

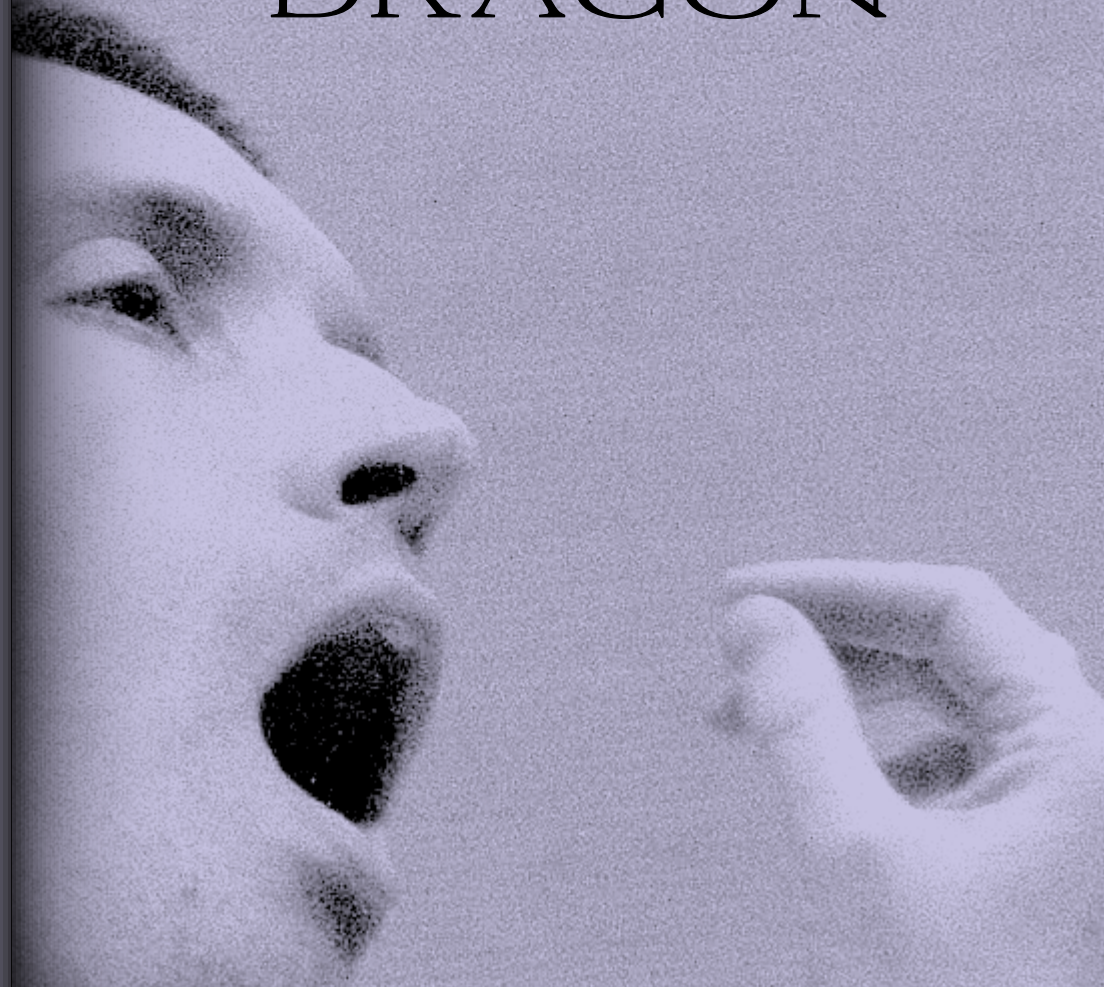
DRACONIS
LACRIMÆ

ESCAPE
FROM THE
GUTS
OF THE
DRAGON

THE
PLAYER'S
HANDBOOK

DRACONIS
LACRIMÆ

ESCAPE
FROM THE
GUTS
OF THE
DRAGON





THE PLAYER'S HANDBOOK

A Fantasy Role-Playing Game
for 3 to 6 players and no Game Master





EDITED BY
PABLO
ESBERT
LILIENFELD

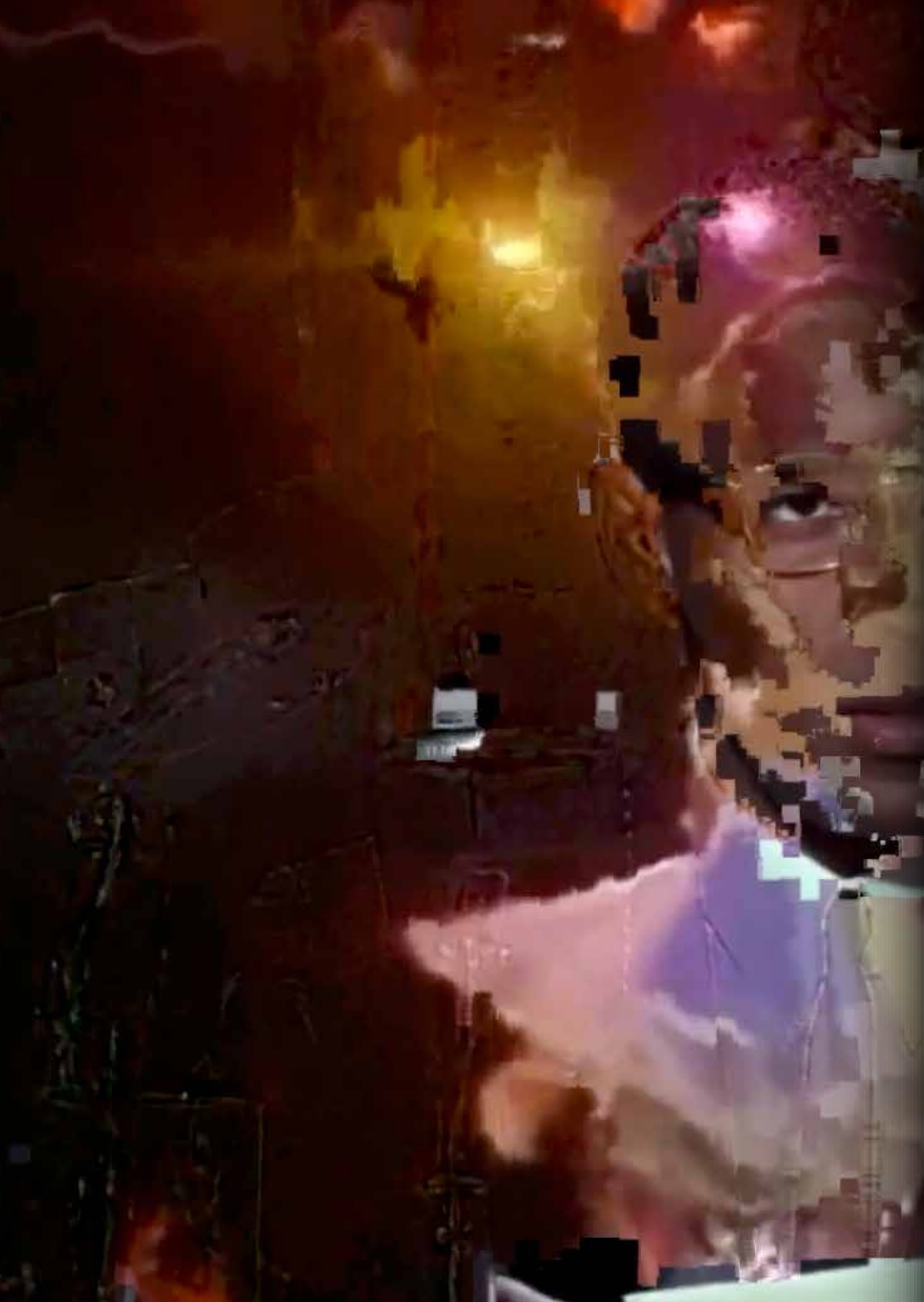
&

FEDERICO
VLADIMIR
STRATE
PEZDIRC

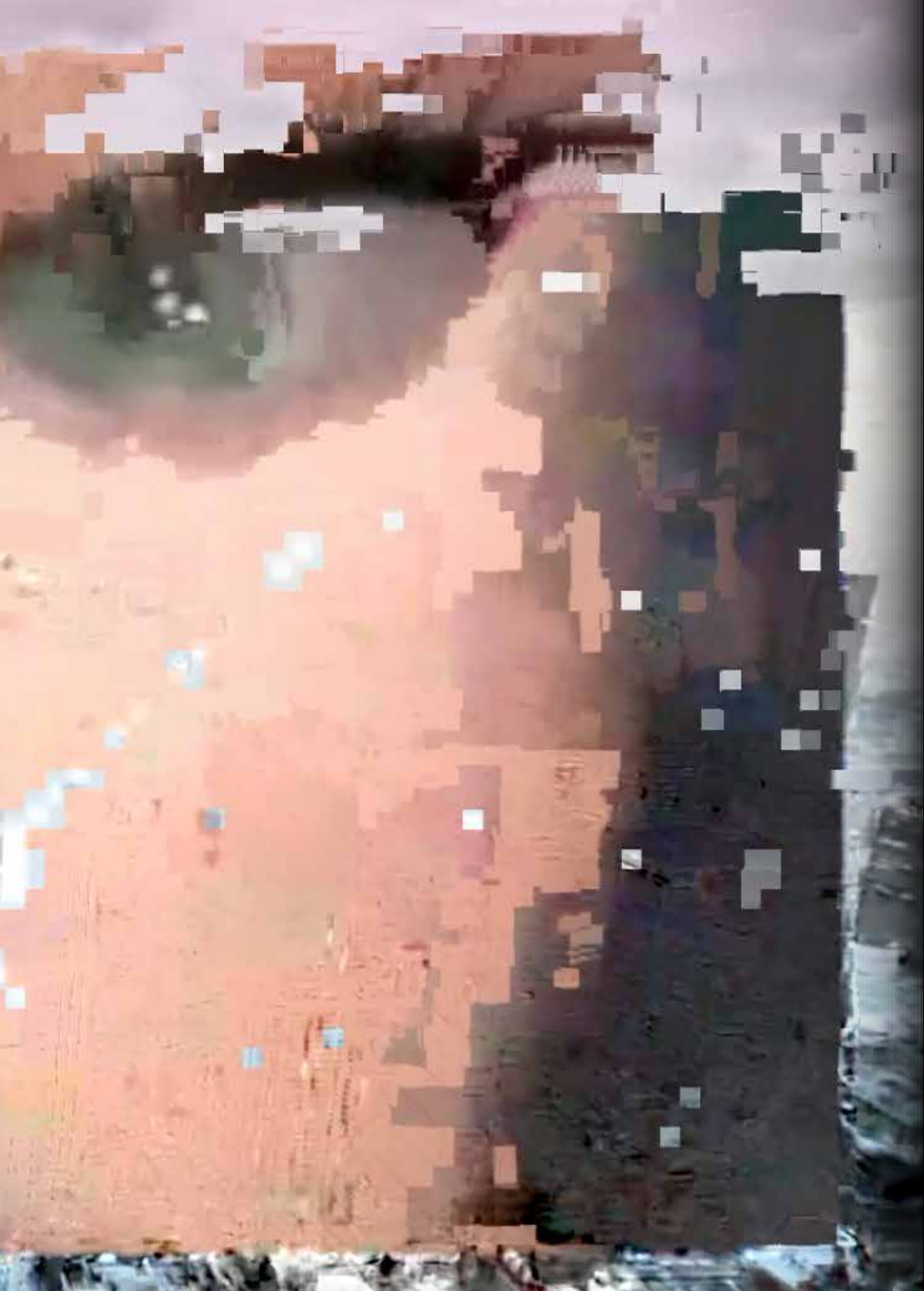
In this Player's Handbook you'll find the rules of a Fantasy Role Playing Game: *Draconis Lacrimae*. It can be played by a group of 3 to 6 players. You'll only need to meet with your friends around a table and be ready to spend many evenings together. You will also need pens, papers and some ten-sided dices (d10). Don't forget snacks and drinks.

First you'll create the *Characters*, then you'll create the *World* and, lastly, you'll *Role-play* and try to escape from the inside of The Dragon.









A PREFACE FOR PABLO

(and I guess also for the readers)



First, came love. Or rather, first, came THE VIRUS. When you and I made love, love brought along an HIV infection.

THE VIRUS, neither living nor dead, neither organism nor machine, was the other¹. THE VIRUS was not only inside of you, now it was also inside of me. THE VIRUS kept mutating and reproducing, through our cells and through the fictions we created together. It became the spaceship of a Golden Alien, the image cover of our music album, the logo of our tv-channel, the wedding ring tattooed on our chests... the virus became THE VIRUS, a figure to understand our relationship, a figure to narrate each other.

After THE VIRUS, came The Adventurer. The Adventurer is the blonde European migrant, the backpacker, the settler and the free spirit that we will never get to be. The Adventurer carries her issues, traumas, referents and other precious stuff in her backpack. The Adventurer is the figure that narrates our past, our foreign surnames, our ancestors and nationalities. This blonde Adventurer is the result of the intercourse between my German Strate, my Slovenian Pezdirc, your Austrian Lilienfeld and your Spanish Esbert. And our Argentinian mums, the two Monicas.

And now, comes The Dragon. Oh! Los dragones, die drachen, quod dracones... Those creatures that exist in many different legends, myths and folklores. Why are dragons so popular? Do they come from snakes? From birds? From dinosaurs? You and I know where they come from. Dragons come when our sex roles are blown up, when we top and bottom each other and our scales get covered in sweat... That's El Polvo Dragón²: when I fuck you and you fuck me and we are devoured by our dragon. And then, once inside the belly of The Dragon³, inside her guts, that's where we meet our kin. The

THE
VIRUS

+

THE
ADVENTURER





Dragon is the figure that extends the couple, that expands the kin, that narrates the community.

But, Pablo: how to do that? How to narrate the kin? How to extend our couple? Ay, qué difícil. We both know how to be swallowed by our dragon and get in the belly of The Dragon but, how can we explain this to everyone else? How can we bring people into her belly? That's what this is about, right? I know! —you said— *Dungeons and Dragons*! I used to play it as a kid.

*Dungeons and Dragons*⁴ is a fantasy tabletop Role Playing Game (RPG). In most of the fantasy tabletop RPGs, players create their own characters which then embark in imaginary adventures. You told me that you used to play *Dungeons and Dragons* with your grandfather Rudolf and your brother Juan. Rudolf used to be an Elf Wizard, Juan an Orc Fighter and you were the Game Master (aka Dungeon Master). In RPGs, you explained, the players often sit around a table and create a story collectively by taking responsibility for their roles. In some games, as in *Dungeons and Dragons*, a player adopts the role of the Game Master, serving as the game's arbitrator and narrator. But there are also games in which there is no Game Master: the responsibility and narrative power of the Game Master is distributed among all the participants.

In RPGs, players follow a formal system of rules and guidelines in order to interact with each other and with the fictional universe their characters inhabit. These rules and instructions are often compiled in a handbook.

A game can last from an afternoon session to a longer campaign, spread in weeks or months. Players sometimes get so attached to their characters that they can spend long periods of time —even years— playing the same character. So that is how you explained to me what RPGs are. And then we began to imagine *Draconis Lacrimae*.

Draconis Lacrimae is a game that is set in the guts of The Dragon. That's where the adventurers meet after being swallowed/eaten/devoured/teletransported/etc. by their own dragons. It doesn't matter where they come from or what they are, since dragons exist in many universes. The adventurers might have been devoured by the Leviathan or by Xiuhcóatl, by Ryu or by the children of Daenerys Targaryen, Mother of Dragons. Dragons inhabit different universes and manifest in many different shapes but their guts are the same. They all share the same viscera. There are as many dragons as universes. But in the inside there is simply The Dragon. The Dragon is the multiverse portal within all dragons. The Dragon's guts are the landing where many staircases cross. In *Draconis Lacrimae*, the adventurers come from different background universes and they all meet in The Dragon's guts. There, they must join forces in order to "escape", whatever escape means.

And then we also imagined my character and yours. Mine is a Giant Barbarian that comes from a Prehistorical Universe inhabited by enormous creatures. There, Dragons are Godzillas. Your character is a Cyborg Warlock that comes from a Cyberpunk Universe where dragons are big corporations, digital monsters like Google. But once swallowed by the dragons, they meet in her guts.

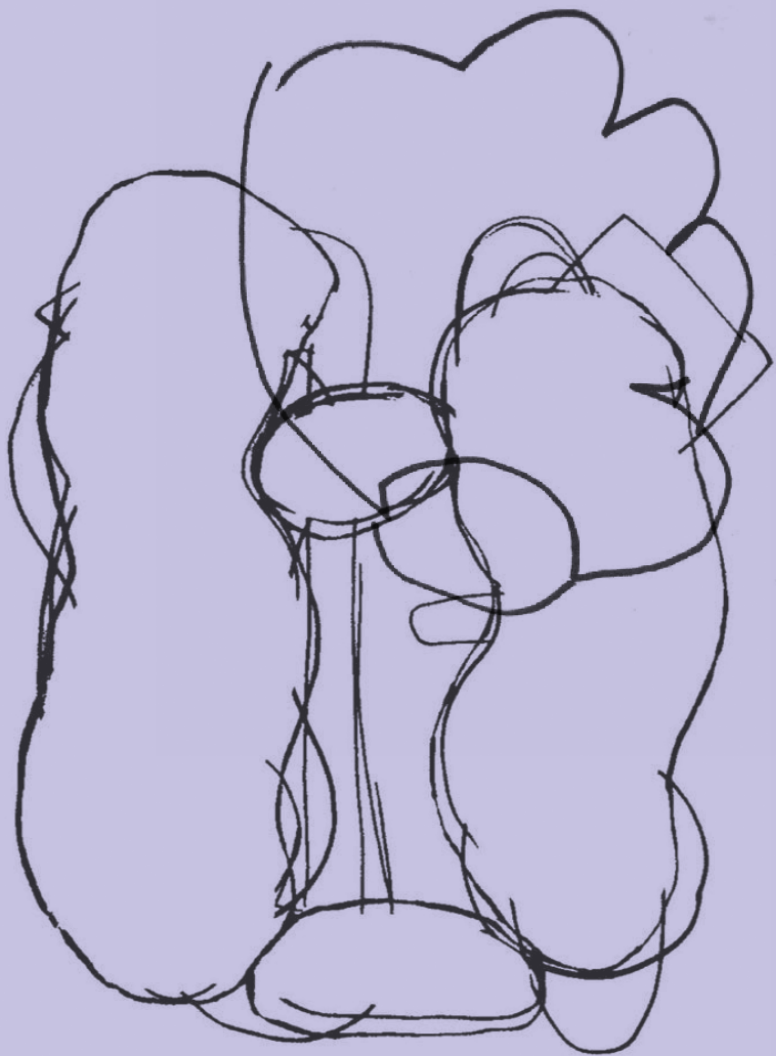
Again, qué difícil. How to bring other people into the guts of The Dragon? *Draconis Lacrimae*, the handbook that we have in our hands, will show others how to create their characters, how to visualize the body of The Dragon and how to build up a story together by sharing, imagining and role-playing. This handbook proposes a series of rules and tools that the players can use (and adapt) to create a story collectively, but not always consensually. *Draconis Lacrimae* has no Game Master: players will build on each other's ideas. Every player has vast creative power but they also depend on each other.

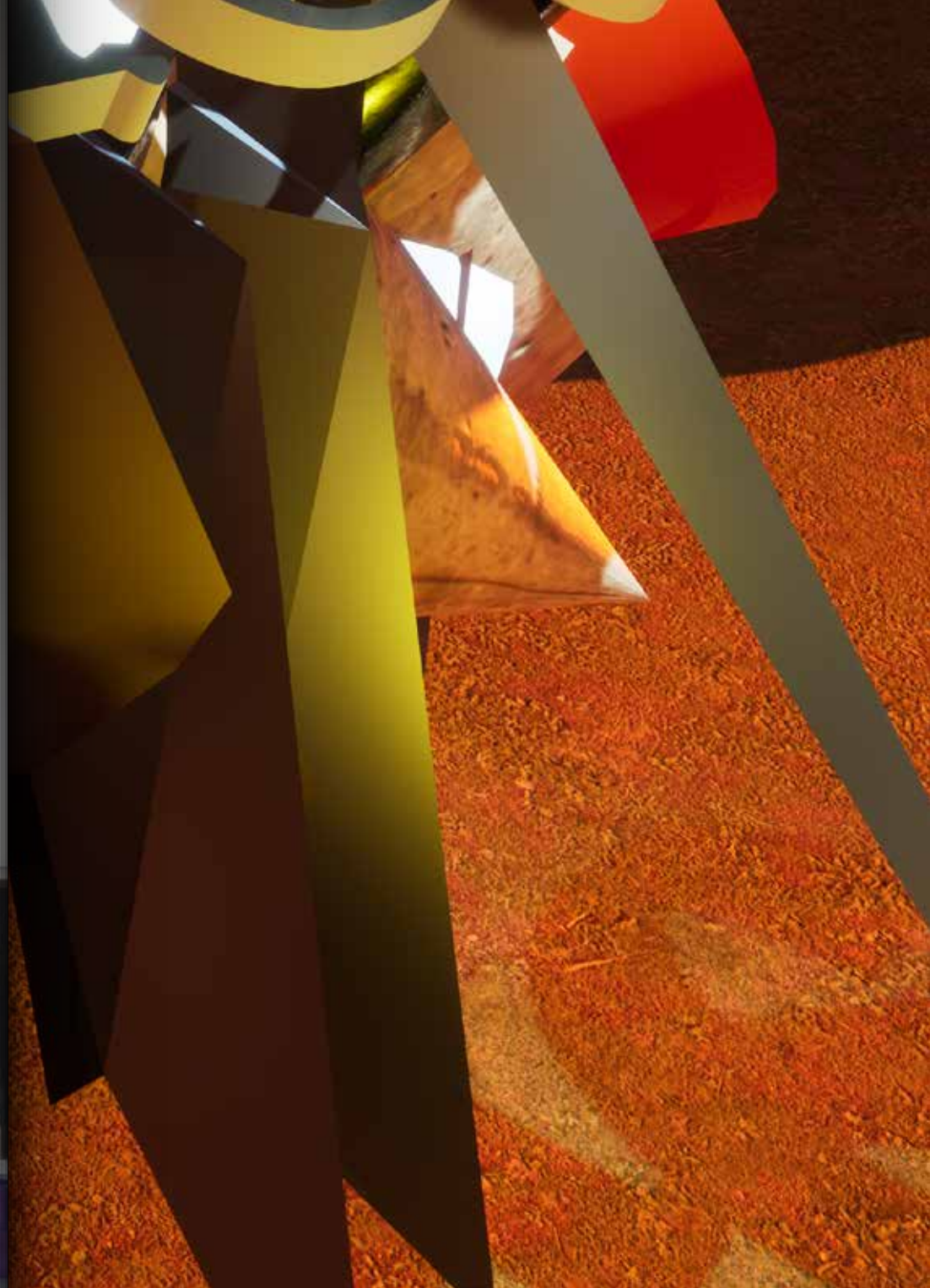
So, first, it was love. Or rather, first it was THE VIRUS. As VIRUS do, we got inside the body of the host.

Then it was The Adventurer. And as adventurers, we carried our most precious personal belongings in our backpack.

And finally, The Dragon. Once inside her body, we met our community. And with the precious issues that we all carried in our backpacks, we were able to start building a story together, to narrate each other.

Draconis Lacrimae may only last as long as it takes you to read this manual. Or it may last weeks or months while you play it with your friends, feeling very attached to your characters. In any case, like all fiction, it will last as long as people believe in it.





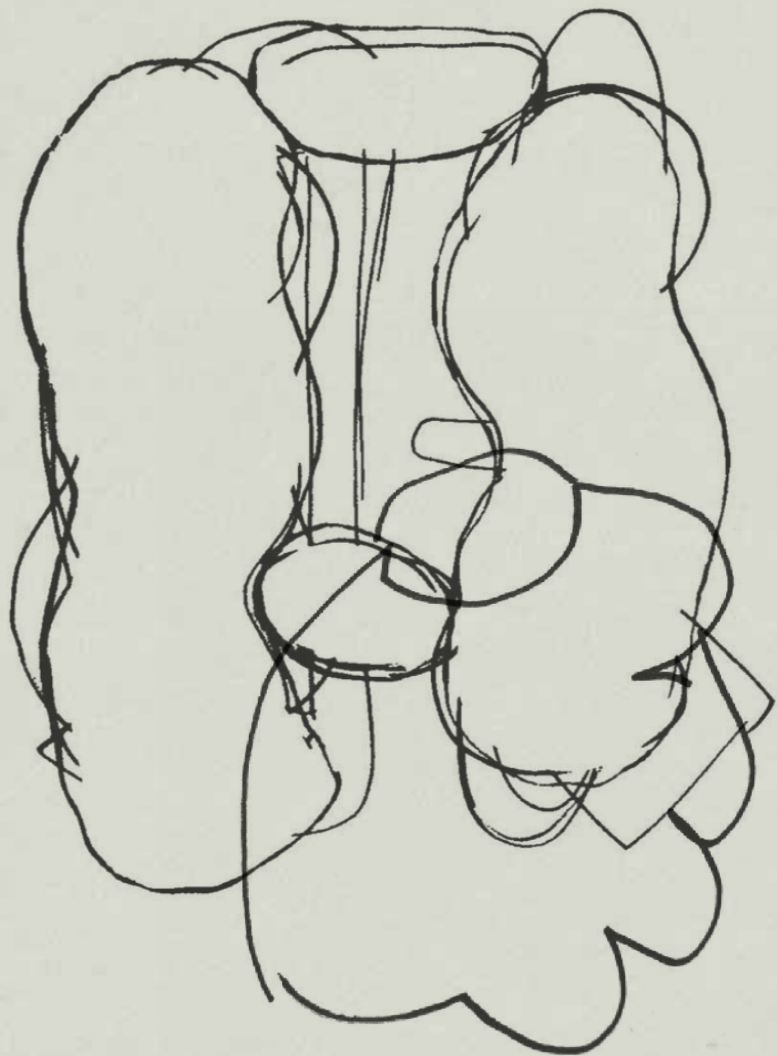






CHAPTER ONE

CHARACTER CREATION



The first game sessions will consist of developing your character. Depending on the number of players this process might take from a few hours to a few days.

This is a very important part of the game since your character will be your way to navigate through The Dragon and interact with your fellow adventurers. The more attached you are to your character, the more you will enjoy role-playing it.

To create your character, you will be asked to share personal stories with other players. The idea is to dig into intimacy in order to fictionalize yourself. Share what you feel like sharing, there is no obligation in sharing things you don't feel comfortable with. Great characters might be built upon personal stuff, but secrets and that which is not named might also nurture your character. Since playing *Draconis Lacrimae* can take you on a very personal journey, before starting the game it's better to...

...Make the list

Make a list of subjects or themes that you don't want to be part of the story you will create together. In order to do so, every player will write down on a piece of paper what he or she doesn't want to face during the game. Try to be precise with what you write on the paper. If needed, you can even write a short paragraph to explain it. Make sure you all write at least one thing. If you can't think of anything, just write something random: "Cats" or "Roses", for example. The idea is that everyone writes at least one issue, so that everyone participates on the list. You must all compromise not to bring up during the game whatever is on that list. If someone has questions or doesn't agree on accepting this list, it's better to discuss it and negotiate now. This will help you avoid misunderstandings during the game and if there were big disagreements, it's better to find it out before starting. Remember to have the list at hand on every game session, in case you need to remember what is written.

HI, I'M MY GRANDMA

— 01 —

You're all sitting in a circle and, one by one, you introduce yourself to your fellow players. You speak in first person but you pretend to be one of your ancestors. You can be your parent, your great-grandparent... You don't need to stick to the nuclear family. Feel free to travel far in time and space. This is an oral exercise, make it short and fresh.

—Example—

Hi, I'm Vladimir Pezdirc. I was born more than one hundred years ago, in 1917. I was born in Ljubljana, which is now Slovenia. But back then it was still the Austro-Hungarian empire.

I'm the second of four brothers: Jože, Vladimir, Bogomir and Slavomir. Vladimir is a Slavic name and it means something as Ruler of the World, or Ruler of Peace.

I studied Law and when I was very young, I joined the Domobranci, a Catholic anti-communist military organization that collaborated with the Nazis during the Second World War. I speak seven languages so as a Domobranci I was mainly working as a translator and assistant, I was never in combat.

That was a terrible decision. I always tell my grandchildren "don't get involved into politics, you will only get in trouble". Because I joined the Domobranci I had to leave Slovenia after the war, escape to Switzerland and eventually Argentina. If I had stayed I'd have been imprisoned and probably killed and buried in one of the many mass graves that populate the caves of Slovenia. Slovenia is a karst land, it's full of caves with stalactites and stalagmites. So I would have probably ended buried in one of those.

But I ended up in Argentina, on my own. And there I managed to restart my life. I was on my thirties then. In Buenos Aires I met a beautiful woman, also Slovenian. We got married and had three lovely daughters. I managed to grow professionally and worked in the Latin American Sales department for Texas Instruments. Argentina was a powerful country back then. So I lived happily there. I have eleven grandchildren. One of them is called Federico Vladimir, after me. He's an artist, a good guy. They say we look alike.

Argentina became a mess, politically and economically speaking. So my three daughters and their families left the country and emigrated to Spain and Canada, looking for better life conditions. So when I was on my seventies, I ended up moving to Canada. Canada is a nice country, I would say it's a "proper" country. Good values, good economy. But still, I love Argentina because it brought me so much peace and happiness.

In Canada I was also happy. It was calm there. I got Alzheimers when I was eighty five. I was well taken care by my wife and the Ontario health system and I lived until I turned ninety one. I died in my bed.

Credits: we learnt this exercise at School of Darkness, a workshop with curator Sepake Angiama in the context of The Free School (KFDA 2019, Brussels).

EMO-BIO

— 02 —

Emo: a rock music genre with confessional lyrics and an emphasis on emotions.

Bio: there is no fiction, everything is fiction.

Write a short autobiography in the style of a resume: it must be written in third person and built as a list of factual events, but instead of professional landmarks you will narrate the most important emotional moments of your life (i.e. the first time you touched the sea or the death of your best friend).

This is a written exercise. Once written, read it out loud to your fellow players.

—Example—

Buenos Aires (Argentina), 1983. Federico III (son of Federico II and grandson of Federico I) and Vladimir II (grandson of Vladimir I).

Before turning seven years old he moves to La Coruña (Spain), a place where kids speak Galician and are already able to write in cursive, but Federico only knows how to write in capital letters. Thundercats vs Dragon Ball, America vs Europe, South vs North. Shy with boys, a little less shy with girls. The middle child between two sisters... and a little brother that was born dead and that he never got to meet. He could barely read when he was on second grade but by the time he got to fourth grade he was at the top of the class.

Federico's best friends were his cousins who had emigrated to Canada. His family is spread throughout the world. He's the son and grandson of migrants. European nazis vs

Argentinian picaresque. Hates food, he only likes the apple strudel and other desserts that his Slovenian grandma does. His teacher tells his mom that he should take vitamins, that he might be anorexic. But he's not. During his adolescence he gets tired of being told to eat and just starts eating normally.

When he turns twelve he starts making films with his sister's Barbies. Later he starts directing his friends. Films, books, maths, chemistry... He doesn't know what to study but he knows he wants to study in Madrid. At the age of eighteen he began his studies in Audiovisual Communication. He meets Pilar: his first kiss, his first girlfriend, his first sexual experience. But after two beautiful years, he still misses something. He spent his whole childhood and adolescence missing his cousins, missing his dead brother, looking for a best friend. He gets his degree and finally realizes that what he really needs is a boyfriend.

Credits: this exercise was developed during a workshop with writer Sabina Urraca.

JE ME SOUVIENS / I REMEMBER

— 03 —

Write a short list of personal memories that relate to social, political and historical moments that were important for you. It must be written in first person and each paragraph should start with "I remember...". Think of these personal memories as pixels that mosh with other people's memories, creating History.

Once written, read it out loud to your fellow players. If needed, contextualize the historical moments you refer to, so that everyone understands you.

—Example—

I remember asking my father "Dad, where are we moving? Spain or Europe?" "You can say either, Spain and Europe are the same thing".

I remember asking my dad what I should say to the Pan Am flight attendants when they offered me coffee or tea. "Nou, zenk iu". My first time on a plane, moving to another continent.

I remember the lice on my head, the irritating shampoo. In Argentina, as kids, we always had lice at school.

I remember inventing a game/song with my cousin that went "ass with ass" and "willy with willy". I remember showing it to my grandma, I remember her, freaking out: "Oh God, you'r gonna make yourselves ill for doing that". I remember asking my mum "If you hadn't named me Federico, like dad, what name would you have chosen?" "I always liked Santiago", she said. That would have been the name of my dead brother, I thought.

I remember when they did a Cartoon Marathon to raise funds for HIV, merging cartoons of Disney, Looney Tunes, etc. (like in the final scene of the film *Roger Rabbit*). I didn't know what HIV was but I really wanted to watch the cartoons.

I remember the kids saying I spoke weird because of my Argentinian accent. I remember the stress of not knowing if "cinturón" was spelled with s, c or z.

I remember being in a driving lesson with the radio on. News said that a small plane had crashed against the Twin Towers. When I arrived home the news were showing the collapse of the towers.

I remember memorizing my Spanish ID number in order to write it down on my first university exams. I got the Spanish nationality when I turned eighteen.

I remember 11-M (the biggest terrorist attack in Madrid). I remember calling my girlfriend cos she passed by that train station every morning on her way to uni. I remember the demonstration for peace, under the rain. I remember seeing people from very diverse ideologies. Even a group of extreme right with the fascist Spanish flag.

I remember the first time I accidentally attended the Pride parade in Madrid. It was my first year of Uni and my dad and little sister had come to visit me. We were touring around downtown, we got off the tube and it was full of people singing "Lesbianismo feminista anticapitalista" with the melody of Suzanne Vega's song: *tu tu turu tu tu ruru* (Tom's Dinner is the title).

I remember when I was diagnosed HIV+. I remember when I told my sisters, my parents. My mother's hug.

Credits: this exercise was developed during a workshop with writer Sabina Urraca and influenced by George Perec's Je me souviens.

GUTS STRIPTease: A CARTOGRAPHIC BIO-NARRATION

—04—

One by one, you will tell the other players the history of your body: what you like, what you don't, scars, traumas, hang-ups, glorified parts, g-points... Include how you felt about your body as a kid or a teenager, how you felt you were perceived. In the Guts Striptease you don't take off your clothes: you only need to reveal your relationship with your own body.

It's an oral exercise. Don't be shy but also, don't share things you don't feel like sharing. At this point of the game you might have already shared personal stories. The Guts Striptease can be challenging if you don't feel totally comfortable with the group so, before starting, make sure that everyone is on the same page.

When you do this exercise you'll stand in the center of the circle formed by the players. As you talk you slowly turn around. Do several turns, so that everyone gets to see the front and the back of your body several times. The other players will draw a portrait of you while they listen and see you turning, as if in a live drawing class. The portraits do not need to be accurate or realistic, they might be influenced by the stories you relate.

—Example—

So... I'm 1'87 meters tall. I've always been very tall and thin. When I was a kid I was super thin and everyone was always telling me to eat more. I was called "spaghetti" or "lollypop". Lollypop, cos I also have a big head. So thin body and big head, like a lollypop.

Ok, I'll go from head to toes. Head. I always thought it's too big. But well... at least I have good hair. I play a lot with my hair, I often change my hairstyle. Face. I'm fine with my features. I've got blue eyes and I like them, they are very useful. I get lots of compliments about them and when I used to work in advertising, every time I had a meeting with a big client I always wore a blue shirt, because the blue enforces the eyes. It's a fact, whenever I was wearing blue, I always managed to convince the client. I even remember one time that the marketing manager at L'Oréal complimented my eyes and, of course, she accepted the whole of the campaign I proposed.

What else? Long neck. I also wish I had wider shoulders. As a teenager I used to swim and I always wanted to have those wide big shoulders that swimmers have. My chest. I like it. It's not very hairy. Actually I don't have much body hair. I've got lots of moles, my skin is very sensitive. I often get allergic reactions on my skin. I am quite allergic... I'm allergic to dust mites, to certain pollen, to some medicines. As a kid I had a big allergic reaction to sulfonamides and my head and neck got red and very swollen, I had to be taken to hospital. And I'm also asthmatic.

Ass and dick. I'm happy about them. Can't complain. Legs. I got my grandfather's thin legs. Thin and hairy. I wish my legs were stronger. But they are very thin. I remember when my grandpa — I'm talking about my Slovenian grandpa, the one I already introduced in the first exercise —, I remember when he had Alzheimer's and he was in bed, I remember his skinny bony legs. I remember placing a cushion between his knees so that he was more comfortable. Yeah, I remember seeing his legs and thinking "ok, those will be my legs when I turn ninety". And my feet are also bony, thin and big. I use insoles. I dunno, the bones in my legs and feet don't quite fit together haha

Mmhmm. What else? Regarding my inner body and illnesses... I'm HIV+. I've been poz for almost eight years now. Getting HIV was tough. On the same year I got HIV I also became an uncle. It was very scary to spend time with my nephews because I couldn't stop thinking of horrible things happening. Like accidentally cutting my hand and infecting them or being in the car with them and having a tragic accident in which my blood was spilled all over them. When you first get the diagnose it's strange, because you feel you're a deadly weapon. You feel like your blood or your cum can kill people. And it's scary. Once you start taking the medicine and your viral load decreases, meaning that you cannot infect others, then you chill. Now I take my medicines and I'm fine.

And I think that's it. Dunno what else to say.

HYPERTAG YOURSELF

—05—

Categories: categories are tools. And one tool can have opposite uses. For instance, a hammer: you could build a table with it but you could also use it to break someone's head.

In RPGs you're often asked to fill in a Character Sheet. It's a form in which you define your character through categories that are given. In *Draconis Lacrimae*, you won't be asked to fill in a form about your character. Instead, you'll be asked to fill in a form about yourself.

Draconis Lacrimae's form contains very diverse categories ranging from "Sexual Orientation" to "Favorite app". The form has no optional responses. That means you can be playful with it when it comes to answering and interpreting the categories. Given the playfulness, we therefore advise to fill in the form in its entirety. The "No answer/don't know" is always a choice, but it won't lead you to the construction of a great character. Hypertag yourself, saturate your life with identity¹.

Once you've filled in the form, read it out loud to the other players. They might react to your answers, maybe because they have things in common with you or simply because they might have questions about your answers. Let the conversation flow.

Zodiac, planet
Leo ascendant Libra,
The sun

Age
36

Animals
Tiger, Flamingo,
Crocodile, Whale

Plants
Ficus, Willow tree,
Wild flowers

Elements:
Water, Slime

Machines & tools:
Video camera, Tooth brush

Software app:
Final cut, After FX, Grindr

Places:
North Atlantic, Sea beach

Conditions:
Physical, HIV+, Asthma,
Allergy dust mites,
Shortsightedness,
Insoles-arch support

Mental:
Bruxism

Obsessions,
manias, tics:
Nose picking,
Obsessive fruit peeling

Fears, disgusts, fobias:
Horror films, Belly buttons

Origin, nationality:
Spanish, Argentinian,
a bit of Slovenian

Hobbies childhood:
Cinema, Stamp collecting,
Model building, Swimming,
Reading

Music, urban tribes,
adolescence:
Film nerd, indie music

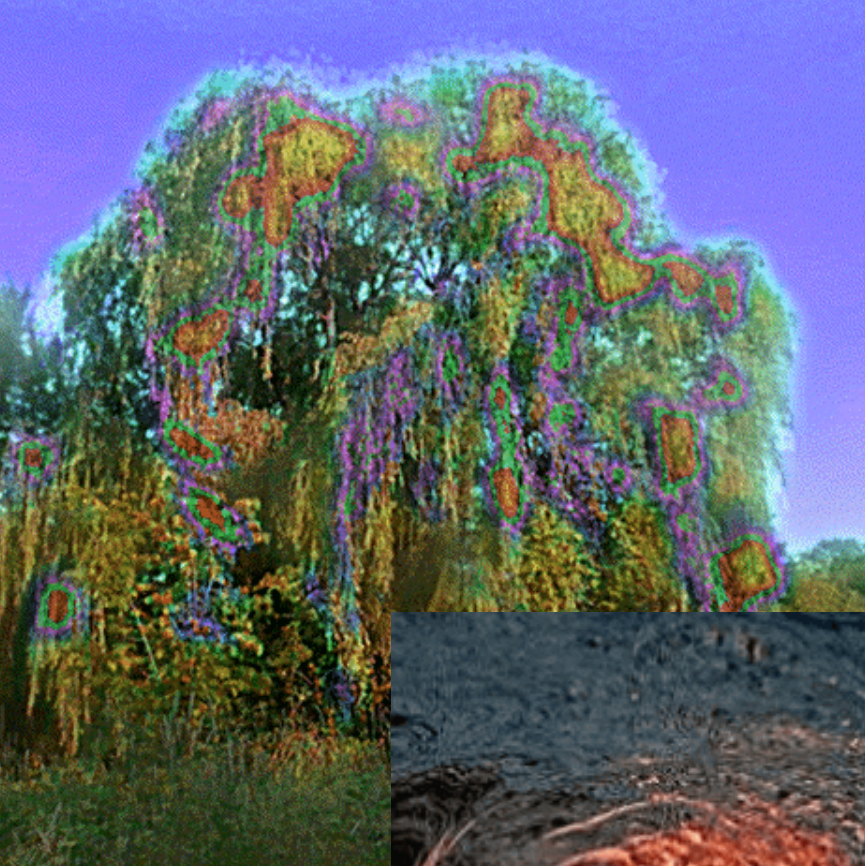
Privileges:
White, middle class,
european, cis male

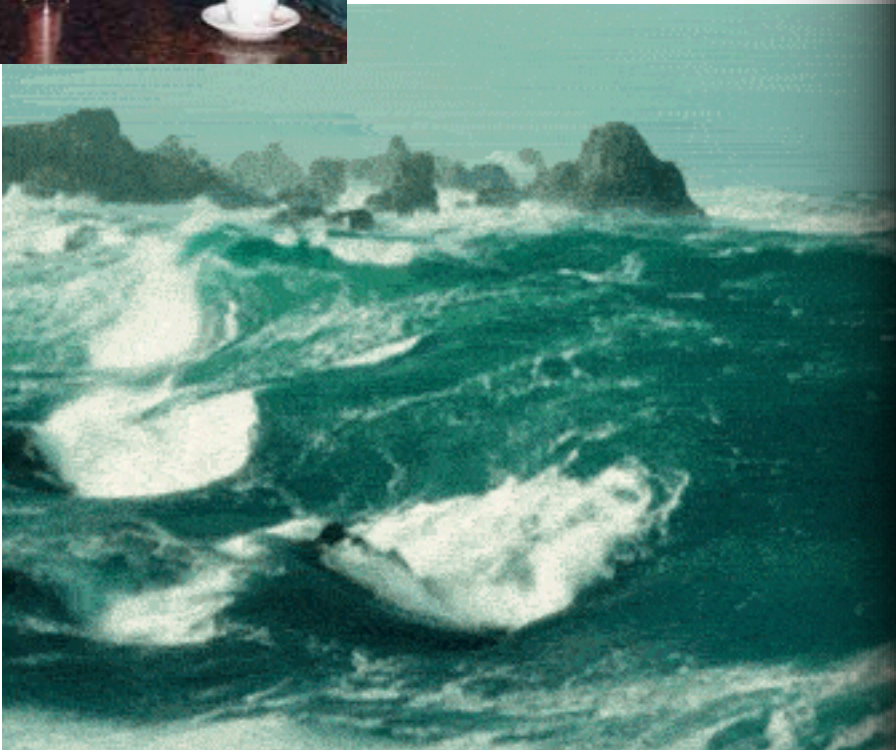
Discriminations:
Gay HIV+

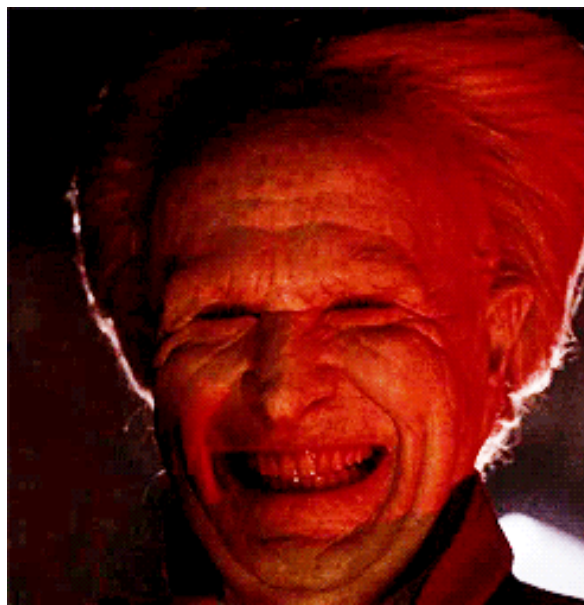
Nickname, bullying:
Jar Jar Binks, Sid Ice Age,
Lollypop

Political party:
Unidas Podemos, Más País











Activisms:
Queer, HIV+, Feminist

Jobs:
Artist, University teacher,
Performance documentation,
Waiter, Advertising

Family members,
conflicts:
Husband, Parents, Sisters,
Nephews and nieces,
in good terms with everyone

Beliefs, religion:
Raised catholic

Gender:
Cisgender male,
Gender questioning

Sexual orientation:
(currently) Homosexual 90%,
Heterosexual 10%

Food:
Chocolate, Ice-cream,
Dulce de leche

Drinks:
Coke, Gintonic

Drugs:
Ecstasies

Hygiene habits:
Cotton buds

Icons, speculative fiction:
Aquaman, Andromeda, Storm,
Tigro, Cheetara, Rafael, Dracula

Icons, non-speculative fiction:
Humbert Humbert, Taxi Driver,
Lawrence of Arabia, Will More

Icons, famous people:
Uma Thurman, James Dean,
Humanimal, Colby Keller,
Ian Mckellen, Vladimir Nabokov

BE TAGGED:
RACE & CLASS
—06—

Many Fantasy RPGs inherited from war-games notions of race, class and gender that are discriminatory and essentialist. They abstract bodies through statistical rules that mirror 19th century eugenics. Their rules and design often carry stereotypes and create a hostile space for minority players.

Race and Class are two of the most problematic categories in RPGs. In *Draconis Lacrimae* you will stay with the trouble. Your character will be defined by these two categories. They are problematic and they must remain as such, as a problem not to be solved but rather as a problem to derive more problems from.

Race: in *Draconis Lacrimae*, Race is not defined by racial stereotypes but instead, by fiction tropes. “A trope is a storytelling device or convention, a shortcut for describing situations the storyteller can reasonably assume the audience will recognize”¹. Your character’s race can be alien, cyborg, zombie, elf... If you need inspiration you can check the website tvtropes.org

Class: the category Class was first introduced in RPGs by Dungeons & Dragons. There, it’s defined as “the primary definition of what your character can do. It’s more than a profession; it’s your character’s calling”². There are twelve classes in Dungeons & Dragons. In *Draconis Lacrimae*, these twelve archetypes will also be the starting point to think about characters. They are:

—
BARBARIAN
—

*Fierce warrior
of primitive
background
who can enter
a battle rage*

—
BARD
—

*Inspiring
magician whose
power echoes the
music of creation*

—
CLERIC
—

*Priestly champion
who wields divine
magic in service
of a higher power*

—
DRUID
—

*Priest wielding the
powers of nature
—moonlight and plant
growth, fire and
lighting— and adopting
animal forms*

—
FIGHTER
—

*Master of
martial combat,
skilled with a
variety of weapons
and armor*

—
MONK
—

*Master of martial
arts, harnessing
the power of the
body in pursuit of
physical and spiritual
perfection*

—
PALADIN
—

*Fierce warrior
of primitive
background
who can enter
a battle rage*

—
RANGER
—

*Warrior who uses
martial prowess
and nature magic
to combat threats
on the edge of
civilization*

—
SORCERER
—

*Spell-caster who
draws on inherent
magic from a gift
or bloodline*

—
ROGUE
—

*Scoundrel
who uses stealth
and trickery
to overcome
obstacles and
enemies*

—
WARLOCK
—

*Wielder of magic
that is derived from
a bargain with an
extraplanar entity*

—
WIZARD
—

*Scholarly magic-
user capable of
manipulating the
structures of reality*

So, Race and Class. Tropes and archetypes. Before defining your character on your own, let the other players imagine it. Be tagged. Each player will choose three or more facts about you, after the personal information you've shared on the previous exercises. With those facts they will write a one paragraph description of a possible character. The description must include the Race and Class of the character.

You must all write at least one character description based on each player. If you feel inspired, you can write more than one description. But remember that now it's not the time to write about your own character, you must only write about the other players' characters. The goal is that when the round is finished, each player has several characters created upon herself.

It's a written exercise. The character descriptions must be written in second person singular. Once you've all finished writing, read the descriptions aloud, addressing the player the description is talking about.

—Example—

So, it's Federico's turn. Now we all read out loud the character we imagined for him.

Player one

I took these four facts: you said you're named Federico Vladimir after your two grandfathers; you're Leo, the king of the Zodiac; you're tall and thin; you're the second of three siblings.

So, to me, you're an Elf Sorcerer. Race: Elf. Class: Sorcerer. You're tall, thin and strong, like a proper elf. You descend from a line of elven kings. You are not the firstborn, so you have not inherited the crown, but you have inherited magic. That makes you the most powerful in the kingdom.

Player two

Race: Liliputian, Class: Rogue. You're a little person like the Liliputians from Gulliver's Travels. You're a rogue, you're so tiny that you can sneak into places easily. You're often hired as a thief or a spy. You work for politicians and big company owners, internationally.

So, Liliputian comes from the facts that as a kid your hobby was model building. Also, from the fact that you're allergic to dust mites, and you also mentioned that you often had lice as a kid. So you deal a lot with bugs or little creatures in your body, haha. And then, on the form, as your favorite "Hygiene habit" you wrote "cotton buds". I dunno, thinking of a cotton bud going into an ear made me think of all these little creatures sneaking into someone's body and doing things. So I thought that a Liliputian Rogue —or spy— suits you.

Spy three

Your race is Sea Monster or Aquatic Monster, a big creature with dorsal fins and gills. You are very big and I dunno, I imagine you as a female. And regarding your Class, you're a Ranger. You live in the verge of the oceans of a flat Earth, combatting other creatures and saving lost ships from falling into the abyss of the end of the seas. I thought of the sea monster because you like whales, the Atlantic ocean, water, etc. And Ranger I chose it because there is something heroic and romantic in your choices. Dr Manhattan, who is this solitary super human; James Dean, Lawrence of Arabia... even Humber Humbert is romantic. And you like willow trees, that's definitely romantic. And Rangers are also solitary and romantic, I think. And you're a female because you like ass kicking girls like Uma Thurman or Storm of the X-Men.

WITHIN THE MOSH, A SILHOUETTE APPEARS

—07—

Mosh: to dance energetically, pushing or slamming others, often at punk or heavy metal concerts.

Datamosh: to use compression artifacts in digital video causing the playback image to distort with glitched results

Now you will define your character. By yourself and on your own. As a starting point, you can take the character proposals that the other players imagined on the previous step. Try those characters as if you were trying clothes on. If there's something about them that you like, keep it, but don't feel obliged to. You have the last word on your character.

Again, you will have to define your character starting with Race and Class. You may feel constrained by these two categories. Think of the tropes and the archetypes as structural instruments that will help you build a common ground with the other players. If you create a character that is entirely unique and only exists in your imagination, it will be very difficult for others to comprehend and interact with it. So there's the big compromise: how far you wanna go from these common places? How unique you want your character to be? What are the handlers you give to the other players so that they can understand your character and the universe from which it comes?

This is a written exercise. Write in third person. When defining your character, you can also think of your background, your appearance, your personality, how you were born, the community you belong to in your universe, your flaws, your virtues, your ideals... anything you think that might be important. Make sure you also define the Universe in which the character lives, specially if the character is particularly informed by it. Once you've all finished writing, read it out loud to the others.

—Example—

So, Race: Giant; Class: Barbarian. Someone suggested I could be a Sea Monster. I liked that, but I see myself more like a Giant than a monster. And I chose Barbarian because I wanna be very strong, tall and muscular, a bit like Colby Keller, the porn star.

The Giant lives in a Prehistorical world, a world inhabited by dinosaurs, Godzillas, King Kongs and other huge creatures. The landscape there is wild: earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanos. The Giant himself, he's part of that landscape. He lives by the sea and, when he lays down to sleep, he is like a cape. Like Coruña, the city in Spain where I grew up, which is a peninsula surrounded by the Atlantic.

So, when seen from afar, the Giant is a cape. But from close, you can see that he's made of rocks, caves, trees, plants... He's like a karst landscape. In fact, the Giant is a Giant because he's gigantic for these creatures that live inside of him, in the caves and tunnels of his body. Yeah, the Giant is inhabited by very little creatures, similar to the Liliputians someone mentioned. These little creatures live in communities and they came together to create the Giant. The Prehistorical world was too dangerous and wild for them, they are so tiny that they couldn't survive there. So they created the Giant in order to protect them, like a huge walking fortress. Or also like the European Union or the UNO. I like this idea of the Giant as a supra-organization and a territory. The Giant has to protect them but he must also keep the balance between the different communities of little creatures.

Obviously the relationship between the Giant and the little creatures is complicated. Like my allergy to dust mites, or the lice you mentioned. But more than anything it's like me and the HIV, I need to take the treatment everyday and keep the virus at bay. And somehow it also echoes the multi-nationality of my family: Argentinian, Spanish, Slovenian, German...

And then, the Giant is a Barbarian because his body is his weapon. As I said before, when I first got HIV I was in shock, thinking that my blood or my cum could infect and kill someone. So the Giant also has this power. He can punch you, smash you... but he can also fart and blow you away or he can pee or even cum and dissolve you.
So that's me, the Giant Barbarian.

REDUCED TO NUMBERS: THE STATS —o8—

Before finishing the creation of your character, you'll need to roll the dice and do some simple Maths.

In *Draconis Lacrimae*, every character is eventually reduced to five Abilities. They are:

Strength

Physical strength, endurance and resistance to illness and damage.

Dexterity

How agile your Character is; useful for stealth, pickpocketing, acrobatics, tricks...

Intellect

General reasoning and wisdom.

Combat

A mix of training, knowledge and general ability to succeed in violent situations.

Charisma

Charm, leadership and self-determination; useful to convince or manipulate other beings.

Each of the Character's Abilities is defined by a score or stat: the number that determines the magnitude of the Ability. The higher the score, the more capable the Character is on that specific aspect. Simplifying the Character's abilities to a number has one purpose: if during the game, the players don't

manage to solve a conflict through negotiation and discussion, they will have to leave it up to hazard and dice rolls. Then, the Ability Stats will be crucial. It will be explained later in detail.

In order to define each of your Character's Abilities, you have to roll 6d10: roll 6 times a 10 sided dice. Then, add the 6 results you got, the final number will be ranging from 6 till 60. Repeat this 4 times so you get 5 numbers in total (all of them will range from 6 till 60).

Now, you will have to assign each of these 5 numbers to each of your 5 Abilities. Distribute them in a way that you think will go well with your Character's personality. When you do so, have in mind the Class Modifiers.

What is a Class Modifier? Depending on the Class you've chosen for your Character, one or two of your Abilities will be reinforced. That is the Class Modifier. For example, if you're a Barbarian you will add +5 to your Character's Strength score.

These are the Class Modifiers:

Barbarian
+5 Strength

Bard
+5 Charisma

Cleric
+3 Intellect
+2 Charisma

Druid
+3 Intellect
+2 Strength

Fighter
+5 Combat

Monk
+3 Combat
+2 Dexterity

Paladin
+3 Combat
+2 Strength

Ranger
+3 Dexterity
+2 Strength

Rogue
+5 Dexterity

Sorcerer
+3 Combat
+2 Intellect

Warlock
+3 Charisma
+2 Dexterity

Wizard
+5 Intellect

—Example—

My Race is Giant and my Class is Barbarian. Since I'm a Barbarian, I've got a Class Modifier of +5 on Strength.

I rolled 6d10, five times. The scores I got were: 50, 38, 40, 35 and 26.

So my character is very strong and big, so I assigned 50 -which is the highest score I got- to my Strength Ability. I added the Class Modifier of +5 on my Strength, making a total of 55.

The second highest score, 40, I assigned it to Combat. 38 for Charisma, because having all these little creatures living inside of me, I developed some leadership skills. 35 for Intellect and 26, my lowest score, for Dexterity. I'm strong and big but clumsy and slow.

Strength

$50 + 5 = 55$

Dexterity

26

Intellect

35

Combat

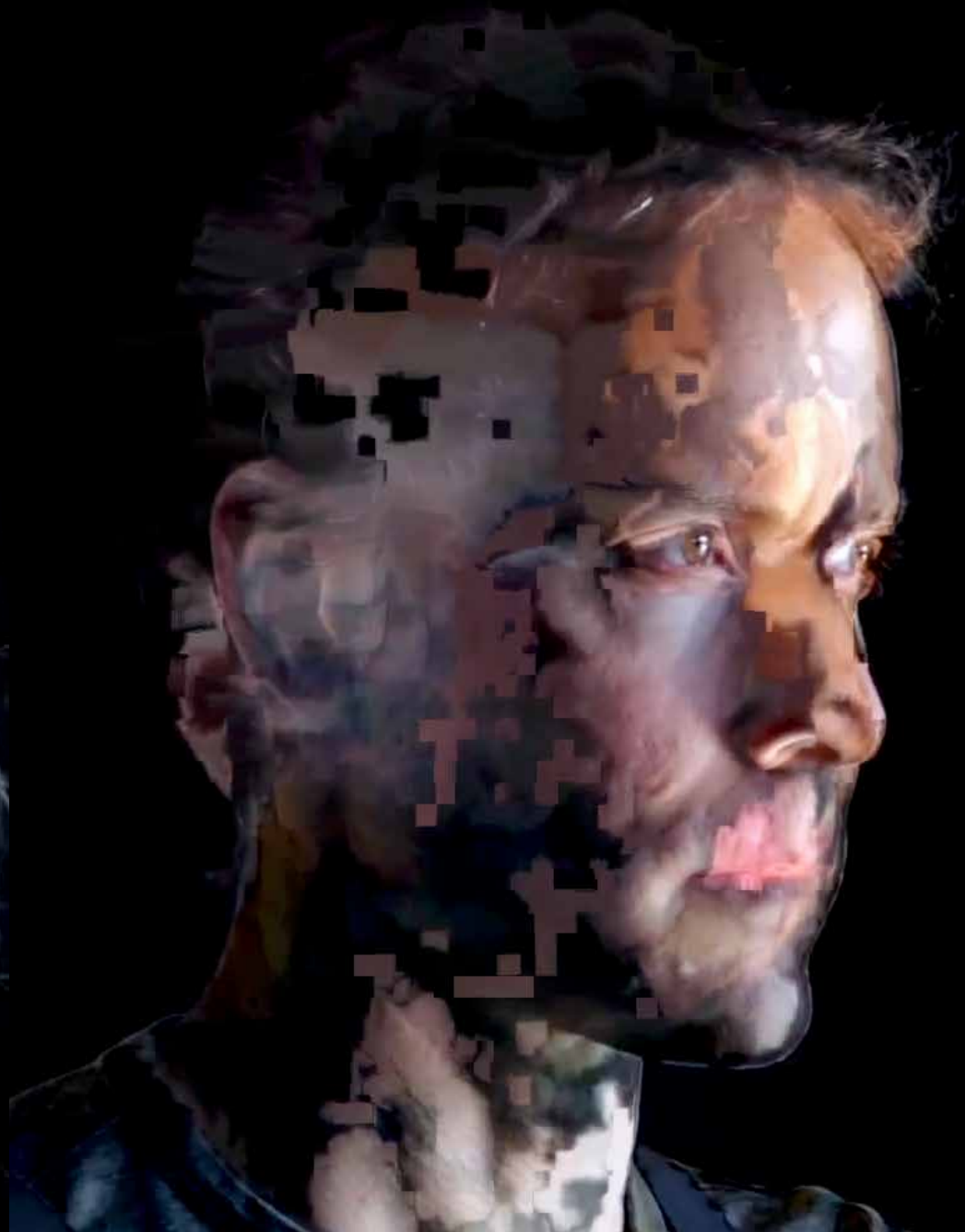
40

Charisma

38



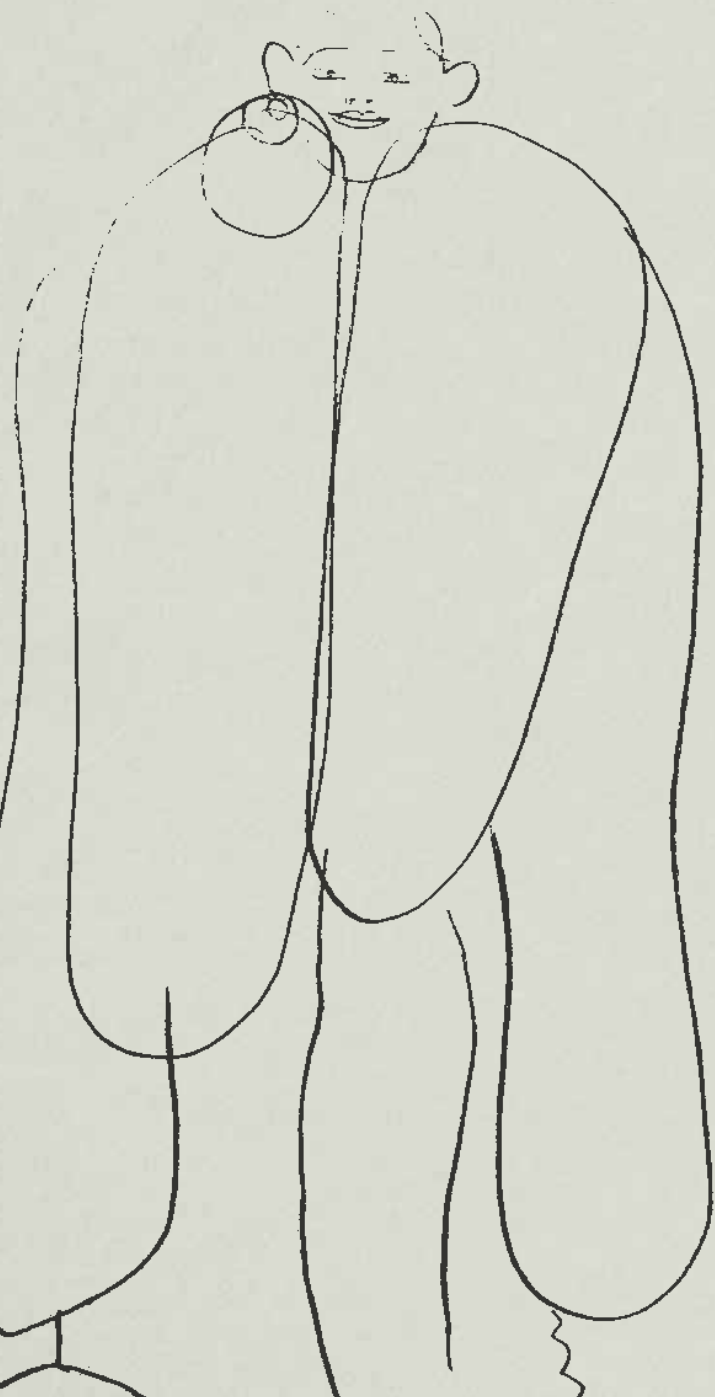






CHAPTER TWO

WORLD
BUILDING¹



In *Draconis Lacrimae* there are no dungeons and dragons, the dungeon is the Dragon.

So, in the following game sessions you will build the world in which your adventure takes place: the entrails of the Dragon. In order to do so, you will need pen and paper cards (around A6 size).

Think of the Dragon's anatomy as the map, the timeline and the pathway of your adventure. The Dragon's organs will be the settings and chapters in your story. When imagining and designing the Dragon with the other players, don't try to project or plan too much. Leave the details and concretions for later, for the role-playing. Remember, the Dragon is a Figure: it will only fully appear while playing.

Dragons: "Nearly every culture has myths about something called a *dragon*, despite the fact none of them can agree on exactly *what* dragons are"². The creatures we call dragons come from very different traditions and as such aren't technically the same monster, even though they have several common features. It was the Eurocentric vision that put all these creatures under the same category #dragon.

In this dragon mosh, it's very hard to trace back their differences and origins: the Hydra (a creature from the Greek and Roman mythology) was turned into King Ghidorah (the antagonist of Godzilla, the Japanese kaiju films star); Quetzalcoatl (the plumed serpent deity of different Mesoamerican cultures) is a summoned monster in the Final Fantasy videogames; Falkor, the luckdragon of the German novel *The Neverending Story* by Michael Ende, takes its name from the Japanese language and is often portrayed as a Chinese dragon... and so on.

In *Draconis Lacrimae*, The Dragon is the players' shared collective fiction: the Figure that appears within their mosh.

THEY MEET IN THE GUTS

— 01 —

Multiverse (First person singular): “The Multiverse can be perceived as a material and metaphorical path of self-discovery, once the self has been recognized as *the others within*”.³

Multiverse (First person plural): You and I, we form a *We*. But we are not the only *We*. A *We* may not be just a *You* and an *I*, there are many other possible *We*. Each of those *We* lives in its own Universe. The Multiverse is the space that all the *We* share... and it's a huge space. And in the Multiverse all of the *We* can, if swollen by the Dragon, meet in the same point: her Guts.

Each of the characters was eaten, swollen, absorbed, teleported, injected, implanted... by or into a different dragon in their own Universes. All those dragons are different in the outside, but they all have guts, and those guts are one. Only one. That's where the adventurers meet, in the Guts of the Dragon: a common ground, a connector, the portal of the Multiverse.

Upon arrival, the adventurers tell each other how they got there. In turns, briefly narrate to your fellow players how you got inside the Guts: how dragons are in your character's Universe and how your character ended up inside one of them. This short narration serves as a kind of prequel for the group's adventure.

— Example —

Giant Barbarian: I come from a Prehistorical Universe. There, everything is always trying to kill you. There are earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes, tornados... Also, there are monsters that

you have to fight, like King Kong or Godzilla. Dragons are one of these monsters, they look like dinosaurs. I got inside the Dragon because I was swollen alive by one of the them in an epic fight.

Cyborg Warlock: I come from a post-apocalyptic Universe in which dragons are big corporations, digital monsters like Google. During a routine mission in a VR environment, I got caught in the code of one of these dragon evil corps.

Alien Druid: My Universe is like Medieval Europe, so dragons are classical Western high fantasy creatures with scales and fire. As a druid, I am a shapeshifter: I can turn into an animal when I get to understand it, when I empathize with it. Dragons are very powerful and complex creatures that I haven't yet been able to understand. So I asked a dragon to eat me so that I could understand them.

Vampire Bard: I come from a place in which the dead and the living coexist in the same plane. Dragons are the ancestors of the Vampires; smokey creatures that can be invoked. I was performing a ritual and one of my ancestors visited me, manifesting as a smoke dragon. I was chosen to be abducted in order to learn something very important for our people.

Pegasus Monk: My world is populated by mythical and technological creatures like me. I met a dragon sitting under the ancient Tree of Life and in mutual recognition of our uniqueness we instantly impregnated each other. It was very intense: love at first sight and pregnancy at first sight. But both the dragon and its new baby died straight away, leaving me as the carrier of the only inter-dimensional portal of my Universe. Because I was carrying a baby-Dragon portal in my womb, I was sucked inwards, turning outside-in like a sock. And that's how I got here.

BOOKEND ORGANS

— 02 —

Write down in a paper card "The Guts" (orient the card tall, not wide). That's the Organ in which the characters meet and where they start the journey through the Dragon. Place it on the very left side of the table. That is the beginning of your journey, the first organ you will visit.

After this you will all have to agree on an End Organ for your adventure, the Organ through which you will (or will not) escape. You will do this collectively and consensually. Talk, discuss, negotiate. You don't need to define what happens in this End Organ. Just give it a name, write it down on a paper (oriented tall) and place it on the very right side of the table. That is the End of your journey, the last Organ you will visit.

Now you will describe what these two Organs are. You will also do this collectively and consensually. When defining an Organ, you may think of how it looks, what is its physiological function, the creatures (if any) that inhabit the Organ... An Organ could be close to the anatomy of an animal (e.g. the lungs) or could be completely far-out (like the Cavity of Pain or Galaxy x45-D).

Describe both the Guts and the End Organ in a few sentences. Make sure that the description doesn't explain what the characters do in the Organ: you're now simply creating the setting. The action and role-play will come later in the game.

Once you've agreed on the descriptions of these two Organs, write one or two sentences about them on their respective cards, so that you have a quick reminder throughout the game.

Organ: An Organ is a chapter of your story. An Organ is a setting in your adventure. An Organ is a part of the Dragon's anatomy. The series of Organs draw a storyline and a journey. A possible pathway throughout the endless possible bodies of the Dragon.

CONFLICT ORGANS

—03—

Each player imagines an Organ in which they will discover something important about their character: these are the Conflict Organs. There will be as many Conflict Organs as there are players in the game.

In the Conflict Organ you create, your character will be the protagonist. Also, as a player, you will have more power when it comes to making narrative decisions in your Conflict Organ.

How to imagine your Conflict Organ? In the Conflict Organ your character will go through a process of transformation or self-discovery. You might already have an idea of what this process will be (maybe you already thought of an issue that your character needs to address). In that case, imagine the setting that could trigger the discovery. On the other hand, you might have no clue of what your character will discover. In this case, imagine the Conflict Organ as a setting that is strongly related to your character's backstory and Universe: either by similarity or opposition. Your Conflict Organ could be an ideal setting for your character: a place where your character perfectly fits, where their abilities, powers or worldview are crucial and useful. Your Conflict Organ could also be hell for your character: a setting in which your character loses their powers, abilities and that challenges their beliefs.

It might be difficult to imagine your Conflict Organ. Don't worry. You shouldn't know everything in advance. Even if you're not sure of why your Conflict Organ will be important for your character or what actions will take place in it, follow your intuition. Later on, you will play to discover what happens.

THE GUTS

A chamber
with organic
porous walls:
things can enter
but not leave

(start organ)

TEAR GLAND

It's like the
Grand Canyon.
A river with
huge walls
on the sides

(end organ)

TUMOR

Its like the
Grand Canyon.
A river with
huge walls
on the sides

(conflict organ)
Giant Barbarian

HEART

Its like the
Grand Canyon.
A river with
huge walls
on the sides

(conflict organ)
Pegasus Monk

LUNGS

Its like the
Grand Canyon.
A river with
huge walls
on the sides

(conflict organ)
Vampire Bard

THE EYE

Its like the
Grand Canyon.
A river with
huge walls
on the sides

(conflict organ)
Alien Druid

CHAMBER OF DREAMS

Its like the
Grand Canyon.
A river with
huge walls
on the sides

(conflict organ)
Cyborg Warlock

As in the previous steps, write down in a paper card the name of the Conflict Organ and its description in a few sentences. Also, write on it the name of your character.

Don't explain anyone why you've chosen that Conflict Organ or what you think your character will discover, just describe the Organ. In the case that a Conflict Organ was repeated (two times spinal cord, for instance) it would mean that the Dragon has that Organ two times; they will anyway be different.

In any order they want, each player places their Conflict Organ on the table, somewhere between The Guts and the End Organ. When placing your paper, you're already creating a storyline. For example, if you place the Lungs card on the left of The Cavity of Pain card, that means that the adventurers will visit the Lungs before the Cavity of Pain. Then, another player could place the Tumor between the Lungs and the Cavity of Pain, that's how the pathway is built.

—Example—

The Giant Barbarian is not sure about what Conflict Organ he will create. He has no idea what might be the important fact he will discover in the organ, so he decides to make a Conflict Organ that will weaken him and leave him powerless. The Giant is big and strong but he's full of cavities, holes and tunnels where little creatures live. So he comes with the idea of an Organ where his body will flood and swell up and he won't be able to move: The Tumor. He imagines it as a big purple mousse that seeps through his body, leaving him immobile. The cancerous cells of the Tumor will infiltrate into his body and will meet the little creatures that inhabit the Giant. He explains his fellow players but doesn't reveal all the details he has .

Giant Barbarian:

My Conflict Organ will be The Tumor, a living purple mass that moves and adapts its shape around us like a mousse.

He writes "The Tumor" and a sentence describing it in a card (oriented tall), and places it between The Guts (the beginning of the adventure) and The Heart (a Conflict Organ created by The Pegasus Monk, a fellow player).

ROUNDS: FREE-PLAY ORGANS, EVENTS & SCENES

—04—

Up to now, the Dragon you're creating has a starting Organ -the Guts-, an end Organ and several Conflict Organs (one for each player). On this last step of the World Building you will create more Organs and add detail to those previously created.

From now on the game happens in turns clockwise. On their turns, each player can create one of these three elements: a Free-Play Organ, an Event or a Scene.

Free-play organ

As opposed to the Conflict Organs, a Free-Play Organ is not linked to a particular character. Free-Play Organs help enriching the overall narrative. They nurture group actions and relationships between characters. Later on, when you role play these Organs, every player will have equal power in creating the narration.

As before, describe a Free-Play Organ in a few sentences and place the card paper (oriented tall) somewhere along the timeline between pre-existing organs but never before The Guts or after the End Organ.

Event

An Event is something that happens inside an Organ, while the adventurers are there. An Event is developed in one or several Scenes. It can happen in any kind of Organ: a Conflict Organ, a Free-Play Organ, the End Organ or The Guts. There can be more than one Event on the same Organ.

Write down the Event on a paper card (oriented wide) and describe it in a single sentence. Place it under its correspondent Organ, creating a nested vertical relation. If there

are already other Events in that Organ, place yours above or below one of them. Chronology develops downwards.

Your description of the Event should be specific enough that the other players have a clear picture of what takes place.

*"The Cancerous Cells invade the Giant"
is an event that takes place in The Tumor,
which is the Giant Barbarian's Conflict Organ.*

Scene

A Scene is a specific moment happening inside an Event. In one same Event there can be several Scenes. To create a Scene, you first pose a question, something you want to find out about the story. The goal of the Scene is to decide the answer to that question. But this will happen later on, while role-playing. You will discover the answer through play.

If the Scene happens inside an Event of a Conflict Organ, the question should somehow relate to the personal journey of the Character who created that Conflict Organ.

On a paper card (oriented tall) write down the Scene's question and place it underneath its corresponding Event card. More than one Scene can be placed underneath an Event, in any order.

*Within the Event "The Cancerous Cells
invade the Giant", taking place in The Tumor
(the Giant Barbarian's Conflict Organ),
a player creates the following Scene:*

*"Why do the Cancerous Cells start a revolution
inside the Giant's body?"*

And so, the World Building develops. On each round, each player will add a Free-Play Organs, an Event or a Scene. Play as many rounds as you want but before concluding the World Building sessions, make sure that:

→ In each Conflict Organ you have, at least, as many Scenes as the number of players minus one.

→ You have at least one Scene inside each Organ.

The more rounds you play, the more the Dragon will grow in detail. The cards on the table will define the Dragon's anatomy. They will be your map, your storyline and the pathway of your adventure. They will guide you through the next part of the game: the role-play.









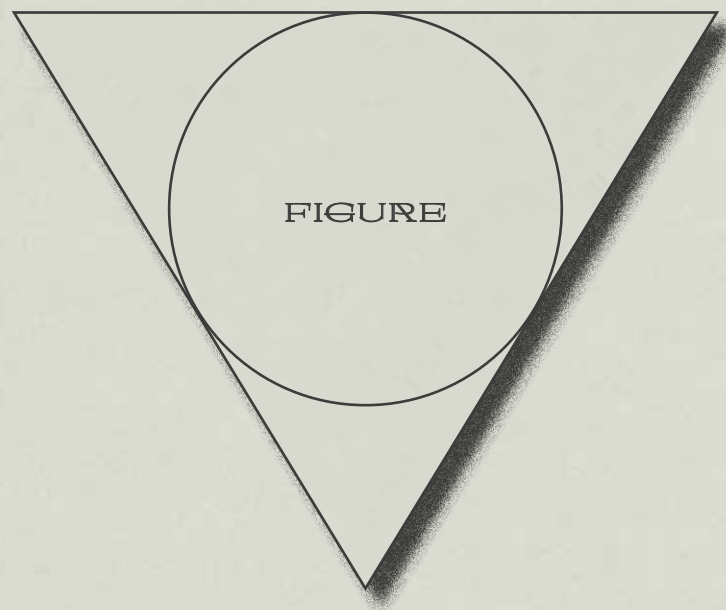


CHAPTER THREE

ROLE PLAYING

PLAYER

PERFORMER



CHARACTER

Now the actual role-play begins. Each Organ will be role-played in order, starting with the Guts all the way to the End Organ. While role-playing, you'll say what your character does, sees and thinks, and by doing so you'll also affect the shared world you inhabit with your fellow players. This is how you will discover together what happens during the journey.

In *Draconis Lacrimae* there are two modes of role-playing, depending if you are in a Free-Play Organ or in a Conflict Organ. Since in *Draconis Lacrimae* there is no Game Master, every player has immense creative power. But the creative power of a player also depends on the other players. These power relations will vary according to the type of Organ you're playing. In Free-Play Organs you will all have equal power. In Conflict Organs, the player who created the Organ will have a protagonist role while the other players will share the antagonist role.

Think of Role-play as a triangle with three vertices: player, character and performer. These three vertices are constantly moving and, as a result of the dynamic interaction between them, a fourth element appears: the Figure.



√The player is you, playing. You and your creative agenda: do you play to win? Or, do you want to tell a good story? Or do you play to feel immersed and explore an alternative world?¹

Character

Characters are different versions of the self. An idealized self, a repressed self, an augmented self, a fragmented self, an oppositional self²... or several simultaneously.

Performer

The performer is the embodiment of both the character and the player's agenda. It's the body that bleeds³ in and out, vulnerable and in a constant search between the first and the third person.

Figure

In the words of Donna Haraway, Figures are not "representations or didactic illustrations, but rather material, semiotic nodes or knots in which diverse bodies and meaning co-shape one another".⁴

The Figure crystalizes and dissolves, shaped by the stories narrated by you and your fellow adventurers. The Figure is the tabletop around which the player, the character and the performer gather to create stories together. So, you will never grasp the Figure on your own.

PLAYING A FREE-PLAY ORGAN^(4B)

— 01 —

When playing a Free-Play Organ, follow the next steps:

First Step

The player who created the Organ reminds the group about it: how it looks like, its features, inhabitants, qualities, etc.

Second Step

The group looks at the Events and Scenes in the Organ. There might be Scenes with questions that are redundant or too similar. You can try to merge them in a single Scene.

Third Step

The Scenes are role-played in the chronological order you established during the creation of the Dragon. In a Scene, each player performs their character and all together they aim at answering the question. The Scene will end once the question is answered. At the beginning of each Scene, in turns, the players will say what their character is feeling or thinking. This helps set the stage for the Scene that is about to be developed.

Once this first round is finished, free-play begins. You can contribute whenever you want (there are no more turns). Free-playing a Scene, you may:

⇒ Say what your character does and thinks. You can speak in first and/or third person.

⇒ If someone tries to do something to your character, you describe the outcome. For example, if another character punches you, it's up to you to decide if you get hurt or if you avoid the punch.

→ Shape the world by describing what your character perceives. By saying, for example, that your character sees a castle, you're creating that castle.

→ Introduce and play secondary characters, as needed. Once a secondary character is created, all the players can perform it in addition to their own characters.

→ You must accept what the others say but you will have the last word on what happens to your character. The story is written collectively but not consensually. You add on what your fellows create.

Fourth Step

During the Scene, everyone should be trying to answer the question written on the card. The Scene ends when the players discover together the answer to the question.

—Example—

The group is about to play the Spinal Cord. In this Organ there are two Events:

“The amount of energy rises dangerously”

“The group gets lost in the tunnels”

Inside the first event there are three Scenes:

“What important fact did the group discover about the Dragon?”

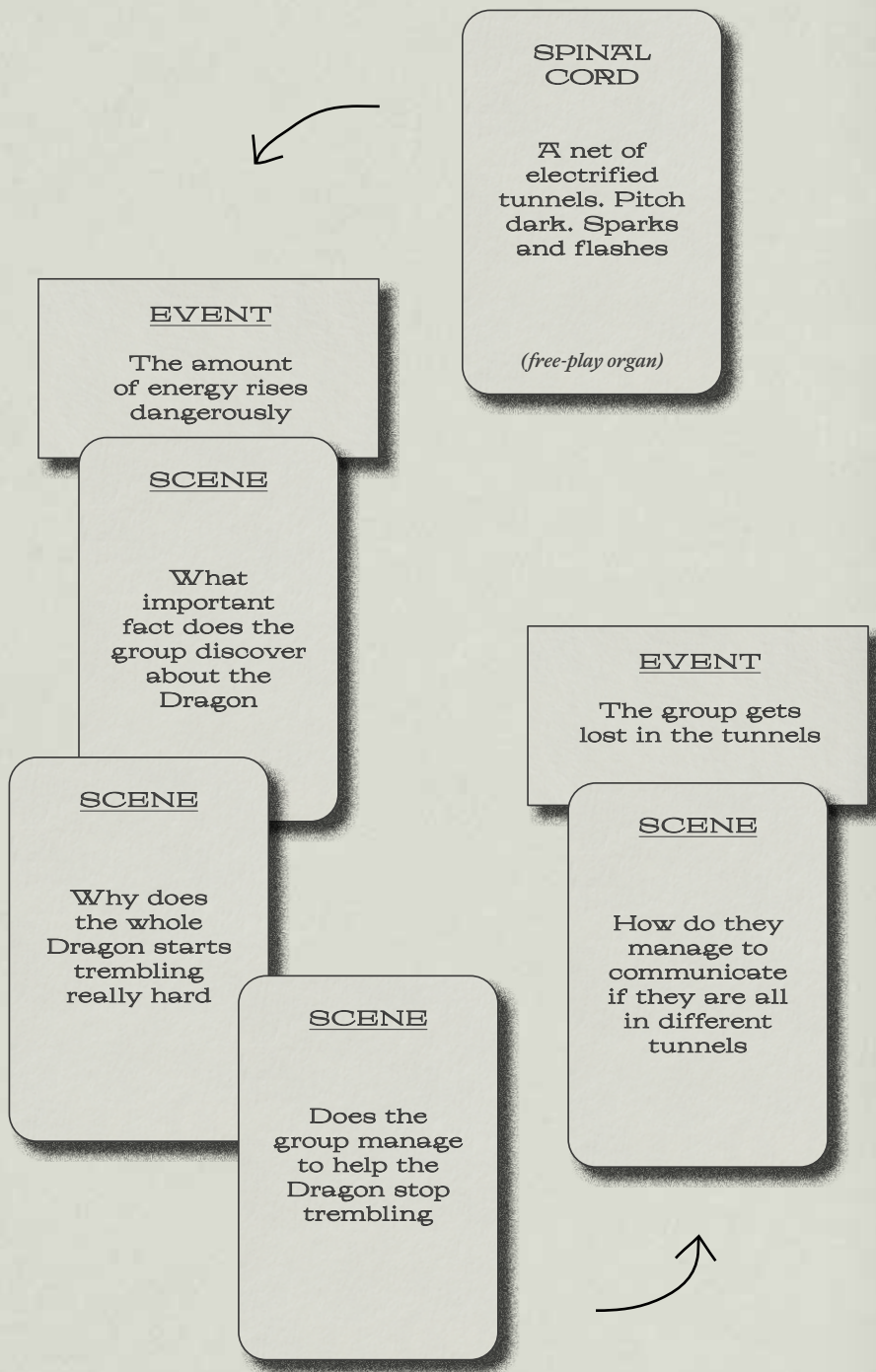
“Why does the whole Dragon starts trembling really hard?”

“Does the group manage to help the Dragon stop trembling?”

Looking at the two last Scenes in the Event, the group realizes that they could be merged into one. So, consensually, they merge the two Scenes into a new one in which the answer to the two questions will be revealed during play:

“How does the group solve the issue that is causing the Dragon to tremble really hard?”

Once this is done, they start role-playing.



Cyborg Warlock:

Now we're gonna play the Spinal Cord, a Free-Play Organ that I created. So, the adventurers enter the Spinal Cord, a net of electrified tunnels. The tunnels are pitch dark with occasional sparks and flashes. The walls are obsidian shiny black.

We have an Event called "The amount of energy rises dangerously". Inside this event we have a Scene with the question "What important fact did the group discover about the Dragon?".

First, we do the round of thoughts. The Cyborg is excited, feeling so much electricity flowing makes him feel great.

Aliend Druid:

I feel insecure. I come from a Medieval Universe so I don't even know what electricity is.

Pegasus Monk:

The wound I got while we were in the Heart hasn't fully healed, so I feel very weak.

Vampire Bard:

Mmhh, I'm not a big fan of electricity but I'm enjoying the darkness.

Giant Barbarian:

I still feel weird with my body. The cancerous cells that invaded me while we were in the Tumor continue to bother me.

Cyborg Warlock:

Ok, now the scene begins!

Aliend Druid:

I transform into a humming bird so I can move without having to touch the floor or walls.

Cyborg Warlock:

I touch the walls with my hand-connectors looking for strong impulses. I find a strong current and manage to connect to it. This knocks me out and I start making very weird noises.

Vampire Bard:

I stay away, it seems too dangerous.

Cyborg Warlock:

The Cyborg starts reading the Dragon's network, connected to her nervous system. I start to understand that the Dragon has memories and perceptions about dragons that I had never seen, like dragons from other worlds.

Pegasus Monk:

I see the Cyborg Warlock on the floor, making weird noises. His body seems out of control, like overcharged. Suddenly, his hologram projector starts showing the images of all these dragons in different universes. The group sees these projected images. Is this ok with you, Cyborg Warlock?

Cyborg Warlock:

Yes, that's cool! Everything that I see, I project it in a hologram so you can also see it.

Giant Barbarian:

I'm very worried about the Cyborg Warlock, I ask the Vampire Bard if she could cure the energetic overload.

Vampire Bard:

I propose to grab the Cyborg and try to pull him out and unplug him.

Giant Barbarian:

I help you grab him.

Pegasus Monk:

Me too.

Aliend Druid:

I don't. I'm still a hummingbird and I'm flying around.

Vampire Bard:

Ok, we do that and a huge electrical spark brightens the space.

Cyborg Warlock:

You manage to pull me out of the network. My circuits are damaged and I'm very confused, almost unconscious.

Aliend Druid:

Thanks to the flash, I notice that the walls and ceiling of the Spinal Cord are covered with inscriptions. I fly closer to see if I can manage to read them.

Vampire Bard:

I try to heal the Cyborg Warlock with my chants, but I cannot heal technology. He has to be repaired, not healed.

Pegasus Monk:

Ok, but wait. With my nanotechnology I can try to transcode the Bard's healing songs into the technological body of the Cyborg.

Vampire Bard:

Cool, we do that.

Cyborg Warlock:

You manage to heal me, at least enough to be able to talk. I explain the group what I've seen while I was plugged in: the Dragon has many different kinds of logics working inside because he lives in many different Universes. Each one of these logics corresponds to an embodiment of the Dragon in each of the Universes. It's the biggest network I've ever sensed. The network is infinitely complex because it reflects the logic of the physics in every possible Universe. Some are Euclidean, some are Quantum and some are Maths that don't even match any logic that I know.

Giant Barbarian:

I think this is it! We've answered the question "What important fact did the group discovered about the Dragon?". End of the scene.

Cyborg Warlock:

Yes, end of the scene! We already knew that the Dragon is a portal of the Multiverse. What we've discovered is that her nervous system is capable of comprehending many different logics, many of which we're unable to understand.

Aliend Druid:

Yes, and on the way we discovered the inscriptions on the walls. We have to see if these inscriptions are relevant on the next Scenes of the Spinal Cord.

PLAYING A CONFLICT ORGAN

—02—

Being in the guts of the Dragon means that you had to leave your Universe behind. You're in a setting unknown to you and you're surrounded by strangers. Furthermore, in a Conflict Organ your character will go through a process of transformation or self-discovery. You might enter the Tumor, a dense organ in which the Giant Barbarian loses all his powers and abilities, or you might enter The Chamber of Dreams, a brain-like organ in which the Cyborg Warlock feels at home.

In your Conflict Organ, your character will be the Center, the protagonist of the narration. Your fellow players will play their own characters and they will also share the role of the Objector, your antagonist. In Conflict Organs there is no consensus and collectivity: it's "the war of us against us".¹

CONFLICT

In *Draconis Lacrimae*, the conflict is not a war against an enemy, it doesn't oppose two clear sides. The conflict puts on the tabletop the left-overs of our categories, that which remains of our species, races, genders, classes... and other classifications unbalanced by the history of domination. The conflict is the struggle to decide what is We.

In Conflict Organs the characters are not on the same level. Conflict Organs have a Center (protagonist) and Objectors (antagonist).

During the building of the Dragon, you all created a Conflict Organ for your character. All the Events and Scenes of that Conflict Organ are related to that character. There-

fore, this is the character that will play the Center. As the Center, you will be the protagonist of every Scene within that Conflict Organ: you will have more creative power because the story will focus on your character.

But in conflicts, you also need an antagonist. That is the Objector. In each Scene of a Conflict Organ, the other players will, in turns, perform the Objector. As the Objector, your main task is to make it difficult for the Center to build up the story the way she wants: add conditions or unexpected consequences to the actions proposed by the her, put her in difficult situations, make her take hard choices... As the Objector of a Scene, you will continue to play your own character (like in any other Scene) but you will also play the antagonists of the story, including possible secondary characters, the environment and background of the Scene.

When playing a Conflict Organ, follow the next steps:

First Step

The player who created the Conflict Organ reminds the group about it: how it looks like, its features, inhabitants, qualities, etc.

Second Step

The group looks at the Events and Scenes in the Organ. Remember that while creating the Conflict Organs, you should have made sure that in each Conflict Organ there is at least the same amount of Scenes as the number of players minus one. This way, every player who is not the Center will play at least one time as the Objector.

Also, as in Free-Play Organs, there might be Scenes with questions that are redundant or too similar. You can try to merge them in a single Scene (but again, make sure you keep a minimum amount of Scenes as the number of players minus one).

Third Step

Every player, except for the Center, chooses at least one Scene that they feel attracted to. In the Scene you choose, you will perform the Objector. If it happens that there are more Scenes than players, the same person can play the Objector for more than one Scene.

—Example—

The Eye is the Conflict Organ created by the Alien Druid. When playing the Eye, she will be the Center in every Scene and each of the other players will, in turns, be the Objector of a Scene.

The first Event inside the Eye is “A memory bubble explodes, flooding the Eye”. Inside this Event there is a Scene called “What is the memory that reveals to the adventurers that one of them is lying?” The Vampire Bard really likes the question, so he chooses that Scene. This means that he will be the Objector in that Scene.

Fourth Step

As in Free-Play Organs, Scenes are role-played in the chronological order you established during the creation of the Dragon. In Conflict Organs you also begin the Scene with a round in which, in turns, each player says what their character is feeling or thinking. After that you will free-play: no more turns; contribute whenever you want; shape the world by describing what your character perceives; etc. Eventually, as in Free-Play Organs, here the Scene also finishes when the question is answered. As you see, most the rules of Free-Play Organs also apply to Conflict Organs (review the chapter “Playing a Free-play Organ” if needed).

However, in a Conflict Organ, the players that perform the Center and the Objector have the power to reject or modify something that another player says. So, if in the course of free-play the Center or the Objector disagree with something that any other player has said, Conflict starts.

Remember, only the Center or the Objector can initiate Conflict. The other players cannot. Conflict is a negotiation between the Center and the Objector over the development of the Scene. When the conflict ends, you return to free-play the Scene, so there can be several conflicts inside one single scene.

The negotiation between the Center and the Objector is not free-form. It is performed through a series of specific Conflict Phrases. Also, as part of this negotiation, the Center and the Objector will have a total of eight Conflict Tokens they can use alongside the Phrases. Conflict Tokens refresh at the beginning of a new scene, for both the Center and the new Objector.

In total there are six Conflict Phrases. The main ones are the following four: "But only if..."; "Chill!"; "Deal!" and "No way!".

But only if...

When you start a sentence saying "But only if..." followed by a statement, it means that you are willing to allow the opponent's statement to come to pass, if he or she accepts your statement as well. Conflict continues.

You must spend a Conflict Token in order to use this phrase.

Chill!

"Chill!" means that you don't think that your opponent is asking something reasonable. Your opponent must offer up another suggestion which is either lesser in scope or dra-

matically different from their previous statement. The other players (who are not the two negotiating parts, Center and Objector) must confirm that their offer is sufficiently smaller in scale or different in scope. You choose one of the two options, the original statement or the newly offered one, and continue the conflict.

You should not, under any circumstances, give your opponent suggestions on what to offer.

You must spend a Conflict Token in order to use this phrase.

Deal!

"Deal!" means that you accept your opponent's statement, and don't wish to ask for anything more yourself. It ends conflict and the Scene continues in free-play.

No way!

"No way!" means that you oppose the last statement and you are not willing to compromise at all. You prefer to take a risk."No way!" is a dead-end for the conflict: the outcome will depend on a dice roll. If you get to this point, do the following:

→ First, the other players (who are not the Center and Objector) will have to decide together which one of the Center's five Abilities Stats (Strength, Dexterity, Intellect, Combat or Charisma) applies to the roll. Their decision should be based on what the situation requires and the kind of problem that is at stake in the conflict.

→ Once the Ability is decided, the Center must roll 1d100 (a roll between 1 and 100). To do so, roll a d10 to get the tens digit; then roll a second d10 to get the ones digit. If the dice have different colors and you can tell them apart, you can

throw them at the same time after deciding which is tens and which is ones. In any case you'll get a result between 1 and 100 (two zeros stands for 100).

→ Compare the result of the roll with the chosen stat. If the result is equal or lower, the Center succeeds. If it's higher, the Center fails (that's why, the higher the stat, the more chances the character has to succeed). In either case, the Center describes how failure or success is translated into the story, conflict ends and the Scene continues in free-play.

—Example—

The group is inside the Eye, which is the Alien Druid's Conflict Organ. The Eye is a fluid sphere full of bubbles containing all the memories of the Dragon. They're playing a scene called "Why did the Alien Druid want to become the Dragon?", which takes place inside the event "The Alien Druid and the Dragon become one".

For this Scene, the Center is the Alien Druid (like in every Scene of her Conflict organ) and the Objector is the Pegasus Monk.

Alien Druid:

I propose to the group that we reach the lacrimal gland. In order to do so we have to traverse the eye.

All the others:

Yes ok! We dive into the fluid of the Eye and swim towards the lacrimal gland.

Alien Druid:

Ok! On the way to the lacrimal gland I shapeshift into an octopus. With my tentacles I touch as many memory bubbles as possible. By reading the memories of the Dragon I can better understand her. And if I manage to empathize with the Dragon I will be able to become her. Because I'm an octopus I can swim very fast, so I touch the bubbles without anyone else noticing.

Pegasus Monk:

But only if at least one of us notices and finds out about this secret plan of yours, which is to become the Dragon, be super powerful and destroy the whole of humanity! I spend a conflict token.

Alien Druid:

OK, one of you know about my plan, *but only if* that one is you, Pegasus. I don't think the others would understand, they're too human. I spend a conflict token.

Pegasus Monk:

Deal!

Alien Druid:

So, while I'm touching the bubbles, the Alien realises that she needs to have someone on her side, in case things go wrong.

I connect telepathically with the Pegasus Monk, showing him images of how in planet Earth -where I come from- the animals suffer on the hands of humans. The Pegasus Monk comes from another planet so he doesn't know that the Earth would be much better without humans. "Help me bring the rest of the team outside of the Eye, they mustn't find out about my plan because they wouldn't understand me", I tell the Pegasus.

Pegasus Monk:

I can't let you kill all humans! Leave some of them alive, at least the good ones so the human genome is not completely lost.

Alien Druid:

Nah... humans are too selfish! The Alien continues with her plan. I continue touching all the memory bubbles. I'm understanding the Dragon in all her complexity, her pain, her suffering, her power... I start to become the Dragon, ready to kill humanity.

Pegasus Monk:

Chill! I spend a conflict token.

Alien Druid:

OK, I reformulate... So I change the Alien's plan. I don't intend to kill all humans anymore. Instead, a little group of humans will be saved. And, thanks to the power I'll have as a Multiverse Portal Dragon, I will be able to transport this small group of humans into different parallel Universes in which they're oppressed and dominated, they're at the bottom of the trophic pyramid. They will learn what it is to be eaten by other creatures. Even plants will eat them! Then I'll put these humans back on their Earth but now they will manage to empathize with other beings. Is this better?

Giant Barbarian,
Vampire Bard
& Cyborg Warlock:

Yes, that seems to be a more reasonable track.

Pegasus Monk:

Ok, *but only if* you feel extremely guilty for having such a plan, and guilt is making you miserable. I spend another conflict token.

Alien Druid:

Ahahahah no! The Alien really hates humanity. She can not feel guilty, I won't let that happen... *no way!* Let's throw some dice.

Giant Barbarian:

Ok, we have to decide which Ability stat applies. I think that if the Alien Druid wants to destroy almost the whole of humanity but doesn't feel guilty about it, it's because she's very self confident. Then I would go for the Ability of Charisma. Do you agree?

Cyborg Warlock
& Vampire Bard:

Yes, that seems accurate.

Alien Druid:

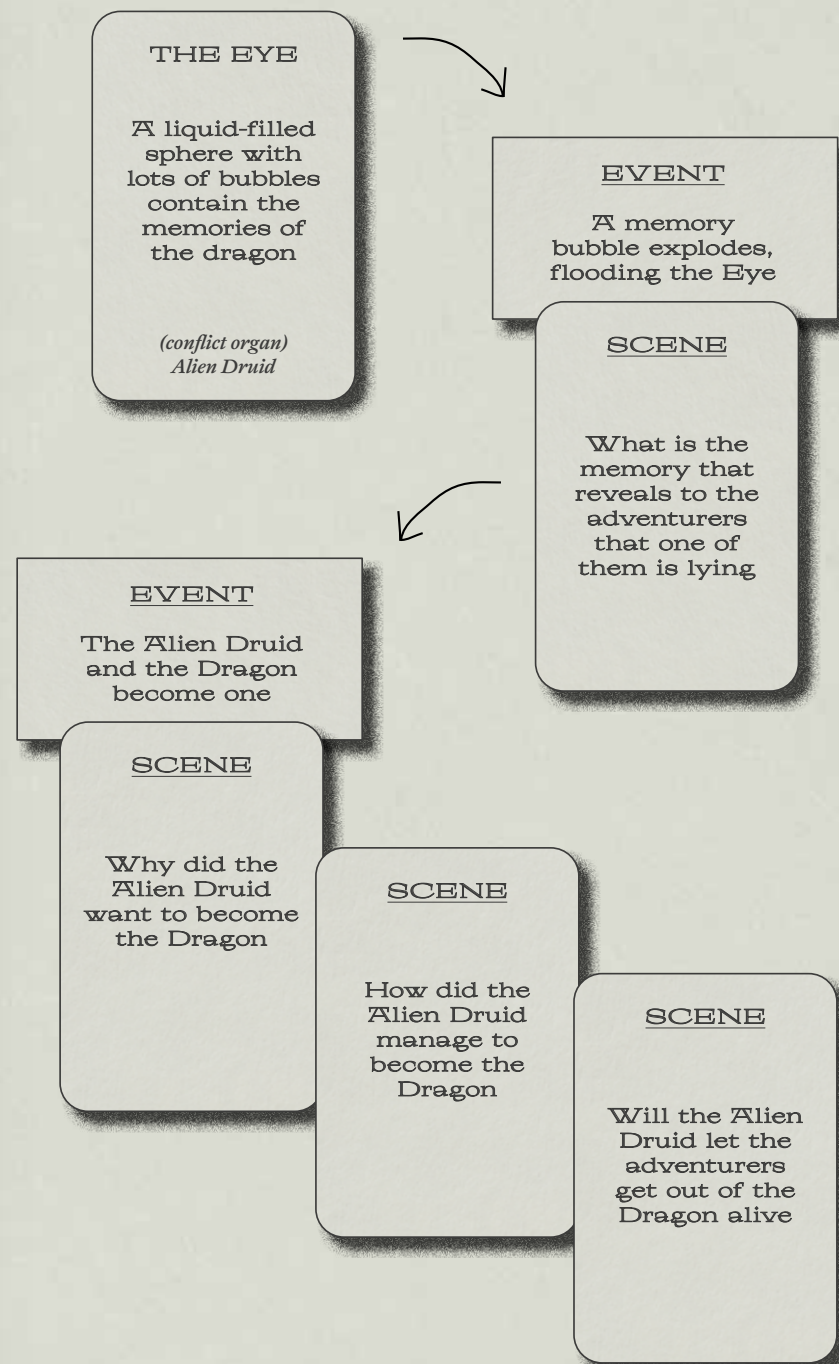
Ok, my Charisma is 57 so I have to roll under that. I roll and... 42! I succeed. Sorry, I happily continue with my plan, feeling no guilt at all! Hahaha.

The Scene continues until the question is answered. For the rest of this Scene, the Pegasus Monk will have 5 conflict tokens left (he has already spent 3), while the Alien Druid has 6 left. Once the question is answered, the Scene finishes. Then, the next Scene of the Conflict Organ starts, and

⇒ The Conflict Tokens reset to 8,

⇒ The Alien Druid is still the Center,

⇒ The Objector will be the Vampire Bard because he chose the next Scene and question early on, when they began to play the Eye.



There are two remaining Conflict Phrases. They are:

That didnt happen
/Yes, it happened

As mentioned before, only the Center or the Objector can initiate conflict. They can use the four Conflict Phrases explained earlier against each other. But what if the Center or the Objector don't agree with something that the other players —those who are not Center and Objector— have said? There are two Conflict Phrases to negate or transform something said by them: *that didn't happen* and *yes, it happened*. This is how they work:

During free-play, a player says something that either the Center or the Objector want to oppose. They'll do it by saying *That didn't happen*. Two things can happen then:

⇒ The other part (the Center or the Objector who didn't say *That didn't happen* in first place) can say *That didn't happen* as well, in which case the player's statement is completely dismissed.

⇒ The other part can say *Yes, it happened*. By doing so, the statement becomes the object of a new conflict between Center and Objector. From then on, the conflicts develops by using the four Conflict Phrases.

—Example—

The group is still inside the Eye, (the Alien Druid's Conflict Organ). Now they're playing a scene called "How did the Alien Druid manage to become the Dragon?", which takes place inside the event "The Alien Druid and the Dragon become one". The Center is the Alien Druid and in this Scene the Objector is the Vampire Bard.

Alien Druid:

I see you all swimming towards the lacrimal gland while I stay behind to touch the last of the memory bubbles. Once I've touched it I will fully understand the Dragon and I will become her.

Cyborg Warlock:

In this moment, the fluid inside the Eye starts changing its color, becoming more and more red. The eye is bleeding. I think that the Dragon is suffering more and more...

Alien Druid:

Sorry, but *that didn't happen*.

Vampire Bard:

Yeah, *that didn't happen*. Sorry Cyborg!

Cyborg Warlock:

Ok, ok!

Alien Druid:

So as I touch the last memory bubble, I start becoming. I read the cells of the Dragon, one by one, and start the transmutation!

Giant Barbarian:

But at this moment you realize that in order to completely become the Dragon you need to establish some kind of contact with her soul first. Like a spiritual link, you need to look right at her soul's eyes.

Alien Druid:

What? No! It's enough that I empathize in a psychological and cellular level. The Alien Druid is a very scientifically being, no need for spirituality. *That didn't happen*.

Vampire Bard:

Wait, that's kind of nice! I like it. So *yes, it happened.*

Alien Druid:

Ok, so I realize that I need to establish a link with her soul *but only if* it's possible to connect with her soul from where we are, here in the Eye. I expend a conflict token.

Vampire Bard:

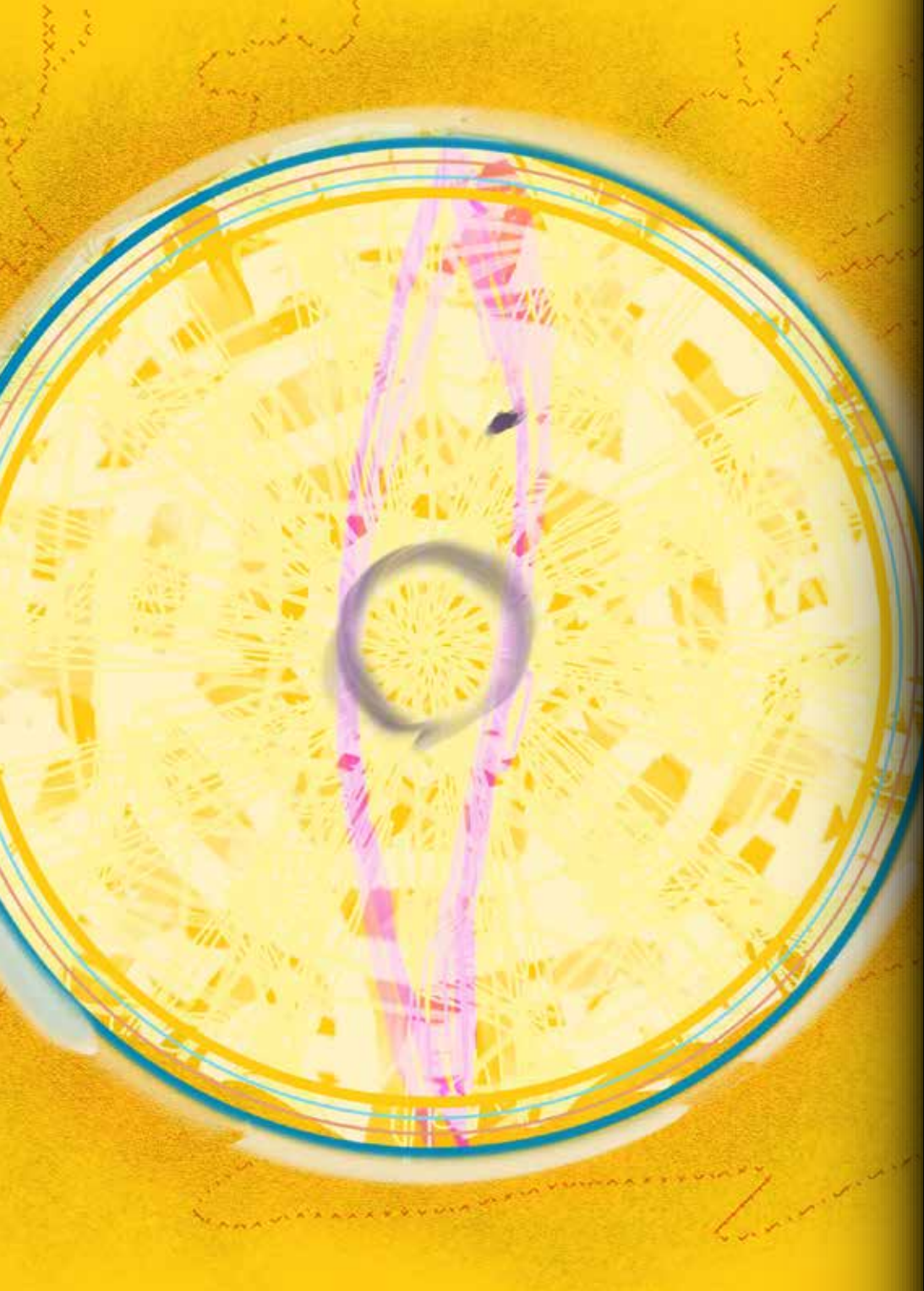
But only if this connection happens in the form of a dialogue between you and the Dragon's soul, and in this dialogue the Dragon is super mean to you! I spend a conflict token.

Alien Druid:

Hahahaha! *Deal!* That's going to be fun. While I'm mutating into the Dragon, I see a very strong light flashing in front of me, and I ask "Is it you, mighty Dragon? I've been wanting to meet you for so long".

The scene continues until the question is answered.





THE ALIENIGENUM DRUID

Sabina Urraca in dialogue with Anaël Snoek



I am not asking for you to not eat me. You can eat me. I ask only that you listen to me before you do. Listen to me. I am going to let you eat me; if you want, I can tell you this while I sit between your teeth, but do not bite down yet. This, the moment right before you eat me, is the most important moment of your life. It always is. Now you will eat me and I will become you. I know this because it has been this way forever. But first I want you to know my plan.

At first I was lamb, *agnus*, *Ovis orientalis aries*. I do not remember how I got to be the lamb or if I was anything before the lamb. My first memory is my mother's udder, and a warm breeze that came from the sky and the ground and that we call summer. I was a lamb until they cut me open here. Blood flowed out like a river. They took the meat but left the remains, which then rotted, turning me into a larva, Plural larvae. I was one among many. Roaming over the body that we had once been, I told myself that this was not the way it had to be done. That madness, our bodies stepping over each other to feed on the flesh, was horrifying to me. That is what I am trying to tell you. That it is difficult not to become attached to the body in which you live, even if that sorrow lasts only as long as a hunt, a slash, a sword. Are you afraid of the sword, dragon? That is how your kind dies. I do not fear your teeth, because it has happened too many times before, there have been too many sorrows before. I am tired. Listen, do not close your mouth yet. I have a plan.

I was a larva until a blackbird burrowed into the ground and caught me with its beak. Then I became the blackbird, *Turdus merula*. I was very happy as a blackbird. And as a blackbird — Listen to me dragon, do not bite down, listen to my plan — and like a blackbird I did not eat larvae, for I had not forgotten the sorrow over my previous body. And as a blackbird I flew, and I liked flying, but I was eaten by a wild-cat and became a cat, *Felis silvestris*.

Seeing the body of the blackbird rot added more weight to my mountain of sorrows. I could not take it anymore. How many deaths can someone bear? I did not want to keep leaving bodies behind. So I decided to remain a cat, not to transform myself again. I did not want to eat or be eaten again. I went into the forest and I ran and I ran and I ran until I was safe, cursing this world, cursing my own body, which, with its hunger, would force me to add more sorrows to the list. As a cat, I was suffering, fighting against the impulses of my breed.

There are many bodies that I do not remember, or only remember the smell of jaws closing around me or a bullet reaching me. I have been so many, dragon. Some of my bodies died of old age. Others did not have any time. I remember being in a cage, a newborn rabbit, *Oryctolagus cuniculus*. My siblings and I were only a few hours old and my mother, terrified but the presence of humans around the cage, began to rip off our legs and eat them. And it was —I remember this well, dragon, and it is important that you listen to me. Listen to me! Do not close your mouth yet!— and it was terrible, yet pleasant to be my mother after having been born from her, to return to her flesh once she had eaten me. I remember that break, sailing in a circle for a moment, having time to breathe in that straight line to a future animal. The only time I was eaten for love.

Sometimes I sleep all day, or I hibernate in a cave, or I stand motionless in abyssal waters and have flashes of the past: many of the bodies I left are rotting, my flesh in another's mouth, the screams in the slaughterhouse, my body trampled by the rest of the herd, human hands breaking my neck in one single motion, my crab shell cracking as it hits the rocks as a seagull, *Laurus*, threw me down from above.

On one occasion, being a squirrel, *Sciurus vulgaris*, a kestrel, *Falco tinnunculus*, caught me in its claws and rose with me dangling, and it was so beautiful, dragon, that de-

spite having already lived it, for I had already been a blackbird, it was so beautiful —dragon, do not close your mouth yet, I have yet to finish— to see the world from so high, just before dying, that I wished to remain in my body. I bit into the claws of the kestrel, which opened and, to my surprise, instead of falling, I flew. I had become a flying squirrel. I was grateful for the blackbird that I had been, for every animal that I had been had left a mark on me.

I hear your roar, dragon, and your belly begging for my flesh, but listen to me, listen to my plan: Sharing the suffering is the promise of revelation. Sharing suffering is the promise of conversion. I can be a squirrel and fly; I can be a cat and eat grass. I can be a mother and a killer, a cub and the mother's flesh. I am a druid.

I am a Druid and I will live even if you close your jaws, dragon, even if your gastric juices dissolve my body. And my plan will continue: the end of death at the hands of others, that those who kill others disappear from the face of the earth. A new order, an earth only inhabited by herbivores, frugivores, decomposers, scavengers eating what the world offers them without using the force of domination.

And now close your jaws, dragon. I am ready. When you swallow me, I will be you and you will be me.







ENDNOTES

01

Paul B. Preciado wrote a beautiful article, Learning from the virus, that deepens on this idea. It's been published in several sites and languages like ArtForum (English), or El Pais (Spanish).

<https://www.artforum.com/print/202005/paul-b-preciado-82823?fbclid=IwAR29p9b-II84g7f0X3BM3Lg84U6rgpfmbqZyIC7EafYEjTaprraUwWdBFIs4>, https://elpais.com/elpais/2020/03/27/opinion/1585316952_026489.html

02

El Polvo Dragón is very hard to translate into English. "Polvo" means "dust" but the phrasal verb "echar un polvo" can also mean "to fuck" or "to shag". So El Polvo Dragón could mean "The Dragon Dust" but also "The Dragon Fuck" or "The Dragon Shag". Too difficult to translate, so I kept it in Spanish.

03

Thinking of Donna Haraway and how she often writes "from the belly of the monster", as in *The Promises of Monsters: A Regenerative Politics for Inappropriate/d Others*.

04

Dungeons and Dragons: it's one of the most popular fantasy tabletop RPGs of all times. It was originally designed by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson in 1974.

05

"Identity can often be vital in dealing with a situation of oppression, but it would be a mistake to use it to avoid dealing with complexity. Life cannot be saturated with identity". Judith Butler in conversation with Beatriz Preciado, by Ursula Del Aguila (Têtu n°138, 11/2008)

06

This definition of trope is taken from tvtropes.org <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/Tropes>

07

This definition of Class and the twelve archetypes are taken from the D&D Player's Handbook 5th Edition.

08

The World Building in *Draconis Lacrimae* is inspired in Microscope, a role-playing game designed by Ben Robbins and published by Lame Mage Productions. We totally recommend it.

09

<https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/OurDragonsAreDifferent>

10

Francesca Ferrando on the term "Multiverse", published in the Posthuman Glossary, by Rosi Braidoti and Maria Hlavajova.

11

In “RPG theorizing by designers and players”, the author Evan Torner explains how Mark Kuhner coined the term Threefold Model, articulating three dimensions of play styles: Gameism (playing to win by overcoming challenges), dramatism (playing to tell and experience stories) and simulationism (playing to model a coherent world following its internal logic). “RPG theorizing by designers and players” is an essay within the publication “Role-Playing Game Studies. A transmedia approach”, ed. By Jose P. Zagal and Sebastian Deterding (2018, Taylor & Francis).

12

In “Players and Their Characters in Role-Playing Games”, Sarah Lynne Bowman defines nine types of Player-Characters: the Doppelganger Self; the Devoid Self; Augmented Self; Fragmented Self; the Repressed Self; Idealized Self; Oppositional Self; Experimental Self; and Taboo Self. The whole article “Players and Their Characters in Role-Playing Games” is included in “Role-Playing Game Studies. A transmedia approach”, ed. By Jose P. Zagal and Sebastian Deterding (2018, Taylor & Francis).

13

Bleed is the name given to the to the crossover between player and character. It happens in both ways: your life experience bleeds in the game and what happens in the game bleeds out to your real life. Elvia Wilk wrote about bleeding, role-playing and

unrecognition on a great article, “Ask Before you Bite” (2019).
<https://www.e-flux.com/journal/103/292645/ask-before-you-bite/>

14

Donna Haraway, When Species Meet, University of Minnesota Press, 2008, pp. 4–5

15

The free-play of a Scene is also inspired in Microscope (RPG designed by Ben Robbins, ed. Lame Mage Productions, 2011)

16

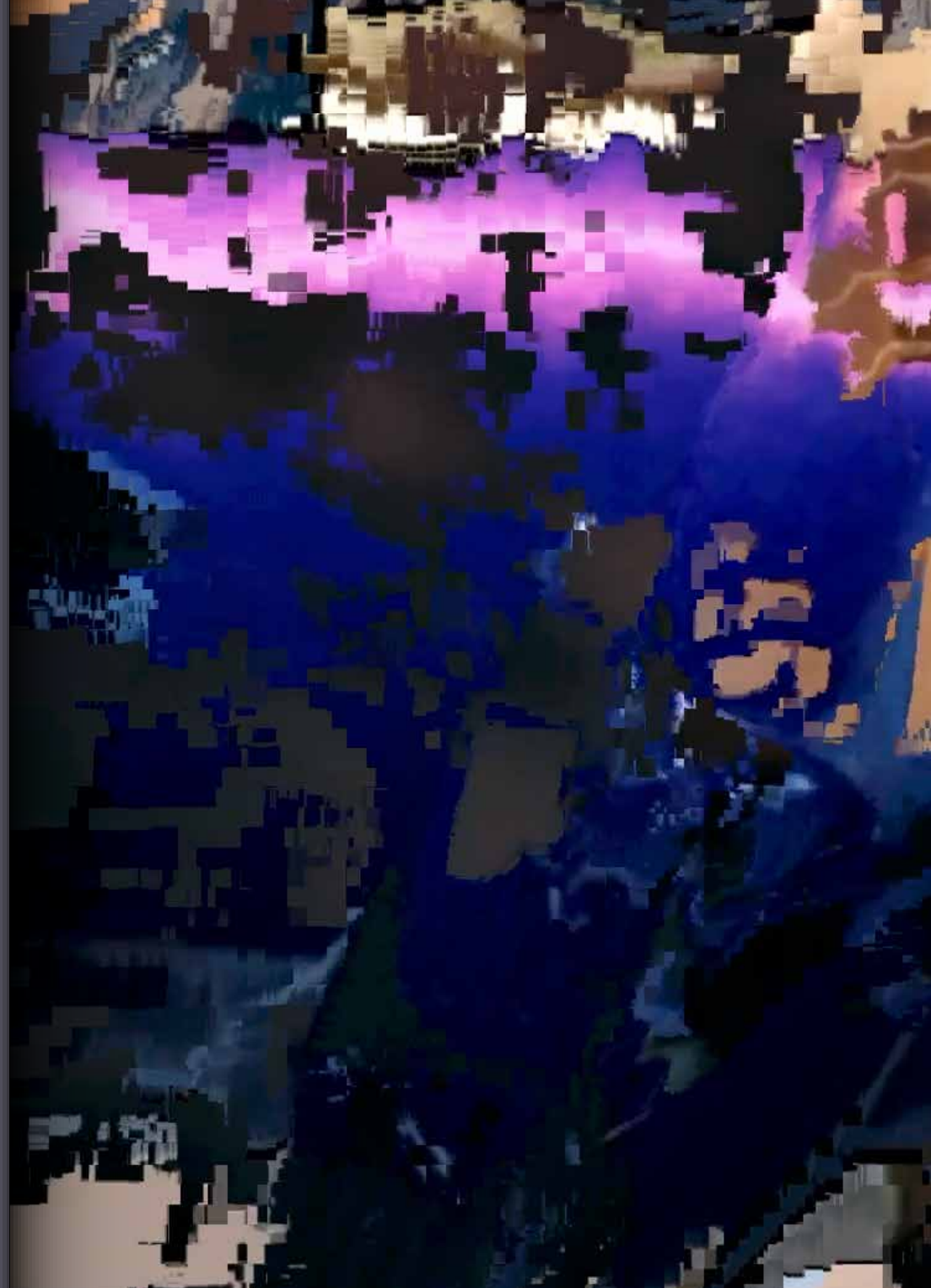
In his book *Nous*, philosopher Tristan Garcia replaces Hobbes’ famous quote “the war of all against all” with “the war of us against us” (*Nous*, Grasset, 2016)

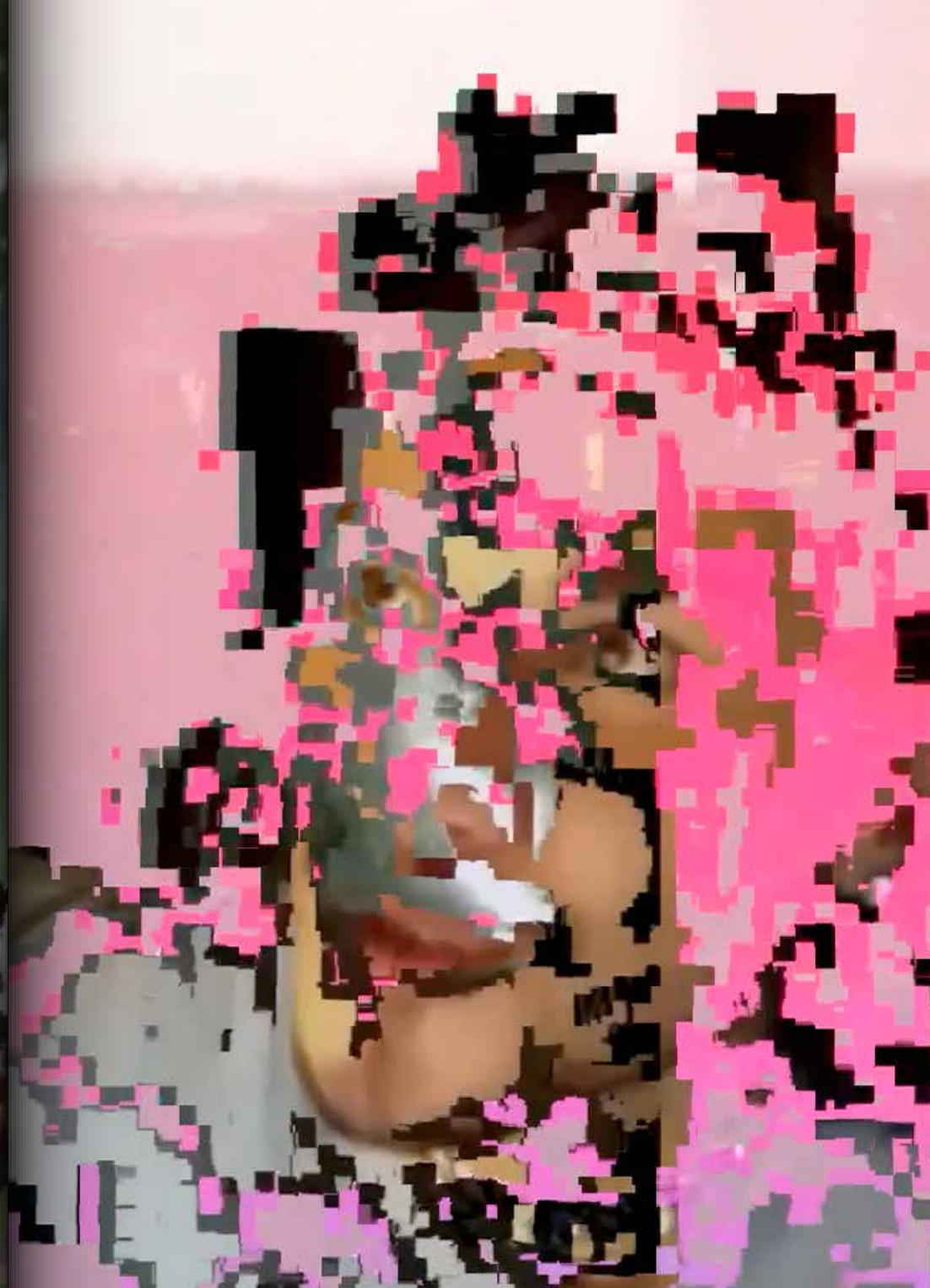
17

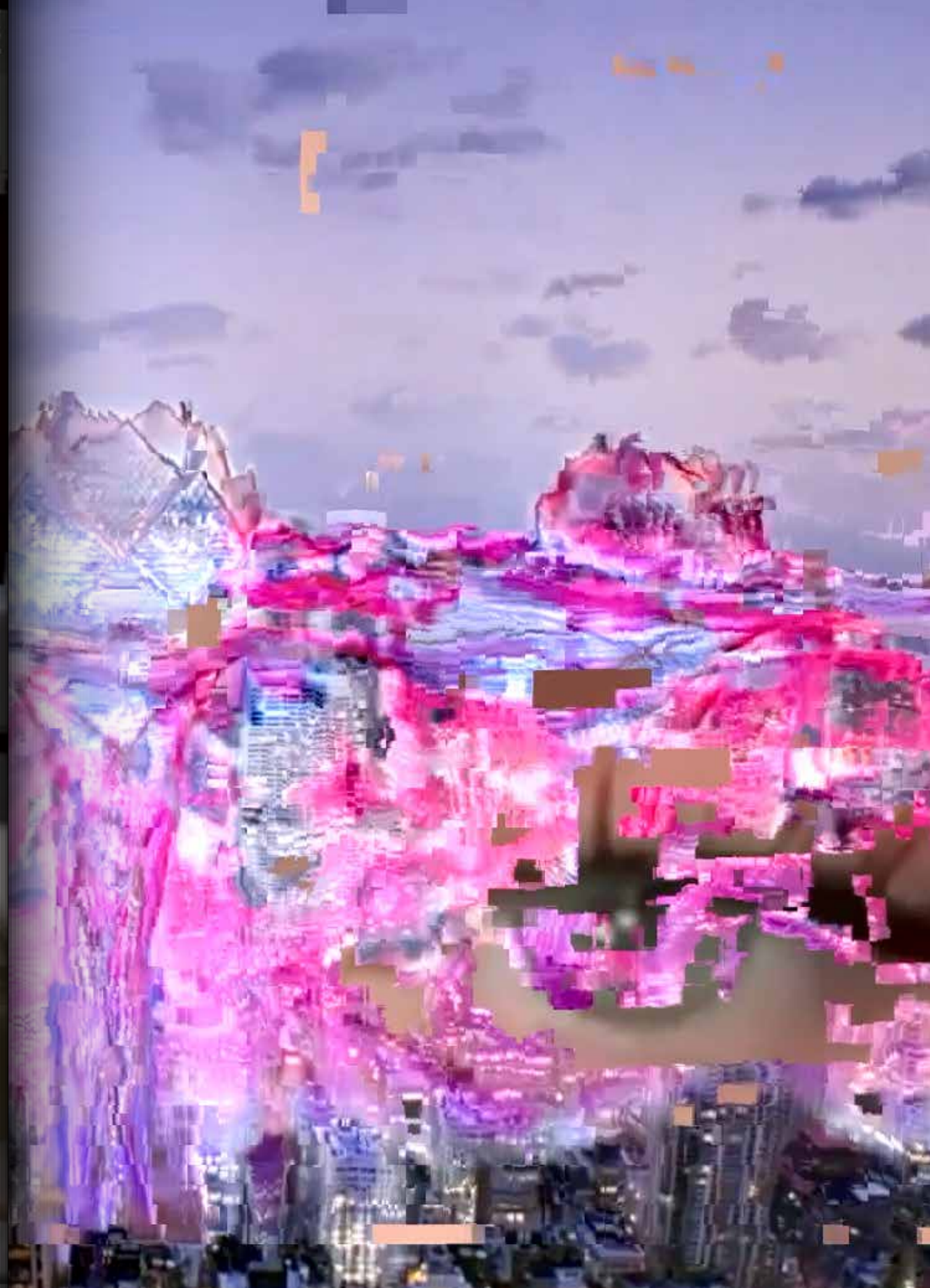
The other part (the Center or the Objector who didn’t say *That didn’t happen* in first place) can say *That didn’t happen* as well, in which case the player’s statement is completely dismissed.

18

The other part can say *Yes, it happened*. By doing so, the statement becomes the object of a new conflict between Center and Objector. From then on, the conflicts develops by using the four Conflict Phrases.









DRACONIS
LACRIMÆ

edited by
Pablo Esbert
Lilienfeld
& Federico
Vladimir Strate
Pezdiric

designed by
P.G. Howlin'

produced by
Federico Vladimir
Strate Pezdiric

1st edition
100 copies

Brussels
June 2021

