a generative principle and an ongoing practice.

The conversation around the Empress brings us to read the spread as if answering to a different question, which we formulate as: What can citational Practice do for the Empress? How to engage in citational practices, so that they work towards supporting collaboration and generosity rather than the authority of legitimization, even when staying within those institutional contexts?

In this spread, the realization of inseparability that Strength calls for – the inseparability between pain and pleasure, thinking and feeling – brings about an appreciation for the elementality of pain, for the shared capacity of feeling, but also of vulnerability. This connection is shared with anything and anyone, since it exists at the elemental level.

This reading thus expresses the possibility of a shift in thinking, a thinking based on water. In the context of this

question it can also be read as a shift from authority as the power of The Emperor, to generosity as the capacity of The Empress. We think about it concretely as the shift from citing the appropriate person, to supporting, invoking and making space for collaboration. Yet at the moment we can only do this in the logic of **The Magician**, or in the logic of **The Emperor**, in the sense that by citing those people or bringing them into the room, we give them legitimacy, and sometimes we don't want to do that, in order not to expose them. So how to balance this? What is the card of **Strength** telling us by showing up in the position of that which is unfolding?

As we zoom in **Strength** with this reading, a glimpse of another image of citational practices appears. Even though they continue to exist within the institutional context and its limitations, they gain an underground existence, or better an underwater one. There, citational practices care for the collaborations they invoke by nourishing all that's in between and underneath, supporting those connections: watering the ground like the figure in **The Star**.