

TENDING

a game of devotion

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*Somewhere in the world,
a holy place waits for your arrival.*

*This is a place of worship, and of transformation.
Pilgrims come, and stay for a time, offering their
labours and leaving their mark. You won't be there
long, in the scheme of things. But your time there will
alter it, and you.*

Tending is a game about divinity, devotion and change. In it, you'll create a holy site for an imagined religion, and then explore how time, events and individuals might shape the life and meaning of that site.

It is also a game of creative experimentation. It will encourage you to write, draw, collage, and repurpose ideas and materials as you go. With one important exception (see page 10), the rules have been written to provide a complete experience with no additional references needed – but from here on, you are explicitly encouraged to do whatever feels most true or interesting to your game, including ripping up the rules and/or the book itself.

HOW TO PLAY

To play, you will need:

- A few six-sided dice
- A standard deck of playing cards
- Writing and drawing materials
- Optional: extra paper, magazines or other materials to cut up, scissors and glue



Throughout the game, you will be asked to answer questions and prompts, alongside more specific instructions. How you record your answers to the questions is up to you – it could be through brief notes, or more detailed written or visual responses. If you think you might want to write or draw a lot, an extra notebook will be helpful in addition to the space provided in this book.

There are four parts to Tending:

SETUP

In this section, you'll start imagining the world of your game, and generate ideas that you can expand on later in play.



ARRIVAL

In this section, you'll introduce a character and describe the end of their pilgrimage, and their approach to the site. This part is very short, as the game's focus is on the experience of the site itself.

STAY

In this section, you'll play through a year in the life of your character, living at the site you've created, carrying out devotional works across the seasons, and seeking divine guidance.

Each season will be represented by a round of play, divided into turns. This is the longest and most involved section, so you may want to divide it up into separate sessions.

RETURN

In this section, you'll reflect on what has changed, and draw your character's time at the site to a close.

COLLABORATIVE PLAY

The rules that follow have been written to suit a single player, but if you want to expand the game to include more people, here are some suggestions:

- Play as a pair or group of pilgrims. You could take turns to contribute ideas in the setup phase, then play through the rest as individual characters responding to the same events.
- Epistolary play: have an initial discussion on what kind of world you want to play in, but create separate Sites and play as individuals corresponding with each other. Agree on a schedule and send each other emails, voice notes or real letters about the events and experiences that transpire.
- Consecutive play: make arrangements to pass your game notes on to another once you've finished playing all the way through, so that they can play as a new character building on what you've recorded.

SETUP

Before your character can enter the site, you'll need to start imagining the place they'll be entering. You don't need to decide on every detail – you'll fill those in as you play. The aim of this stage is to give you a good stock of material to use along the way.



The Source

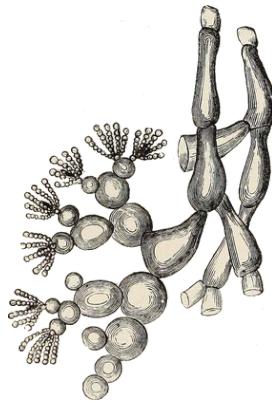
To begin, choose a Source. This is the worldly manifestation of the divine, something that reaches into our world while holding its own worlds and mysteries. It could be an animal, a plant, a celestial body, a landscape – whatever it is, it is of high importance to the religious community in this place.

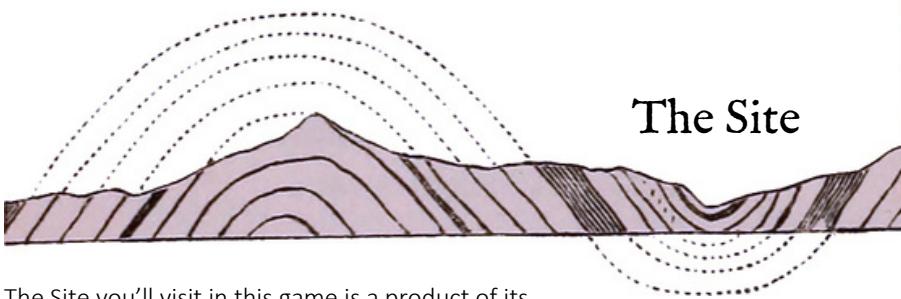
There are 12 Sources included in this zine, 6 of them by guest writers – turn to SOURCES on page 36 to find them. You'll also find a template and instructions for creating your own.

Once you've chosen your Source, look at the Evocation section. Out of these words and ideas associated with your Source, circle up to 5 that interest you the most. These are your initial building blocks for imagining the world your site exists in, and the religion or sect that holds this place sacred. You'll also find a handful of Questions to get you started thinking about the relationships between Source, setting and people. Some additional questions that may help:

- What aspects of the Source are significant in this community's beliefs and practices?
- Is the Source widely believed to be divine, or does its sacred status live on the margins?
- Does the Source represent a deity, a messenger, a history, or something else entirely?

*Use this space to explore your Source however you like - answer
questions, ask new ones, make notes, draw, collage...*





The Site you'll visit in this game is a product of its location and the activities of all who have dwelt here. As you play, you'll discover some of its stories and secrets; for now, consider what kind of place it is.

You may have already started thinking about your Site's location through the Evocations and Questions. Now look at the section labelled Sphere, which describes the places where your Source might be found. Use anything that interests you here to think about the kind of terrain, climate, ecology and communities that make up the area, and the resources that might be found locally.

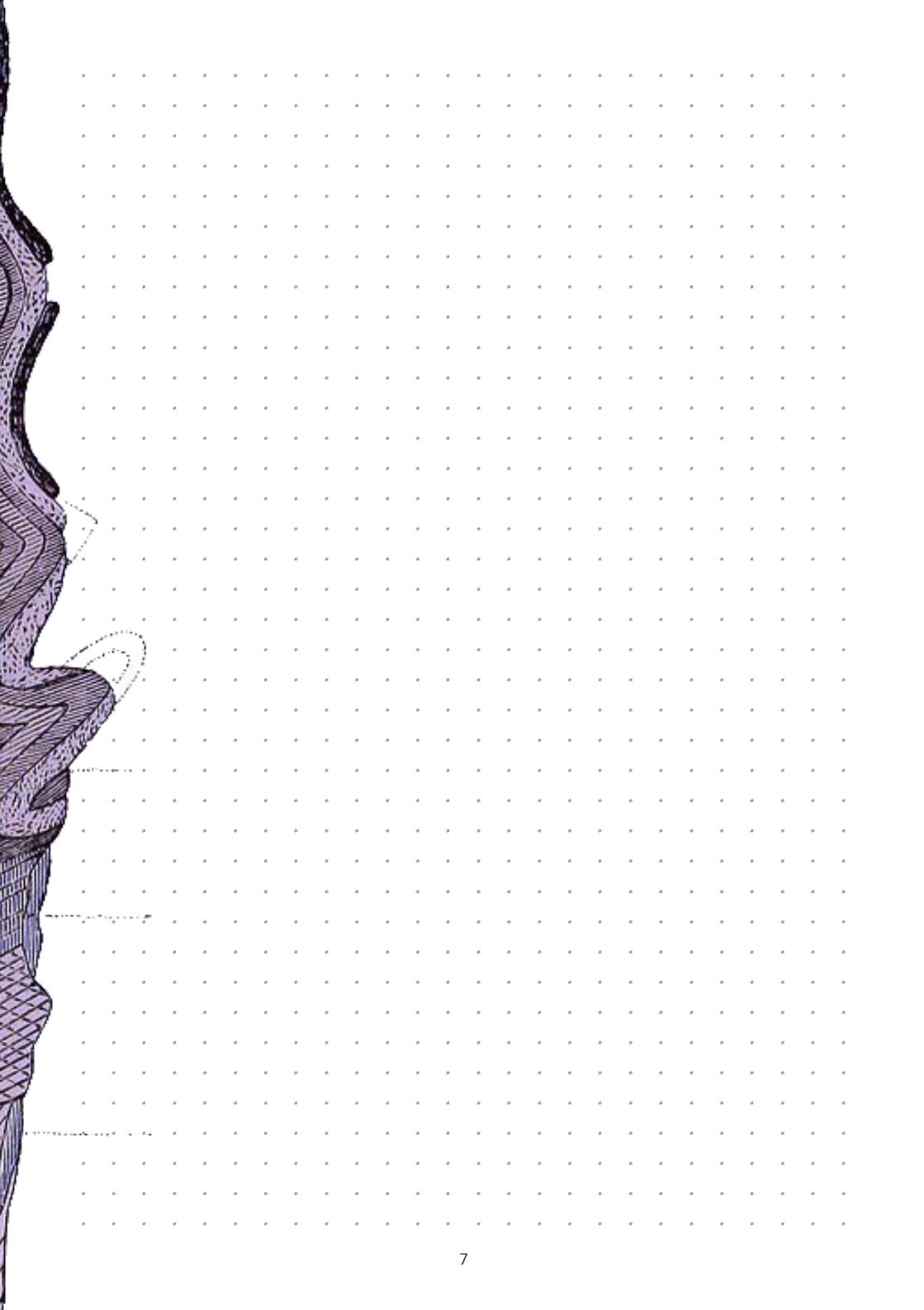
Next, consider the Site itself. This should be a location with an active community of devotees who welcome pilgrims into their ranks. The scope of this is up to you – from a mostly ruined shrine dedicated to a mostly abandoned god, to the gilded core of a crowded holy city.

Make some notes on the nature of your Site, answering any of the below questions that you find useful. For additional ideas, turn to page 66 for dice and card-based prompt tables.

- How busy is the site?
- What stories are told about its origins?
- Do pilgrims seek something special here?
- Who has authority at the site, if anyone?

During the game, your character will have the chance to work on the following site features: built structures, gardens, a kitchen, and a library or archive. You don't need to flesh these out at this stage, but the space you're imagining should contain at least one of these, and all four if you want the widest range of options.

The layout of the Site is something you might start thinking about now; it's also something you can return to and build on as you play. A grid is provided on the next page if you want to create a map.



The Calendar

Your time at the Site will be marked by the passing of seasons. These could be seasons that are familiar to you, or ones you invent. The basic rules were written with four seasons in mind, but can be easily adapted for other models.

Look at the section of your Source titled Change. This describes some of the processes and cycles that your Source undergoes, and can be used for inspiration as you consider the important moments of the Site's life.

Consider how time moves for your Source, and how that might influence the way time is kept at your site. What changes and cycles are important? What times of day, month, or year are given to particular activities? What seasons will you mark, and what defines them?

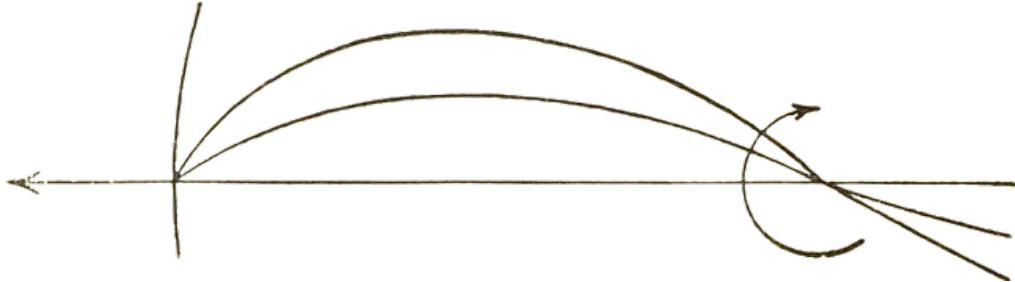
Within this calendar, what are the most important times of year for the community? What is considered especially worthy of remembrance, observance or celebration? Drawing on your notes so far, along with the Change section of your Source, come up with at least one major festival; give it a name, note its purpose and nature.

There are a few options for bringing festivals into your game. The simplest is to decide in advance that a major festival will occur in your final season of play. You could equally choose any other season. If you want to give yourself even more material to work with, you could create a festival for every season in your calendar.

Alternatively, you could create a festival without a fixed date, and decide on a way to trigger it in play – for example: a festival heralded by the first storm of the year, that comes into play the first time you draw a face card (jack, queen or king).



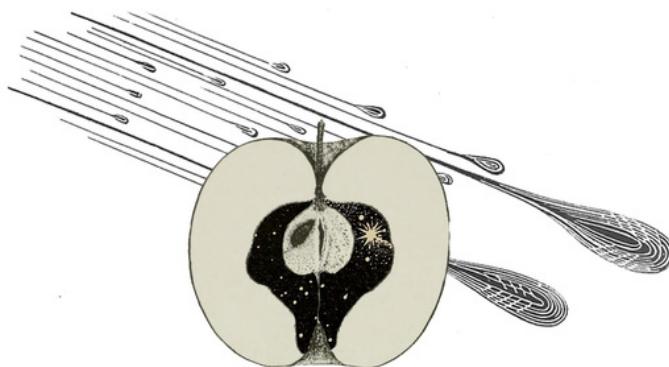
Use the opposite page for notes on time, seasons and festivals.



Revelations

The divine is not straightforwardly approachable, even here. To meet with it, devotees must seek moments of Revelation.

How they do this is up to you. It could be through prayer, dreams, trance states, signs, divination, or anything else that fits the world you've imagined. Think about what approach your site's community might take to seeking divine guidance, incorporating any elements from your Source that appeal to you.



Now, decide how you, the player, will represent Revelations in your gameplay. This should be something that exists beyond the rules written here, that brings outside influences into the world of your game. Something that contains an element of randomness, and is rich with interpretive possibilities.

You might choose tarot cards, or opening a random book to a random page, or putting a playlist on shuffle, or cutting out words from printed text and pulling them out of a bag, or anything else that appeals to you. When the game instructs you to seek the divine, turn to your chosen method. Making sense of it will be up to you.



READY?

Before you begin your time at the Site, check you have established the following:

- The site's location
- Some of its key features
- Its rough size, and how busy it is
- What the surrounding area is like
- What seasons are marked
- At least one major festival
- What method you'll use to seek divine revelations

Make your approach



ARRIVAL

You are a pilgrim at the end of your long journey, about to enter the place that will define your purpose for as long as you remain there.

As you approach, look around you. What time of year is it? What colours, sounds and scents fill your awareness?

If you've decided you want a major festival to take place in your final season of play, choose your first season accordingly. If you want to choose the season at random, draw a card – adapt to different seasonal systems as needed.

♣ Spring ♥ Summer ♠ Autumn ♦ Winter

The routes and events of your pilgrimage fall away behind you. Reflect on the journey a moment. What kind of world did you journey through? What kind of inner journey did you make?

There are dice tables you can use to describe the your journey on page 67.

You draw closer. What will you carry into this place? Did you bring anything with you beyond your travel essentials – personal possessions, offerings, or items picked up along the way?

Write down or draw what you have. If you truly have nothing, write or draw a memory that you've been carrying.

Just before you cross the threshold, you pause. Do you do anything to mark the moment - an utterance, a prayer, a gesture?

Now, enter.

STAY

The following section will see your character interact with the Site across the seasons, bringing opportunities to discover more about this place, its community, their beliefs, and the activities and events that shape it.

At the start of each season, you will choose a Work: a devotional act of labour that you will carry out as the season progresses. Each Work has its own set of rules, but all start with some guided preparation, and then follow a similar turn-based structure. You'll find a summary of the four Works on page 15.

PLAYING A SEASON

You can choose a different Work each season, or focus on the ones that most appeal to you. Some rely more on dice-rolling, others more on answering prompts and questions. All involve an element of drawing, collaging, or cut-up text.

Once you have chosen your season's Work, ask yourself any of the following questions that feel relevant, from your character's point of view:

- Did you choose this work, or was it assigned to you?
- Why is this work important to the site at this time?
- Why is this work important to you?
- What questions are on your mind?
- How connected do you feel to the site, and to its community?
- How connected do you feel to the divine?



TURNS

A turn consists of Actions, which ask you to describe your character's contribution to the work, and Events, which ask you to draw a playing card and respond to the corresponding prompt from the Events section on page 62.

It's up to you how many turns a season consists of, although more than 13 per season will mean you might start having to repeat Events. You can decide on a set number in advance, or simply start and keep playing until you feel the story of the season's work is nearing its end.

EVENTS

Before you start a new season, shuffle your deck of playing cards. The specific instructions for each Work will indicate where in your turn to draw a card. Once you've drawn a card and responded to its prompt, discard it for the remainder of the game. If you get through the full deck, re-shuffle and start again.

Some Events are personal in scope, while others involve natural forces, the community, or the world around the Site. Depending on the card and the way your work is progressing, the Event might have a direct impact on your activities, or it might provide background detail about what's happening around the Site as you work.

If your deck includes jokers, you could choose to remove them, or, if you want, add your own instructions for what happens when you draw a joker.

Some ideas:

- Draw another card and subvert the event it describes
- Draw 2 more cards and combine events
- Ask a friend to create an event for you

After finishing a season, begin again, until you have progressed through a full year. Then turn to RETURN on page 34.

WORKS

Building (page 18)

The construction, removal or alteration of physical structures at the site. This Work uses a fair amount of dice rolling, plus drawing/collaging of simple shapes to represent architectural changes.

Garden (page 23)

The growing and harvesting of plants in the site's gardens. This Work relies the most on dice and numbers, alongside drawing, to track the success of your crops.

Text (page 26)

The studying of manuscripts kept at the site. This Work uses some dice rolling and the arranging of cut-up or copied words to represent the texts being studied.

Kitchen (page 30)

The learning and adapting of recipes to feed the site's community. This is a more open-ended Work that requires cutting up or borrowing from written texts to create recipes, with no dice needed.



FESTIVALS

If a festival falls in the season you are playing, add a special turn. Depending on the nature of the festival, you might plan for this to be the season's final turn, or to mark a halfway point, or to occur organically as you play.

Consider what part your season's work has to play in any approaching festivals. Are you constructing the stage for a special performance, studying a key ritual, preparing a festive delicacy, growing food for the feast?

On a festival turn, skip your usual Actions, and instead start by noting:

- How well prepared the site is – including, if relevant, the outcome of your work so far
- One central event or activity being prepared for
- The atmosphere within the site as the festival starts
- How you feel about the upcoming festivities

For extra inspiration, check the dice tables on page 70.

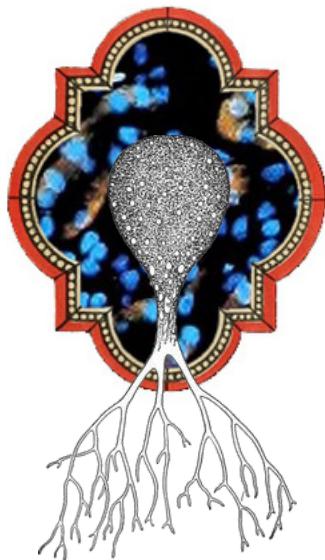
Next, draw an Event card as you normally would, and respond to its corresponding prompt – this time with a focus on how the Event impacts the festival.

Additionally, note the suit of the card you draw, and answer the corresponding question:

- ♣ A call for divine help is made during the festival. Who makes it, and what is asked?
- ♥ You hear a story about a previous year's festival. What is the story, and who tells it?
- ♠ This year's festival has generated a new tradition. What is it, and why will it be upheld?
- ♦ You keep a souvenir from the day. What is it?



ENDING A SEASON

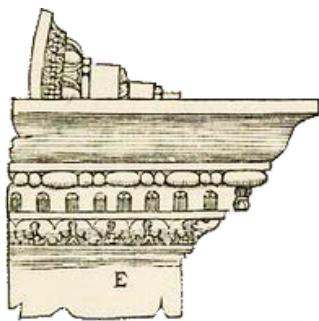


As your current season of play draws to an end, take a moment to look back at your work and the events that have surrounded it. How have you changed the site by being here? How has it changed you? What has your work here meant?

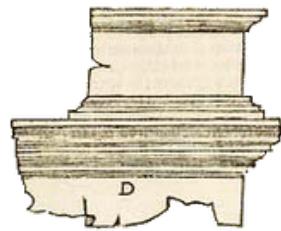
Perhaps you want to know if your devotion to this place has been recognised. Perhaps you want guidance on a particular matter, or answers to the questions that brought you here. Whatever the reason, now is the moment.

Prepare your chosen Revelation tools.

Seek the divine.



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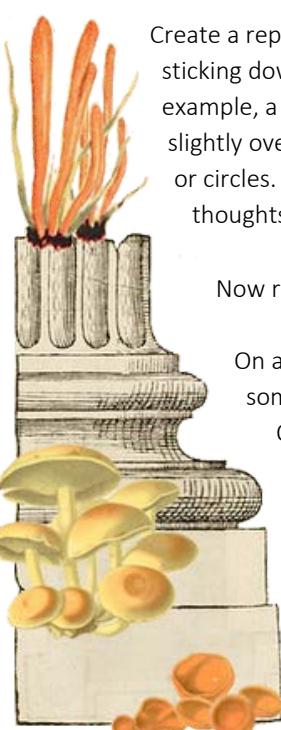
BUILDING

The physical structures that make up this site are not fixed in place forever: time, the elements, and the hands of the faithful see them grow, fall, or transform. Your season's work will be focused on one such structure.

PREPARATION

What kind of structure is this? A shrine, storehouse, fortification, statue, or something else? Make a few notes on its nature, its purpose, and its daily existence. For extra inspiration use the tables on page 67.

To determine the size and complexity of the structure, roll 1d6 (one six-sided dice). This will give you the number of 'parts' it has – interpret this in the way that best fits your structure. For example: on a 1, a building has a single room, on a 6 it has six. On a 1, a statue depicts a lone figure, on a 6 it might contain six figures or be a collection of six statues.



Create a representation of this structure by drawing, or cutting out and sticking down, a shape for each part – keep these fairly simple. For example, a building might consist of rectangles placed side by side or slightly overlapping; a statue might consist of an assemblage of blocks or circles. Annotate this depiction as you like, incorporating your thoughts on the structure's appearance and activities.

Now roll 1d6 to determine the work you'll be doing.



On a 1 or 2, the work involves removing or dismantling something. What is it? Why is it being removed?

On a 3 or 4, it involves adding or expanding a feature. Is this a major part of the structure or something smaller? What is the significance of the addition?

On a 5 or 6, it involves repairing something. What needs repairing? How was it damaged?



Write a few notes on the plans for the work: its nature, its importance, its expected duration, whether many people are involved, or only a few.

TURNS

For this work to progress, sufficient resources and reasonable conditions are required. Resources might include materials, tools, space, support from others. Conditions could include weather, atmosphere at the site, your own state of body and mind.

Take 2d6, ideally with some way of telling them apart. Decide which of these represents resources and which one represents conditions.

To start a turn, roll your 2d6 and note the results.

If you roll:

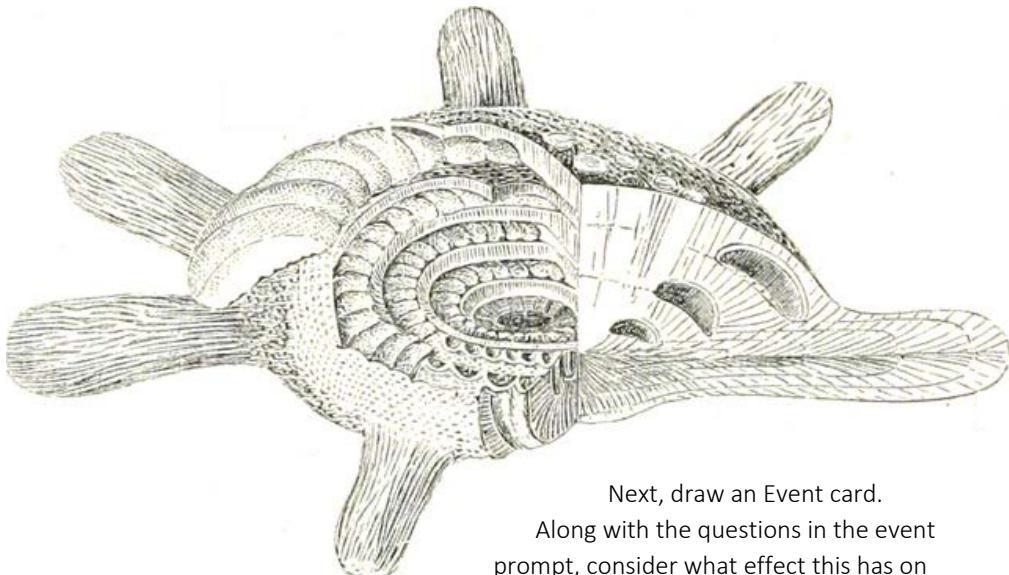
4 or above: resources / conditions are good.

3: resources / conditions are adequate, but there is some cause for concern.

Below 3: resources are depleted / conditions are poor.

For example, you could roll a 5 on your resources dice and a 3 on your conditions dice. This would mean that the current stage of your work is well-resourced, and that conditions are currently fine but that you're aware this might not be the case for long.

Consider how this affects the work. How do you feel as you try to build, raze or alter your structure?



Next, draw an Event card.

Along with the questions in the event prompt, consider what effect this has on your work, whether big or small. Does the Event intersect with your work? What kind of progress are you able to make?

Adapt your representation of the structure accordingly - this may consist of adding or amending annotations, drawing or sticking down more elements, scribbling out or covering up other elements. Let it be messy – you’re depicting a structure being subjected to time and change, not the structure itself.

On subsequent turns, consider whether the previous turn’s events could account for the results of your resources/conditions dice, or if they are unrelated.

Continue to roll your dice, draw event cards and amend your structure until you have played all the turns you wish to for the season. Now look at what you have done, or undone, or repaired. Is it complete? How will this space be used in the coming season? What stories are now marked in stone or mortar, steel or rubble?



GARDEN

The work of planting, tending and harvest takes place across the year; energy traded back and forth between garden and gardeners. For this season, you've taken up your part in this exchange.

PREPARATION

Think about what kind of garden this community keeps. Is there a lot of space for growing, or just a few containers? Do garden spaces mingle with wilderness, or are they carefully cultivated? Does the garden serve the community only, or is produce distributed beyond the site? For additional ideas, use the tables on page 68.

Draw a rough map of your gardens – it could be as simple as the outline of the area where plants are grown. You'll be adding crops to this map, and tracking their growth. Don't worry too much about precision or scale; allow it to be a bit chaotic, as gardens are.

Now consider what threats to a good harvest might exist here – animal, fungal, meteorological, human, supernatural. Come up with a list, and note them at one side of your map.

Others have performed gardening duties here before your arrival, and others will continue alongside you. You will take on the care of plants already growing, as well as having the option to plant more. There may be other things growing, looked after by other attendants, but these are the ones you'll focus on.

Decide on up to four crops to start with, and draw or paste a symbol to represent each of them somewhere on your garden map. Give each plant a name, and a short description.



Next to each crop, draw a circle split into 6 segments – this will be used to count the turns until your crop is ready to harvest. Now roll 1d6 to see how far into its growing season each plant is.



On a 1 or 2, fill in one segment.

On a 3 or 4, fill in two segments.

On a 5 or 6, fill in three segments.

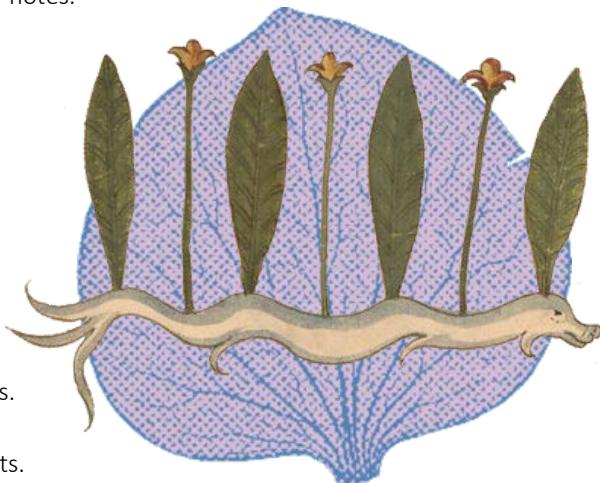
Over the years, various protections have been developed and deployed against known threats. This growing season starts with some of the previous season's protections still in place. These might be physical, chemical, botanical, ritual or anything else that fits with your setting. Decide on one or two protections, and add them to your map as symbols or notes.

TURNS

You have three actions per turn.

An action can be:

- Tending a plant
- Adding a plant
- Harvesting a plant
- Adding a protection



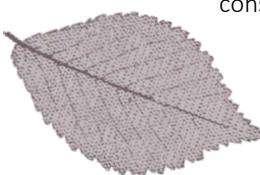
To start a turn, roll 1d6 for threats.

On a 1 or 2, there are no threats.

On a 3 or 4, one plant is affected by a threat.

On a 5 or 6, two plants are affected by a threat. Choose a threat from your list, and a plant affected by it. Add a note or a representation of the threat near the affected plant.

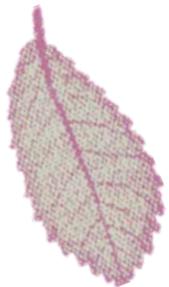
Choose and note your actions. Also draw an Event card – you can do this before or after deciding on your actions. As well as answering the event questions, consider whether the Event is likely to have an effect on your gardening work.



Then for any plant affected by a threat, roll to see how it fares. You can modify your result in the following ways:

- Add +1 if the plant was tended this turn.
- Add +1 if you have a relevant protection in play.
- If you decided that this turn's Event has a direct effect on the garden, apply +1 for a positive effect or -1 for a negative one.

If your total is:



3 or under: the plant is damaged. Draw an X next to the plant symbol, or, if there is growth from a previous turn, cross/black out one point of growth.

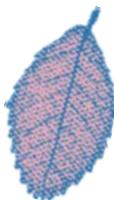
4: the plant is saved from bad damage but does not put out new growth this turn.

5-6: the plant puts out new growth despite the threat. Add 1 point of growth to the plant – draw or paste a simple shape next to the plant's symbol to represent this.

6 or above: the plant thrives despite the threat. Add 2 growth points.

Any plant that was tended this turn and didn't face a threat also gains 1 growth point. Any plant that has gained 2 crosses next to it (rather than growth points crossed out) is dead and cannot be used in play any more. Cross out or obscure the entire plant.

At the end of a turn, fill in a segment on each plant's counter (the segmented circle you drew next to it earlier). Once a plant's counter is full it is ready to harvest; it can also still be tended to protect it from threats, but will no longer gain new growth points.



A crop with a full timer and negative growth has failed. A crop with one or two growth segments has done poorly; with three or four it has done well. With 5 or more you have a glut. Note down the outcome of any plants harvested.

When you've played all the turns you want to for the season, take stock and reflect. What has been successfully grown and/or harvested? What will be done with it? How might this season's events bear fruit in the next?



TEXT

This place holds its own unique body of knowledge: texts brought in from outside, texts composed on site, breathing life into each other. This season, you'll join their conversations.

PREPARATION

Start by considering what kind of library suits this site. Is there a dedicated space for scholars, or a few modest shelves? Are the texts here accessible to everyone? Are there any rules or rituals associated with reading them?

Now, decide on a specific text you'll be studying. What kind of knowledge does it contain? Why are you interested in it? For extra inspiration, have a look at the tables on page 69.

As you begin to examine a page of your chosen text, roll 1d6 and make a note of its condition:

- 1: very well-preserved
- 2: a small stain or mark on the page
- 3: damaged but legible
- 4: small part of the text obscured or corrupted
- 5: about half the text obscured
- 6: only a few words are still legible

If damaged, can you tell how? Was it water, fire, mould, creatures? Or has it been torn, cut away or blotted out? Are there any signs of attempted repair?

TURNS

To find whatever it is you're seeking in this text, you'll be reading it closely – a few lines at a time.

At the start of a turn, roll 2d6 and add the results together. Now, using existing written materials available to you, compose a line of that many words. You could do this by cutting out words of printed text and sticking them down; alternatively, you could write a more free-form line that incorporates words from the materials at hand. Be sure to leave some space around the edges of your page.

You may end up with something fairly oblique, especially if relying entirely on cut-up words – embrace this: the work of interpretation is what's important here.

Repeat this process at least once, so that you have a short piece of text to work with.

If the condition of the text that you rolled for earlier included damage, decide how you'll represent this. If your result indicated that any text was unreadable, decide which words to obscure, and find a way to do so – you might tape or paste something over them, or simply cross them out.

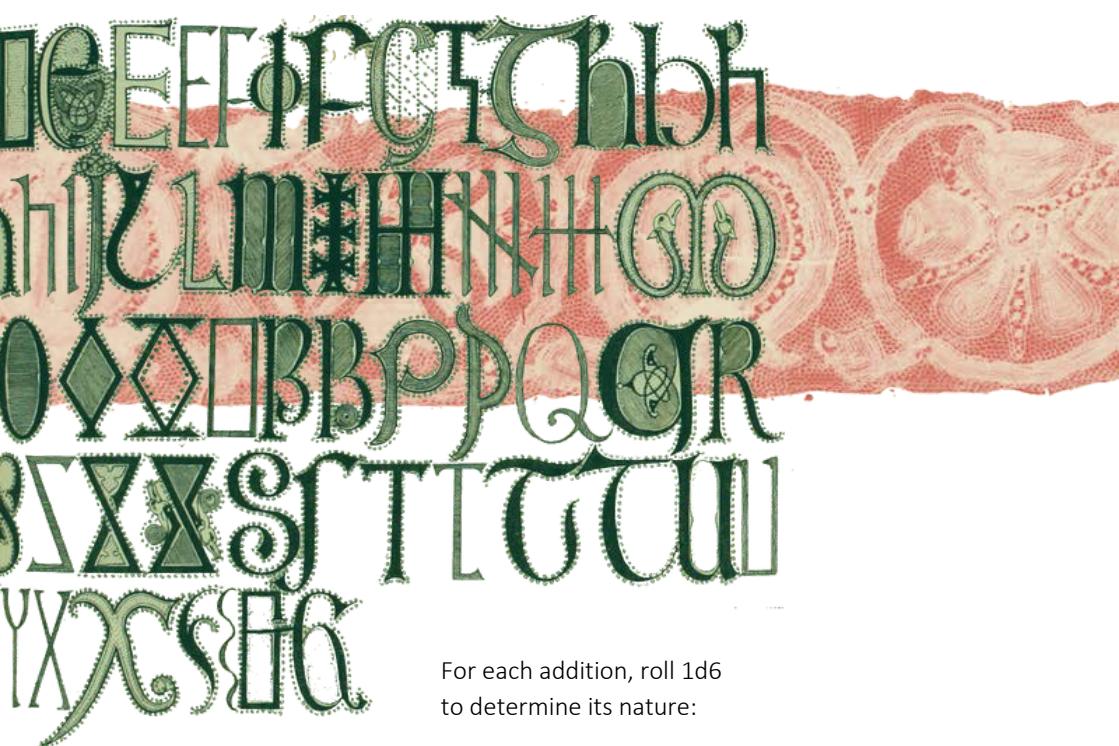
Now consider these lines as they appear to you in the moment. How well do you understand what you are reading? Is the text satisfying your reasons for choosing it, so far? Does anything surprise you? And is your attention wholly on the text, or are you distracted by the world around you? Draw an Event card and describe its effects on your studies, whether direct or as something happening in the background.

You are not the first person to pore over this page – others have studied these lines before you. Have they left their mark? Roll 1d6.

On a 1 or 2, there are no clear signs of previous readers.

On a 3 or 4, you notice something has been added to the margins.

On a 5 or 6, there are two such additions.



For each addition, roll 1d6
to determine its nature:

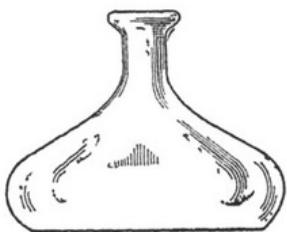
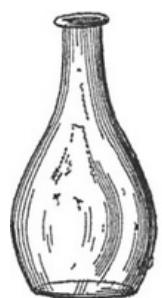
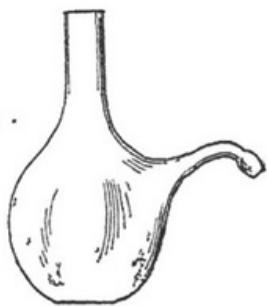
- 1: a doodle or diagram
- 2: a cryptic symbol
- 3: a note questioning something in the text
- 4: a note expanding on something in the text
- 5: a note about something the note-maker experienced
- 6: what appears to be a quote from a different text

Add these to the edges of your page, using a different colour pen to the one you usually favour.

Does anything you find in the margins change your reading of the lines in front of you? Do you add any marginalia of your own?

Continue to generate lines of text and interpret them in this way until you have played all the turns you wish to for the season. You can choose to put the current text away and pick up a new one at any point by returning to the preparation section.

What have you learned? What knowledge have you added? What will you relate to others about your studies?



KITCHEN

A vital organ of the site, the kitchen sustains the community through changing seasons and times. By taking up duties here, you take up the work of nourishing your fellow devotees and their endeavours.

Spend a few moments thinking about what this kitchen is like, and what it produces. Consider alternative kinds of kitchen if you like, such as a medicine or potions workshop. There are optional dice tables on page 69 for more ideas. If you've played a season in the Garden, you could also incorporate the produce grown there into your vision.

Some questions to guide you:

- Is the kitchen big or small, busy or quiet?
- Who organises the work here?
- What kinds of foods are staples at the site?
- What ingredients are readily available? What's used more sparingly?

Now gather materials to do with food, drink, or other concoctions – recipes from magazines/newspapers, takeaway menus, packaging labels, medical brochures, etc. Add in any materials you have that feels relevant to your setting in general. Sift through these and cut out words and phrases that appeal to you and/or feel relevant to your answers above.

Using your notes and the material you've collected, create the description and recipe for a dish, drink, potion, etc that is important to the community in some way. This could be a daily meal, a festive or ritual food, an offering, a cure that visitors seek, or anything else. You might make your recipe wholly out of cut-up text, or write it out incorporating your finds, or a combination of both.

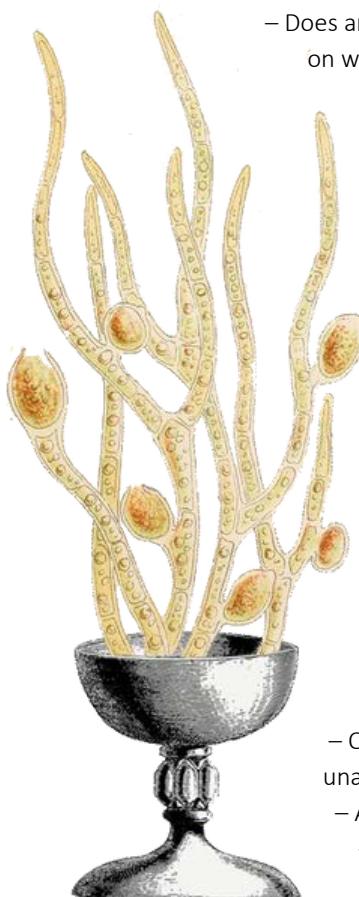
If this feels like a recipe that needs practice to get right, or one that requires an extended period of time to prepare, or you just want a shorter round, stick with this one recipe. If it's short and simple, or if you'd like to play a longer round, create a few more.

TURNS

As you get your bearings in the kitchen, you are given the task of preparing a recipe. Depending on what was generated during the preparation for this round, a turn will consist of either making a shorter recipe in its entirety, or completing one or two steps of a longer recipe. From your second turn onwards, you can choose to either repeat a recipe you've already tried, try a new one, or continue with the next steps for a longer recipe.

To begin a turn, pick your recipe, and make a few notes on how it is given to you. Some of the following questions might guide you:

- Who tasks you with making this? Who will be consuming it?
- Does anyone show you what to do, or will you be relying fully on written instructions?
 - Is this kind of preparation familiar to you?
 - Do others at the site tell you their own stories of making or consuming this?



Next, draw an Event card, and consider its effects on the site. If the event suggests kitchen stocks or infrastructure might be affected, note down whether the effect is helpful, a small concern, or a severe setback. Decide which statement from the following list is most fitting.

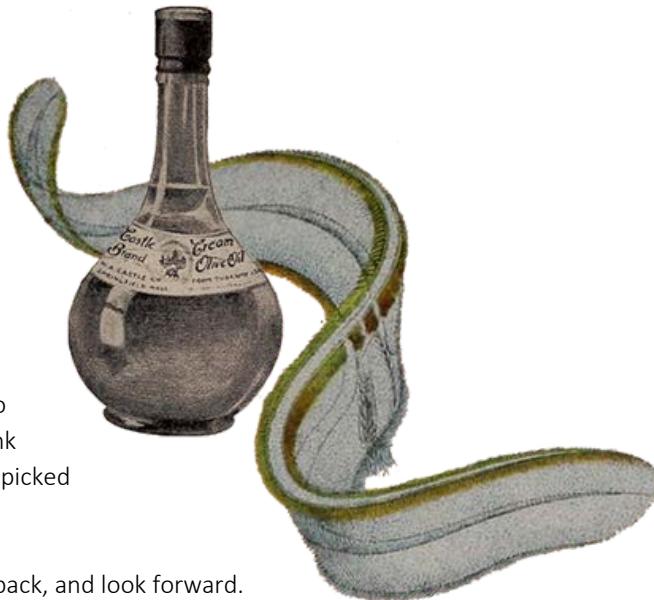
If your interpretation of the event doesn't have a clear effect on what's available in the kitchen, you can use the card's value as a guide (see parentheses).

- Everything you need is readily available (Ace)
- One non-integral ingredient or piece of equipment is missing or out of use (2-4)
- One integral item, or a few supplementary ones are unavailable (5-7)
- Almost everything is unavailable (8-10)
- You are inspired! Regardless of what's available, you're making this your own (J-K)

If you need to make changes to the ingredients or process, note how you do this. Annotate your recipe or write a new version of it.

When you complete a recipe, pause and consider what you've made. How close did you come to your intended result? Do you think any changes you've made will be picked up by others?

At the close of the season, think back, and look forward. How well was the site nourished during this time? What did others make of your adaptations? And what notes, techniques, or stories are you leaving for future kitchen attendants?





RETURN

You've spent a year of your life in this place. Its existence is part of you now, just as your existence is part of it. But something calls you back to the world you left behind to be here. It's time to return.

Perhaps you only ever meant to stay this long. Perhaps events have prompted you to move on. Perhaps you have a new journey to undertake, or you find yourself longing for home.

As you prepare for departure, look around you. What time of year is it? What colours, sounds, and scents surround you?

You make your way towards the site's margins. What are you taking with you from this place?

Write or draw what you are carrying, whether tangible or internal.

As you pass the threshold, do you pause? Are there any actions or words that you use to mark the moment?

Now, go.

CONTINUING THE GAME



You have told the story of one visitor's time at your Site. The place you have dreamed into being has space for many more such stories.

To build on what you've already created, return to the Arrival section and approach the site as a new character. This time, when choosing your Works, you can revisit the texts, buildings, gardens and kitchens that your previous character spent time with, and see what happens when a new person takes up the work. Consider what the site remembers, and what has been forgotten.

You might also have ideas of your own for continuing the stories you told here. If so – follow them.



SOURCES

SALAMANDER

Salamanders live in fire and make cocoons, which our court ladies spin and use to weave cloth and garments. To wash and clean these fabrics, they throw them into flames.

– The Letter of Prester John

Lizardlike amphibian, favouring dark and damp places, long believed to be icy-cold, fireproof or even born from flames due to appearing in fireplaces when its log-shelters were collected and burned. Able to completely regenerate many body parts, organs and tissues; some species are known to regenerate parts of their brains. Produces a deadly toxin rumoured to be hallucinogenic – rumoured, too, to be brewed into a wild aphrodisiac brandy.

Evocation

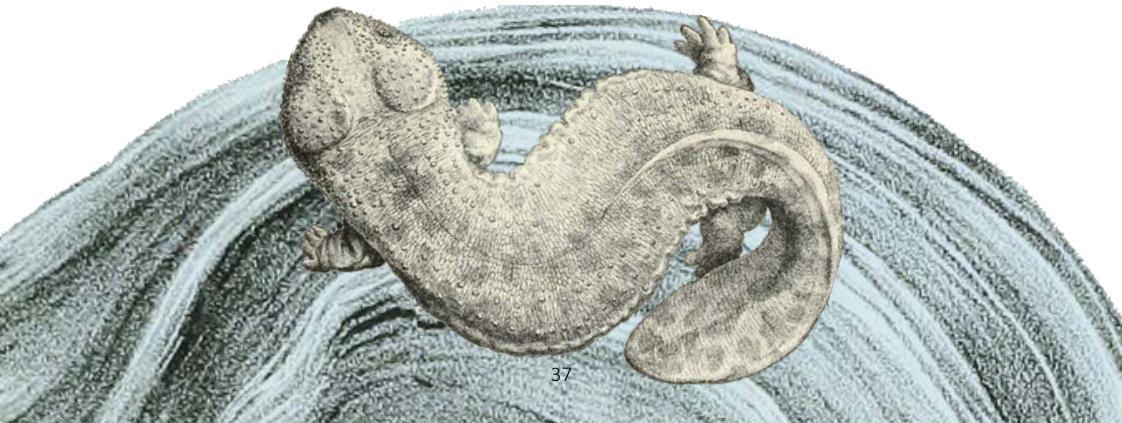
amphibious - mud - metamorphosis - elusive - elemental - fire - forge - hearth - heatproof - asbestos - dragon - deathless - damp - log - moss - burrow - freshwater - rain - spawn - larvae - slime - smooth - speckled - stripy - sinuous - sorcery - alchemy - virtue - heraldry - emblem - talisman - tail - gills - lungs - mucous membrane - toxins - secretion - skin shedding - autotomy - regeneration - axolotl

Questions

What is the relationship of land to water like, in this place?

Are there fire-dwellers or elementals in this world? What is believed about them?

What kinds of hiding places exist in the area, and who seeks them out?



Sphere

Shady, moist environments with plenty of water and damp hiding-places. Forest floors, caves, streams, pools. Some climbing species are found in arboreal and mountain habitats. Watery spawning places, which may be at some distance from the adults' main habitat. There should be plenty of vegetation, a good amount of condensation, and abundant insect prey.

Change

Lifecycle

Varies enormously across species, but most salamanders spawn in water, often in spring, leaving strings or clusters of jelly-like eggs. Larvae hatch, swim, feed, grow, metamorphose. They transform dramatically: lose their feathery gills, gill slits, tail fins; gain lungs, tongues, eyelids, teeth. Limbs, jaws, eyes, and the nervous system develop fully. Mature adults may travel from their place of birth following metamorphosis, but return for the breeding season.

Moultинг

Determined by an internal calendar, sometimes influenced by seasons or the weather, the skin is shed periodically as the salamander grows. Its glands secrete extra mucus, allowing it to wriggle out of its old skin, which it then eats to re-use the proteins.

Autotomy and regeneration

A threatened salamander can detach its own tail, which writhes on the spot where it was dropped as a distraction to predators. Once safe, the salamander will begin to regrow its tail. This costs energy and leaves it temporarily more vulnerable. Most animals with regenerative abilities are only able to create approximations of the original, but salamanders can grow perfect copies of lost limbs.

MUSHROOM

*Had Nature an Apostate –
That Mushroom – it is Him!
– Emily Dickinson, The Mushroom is the Elf of Plants*

The visible reproductive organs of hidden, filament-bodied fungi. Appearing as if from nothing, prized for their flavour, feared for their poisons, held sacred for their secrets. There are mushrooms that deliquesce into ink, others that can be squeezed or boiled for dyes, others that look and burn like lumps of coal. There are mushrooms that refashion reality. Edible and deadly species are sometimes only differentiated by the subtlest differences, requiring close study of habitat, scent, shape, and spores.

Evocation

growth - decay - spread - root - networked - mycelium - fungus - fruiting body - hyphae - spore - soil - cap - gills - stem - stipe - bracket - horn - veil - organ - poison - magic - medicine - dye - damp - toadstool - parasite - psychoactive - psilocybin - forage - fairy ring - wood - field - hunt - leaf litter - edible - earthy - rich - flavour - flesh - preserved - proliferate - release - rain - cluster - sudden - identification - perception

Questions

Do people in this place go foraging? What do they tend to find?
What is hidden in this world, and what are the visible signs of its existence?
What is believed about the relationship between life, death, and decay?

Sphere

The surfaces of dwelling-places for fungal networks: earth, living trees, dead wood, insects, other mushrooms. Pastures, forests, parks, riverbanks, roadsides. Around the bases of trees that they form underground partnerships with, or directly from the bodies of the decaying organisms they feed on. Most abundant in places where moisture can be readily absorbed, but desert mushrooms are also known.



Change

Lifecycle: Formation

When ready to fruit, a mushroom-forming fungus* combines many of its microscopic threads into a tiny nodule, positioned just at the surface of its home substrate. This nodule develops into a baby mushroom, which rapidly absorbs water, allowing its cells to swell and its body to expand above ground. In temperate climates this often happens in the cooler, damper weather of late summer through autumn – although many species have adapted to mushroom in their own seasonal niches.

Lifecycle: Sporing

Fully grown, a mushroom has all the tools needed to fulfil its main objective: producing and dispersing spores. A layer of specialised spore-bearing tissue – the hymenium – is formed, in the shape of gills, folds, tubes, teeth; in some mushrooms this layer remains internal. In all its forms, it produces millions of spores, which are dispersed in a number of ways: ejected from gills to float on air currents, spread through the soil as the cap liquefies, secreted as a carrion-scented slime to be picked up by flies, or released in a sudden cloud as a puffball bursts open in rain.

Foxfire

As darkness falls, some mushrooms begin to give out a neon-green light, produced by the enzyme luciferase. This fungal glow, traditionally known as foxfire, is tied to the mushroom's circadian clock, reaching its peak of intensity well into the night. This light may serve as a beacon to nocturnal insects, or as a warning to grazing animals.

MOON

Our only natural satellite is a stabilizing force that makes the planet a more pleasant place for life.

– NASA

Space-formed satellite for a planet, tracing a regular repeating path around its host. A source of light in the sun's absence, conductor of tides and cornerstone of calendars. According to various beliefs: a moist body, delivering dew and decay; a troubler of the mind and the blood; the home of lost and wasted things; a stepping-stone for humankind.

Evocation

phase - wax - wane - full - new - half - gibbous - crescent - satellite - orbit - eclipse - crater - collision - sea - tide - locked - distortion - gravity - axis - illumination - reflection - fecundity - witchcraft - intuition - sleep - dreams - delirium - lycanthropy - howl - blood - hunt - measure - navigation - exploration - space - rover - rocket - ice - volcano - subsurface ocean - crust - core - calendar - contraband - thieves - poets - lovers - honey - dew - dust - shepherd - rising - round - ridge - haze - beam - shadow

Questions

What moons exist in this world?

Can the moon(s) be easily observed from the site's location? Is the site on a moon?

What natural or human activities take place by moonlight?

Sphere

Within the gravitational field of planets, tracking circular or elliptical routes around their hosts. Close enough to be held in orbit but not so close as to crash to the surface or be disintegrated by tidal forces. Moons might share this habitat with fellow moons, moonlets, manmade satellites, rocks, ice, dust; others are solitary. Diverse surface landscapes: mountains and plains, liquid methane lakes, lava flows, frozen oceans; occasionally, an atmosphere.

Change



Creation

In one way or another, non-moon matter interacts with a planet's field of gravity, and is made moon. Debris from the collision of bodies in space scatters into orbit and slowly pulls together into a new body. A young planet forms, circled by discs of dust, ice or gas which coalesce into satellites. Or a passing asteroid is pulled from its trajectory and given a new, looping path to follow.



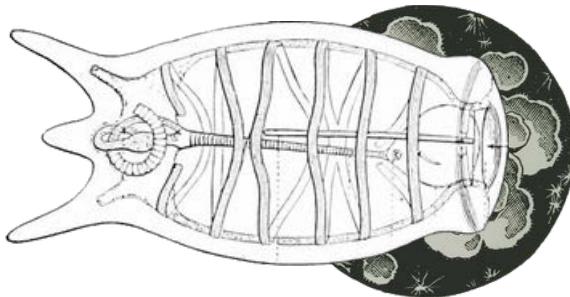
Phases

Seen from the planetary surface, a moon appears to change shape as it proceeds in its orbit, shifting its angle from both the sun and the observer – so shifting the visible illuminated portion of its face – as it goes. These portions acquire their own names and meanings, blank new moon waxing to crescent, then half, then full, and waning back again. The length of any given moon's orbit might mean it takes years, or a month, or less than a day to complete this cycle.

Distortion

The gravitational forces that hold a moon and its planet together exert a stretching effect on both bodies. Moons, the smaller bodies, feel this effect most keenly: those on elliptical orbits subtly elongate when brought closer to their planet, and on ice moons the force of this distortion creates heat, which might create liquid seas, geysers and weather patterns. Some moons may eventually be torn apart.

SALP



Each salp is different from the mother and from the daughter, but is identical to its grandmothers and grandchildren and to its sisters.

— Adelbert von Chamisso, De Salpa

Glassy, tubular sea creature that exists in both solitary and aggregate forms, with colonies that can consist of thousands of individuals assembled in chains, double helixes, rings or spirals. Generations of salps alternate between asexual and sexual reproduction, allowing rapid population growth. Salps feed on plankton by filtering water through intricate, invisible nets; larger animals like fish might take shelter or hitch rides within their hollow bodies, and young octopuses have been observed disguising their bodies as the internal organs of salps.

Evocation

gelatinous - generation - clone - spiral - ring - chain - chordate - tunicate - tubular - pelagic - plankton - current - drift - pump - jet propulsion - marine - deep - surface - swarm - bloom - algae - siphon - filter - shelter - hollow - divide - multiply - bud - stolon - solitary - aggregate - alternation - sequential hermaphroditism - transparent - stringy - sticky - carbon sink

Questions

What strange things can be found in nearby waters? Who is aware of them?

How does this community structure itself in relation to reproduction and generations?

What activities are considered solitary pursuits? What is done communally?

Sphere

Salps inhabit the open ocean, in cold, temperate and equatorial regions. They gather and multiply in areas rich in phytoplankton, particularly at night when they rise to the surface to feed and reproduce. During the day they migrate to the deep ocean to avoid surface predators and harsh sunlight. They may also be found in coastal areas, carried by currents to form a glittering offshore jelly soup, beached in sticky masses, or clogging industrial seawater filters.

Change

Lifecycle: Oozooid phase

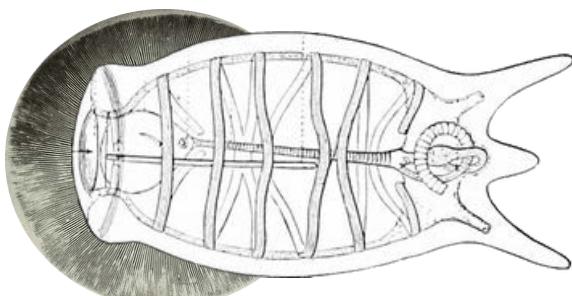
Solitary salps reproduce asexually, often in response to sudden abundance of food in the form of phytoplankton blooms. The parent salp buds off and releases a chain of tiny clones, which remain attached to each other as they drift, feed and grow.

Lifecycle: Blastozoid phase

Salps in their aggregate form reproduce sexually, with each individual salp in a newly formed chain containing an egg that can be fertilised by members of an older chain, who produce male gametes. Embryos are formed and nurtured within each salp, then released as solitary salps to begin the cycle again. Chains mature as female to start with, and become male after they have reproduced for the first time.

Carbon sinking

By rapidly multiplying and feasting on algae blooms, salps swallow up large amounts of carbon from the ocean surface. The carbon-rich fecal pellets they produce are dense and fast-sinking, carrying this carbon to the ocean floor, where it remains largely untouched by ocean ecosystems.



LEPIDODENDRON

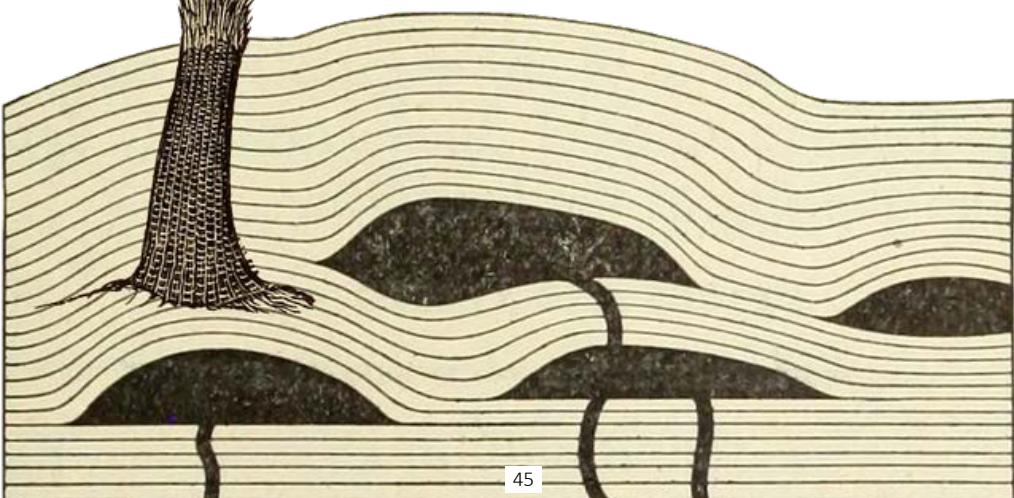
Those who are familiar with this object, with its lozenge-shaped markings running spirally up the stem, will readily understand the outburst of pleasure which escaped our lips!

— J.E. Taylor, Notes on Collecting and Preserving Natural-History Objects

The scale tree, named for the tough diamond-pattern cortex that protected and supported its narrow body, allowing it to grow upwards of 50 metres despite its soft interior. Its 'scales' are the scars left by quill-like leaves that grew from the trunk in upwards spirals. Lepidodendron grew in abundance during the Carboniferous, 358.9 to 298.9 million years ago, anchoring itself in lush wetlands with shallow, blunt root-like structures. A relative of modern quillworts and club mosses, and a major component of the coal that fuelled the Industrial Revolution.

Evocation

scale - quill - needle - cone - giant - fossil - carboniferous - coal forest - steam - spore - armour - vascular - branching - anchorage - compression - seam - sediment - sandstone - mass - climate - cooling - collapse - time - swamp - spiral - scar - imprint - cast - diamond - reptilian - precursor - prehistory - palaeobotany - aeon - extinction - energy - modification - preservation



Questions

What remains from ancient times in this setting? Is it treasured, exploited, ignored?
What materials and methods are used to meet challenges offered by the landscape?
How are heat and fuel produced, and who controls their production and use?

Sphere

Throughout subtropical regions of the Carboniferous era, in some of the oldest forest ecosystems: sprawling, swampy; thick with calamites and ferns; home to giant insects and amphibians, freshwater sharks, and the earliest reptiles. As fossils, revealed by erosion or human industry. As coal, pressed into rich seams alongside its forest neighbours, uncovered in mines, burnt in stoves and power stations.

Change

Lifecycle

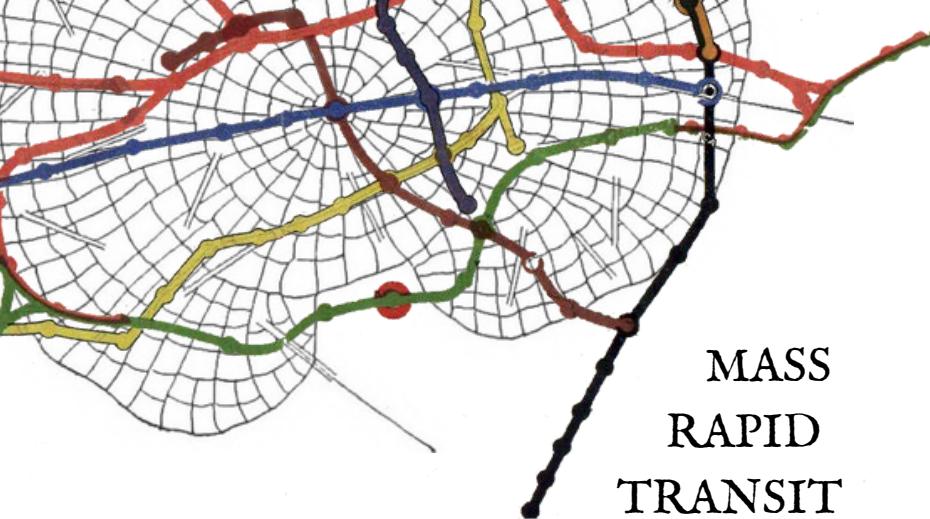
First, the growth phase, in which the tree grows as a single unbranched trunk to its full height. The growing tip then divides into a crown of branches before entering the reproductive phase, in which cones made from clusters of modified leaves at the branch-tips produce and release spores. Each tree would complete this cycle only once before dying. No seasonal changes are known to have occurred.

Fossilisation

Fallen trees sink into the soft ground and gradually become covered over with layers of mud and sand. The increasing pressure of successive sediment deposits eventually turns the lower layers into rock, while the buried organic matter is slowly dissolved by ground water flow. The water leaves mineral deposits in the spaces left by bark, branches or cones, in time replacing them with stone copies.

Coal formation

Dense and towering, Lepidodendron populations absorb massive amounts of CO₂, which remain in the trees' bodies as they fall. As the fungi and bacteria of these forests have not yet learned to digest wood, fallen trees pile up instead of decomposing, pushing their older relatives further down. Their underground transformation continues over millions of years: time, heat and pressure removing almost everything but the carbon and compacting it into strata of hard black coal.



To thus foreshorten for everyone the distances that separate localities from each other, is to equally diminish the distances that separate men from one another.

— Constantin Pecqueur

Public rail systems designed for efficient, high-capacity urban travel, gathering disparate parts of cities and suburbs into schematic constellations. Networks vary in scope, design, and character, but share some universal components: tracks, vehicles, stations, operators. Stations and trains may be operated by human labour, machine automation or, most commonly, an intricate combination.

Evocation

train - travel - track - network - metropolitan - sub-surface - underground - elevated - tunnel - tube - station - line - map - maglev - monorail - rolling stock - platform - carriage - access - turnstile - ticket - token - interchange - operator - signal - city - circuit - public - passenger - electricity - urban legend - terminal - topology - timetable - connection - strangers - crowd - commute - rush - graffiti - busk - kiosk - poster - fare - shelter - vent - announcer - maintenance - crew - departure - arrival

Questions

What kinds of public transport exist in this setting? Who operates them?

What technological innovations have been seen recently?

Where are the significant hubs of activity for local communities?

Sphere

Urban areas, in single, branching or interconnecting lines. Beneath, at, or above ground level; in tunnels or on elevated rails, with some systems moving between subterranean and aerial environments. To flourish, an MRT network requires people to work and ride it, places to go to, and a reliable power supply. A network may in turn provide habitats for wildlife, including mice and rats on platforms and tracks, bats in disused tunnels, and thriving populations of insects.

Change

Creation

Introducing MRT to a city is a massive undertaking, requiring years to decades of planning to account for existing structures and underlying geological conditions. Construction may require digging up and re-covering entire streets, deep tunnel-boring, or building viaducts over roads, as well as implementing new transport technology and establishing stations in key locations. This work often cleaves to existing urban layouts, while also immediately beginning to influence the city's future growth and movement.

Modernisation

An active transit system is always incomplete, a meeting-place of obsolescence and potential. Steam is replaced by electricity, stock is phased out, lines or stations closed or rebuilt, new routes added. With networks so deeply embedded into their cities' bodies, this change is rarely linear: new tech jostling with old, service disruption required to keep the system alive.

Passenger flow

The daily life of a rapid transit network follows the daily lives of its human riders, with activity usually peaking in mornings and evenings when passengers are commuting to and from their work. Other peaks occur during lunch hours, or late at night after bars and restaurants close; there may also be seasonal changes based around holidays and special events. Factors adjusted to meet this ebb and flow include staff numbers, frequency of services, train length, escalator direction, and use of station entrances.

BREAD LOAVES

a Source by Kyle Tam

With bread all sorrows are less.

– Sancho Panzo in Don Quixote

A humble baked good formed when the salt of the earth rises to meet the sweat of the brow. Though recipes vary in composition and measurement all the world over, every loaf begins with flour, yeast, water, and salt. No two are ever truly identical, though they are all made with the shared will to feed others and bring satisfaction.

Evocation

risen - leavened - moist - dry - warm - fresh - crunchy - shared - celebrate - breakfast - meals - flour - yeast - salt - earth - family - baker - hearth - flat - dough - knead - slice - oven - flame - sun - butter - spreads - happiness - bite - whole - wheat - growth - smooth - crust - beginning - starter - fermentation - passing - water - life - rustic - proof - humility - simple - satisfaction - fullness - feeding

Questions

How does the recipe for bread differ from place to place?

Is it a staple of all meals, or a rare foodstuff for special occasions?

What traditions surround feasts and food in this place?

What position do the makers of food occupy?

Sphere

A loaf of bread can be found either in the process of being made, or as a foodstuff after it has been baked. In its initial stages the loaf of bread exists as raw ingredients – flour freshly ground from wheat, water drawn from the wells and rivers, salt shaved from crystal mines and a pinch of yeast carefully prepared. Afterwards the loaf of bread may come into being as dough, ready to rise or in the process, which means that it exists within any kitchen that has an oven so that it may finish being baked. Finally, the loaf of bread in its most complete state may have a presence wherever food is being consumed by others. Wherever there is meat or pasta that needs accompanying, or perhaps when a fast is being broken, the simple bread loaf will be there.



Change

Making Dough

Making dough is the process of turning raw ingredients into the dough to be baked. Taking the results of one's harvest, the spoils of the earth, and combining them together with patience and care. The end result should be sticky and gooey, with the kneading and mixing of the dough an important part of harmoniously bringing all of the ingredients together into a cohesive whole.

Rising

Counterintuitively to the creation of a work, rather than toiling away at the dough an important part is to leave it in order for it to fill and rise. Arguably, leaving the dough to rise in the silent darkness for hours in order to form is just as important as working away at the dough's initial creation. Rest, patience, and care is necessary in order for the bread to come closest to its true potential.

Baking

With warmth and patience, all bread shall rise. You put faith in the work, the toil, the separate parts combined together. Making bread is as much a product of trust in all elements of the process as it is the final bake. Watching the sticky dough turn from pale white to crusty dark brown or a soft caramel. The smell begins to waft out from the oven, a promise of new beginnings. No matter what comes out, it is proof of the hard work and dedication placed in, and shall find a place upon a table to be eaten. To be shared. To become part of one's daily life, and to nourish that which is most important – life.



ROOTLESS-YET-CLINGING

a Source by Pear Nuallak

The ground moss groweth in our moist woods, and in the bottom of hills, in boggy grounds, and in shadowy ditches, and many other such like places. The tree moss groweth only on trees ... All sorts of mosses are under the dominion of Saturn.

— Culpeper's Complete Herbal

Lichens and bryophytes (mosses, liverworts, hornworts) cling to their homes without roots, absorbing water and nutrients directly through their surfaces. Historically grouped together as “moss,” they are in fact distinct lifeforms: lichens are symbioses of algae and fungi, while bryophytes are non-vascular plants. Lichens and mosses are often found growing close together, thriving in damp places, often covering the surface with their infinite forms: filigree lace, jam tarts, swathes of velvet, braids, plump cushions, nodding stars.

Evocation

epiphyte - patience - mossy rocks - slime - matted - concrete - green - hold - soak up - estuary - chlorophyll - grey - liverwort - osmosis - wet - bryophyte - lichen - tangle - symbiosis - oakmoss - slip - algae - branching - quench - fasten - woods - dripping - revive - sphagnum - cling - rhizoids - slow water - drink in - clump - swell - foliose - persistent

Questions

Who or what thrives in forgotten corners and crevices?

Who gathers rootless-yet-clinging, and why?

Sphere

Anywhere and everywhere, often at boundaries and transitional places. The top of a bus stop, worn brick walls, an old dripping pipe; trees and rocks in all manner of forests; caves, cliffs and concrete cities that resemble them.

What rootless-yet-clinging requires is patience. It takes many years for bryophytes and lichens to form, slowly building up into lush surfaces or abundant structures. In order to grow, rootless-yet-clinging requires just enough water; a slow trickle or fine mist encourages mosses and lichens to swell with life, while torrents wash them away.

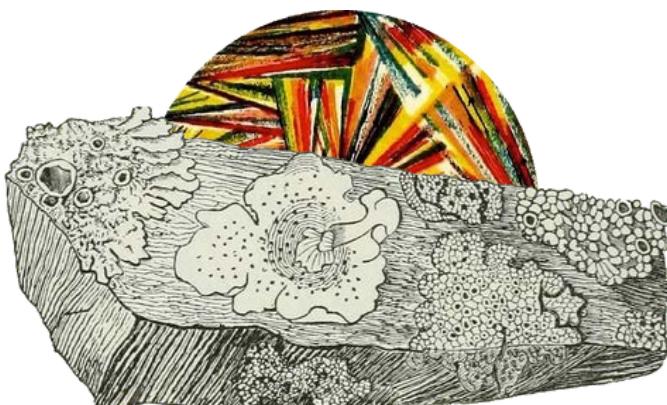
Change

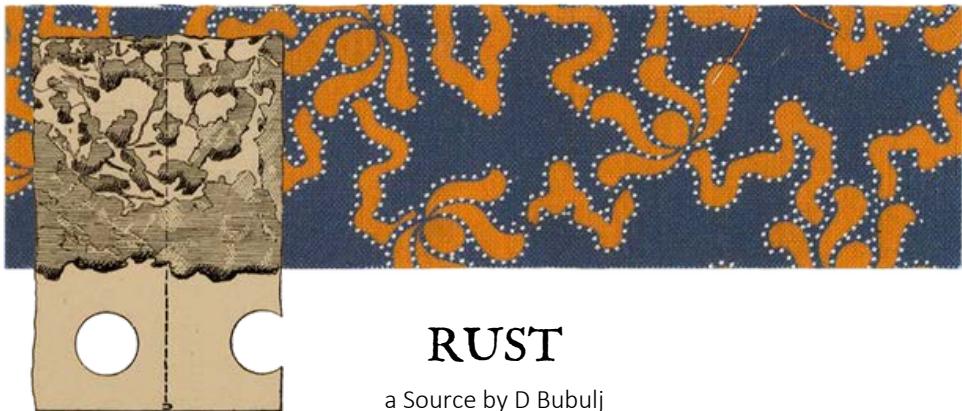
Poikilohydry

The essential structures of rootless-yet-clinging retain their integrity in the absence of water, going into dormancy as they dry. They can survive for many years in this state. Just a few drops of water is enough for their unfurling revivification, stretching out in fresh, wet colour.

Reproduction and recovery

Mosses and liverworts grow not only in damp forgotten crevices, but also cover the soil after fire, the spores dispersing among the ashes. This allows the humus to regenerate under its protective mat. Lichens protect trees and rocks from harsh weather and, when it is time, they return to the ground and enrich the soil.





RUST

a Source by D Bubulj

After all, thought I, time is not such an invariable destroyer as he is represented. If he pulls down, he likewise builds up... his rust is more precious than the most costly gilding.

– Washington Irving, *Bracebridge Hall*

Rust is formed by the reaction of iron or its alloys (such as steel) and oxygen, with the presence of water (still, flowing or within the air). It can be many colours, but most commonly the reddish-brown hue to which it gives its name. With enough time and without preventative measures, something of any size could be entirely transformed. As all rust needs to begin is air and moisture, this process can be seen as reflective of time passing, neglect, or encroaching decay.

If you were hoeing dried crops, you are doing something against rust.

– Palladius, *Opus agriculturae*

Plants are also affected by ‘rust’, fungi types that spread highly specialised spores through wind, water and insects to germinate chosen host plants including cereals, cedar-fruits, corn, soybeans and sugarcane. Signs of infection include powdery patches, cankers and the raised blisters and stripes of fruiting rust bodies.

Evocation

iron - reaction - catalyst - eating - eaten - time - red - ferrous - industry - still - infrastructure - care - protection - weathered - inaction - rest - disrepair - rain - natural - crumbling - edges - disintegration - iron gall ink - stain - indifferent - inevitable - healing - slowing - history - erasure

Questions

How is rust present at your site, and what is causing it?

How familiar is what is rusting: is it a structure that is common/distinct within your world, or has the origin been lost?

How safe does it make people feel to be near this space?

Have there been attempts to reverse or remove the rust?

Sphere

From quiet red rivulets down deep mine walls to the screaming joints of cranes that touch the clouds – iron exposed to the elements invites rust to feed on bridges that cross untraversable expanses, the beams and columns within gutted buildings, and desperate makeshift shielding wind-bitten by storms.

It thrives in areas where industry once was, like abandoned factories or once-gleaming railways eaten by forests; sunken ships or the reddened shape of a long-gone rake that continues to exist by virtue of not being touched.

Change

*Our Armours now may rust...
And all the noisie trades of War, no more
Shall wake the peaceful morn*
– John Dryden, Don Sebastian

Time

The process of not-rust to rust to slowly breaking down is a strong indicator of time passing. Actions can increase, decrease or even reverse its inevitable pace. Rust reveals vulnerabilities within the early foundations of bright, galvanised futures – futures which rust will in turn break down into artefacts unfamiliar in worlds of clay, bone, wood and stone.

Consumption

Rust can be said to eat through hubris. Like fire, it is a force of nature fuelled by air and water to slowly but surely devour until nothing beside remains. Rust fungi, obligate parasites, die with their hosts after a life of feeding and propagating spores to spread their line.

DESERT SAINTS

a Source by Alex MacFarlane

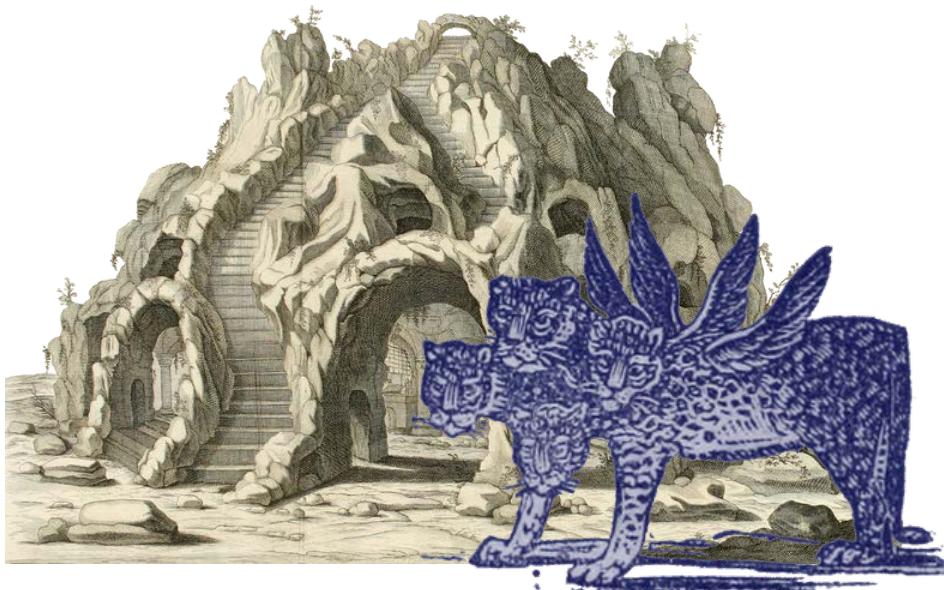
We ate herbs from the ground, and water did not run short for us, and we arrived at a place in which there were fruit-bearing trees abounding in fruit and we gave thanks to God, and we were satiated by the fruit.

— The Life of Makarios the Roman of Mesopotamia

People who flee their cities to pursue an ascetic life in the wilderness, sustained by the most basic foodstuffs: herbs growing on the ground, trees bearing fruit. In some stories, the trees cease to fruit during periods of religious fasting, then return to abundance for the feast days. The saints live in caves, accompanied only by animals, clothed in a simple cloak or their own overgrown head and body hair, transformed by the harsh landscape into holy selves.

Evocation

desert - desolate - rocky - rugged - desperate - herbs - fruit - honey - fasting - virginity - nudity - clothed in hair - solitude - sunburn - skin like a tortoise - thirst - desire - natural springs - sin - burial by lions - divinity - visitation - forgiveness - birds with human faces - paradise - pursuit - return - narrating - remaining - transcending



Questions

How is the landscape attuned to the seasonal practices of the people here?

What new selves do people seek in solitude?

What does it mean to journey into the wilderness and meet a saint? What does it mean to come back?

Sphere

Wildernesses, but not necessarily lifeless. Scrublands and marshes. A harsh sun.

There should be caves for the ascetics to dwell in, of untold numbers. A desert silently riddled with saints. The nearest city or port or monastery is weeks, months, or even years' walk away, although the linearity of the landscape is in question. It is easy to get lost. The fauna are at first alarming, but may provide guidance.

Change

Departure

The greatest change, arguably, is departure: the decision to leave behind a life in society, with its comforts and company, to dwell alone in the desert. For some, it is a lifelong need: they have always known. Others learn along the course of life. They set aside their possessions, spouses, spurious selves and disappear into the desert, to be transformed.

Masculinisation

The basic diet causes changes to the body: breasts shrivel up like leaves, menstrual cycles cease. Living in the desert, the ascetic becomes known as a beardless man. Perhaps he takes on a new name. This is a harsh transition, but a reality for some.

Return

Few who cast off their lives to be in the desert return, but others go to see them: curious to learn, to sit in conversation with such holy people. Some write down the stories of their journeys to and from the saints. Some continue the conversation with their own bodies, in their own holy or unholy places. The desert trees grow multiple fruits on one bough.

PEBBLE

a Source by Eleanor Turney

*Pebbles cannot be tamed
to the end they will look at us
with a calm and very clear eye.*

– Zbigniew Herbert

A pebble is a rock between 4–64mm according to the Udden-Wentworth scale of sedimentology. Pebbles are generally accepted to be larger than granules and smaller than cobbles. A larger rock made predominantly of pebbles is called a conglomerate. ‘Pebble’ can also refer to colourless quartz, or a lens made of such quartz. Pebbles are smooth rocks, tumbled and rounded by the action of water. Sucking a small pebble can ward off thirst on a hot day.

Evocation

rock - stone - quartz - hard - resistant - enduring - erosion - tumble - smooth - sand - polish - jewel - water - riverbed - sea - beach - grey - calm - pleasing - round - tactile - mountain - cairn - marker - grave - weapon - slingshot - missile - club - eye - blank - canvas - surface - crystal - reveal - secret - precious - lens - glass - vein - fissure - mining - hammer - split

Questions

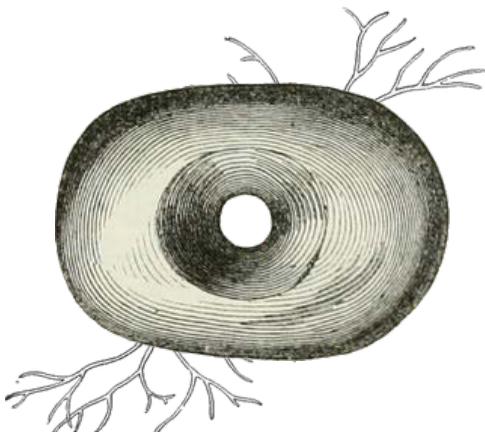
What would happen if you split a pebble open? What would you see?

When you hold a pebble in your hand, why does it warm?

Does a pebble in your pocket hold the memory of water?

Is this beach/riverbed/ocean coming or going?





Sphere

Pebbles can be found in water, near water, in hands, in pockets, hidden away, carried like talismans, split, polished and worn as jewellery. They require no special conditions to survive; they endure. Pebbles can also be found in earth, buried or loose, everywhere from gardens to graves to paths. They can turn the ankle of the unwary or bruise flesh when thrown.

Change

Pebbles are themselves still, but they are subject to movement by other forces.

Water will pick them up, carry them to new places, shift them around, turn them over, fling them high or drag them down into the depths.

People will pick them up, split them, break them, treasure them, gift them, wear them, polish them, throw them, weaponise them. Rain can bury or uncover them.

Water tumbles them and they gradually erode from bumping and rubbing against each other, against sand, against larger rocks. Water wears everything away eventually.

Glaciers can carry them, slowly, across great distances. The picking up of pebbles by the glacier is called 'plucking'. The front of the glacier is called its snout, and this bulldozes loose material as it moves slowly downhill.

THE STEEL COLOSSUS

a Source by Cameron Haberberg

Metal that may be living or dead, but regardless thrums with potential. It can take a variety of forms, all of them massive, and showcases the utmost technical capabilities of its creators. With the right expertise and commands, it can transport living creatures, perform heavy labour, and build things – or destroy them.

Evocation

heavy - decay - obsolescence - ingenuity - construction - demolition - war - service - synergy - tactical - circuits - complex - rust - glistening - awe - terror - tread - fly - humanoid - inhuman - weapon - intelligence - will - metal - smithing - spark - automaton - pilot - engine - cube - exhaust - smoke - dust - impact - choice - squadron - vice - claw - hammer - apart - shrapnel - rubble - victory - defeat - consequence - repair

Questions

There is an order to the things and beings of this place – who creates it, and how?

In this place, where does metal come from? What secrets does it hold?

What is understood here about the essence of the mind? What or who is deemed to have one?

Sphere

If you wish to see the Steel Colossus in action, find it on dry, open terrain, the site of a building in progress or destroyed; wide, enclosed spaces filled with tools; or, if you are most fortunate, beyond the stars you see on land. It can be found in the rainforest, overtaken by vines and creatures; in the desert, become an hourglass of sorts; or deep beneath the ocean – but it cannot be said to live there, if indeed it is ever said to live at all.

Change

Creation

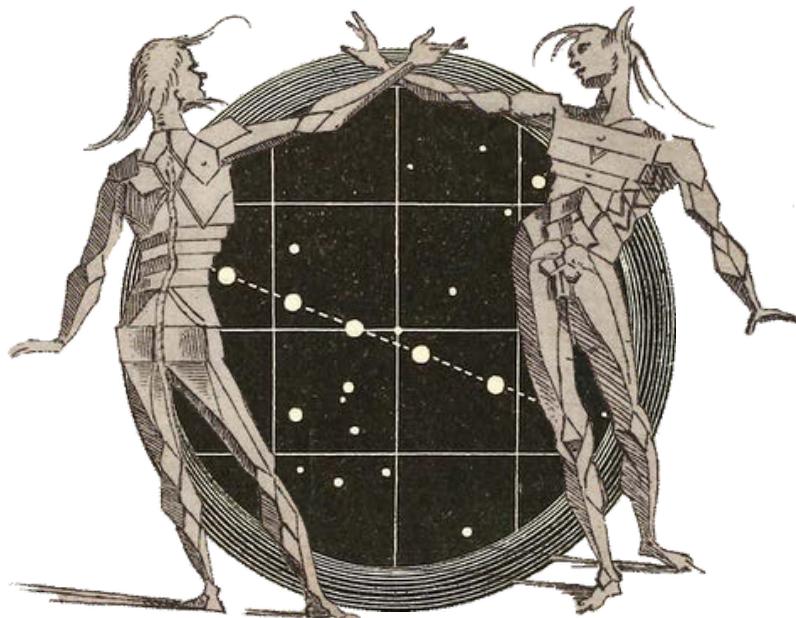
Birthed by many parents over many months, the Colossus begins its existence as disparate piles of ore and silicone. Through endless toil and endless fire, it is hammered and welded into the shape its parents dreamed. They construct its veins and neurons from wiring and processors. Finally, a place is set for its incumbent pilot, and the next stage commences.

Pairing

A Steel Colossus is known for its size and power, but equally through the deeds of its pilot. The moment one is selected, their destinies are intertwined – for better or for worse. Pairing is a time for great ceremony and anticipation. It is the opening of a new record. A Steel Colossus is likely to have numerous Pairings across its lifespan.

Decommissioning

The end of a Colossus' functioning is not the end of its life – merely the end of its movement. Its form will persist, and so will its function if visited often. However, in many cases, a decommissioned Colossus will be left to rust and decay in the open, or be gutted in the name of progress.



CREATE YOUR OWN SOURCE

First, choose something from the natural world that you find compelling. This could be an animal, plant, mineral, habitat, system or process. As nature contains humans and our creations, you might opt for a manmade structure or system.

Spend some time researching your source. What immediately strikes you about it? What do you want to dig into further? What others have said or written about it? Draw on these areas to expand on the following sections.

Evocation

A list of words or phrases associated with the source – these could be ecological, technical, folkloric, historical, modern, etc. They can be directly descriptive of the thing you've chosen, or more tangential. Don't overthink this stage – you're simply building a bank of ideas and images to draw on throughout play.

Questions

Now that you've started looking into your source, what interesting worldbuilding questions might it inspire? Come up with 3-4 that allow expansion, touching on material, cultural, or metaphysical aspects.

Sphere

Make some notes on the kinds of places this thing usually inhabits. Include specific conditions and/or resources that are important to its presence and survival there. This is for you to draw on when imagining physical spaces within your game.

Change

Describe at least one cycle or process that your source undergoes – the rhythms of its existence and any major stages or events. This could include patterns of behaviour (such as different activities at different times of day), seasonal or yearly processes of transformation and/or reproduction, or more-than-yearly timelines of change. You'll refer to this when thinking about the patterns of your site's existence, its calendar, rituals and important events.

Finally, look over what you've written. Is there anything you love or find fascinating about your source that isn't covered? Note it down.

Your source is now ready to use in the setup phase of the game.

EVENTS

♣	Event
Ace	Sudden abundance. Gardens burst with life, visitors bring riches, or good omens multiply. How is this fortune shared?
2	A vital resource becomes scarce. What is it, and what has happened to it?
3	Something unexpected grows from the ground. Is this growth encouraged or uprooted?
4	Fog, storms, blackout – something causes loss of visibility across the site. What measures are taken? How long does it last?
5	Strange rains fall – what do they bring, and how long do they last? What is done with the fallen matter?
6	An infestation. Gardens ravaged, buildings gnawed upon, bodies bitten. How does the community combat this pestilence?
7	Several weeks of unseasonal hot or cold weather. How is the local ecology affected? The site's resources?
8	A field, clearing or cavern in the area has taken to quaking and making unearthly noises when anyone enters it. Is the cause of this understood?
9	Rocks, plants, or bodies of water have started to stray from their usual places. Is there any pattern to their movement?
10	A structure collapses – a wall, a building, or monument. What becomes harder as a result? Is this considered an omen?
Jack	A broken structure is repaired in the night. The ground nearby is busy with animal tracks. What kind of tracks are they?
Queen	After a ritual, small clusters of creatures are seen all around the site. What do they look like? What do they do?
King	A beast believed extinct is discovered within or near the site. Is it welcome?

♥	Event
Ace	A stranger arrives, full of urgency, asking for divine intervention. What do they need? Will they be heard?
2	A crowd has appeared, all their eyes distant. None of them remember how they got here. How are they greeted?
3	Somebody leaves abruptly, marking their departure with a grand pronouncement. What do they say?
4	A pilgrim leaves an offering that offends. Who objects, and why?
5	One pilgrim steals a token left by another. What was it? Is it recovered?
6	A group returns from an outing, uneasy and close-lipped. Is anyone able to get a story out of them?
7	One or more attendants embark on a mission. What do they hope to obtain, and why is it needed?
8	A ceremony is held for new initiates. How does it go?
9	A game is played somewhere on the site. What kind of game is it, and who participates?
10	Love or lust blooms within the community. Is this a mundane occurrence or cause for scandal?
Jack	A disagreement about beliefs or practices breaks out among the faithful. How is it mediated? Where do you fall?
Queen	The personal journals of a deceased or departed elder are discovered, containing surprising information. Who finds them? What do they reveal?
King	A child is born into or found by the community. How is it provided for?

	Event
Ace	Miracles abound in the outside world. What form do they take? Do pilgrimages increase in response?
2	A major route to the site becomes compromised. What has caused the damage or blockage? How are its effects felt?
3	News reaches the site that an unseen beast is attacking travellers. What rumours about this creature hold sway?
4	Stories of war or civil unrest begin to arrive. How distant are these events? Are they cause for alarm?
5	Soldiers, mercenaries, or rebels pass through the area. Is their purpose known to you? Are interactions tense or friendly?
6	A circus, fair or band of travelling players sets up nearby. Do you visit? Do you bring anything back?
7	Merchants bring goods from far away. What rarities are they offering? What will they take in exchange?
8	A newly imported resource becomes popular in nearby localities. What is it? Does the community have a use for it?
9	A new invention is changing the world. Is this innovation in industry, communication, transport, something else? How well-established is it in the local area?
10	The surrounding region is stirred by an emerging movement - social, artistic, religious or otherwise. What do those within the site have to say?
Jack	A celebrated – or infamous – figure visits the area. Ruler, adventurer, prophet? Why have they come?
Queen	Bureaucracy comes calling, in the guise of taxation, a census, or clerical scrutiny. Was this expected? Is the site prepared?
King	Power shifts in the region. A usurper, a coup, an alliance, a split. What hopes or fears does this change stir up?

◆	Event
Ace	While spending time alone, you discover something previously hidden – an item, an artwork, a space. What is striking about it? Do you share your discovery?
2	You find yourself growing close to a fellow attendant. What draws you to them? What do you talk about together?
3	A dream of a strange place; you wake convinced that it's real. What was it like? What did you do there?
4	You awake to find you've been sleepwalking. Where have you ended up? Is it easy to get back?
5	A melody has lodged itself in your mind and won't stop playing. What feelings does it stir in you? Are there words that come with it?
6	Illness, injury, or irritation – something is causing you difficulties. Is this familiar or new to you? How do you adapt?
7	Part of your body has begun to change its composition. What is it becoming? Does it hurt?
8	Something you are working on transforms unexpectedly overnight. How is it changed? Does this please or trouble you?
9	With every passing day, you find yourself remembering less and less of your life before you came here. Do you welcome this forgetting, or resist it?
10	Recognition! Your daily labours are seen and commended. Who celebrates your work? Are you rewarded?
Jack	Your shadow is behaving oddly. What's it up to? Do others notice?
Queen	You see a figure that no one else seems to be aware of. Where do they show up? Do you approach them?
King	A message arrives from someone claiming to know you. What form does this message take? What does it say?

Site creation

Why this place

1	Something extraordinary is believed to have happened here
2	An important figure spent time in this place
3	A sacred object resides here
4	Travellers seek a transformative experience here
5	This is a place of ancestral importance
6	A deity is believed to inhabit this place

A unique feature: draw a card

A	Built on the remains of another place
2	Built on the back of a giant beast
3	In an area of volatile geological activity
4	Has its own hyper-local climate
5	Only reachable via air transport
6	Only visible at certain times
7	Constructed from living tissue
8	Constructed from salvaged materials
9	Clattering with mechanical devices
10	Linked to distant places by portals
J	Deep underground or underwater
Q	A wonder-work by a master architect
K	At the heart of a haunted labyrinth

Connection to the world

1	A remote enclave, hard to find
2	Remote, but with established travel routes
3	Separate, but close to other settlements
4	On the outskirts of a town or city
5	At the heart of a town or city
6	Variable, due to changing terrain

What happens here

1	Rituals for the dead
2	The seeking of intercessions
3	The seeking of oracles
4	Healing and rest
5	Law, lore, learning
6	Parties and pleasure

Arrival

The outer path

1	Halcyon
2	Wild
3	Unreal
4	Crowded
5	Beguiling
6	Haunted

The inner path

1	Halting
2	Ecstatic
3	Curative
4	Tormented
5	Hungry
6	Repentant

Building

Purpose of structure

1	Ritual
2	Study
3	Domestic
4	Monument
5	Industry
6	Hybrid

The structure is...

1	Overgrown
2	Perfumed
3	Hidden
4	Elevated
5	Mobile
6	Luminous

It features...

1	Water
2	Fire
3	Bells
4	Tapestries
5	Inscriptions
6	Mouths

Someone has left offerings nearby of...

1	Fruit
2	Weapons
3	Ash
4	Toys
5	Milk
6	Clothing

Garden

The garden is...

1	Terraced
2	Walled
3	On a rooftop
4	Under glass
5	Floating
6	Subterranean

It features...

1	Fountains
2	Sculptures
3	Arches
4	Lanterns
5	Beehives
6	Warnings

Plants

This plant is grown for...

1	Fruit
2	Roots
3	Leaves
4	Seeds
5	Pigment
6	Fibre

The plant is...

1	Only found in this place
2	Uncommon in this place
3	Poisonous unless processed
4	Of ritual significance
5	Loved by wildlife
6	Controlled

Notable feature

1	Ghostly, flickering or otherwise hard to look at
2	Symbiotic with something else in the garden
3	Mimics a different organism or object
4	Can only be seen at night
5	Makes a melodic or rhythmic sound
6	Doesn't stay put

Text

Text contents

1	Myths, legends, tales
2	Annals, accounts
3	Rites, spells, ceremonies
4	Aphorisms, proverbs, laws
5	Songs, prayers, poems
6	Natural sciences, mystical arts

Your reason for choosing it

1	Picked at random, just to learn
2	Seeking answers to a particular question
3	Translating into a different language
4	Copying in order to preserve
5	Looking for hidden meanings
6	Comparing to another text

Notable feature

1	Appears blank unless looked at under certain conditions
2	Written in rare inks and gorgeously illuminated
3	Circular, fan-shaped or otherwise unusually shaped
4	Assembled from the pages of other texts
5	Intricately folded, offering multiple ways to read
6	Did it just... make a sound?

Kitchen

Type of space

1	Minimal and utilitarian, everything tidily in its place
2	Crammed with herbs and vials, bright botanical aromas
3	An open hearth, laden tables, constant chopping and stirring
4	Communal outdoor cooking-spots, smoky and convivial
5	Vats, barrels or clay jars, clouded in fermentation smells
6	Makeshift, moveable, well-worn equipment assembled as needed

Festivals

Focus of festival

1	Renewal
2	Respite
3	Commemoration
4	Abundance
5	Fellowship
6	Misrule

A central activity

1	Song, dance, theatre
2	Sports, games, challenges
3	Fasting, breaking a fast
4	Exchanging of gifts
5	Parades or processions
6	Offerings or sacrifices

As the festival begins

The site is:

1	Festooned with special decorations
2	Overflowing, visitors camping where they can
3	Dotted with stalls and entertainment booths
4	Delicious with the smells of roasting and baking
5	Lively with last-minute preparations
6	Silent, seemingly empty, waiting for a signal

How you're feeling

1	You've barely slept, too caught up in getting ready
2	The festivities are on your mind, but so are many other things
3	Your mind is on festivals past: what you felt, who you celebrated with
4	You're nervous, unsure if what you're bringing to this will be enough
5	You feel clear-headed, open to the change today will bring
6	Something has unsettled you, but you can't say what