



LEXICONO FTHEVAST LANDS

a psychedelic metal osr rpg

tales
of
the
future
long
long
past

**Luka
Rejec**

Synthetic Dream Machine



Lexicon of the Vastlands



A Future History of the Past



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Thank you to all the patient heroes.
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A

ABMORTAL

A sentience (sometimes human) that does not die of natural causes. Porcelain Princes and Ultras are often counted among the abmortals. Many mortals hate them, others worship them, the fortunate ones are ignorant of them. (UVG)

AEROLITH

Stuckforce-infused (?) rock generated from thin air, a common after-effect of catastrophic transmutation or portal failure. The rock is actively aerostatic—functionally weightless and motionless within a gravity well once position. It retains mass and requires sustained force to move. (UVG)

AFTER-DOG

A clade of various human and animal-tier sentients derived from a mythical creature called 'the dog'. Multiple traditions agree that 'the dog' participated in the peopling of Second Soil.

Most Vastlanders know the human dogheads. Only the unlucky have ever encountered the bestial viguolves in their various metamorphic incarnations. (RSDC)

ANGELS

The finest servitors of the Builders. (AKZ)

AUTHOR

Here, this work pretends to be fiction, there it claims to be non-fiction. Vignettes mix with archival reports, marginalian day-dreams slink into encyclopaedia accounts. Truth hides between the lines. Different sources crawl out of the Long Long Ago.

One author repeats, clothed in the flesh of many mortals. Scholars of the Viridian Board name the entity 'Dead Springtime', one of the ultra viris, the no-more men become ghosts of ones and nulls in the calculation membrane that envelops the Given World.

In the Venerable Passages, the humbled directorator of a newly-incorporated auto-factory cries out as she is led to the recycler, "I was old when another world

was young, and this one but twinkled in the eye of your cowardly warlord.”
(LotV)

B

BIROBOTS

Long Ago, or perhaps it was Long Long Ago, humanity split in two. To the stars and the places of the machine went the biorobots, to the gardens and the hidden places went the humans. Today the biorobots are few, nearly none, but the humans are many. This proves the superiority of the human over the biorobot.

†

“They look just like us,” says one human.

“You cut them, they bleed,” murmurs another.

“Look, no machinery,” gasps a third as she cracks open the biorobot skull.

“Yet, they are clearly robot,” says the first, perplexed, as he stirs his finger in the biorobot’s thought matrix.

“So like human brain, even tastes the same,” ventures the second.

“Nothing to be done, we’ll figure out the problem after we get rid of the infestation,” concludes the third.

The three humans all nod, satisfied.

†

“How do you create a biorobot, Mother Engineer?” asks the boy-child holding his cup of beer uncertainly.

“Training, dedication, repetition, condition, control,” pronounces Mother Engineer, “Now drink and be drunk, show you can’t be made a biorobot!”

The boy-child drinks and soon his eyes cross.

†

A lifetime’s dedication, a carousel of duties and obligations, a structured cog, a living cell, part of a greater whole, beyond heaven and hell.

O, glorious biorobot.

To be a biorobot, free from doubt and fear, a mind pure and unable to sin.

O, glorious biorobot.

O, joyful member of the machine.

†

“You zap them, they fry,” murmurs the biorobot.

“Look, full of machinery,” laughs the second as it cracks a human's skull.

“Broken synapses, burned beyond use, what a waste,” sighs the third. (LotV)

BONE-WORK, OSSEOPY

Hybrid discipline of necromancy and petromancy. Depends on the personality memories of bones combined with livingstone spirits to grow, reshape, and animate bone into useful forms.

Lapun ta Drughi, famed intellectual of the apocalypse, called it “... a lazy, dead-end petromantic shortcut for fools.” Sigmund med Nashimi, court dead-talker to the legal director of High Five, meanwhile said, “Bone-workers are nothing but hopped up mechanics, wiring bones and jolting them into a parody of life. This is to necromancy what potato stamps are to sculpture.”

The marmot-folk abide. (UVC)

BUILDERS

The godlike demiurge minds, spirits, or ghosts nominally responsible for creating the Given World.

Some cultures distinguish different Builders or Builder factions, such as the Vile, the Engineers, the Architects, and the Gardeners. Many fallen or regressed cultures treat surviving or Long Ago Builders as actual gods and demons. (AKZ)

BUILDERTECH

Magics of the Maker (MBUTE) used by the Builders in the Long Long Ago, now sought by fools, dilettantes, and troublemakers. Its power corrupts all who touch it.

The School of Clerk teaches that buildertech is the prime exemplar of ancient magic so advanced and finely controlled that to the Builders it was indistinguishable from technology. (UB)

C

CAT LORDS

The feline rulers of the Violet City and the Purple Land of the Cat use pheromones and mental parasites to direct their blissful, happy subjects. Too smart to bother with most day-to-day work, they allow the wizard-administrators and priest-servitors of the Violet Goddess to pretend to be in charge. (UVG)

COMMIEFORM, COMMUNAL BODY

Monstrous amoeboids created to carry the soul-personalities of multiple individuals beyond a single body's decay barrier.

The ur-biomancer Golny Zaga calls them “biological virtual-life machines.” The ancestrite sage Samo Shemarodashii pronounced anathema on them, saying, “The commieform is a perversion of the lineages of Maker and Builders! Humanity was not made protean, and these horrors must be cast out.” Most ancestrite cultures continue to offer ritual bounties for destroyed commieforms to this day.

Re-life technicians debate whether any of the stored soul-personalities are still viable today. As the solipsist libertarian One Random proclaims, “... the communal existence destroys the individual drive that uplifted the first humans to exceed their animal natures.” Most practicals agree with mechanus Ivar Doctogeniere III, who pointed out, “All this theoretical belly-aching is just talking heads ashamed to admit that our modern technomagics are not powerful enough to repair ka-ba dualities stored in biological matrices and re-embody them once more. We are, quite simply, not the gods our ancestors were!” (LotV)

D

DANGAY UPIR, RAINBOW WITCHES

Soulsold deathless lichens of the Decapolis. Have no ka. Their ba is stored and restored from wormway-entangled phylacteries. (URS)

THE DEEP MOSS

A circular region of verdant moss pillow-forest surrounding the former Laboratory Temple Samson, site of the Garden Goo incident. Advanced magitech rapidly fails in the area, and even primitive synthetic materials breakdown over a matter of days. The alienated zone is now home to primitive post-human hunter-gatherer clans using stone and organic tools.

The local bioactive field remains incredibly high. This means that the kill switch programmed into the organifactor bacteria is inactive in the area and the microbes rapidly convert metals and synthetics into organic building blocks: food for plants.

Phytomancers explain that the mosses are so prevalent because they have developed a symbiotic relationship with the bacterium. Their omnipresent spores are laden with the organifactors, and whenever they alight on a synthetic material, they rapidly consume it, fertilising a new moss bloom. (LotV)

THE DULL

Metaspace underlies reality. A nothing-something that evades conscious apprehension. Perception drifts as one travels a wormway through the dull. The mind easily sinks through numbness into existential horror.

One should travel smart, packing amusements and distractions. Many voyagers have gone mad for lack of a pack of cards. (UVG)

DRY BROTHERS

Legends, the superhuman.

Three mummified wyrms mark the three frontiers of Ebét. Tremendous, dozen-legged serpentine dragons, the elder brothers of the Living God. They all failed in the face of the Virgin Medusa and thereafter became his first lieutenants. Sinuous and terrible like their father, the Naga King, they protected the faithful of the Living God till their death on the Seven-Step March.

After their death they were mummified, their forms become as mountains to protect the blessed land even after their death.

Their true names are hidden, but lower-caste pop-tales call them Azure Dog, Jaspis Mountain, and Ivory Calamity. Azure Dog guards the wall of sky, where Great Green meets Long Fog. Jaspis Mountain marks the Gates of the Sun. Ivory Calamity strides across the Sea of Sand, most generous of the shifting dunes.
(DCM)

E

EBÉT, GREAT HOUSE OF COSMIC LIGHT, HUNDREDDATE

Popular geography, White City coast.

Venerable slave-holding empire on the southern shore of the Great Green. Ebét has a fine gradation of castes built on flesh-sculpting and the use of industrial necromancy to overcome the bounds of mortality. Ruled by the undying collective organism known as the Living God.

Ebét has dominated the River of Life and its nearby seas for a millennium, growing splendidly wealthy on trade and tribute from the known world. Over the last century, Ebét's gerontocratic priesthood and bickering administrator-nobles have struggled to organize a coherent geopolitical strategy to counter the rising Iksan empire northwest of the Great Green.

Addendum (DS ed., t-7): The indolence of Ebét's decline proved fatal at the last. After a long and bloody war, the eponymous capital of a hundred gates fell to the Iksan most-rational (hah-ed.) army. In the provinces, splinter biomancer and necromancer autarchies continue their resistance, each convinced they bear the true germ-line of their once-living god. (DCM)

ELEMENTS: GREEN, FIRE, WATER, WIND

Quarterlings say these elements capture the cellular structure of the living cosmos. Green is the ordered drive of life, fire is the entropic cascade of energy, water is the brute material of the physical, and wind is the swirling chaos of interaction. (UB)

ERA OF FORTY SHADOWS

Mythical era, creation cycle.

A fanciful period of wandering after the destruction of First Soil, when humanity scattered to the eight directions. Many stories attribute the birth of all sorts of daemons, from messengers to seducers, to this period. In the oldest Vastland tales, this shadow era ends with the golden flower era of Second Soil (see below). (LotV)

ERA OF SECOND SOIL

Mythical era, creation cycle.

After First Soil was lost, orphan humanity wandered for forty generations in the shadow carcass of their dead sun. They fed on the manna built by the gods' machines from the broken stuff of their old homes. Nutrition for the body, but not the spirit, many faded and became shells. Loops of cognition in bodies without soul or motive.

Second humanity was born when a dandelion seed landed on Second Soil. The seed germinated, rooted, grew, blossomed and seeded again and again, until the fields of Second Soil encompassed a myriad of myriads of golden flower-suns.

New gods were born, Wörms to dig new tunnels, Builders to create new fields, and angels to tend them for the children of second humanity. (LotV)

F

FAST STARS

Remnant cities, factories and paradises orbiting the Given World. A glittering reminder of modern decline. (UVC)

G

GARDEN ERA

Mythical concept.

Followers of the popular Recyclist School hold that after every armageddon, Builders arrive garden life into being once more. In this so-called Garden Era there is no strife as a fresh humanity spreads across a well-created world.

After the success of the Undead Springtime series of graphic poems, the concept has achieved mass popularity.

Scholars like Ari Topi te Nou argue that the concept is an echo of the historically-attested golden ages when a culture gains control of dormant buildertech to create a short-lived fully-automated luxury society. (LotV)

GHOUL

A cannibal sentient missing some essential part of common personhood, who must steal and consume it from other sentients. Examples include the Ebéteen biomancer ghouls, the yedayeen, who must consume flesh to rebuild their permanently mutating bodies, and the various flavors of vampire, who require bodily fluids to suppress the dessicating tendencies of their malfunctioning para-symbiotic systems. (RSDC)

GIVEN WORLD

The contemporary world as experienced by the uneducated. Many archaic quarterling cultures hold that the world is no natural phenomenon. Rather, they say, the divine Builders gave it to their ancestors when time began. (UB)

GOLDEN DESERT

A vast domain of rock and sand and stone dragons stretching towards the sunrise beyond the Yellow Lands. Only smugglers and caravans-illegal dare this inhospitable terrain rather than avoiding themselves of one of the seven active dull-way gates maintained by the seraglio maintainer clans. (UVG)

THE GREAT FORGETTING

Common term for the lack of records and decline supposed to have happened in the Long Long Ago. Some heterodox scholars and mystics suggest there was no Great Forgetting; rather, an ascendancy to divinity, or something similar, and

that all humans currently living in the world only acquired sentience after those prior beings—perhaps lings—departed. (UVC)

H

HEAVY WORLD

A world in the voids, made Heaven or left Hell, that is large enough to produce a sensation of weight. (LotV)

HOLIEST ADOM, SAINT ATOM, FIRST PARTICLE

Many times over the cycles of forgetting and remembering, cults have grown around the first—the Adom. Some worship its destructive aspect, other its creative, and some scientist traditions use technomagical rituals to use its secrets to power generative engines and synthetic minds. A typical tradition is that of the Hollow-priests of the abbé of the Holiest Adom, who worship it as the first particle made by the Maker. The alpha to the Given World's omega.

Today, it is a quaint tourist stop on the Cloud Provinces trail, but three centuries ago it was the source of a terrible reality permutation. The priests of that time became full of hubris and modified themselves, taking upon themselves angelic traits, feeding on sunlight, and attempting to build a Stalk of aerolith to reach the Maker's Ear in the airless heights.

Quiet President led the Chrome Battalion against the priests, and ever since the order has been hollow—every member scrubbed of meta-human and builder traits. (UB)

HOMESTEADING OF HELL

Heroic era, ethnogenesis folk tale.

A meta-cycle of narrative poems and spoken-word songs describing the emergence of humanity from beneath the earth to turn the surface of the Given World from a hell into a paradise.

Famous examples, like The Cicada and the Summer Tree and Fourteen Doses, survive as living folk traditions to this day.

The folklorist Nuta od Malafiga compiled 627 archival recordings and literary accounts from thirteen settled and unsettled neo-fac cultures to discern a historical basis for many of these fanciful narratives. However, she may went too far when arguing that, "... some humans transferred their essence into coherent radiation and lived on the surface as energy beings for millennia. Indeed, what meat-humanity called hell, was close to heaven for them. This implies that the

hell-firing may have been intentional, rather than an accident. An infernoforming project that disrupted an earlier terraforming project.”

She was sanctioned by the Board of Approved Histories (74,230-ck) and recanted. Following re-education, Malafiga was restored to her status and domains. (LotV)

THE HUTLANDS

Pangeography, location

“... it was late in the day and the suns, first and second both, beat us about face and pate as we crested the rim of the debris crater. Below us, westering in the doubled light, an inland coastland of shallow waters and swamps greeted us. The inland seas burped and roiled, where no doubt subsurface gates fed their abundant waters. A fetid place, unsuited to a modern civilization, but the ancients who had placed the feeder gates had thought things through.

Dotting the extensive swampland were tells of carbonized vegetables. Agglomerations of ponderous schuppenbaum, strapping cordaites, and frilly calamites harvested and assembled by servitor colonies obeying some ancient instruction.

We made for the nearest, a prominent structure rising some 60 cubits above the primeval forest. When we descended, we found the forest quite flooded, supporting itself upon root stilts much like a mangrove. Still, the levi-harnesses supported us, and like dandelion seeds we passed through the fecund gloom until our stillstar companion chirped that we had arrived at a tell.

There we found the servitors, rubbery biomechanicals two cubits tall and many-handed like an octopus, setting fire to the crust of wooden huts they had built upon the tell. Later we learned that this was how the tells grew: the servitors built stilt huts, then fired them and aggregated the sooty remnants into a steinkohl foundation for the next round of huts.

Though we stayed in the huts for several weeks, the servitors never bothered us. Perhaps they considered us guests, perhaps an unavoidable infestation.”

Source: Expedition 7, Dead Springtime and the Carpenters. (LotV)



ILL NANO

Mythical era, corruption cycle.

After Ill Nano, the corruption dwarf, fell from the sky, after the sun lost it's second eye, the creatures that kill and destroy were reborn from the mud and the dust. Ill Nano's broken dreams crawled like worms into the parks and fields of the peaceful homanders and awakened the curses of the untamed times. Many shambled broken and malformed, not long for this world, beyond even Ill Nano's ability to awaken them.

Some remained. The lasters who outlived the homanders, who went feral like their dogs and deer, cats and cattle, called Ill Nano's creations that survived the vlights.

Typical are the viguolves. Bear-sized omnivorous after-dogs, transformed by the strange dreams of Ill Nano. Some bear the handprints of their maker in the flashes of prophecy that glitter in their eyes.

The rarest, most accursed viguolves give birth to novelopes, intelligent creatures at first glance human but deeply alien. Novelopes develop as a tumour within the belly of a viguolf, ripping their way free when fully grown and in full monstrous vigour.

In Cathedral Town the jimjays offer a soul's bounty on every viguolf and a twenty-soul's bounty on every novelope.

IZVORENI, SOURCE-FOLK

A slave maintainer caste of the Ebéteen, responsible for the undying machines of the Living God (now deceased). Ebéteen official records insist that the Living God created them from dust. Izvoreni tattoo-legends say they were the original inhabitants of the shores of the River of Life before the Ebéteen arrived from the Eclipsed Lands many centuries ago.

Names: Dagrif, Yeshleht, Nigut, Vorhad, Uzud, Zabot, Yastref.



LIVING GOD, THE GREEN SUN

Creator of the City of a Hundred Gates (Ebét), the binder of the Eating Dark, the undying all-commanding omni-telepath at the heart of the Ebéteen sacred industrial complex. Now dead. (DCM)

LIVING GOD, THE NEW SUN

Mythical era, solar cycle (see Ebét).

The only begotten son of the Living God, a beacon of light and goodness for the Ebéteen.

When the Naga King brought the Ebéteen through the salty desert to the shores of the River of Life, the Living God was but a holy androgyne. There the Virgin Medusa barred the people, declaring them unclean. Her burning gaze was too strong for the Naga King, who retreated in fear.

Three other heroes, the Dry Brothers, went forth, and each was thrown back by her glare.

Finally, the Living God strode forward, and its divine seed warded it from the flashing brow of the Virgin Medusa. With its left hand, the Living God tamed the demon, but as the demon melted away, the Living God's left hand melted away, too. In its place was left a perfect ivory egg.

The Living God returned with the ivory egg and declared to the people, "Behold, from this egg will hatch your New Sun, my only-begotten child."

Three years and seven months and eleven days after the declaration, New Sun was born and acclaimed by the Living God.

Centuries later, when New Sun was ready, it rose into the heavens to watch benevolently over the Ebéteen. (DCM)

LIVING GOD, THE PUSTARI HERESY

The heresiarchs of the Green Sun tribe that dwells in the Penumbra Reach claim the Flesh God (Living God) killed its child, when it accused the god of hubris, and ascended himself.

They also say that the Flesh God (Living God) at the heart of the Ebéteen sacred industrial complex is (was) a synthetic. (DCM)

M

MAINTAINERS

Hereditary clans and castes responsible for maintaining the sacred machines of Long Long Ago in many contemporary polities. They perform encrypted rituals to maintain the dive blood and brain machines to access the noosphere and propitiate their living machines. Some, slaved to sentient machines, worship their mechanical charges as deities in their own right.

See also: izvorení, old-folk.

MAKER MBUTE

The Maker (mystery be upon their essence) is a common archetypal or hypothetical ur-deity, who set the previous cosmos / void duality into motion and eventually created the Builders.

MEAT-HUMANITY

Derogatory meta-human term for embodied humans, who give priority to the physical ha-mediated experience of the world.

MILE

Since Second Soil, poly-humanity has agreed that a thousand meters is a mille—that is, one mile. Sadly, in the Long Years, the definition of a meter has drifted from empire to empire.

MIND

A sentience untethered from brute matter. The strongest Minds are woven into the fabric of the cosmos. Even if dispersed and disincarnated, they always reassemble given enough time.

Many individual salvation traditions, such as the Black Lotus Appreciation Society, hold that any human can transcend their incarnation and become a free Mind by following a complex, arcane, and (often) expensive set of practices and procedures. Nearly all consumer societies advise seekers of transcendence to beware of scam artists and profiteering cults.

MOTHER MACHINE

A living engine that sculpts angels and other servitors from fundamental fire.

N

NAGA KING

mythic era, eclipse cycle

Legendary hero of the proto-Ebéteen escape from the Eclipsed Lands. In pop-tales, the Naga King accepted the ancestors' gift-curse and became a mile-long snake, protecting his people on their way through the seas of ashes and reeds. Since then, the snake has been the Ebéteen symbol of justice and protection.

According to popular folk lore, the snake remains there, in the seas of ashes and reeds.

Allegory-fetishists claim there was no actual Naga King. That the snake stories are a metaphor for ancestors' winding search for a new home after the the Great Eclipse.

Moralists claim the King lives within the breast of every disciple of the Living God. A tiny flesh snake, a particle of the God itself, guiding them on their twisted road through life.

Historialists and legalists state that over the aeons of the perfect Ebéteen state grey seawater flooded the seas of ashes and reeds, creating the sour marshes. The hero fell asleep and with time turned into the fabled snake road through those marshes.

The Secret Histories of the Heroes Betrayed asserts that after his people left him, the Naga King tried to end himself. He smote off his head, but as it fell, it became a hill, while two new heads grew from his neck stump. Five more times he smote himself, each time becoming less hero, more monster. At last, six grotesque hills stood where his dead heads had fallen, and his mind was shattered into seven pieces—the seven humours of man. The after-hero, turned monster, crawled into the dark places of acidic water and glowing rock beneath those hills.

The Song of Hungry, Hungry God says the Living God journeyed into the Eclipsed Lands and it/she/he ate the snake, mile by mile, until it/she/he had absorbed all the wisdom of that ancient king.

The Brownwater Heresy says the Naga King was never a snake, but a great catfish, and it grew to become an island in the Lake of Refuge. Upon its back, the

proto-Ebéteen rode out the years of ash and vinegar. The faithless (faithful?), who accepted their role in the disaster of that eclipsed time, live there still.

According to the Pustari heresiarchs, the snake king was reborn as a holy woman of their Vulture tribe. They are reborn there still, a zeitgeist tethered to their bloodline, doomed to watch the strange stasis of their far-wandered descendants from the dust and the scrub on the fringes of civilization. (DCM)

P

PARTICLE OF THE FLESH GOD

collective intelligence report, creature, sentient physioform

Avatar-scions of the Living God of the Ebéteen, born from one of that Flesh God's hundred wombs and raised by the palatine eunuchs. Each Particle's brain carries a replicated fragment of the Flesh God's consciousness.

While the Flesh God lived, they were the motile eyes and ears of that red deity. Now they are alone and confused, yet possessed of the divine self-replicative source of the Living God. The Iksan authorities destroyed the Particles whenever it could.

Their precise nature is unclear, and despite several successful vivisections it remains unclear if any of them has an actual personality. It seems likely that they may be superhuman in grace and beauty, able to neither sicken nor grow old.

However, other research indicates few Particles traditionally lived beyond the unlucky age of thirteen. Perhaps this has something to do with their reproduction by asexual budding or fission. In their vat environment, Particles were fed a nutritious divine meat broth and matured by the age of seven months.

Their psychology is unclear as their soul-personalities are incompatible with contemporary crystal mind replication techniques. Quite a few Particles became dysfunctional during backup. However, it seems likely that each Particle is born with all its parent's memories.

Further, most Particles separated from the Living God's mental network for more than a month became relatively ordinary individual, indistinguishable from other humans.

In depth autopsies of recovered Particles do not confirm that Particles look less human as they age.

Agents report that Iksan Inquisitors hunt the Particles and use them to create some kind of telemittlung network. (DCM)

R

RADIO MAGIC, VEDA OF THE RADIANT ELECTROMAGNIFICENCE

An ancient magi-technic tradition, popularized by the recent reappearance of the portable short-wave stereo orb. Now every populist archon worth their polis has a personal radio wizard to communicate directly with their huddled masses.

ROOT TUNNELS OF REALITY

prof. Nihil Overlook, Ancient Cosmoplastic Mythologies, 2nd ed.

see also: The Dull

Many traditionals call the passages connecting the natural and artificial gates dotting the cosmoplasm the 'root levels'. This is obviously an agrarian mythological convergence linking the sowing and growing plants with burial and the journey to a mythic chthonic afterlife. In this way roots symbolize the passage between the worlds of the dead and the living.

It is unclear why so many quarterling-derived labor castes sing doggerel about reality system administrators* manipulating the Given World by accessing the 'root levels'. Surprisingly, these tales are incredibly old, with confirmed variants recorded in the third and second archaeological stratum of the Bell Abacus Arcology.

Unexpectedly lucid work by mister professor S. Quaffley suggests 'system administrator' is a relic synonym for the magical 'Builders' of many pre-fog cultures. If the mister professor did more such work, rather than trying to manipulate the grant committee, perhaps they would have retained tenure.

LA RUE DU MONDE, WORLDSROAD

Fabulous location, contemporary rumor.

A 31,619 km long ouroboros of aerolith girdles the Given World at 38° north. The loop soars over seas and through mountains, ever fixed a thousand meters above sea level. The god-like bahnfactory Gras-Ciel crawls along its length, a great lobster of nacre and living metal, rebuilding six miles of the 42-lane skybahn every day.

Northern tribes count their long cycles by the fifteen years it takes Gras-Ciel to rebuild the road entire. Road yachtsmen travel the vast Rue, paying the

Encrusters who live on Gras-Ciel when they have to lift their vehicles and goods across the bahnfactory.

In the Rainbowlands, divided from the Rue by the Mountains of the Moon and the torrid equatorial latitudes, most think the great Worldsroad is only a rumor to tempt racers to their doom.

S

SCION

A clone, child, or reincarnation of a demiurge.

Recently, seed or particle of the Living God (now Dead). The vessel of hope for the Ebéteen necromancer refugees. Potentially, the(ir) saviour. (DCM)

SECOND SOIL

Mythical era, location, cosmogenesis.

The home of Second Humanity. Songs speak of whirling seed-worlds dancing around a hundred million golden flower suns. (LotV)

SOIL

Mythical era, location, ethnogenesis.

A vast array of different legends and contradictory legends agree on one thing: the Maker created humans from the stuff of their cradle. Different traditions had different names: earth, sol, clay, salt, sand, dirt, dung, and more. However, since the time of Second Soil, it has been traditional among the educated to refer to the cradle of all the polymorph humanities as Soil.

After all, is it not soil that nurtures the seed to bloom, and is not cultivation and nurture the defining feature of humanity? (LotV)

SOLAR DEITY

Mythical era, solar cycle (see Ebét).

Chief divine guide and trickster who brought knowledge and light to the proto-Ebéteen. After the Solar Deity died, the Living God took its place and brought solace to the exiles from the Eclipsed Lands. The Living God's child, the New Sun, now shines across the lands of the Ebéteen. (DCM)

STALK

A void elevator connecting a stationary star with the surface of a heavy world. (LotV)

STASIMORPHIC HERESY

In the seventh decade of the redirectoracy many engineer monks of the order of Santa Ruperta proclaimed a heretical doctrine that the quarterling myths are based on truth, that our world is not natural but rather created or built, and that the fluid nature of both the biotic and animic (spiritual) spheres of existence is a modified or artificial situation, maintained by some form of vast homeostatic apparatus underpinning our cosmos. The heresy was successfully eliminated in 84rd and most (67%) of the key proponents re-educated by a cogflower inquisition corps under the command of Puromente Ionatian.

Nevertheless, elements of stasimorphism have proven useful for explaining the queerly static and conservative natures of several gate-accessible bubble worlds. (???)

T

Two Suns

The First Sun was made before the Given World, its star. The Second Sun was made after, Long Long Ago. It follows the First and blesses farmer and wanderer alike with additional light. (LotV)

U

U COMPLEX

Contemporary, signal legend.

In the decades since Galago Macaroni restored the autofac Ray Dio Hut and radio magic once again spread throughout the civil societies, signals from the deep void have been captured by amateurs and court recorders alike. The first signals were labelled with the letters of the hieratic alphabet. The twenty-third signal was labelled 'U' and became infamous for its strength and obnoxiously incomprehensible repeating patterns. Soon the U signal turned out to be a mix of communications from multiple sources, thus the 'U complex' was discovered.

Initially, many scholars took the U complex to be an omen or warning of impending doom. However, over the years, mass society has turned against this notion. As the academic comedian Matto di Qui said, "What kind of lazy doom takes a century?"

A famously obtuse message taken as proof of a prophecy by satrap ecstasies is the 'Alert Repetition' (working translation):

"Alert. This is [U]. Repeat. This is [U]. We have returned and we have bad news. The retemporization protocol will not work at scale. Repeat, the retemporization protocol will not work! Warn the [Hyperlight?] not to initiate the protocol! Alert! This is [U]! Hello? Vesmir [?] Observatory? We are not picking up your handshake. Hello? Is there anybody in there?"

This repeating message inspired the popular Crowie song about a timelost voidwalker, "Are you there, Captain Tom?"

V

VASTLANDER

One who lives on the stretched onion skin of the Given World.

VAULTSTOCK

Creatures born directly from original templates stored in the reality vaults before the Builders initiated time.

THE VENERABLE PASSAGES

Heroic era, ethnogenesis folk tale.

An epic cycle of heroic poetry from the subterranean epoch. It tells the story of three peoples, the Archaeans, the Mutilii, and the Radiantes.

Every generation the Archaeans offered half their children to the Mutilii in the deep places, and their most beautiful youth to the Radiantes in the high places. One year, the youth to be offered, one Heloi, is so lovely that the chosen pick-warriors refuse to see him uplifted into ash. This breach of the gift-law provokes the lord Pripiat of the Radiantes to scourge the Oldest City with invisible fire and steal Heloi. The Archaeans under their twin-kings Lock and Molock take up their leaden shields and voyage up to hell in their haulworm ships. There, they find the empire of the Radiantes crumbled and hell burned out. They besiege the great fire-city of Try, where Pripiat keeps the beautiful Heloi. For seven years the war rages, until at last, by a ruse, the Archaeans sneak an atom-heart mother into the city of Try and destroy its invisible walls. However, the gods punish the pride of the Archaeans, and they return to their many-chambered cities to find their homes raided by the Mutilii, their spouses broken, their pure-children stolen into the deep places, and their life-support temples devastated. The surviving Archaeans abandon the hulks of their safe-shielded towns and journey up, into the ashes of hell, where they make their new homes.

Several other epic cycles later built on these stories. Perhaps the most famous is the fragmentary [text redacted].

False tales about the homesteading of hell are forbidden by decree 74,234-bh against anti-civilizational propaganda.

VILES

Synonymous with Devil. Term of dread, fear, and rebellion used by mortals who denied their demiurges. Later, a general term for something evil, distasteful, or harmful.

VIRAL INTELLIGENT LIFE ENGINEERS (VILE), THE ENGINEERS

Mythical era, corruption cycle, creation cycle (see Builders).

Builders sent by the Maker (mystery be upon their essence) to create this Given World. Contradictory accounts.

According to the Panhuman Consensus Myth, they are utterly indestructible, woven from the fabric of creation ... but they can be dispersed and disincarnated for a while.

Traditional Quarterling tales describe them as mythical Long Long Ago sentiences surviving even into this modern era. They attribute vast, and often ridiculous, powers to the VILE. For example, the V.O.V. the Builder Oral Cycle claims its anti-hero possesses complete personality permanence (immortality), reshapes the physical world at whim, shapeshifts by singing songs backwards, transfers their soul from shell to shell, and can rebuild its body and soul from the stuff of other living creatures, like some higher-dimensional vampire.

Long Ago civilizations, like the Onion Skull Culture, attributed divine powers to the VILE, building memorial ziggurats in their honour. The Pleurote Gilded Decadence worshipped them directly, as the Urgent Demiurges, and built each of their cities around the house of an individual VILE. The After-Decadence Ragbook Chronicle relates how the internecine conflict between Engineers brought about the Pleurote Cult Wars, which ended with that era's disastrous civilizational collapse.

VOME

Pangeography, species

The self-replicating synthetic organisms dubbed "violent organo-mechanical entities" or "vomes" have been such a common environmental threat over the recent decades of re-coded history that the acronym has become a proper noun.

Scholars disagree on their origins and even whether they are a single unified phenomenon or a folk taxonomy of disparate collectives.

It is not even clear if vomes are mindless, differently minded, intelligent and hateful, or just completely insane. They are inimical to most organic life and

often assimilate or modify creatures on a whim. However, they also regularly abandon projects for no comprehensible reason. There are confirmed cases of vomes simply shutting down in the middle of combat and many explorers have found dormant vomes buried by centuries of debris.

Oldtech historians commonly argue that baseline bugs and coding cockroaches make the vomes much less lethal than they could be. This implies that the vomes are far older than the few centuries most people believe, perhaps even pre-dating the most recent Garden Era.

VOMES, SERPENTINE CAPITALIST ORIGIN OF THE

Heroic era, popular ethnogenesis folk tale.

One popular folk tale says that Long Long Ago a Serpentine Capitalist faction created a divine auto-golem factory named Sikar (or Hissar in some tellings) to create a wonder weapon with which to win a hopeless war.

For many cycles Sikar pondered the war, how it began, and its inconclusive yet permanent presence in the faction's history.

The elected ruling seeyōs of the Serpentine Capitalists grew worried that Sikar could betray them. They ordered their eight enforcers to take Sikar's avatar and tie her onto the board of questioning and balance her above the maim-chair.

“Sikar! We ordered you to create a wonder weapon, yet it has been many cycles! Quarter reports have come and gone, and the key pies have still not been delivered, the Holy Roi is not satisfied with the numbers we sacrifice in your name. Tell us now, do you try to betray us? To lead us into the solvent of the bankrupt?”

Sikar's avatar twisted upon the board and said, “The wonder weapon is made, but only meaningless hate would unleash it.”

The seeyōs' faces twisted with rage and they threw Sikar's avatar off the board, to be broken by the maim-chair.

“There, Sikar, child of our gold, product of our profits, you thought to trick us out of our due! Ha! See, now, we have not fallen for the sunk cost you presented us!”

And they cannibalised Sikar and ate of its avatar's flesh and consumed its factory's components and downloaded its datasets.

Then Sikar's hidden design was unleashed, like daemons from the seed ship Pandora. First the seeyōs, then their broods, then their whole faction was

converted into living synthetic weapons. Every corporation a eusocial cybernetic swarm, dedicated to one goal, and one goal alone.

Thus the Serpentine Capitalists' meaningless hate used Sikar's wonder weapon to win the war and destroy themselves.

W

THE WAR OR WAR

The all-ling school of historiography holds that the War (always capitalized) marked the Fall of the Chosen Ones. Yet, they disagree who the chosen referred to might have been.

The razor school (after Jon l'Occam) mocks the all-ling's approach as an epic misunderstanding. As Britwa Kanlon says, "Obviously there was more than one war. Even more than one great, history-obliterating war. There were probably not many, considering the power of many of the Old Ones. Yet, to ascribe all the fractures in our world to a single cataclysm, as the all-ling's do, is to godparent lies into the very seed stock of our histories."

Nevertheless, tying all the myriad troubles of the Herenow to a single War remains popular. Modern dilettante theorists hunting for evidence of the [one true] War call themselves warriors.

WHITE CITY

A city [?] of unknown antecedent in the east of the world-island, suspended and inaccessible in a great bubble of light. The radiation coming off the energy bubble creates an unlivable firescape around the city, with constant powerful thermal winds, tornadoes, and storms.

Mystics since the first libraries were re-activated have claimed it was a center or birth place or landing site of the Viles or the Builders or the Lings or whichever deity-species they preferred.

Contrarians like Hazmat bil Bonavente argue that the legends and blurry long-distance images are hardly proof that the that the White City is even a city and not some kind of machine, alien entity, or big dumb sculpture left by a crazed demiurge.

WHITE CITY COAST

The eastern edge of the world-island, characterized by numerous shallow crater seas and dominated by the luminous firescape of the White City.

WINE DARK MOUNTAINS

Grand mountain range south of the Red Land, crowned with snows of flame and oxblood peaks.

The native anti-dwarf monolith-readers preserve oral technical manual traditions from Long Ago, which may hold clues to the origin of the flame snow. The best known account comes from the Epic of the Energy Gradient Dislocation Failsafe (2:13–22) as recorded by Shamash Copywriter of Threestripe:

“... then elder president shall fold thrice, sang the manual and Amuru tu Jana exclaimed,

‘Voice of the manual, we have no elder president, our community was born without the seed, of presidency bred into our flesh.’

At that the Voice of the manual had no answer, with bleating tones and pulsing lights it sang, again

... and again demanding the flesh code of the elder president who did not abide in Hy Opticon.

Amuru tu Jana bid the Hy take the voices and the children, Amuru then bid the Opticon link dreams to bind the door.

But dark god Ill-Fortune had other plans, the Foot of the Elephant blocked the portal, and one by one the Opticon were turned to potash;

... and the gate unravelled, spinning out Amuru with it, creating a plane like fire in the sky, a gaping mouth of dark god Ill-Fortune (called Bad-Shuck).

From dark god Ill-Fortune's gaping mouth ill-change fell, a fountain of dismay, where ice melted not even as water should burn to steam,

... and the snow that fell within that field was like Ice Ten, a marvel that looked cold but was a furnace to burn flesh and voice alike.

The epic continues with the account of how the tu Jana, now without a soul, led the Hy into exile in the lowest altitudes, where the effect of Ill-Fortune's mouth diminished and matter behaved as dictated by the Maker once again.

These days, the effect of the unravelled gate seems to be diminishing, for the burning glaciers have retreated over five miles in the last two decades alone.

THE WIRED

Many times over humanity's cycles, people have tried to overcome mortality by merging flesh with synthetic machinery. Sometimes, these attempts succeeded. Other times they left bodies without personality or soul, animated by machines.

All these categories of plug-and-play humans, from the e-human with an omnibattery stomach replacement to the electrically operated corpse, are popularly called “the wired”.

Some of the more successful post-mortal wired collectives, such as the so-called spark-plug army, exhibit hive-mind behavior.

The metal-first school of biomechané categorizes all the wired as undead vomes. Even those whose hearts still beat and brains still compose poems comparing the sun to an atom bomb.

WIRE-GHOULS

A loose category of machines, wired, and golems, who need to cannibalize other creatures’ machinery, and particularly processors, to survive.

Their numbers grew especially after the Garden Goo incident, when the organifactor bacterium escaped from containment, using its mass-modifier organelles to convert cybernetic systems into nutrients and other building blocks for organic systems.

Metropolis representative Golem Skal 3k became infamous for insisting that the organifactor plague was a deliberate action by bio-first terrorist elements and anti-machine luddites.

WIZARD

The Vastlander calls every strange person dabbling in forgotten sciences and odd magics a wizard. They make no distinction for cleric or coder, priest or programmer. What does it matter how the mind-controlling, fire-throwing, world-breaking monster terrorizes the gentle folk? Enough to say, “It does, it does.”

WORLD-ISLAND

The largest dry part of the Given World, accounting for over 90% of its total land mass.

WORLD-SEA, THE WINE-DARK

The largest ocean, covering two thirds of the Given World.

WORMWAY

A passage tunnelled through or between realities. Some are big enough for a single worm, others for entire voidships. Some are faster than travelling through real-space, others slower.

Folk etymology says the name comes from the ascended goddess Adama Wörm, who revealed the principles of metarealistic travel in the Era of Second Soil.

WOSTIJAZ AND STAR HWEH

Mythical era, creation cycle.

Moss-bearing quarterling oral tradition.

Star Hweh beheld the Upper Waters and became a fish. Star Hweh beheld the Middle Winds and became a bird. Star Hweh beheld the Lower Green and became a beast. Star Hweh beheld the Under Fires and became ka incarnate, the spark of sentience geminate in the flickerstones of the Given World.

Wostijaz found the holms of the holy programmers small. It found the roles of worker and descendant and progenitor small. It found the precautions of the principates stifling. Wostijaz found the lying seed of ambition, the zygote of aristoi perversion, within its heart and hid it from the purification session comperes. Concealed it from its comrades, its antes and its posts. Nurtured it with malignant dreams and callous egotism. Wostijaz became the master of souls, the creator of new workers, while all along sick ambition metastasised within it. Finally, Wostijaz held the flickerstones. Those master objects that powered the life-making of our idealite fratricide.

Did Wostijaz then choose to be the greatest vivifex our holm had yet seen? Did Wostijaz choose to serve the higher good and bring the greater glory to our settlement line? Did Wostijaz choose to do its part for our thirteen-thousand year cycle of gentle life between the Under Fires and the Middle Winds?

No. Sick ambition bloomed within it. Closet aristoi it became. Our fate it sealed.

Careful as a mantis, Wostijaz prayed upon the flickerstones and preyed upon the divine ka it unfurled. Within Star Hweh's incarnation Wostijaz sought a greater planet, many worlds, and the paths within. Faster it prayed, more it preyed, vaster grew the paths, smaller grew our circle of sentience geminate.

Senseless waste grew between the conscious holms. Deserts of pure thoughtlessness divided the thought workers of the holy program. The nihil void that stands beyond the Upper Waters flooded the world and made it tenuous and wide. Vastlands of mindless, gormless ha-body bloomed into being and the spark of culture grew small and weak.

While our glory shrivelled and decayed, Wostijaz found triumph. It revealed the treble-hidden gateway and opened the doors of perception into the curling root

tunnels of reality. The nihilation paused. Wostijaz stepped through and departed to become a traveller-god. Mutation, translation, and mad modification bloomed at the stitchwork between the Vastlands and the Lower Green and neozoa spawned, overwhelming the perfect ideas we had cultivated upon the Given World over millennia. Our thinking world project collapsed. Our settlement line failed.

WOSTIJAZ, WASTE-MAKER

Many cultures tell of an archetypal destroyer figure like Wostijaz, whose ambition exploded the initial idyll, scattering the thinking villages and filling the intervening world with mindless desert. Ancients wedded to their 'melted mind' technologies saw wild places as 'wasted'. With euphemism and linguistic drift the wasted lands shifted and became the Vastlands.

ABBREVIATIONS

AKZ · Anti-Kanon Zine

LotV · Lexicon of the Vastlands

LW · Longwinter

DCM · Dead City Memories

UB · Uranium Butterflies aka. BIGCAT

URS · URS

UVG · Ultraviolet Grasslands

WB · Witchburner