



SONGS OF TERRA

A Style Guide

Compiled by Isaac Albert Frankel

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SONGS OF TERRA

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE	4
BACKGROUND	6
CREATION MYTH	7
GODS AND GODDESSES	9
THE TREE	10
EIA	11
THE MOTHER.....	11
MALATHIER.....	12
IMMORTALS	13
THE WORLD OF TERRA	14
THE SHARD	16
SHARDSTONE	16
TITANS.....	17
CHELONIA, THE TURTLE-GOD.....	18
MAGIC	19
DARK MAGIC	20
THE HISTORY OF TERRA	21
MYTHIC AGES	22
WANDERING YEARS.....	22
FIRST AGE.....	23
SECOND AGE	23
THIRD AGE	24
FOURTH AGE.....	24
SOCIETY	25
SCIENCE & RELIGION	26

SONGS OF TERRA

LANGUAGES.....	27
WORKING IN TERRA	28
WHEN?	29
ADDITIVE CREATION	31
DESIGN PILLARS.....	32
<i>Magical Realism.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Existentialism.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Sexuality.....</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Abrahamic Motifs.....</i>	<i>34</i>
CREATURE DESIGN.....	35
PRINCIPLES & VALUES	36
<i>Racial Inclusion.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Gender Inclusion/Sexual Orientations.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Feminism.....</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Sex Positivity.....</i>	<i>38</i>
<i>Spirituality</i>	<i>39</i>
<i>Character Appearances.....</i>	<i>39</i>
RECOMMENDED MEDIA	40

SONGS OF TERRA

How to Use This Guide

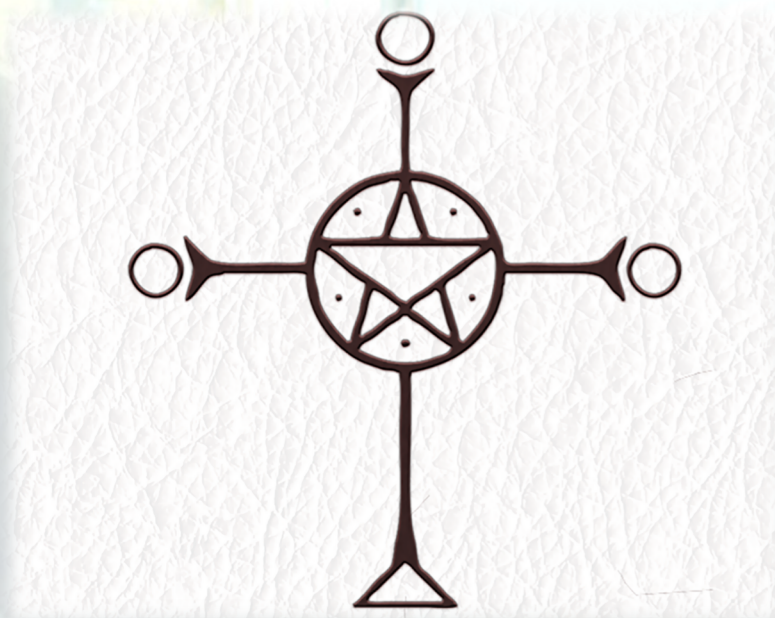
Included in this document are details about the development of Terra, its world, and guides to making your own work in this universe. Although the world of Terra is almost limitless, an attempt has been made to include only the most crucial details to give a sense of what factors play a role in shaping the people, places, and things that occupy Terra.

As you read through this style guide, consider how your creations will fit alongside — and be influenced by — the many details contained herein. Not everything will be relevant to the work you're producing, so be sure to use the table of contents to find the sections you need.

Terra's foundations are rooted heavily in medieval fantasy, but it also draws much inspiration from North American and United States history. Because the United States is a country of many cultures, from all over the world, there is room for you to infuse your cultural identity and worldview into the story of Terra.

— *Isaac Albert Frankel*

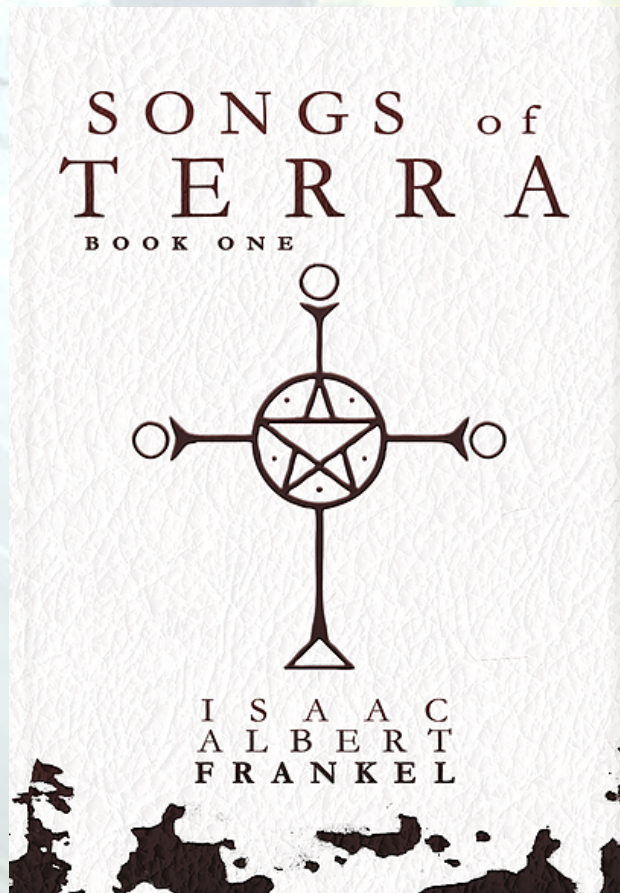
SONGS OF TERRA



FOR KING AND CARTOGRAPHY

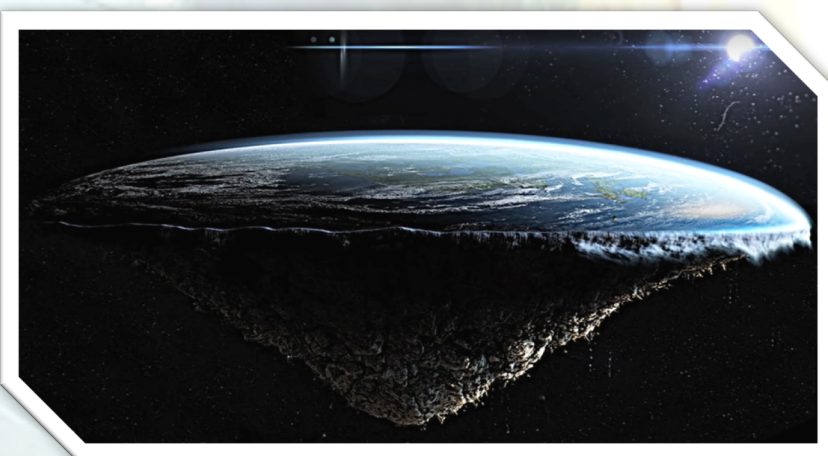
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Background



Songs of Terra: Book One is a dark fantasy novel about a young girl who longs for freedom from her family estate. When a letter arrives, claiming her life to be a lie, she must leave the only home she has ever known for the larger world to uncover the truth. But in the shadows, an expedition into the Frozen Wastes to investigate the return of an ancient entity. While the girl finds herself stumbling upon the prelude to civil turmoil, forces beyond her control will steer her life to the center of a prophecy involving the fate of the world.

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Creation Myth

*Before all that is there was a Void of Chaos.
From Chaos sprang forth Time, which said
unto Chaos, To thee I bring Change.
— The Histories, Book of Lights*

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In the beginning the entire universe exploded from a singularity known as the Seed. This outward expansion gave birth to the Great Tree, (think of the universe not as a bubble, but as a tree with roots and branches growing in every direction). The first star to form in this universe was Eia, the First Fruit of the Tree. He separated the physical world from the Void. The physical world (the Thier) became Terra, and the underside of Terra became the Nether, exposed to the Void (the gods see Terra as flat, like the image on the previous page, but the denizens of Terra interact with their world as a planet). Eia sculpted Terra and filled it with life. He created the Immortals first — ageless goddesses — who helped him care for the land before they requested Eia make a partner race for them. When Man was created, they grew jealous of the Immortals' ability to create life and went to war with them. As punishment, Eia condemned Man to partner with the Immortals to bear life, and stripped those Immortals who took up arms of their immortality—thus men and women came to be. Eia then walked off Terra and became the sun.



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Gods and Goddesses

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The Tree



If there can be said to be an analog to God in the world of Terra, it is the Tree. The Tree, however, is not a conscious being. It is sometimes referred to as the Dreaming Tree, for the way in which it passively creates all of reality simply by existing. The Tree is synonymous with the universe — all space, time, matter, and energy. Everything is a part of the Great Tree.

From the Body of the Seed sprang Hrolgar, the Great Tree, whose Roots and Branches went everywhere and became every thing, and the Tree dreamed.

— *The Histories, The Book of Lights*

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Eia

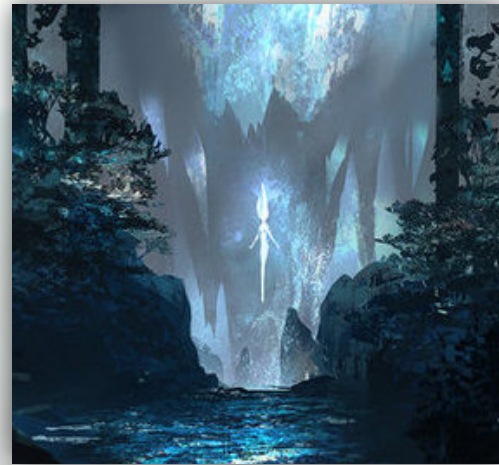


As Hrolgar dreamed, the First Fruit was born from Its limbs, who was Eia; Light of the World; Most Beautiful and Radiant.

— *The Histories, The Book of Lights*

Both the first self-aware god born in the universe and the first star (many others were born after), Eia separated the Thier (the physical world) from the Void and created the world of Terra. In tribute of the Great Tree, he created the Mother Child to bring forth beings to live in Terra.

The Mother



Life reached up out of the Darkness, like hands reaching towards the many Lights, and Eia saw this, and to protect that Life Eia stripped bark from the Tree, and brought to it clay from the rivers, and bottled the lightning and stilled the flame, and created the Mother Child.

— *The Histories, The Book of Lights*

The Mother was the first corporeal form, Mother of all conscious life, synonymous with nature itself.

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Malathier



The first water that fell from the land found form in the Void as Malathier, where it dwelt in the Nether beneath the world, steeped in the Chaos of the Void.

— *The Histories*, The Book of Lights

When Eia carved the rivers, the water that fell off the surface of Terra allowed the chaotic essence of the Void to find form. This force became Malathier, the Dark God, through whom the Void continually attempts to take back the Thier. Malathier has only entered the physical world once in corporeal form, but was pushed back by Eia's children. Now he uses more subversive methods to control the Their — envious of the Mother's life, he creates corrupted, tortured creatures of his own to send against Eia's creation. The Ages of Terra are reckoned by the threats Malathier has used to assault the world.

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Immortals



The Immortals were the firstborn children of the Mother and Eia. Beautiful female goddesses, they could procreate on their own, and lived in blissful harmony with nature, not knowing old age. After a time, they requested that Eia make for them another race, so they would not walk Terra alone. This race was Man.

The childhood days of the Immortals were glorious and good in the Garden of the Dreaming Tree; in the Time of Lights, with Eia, Most Luminescent; and Malathier was seen not.

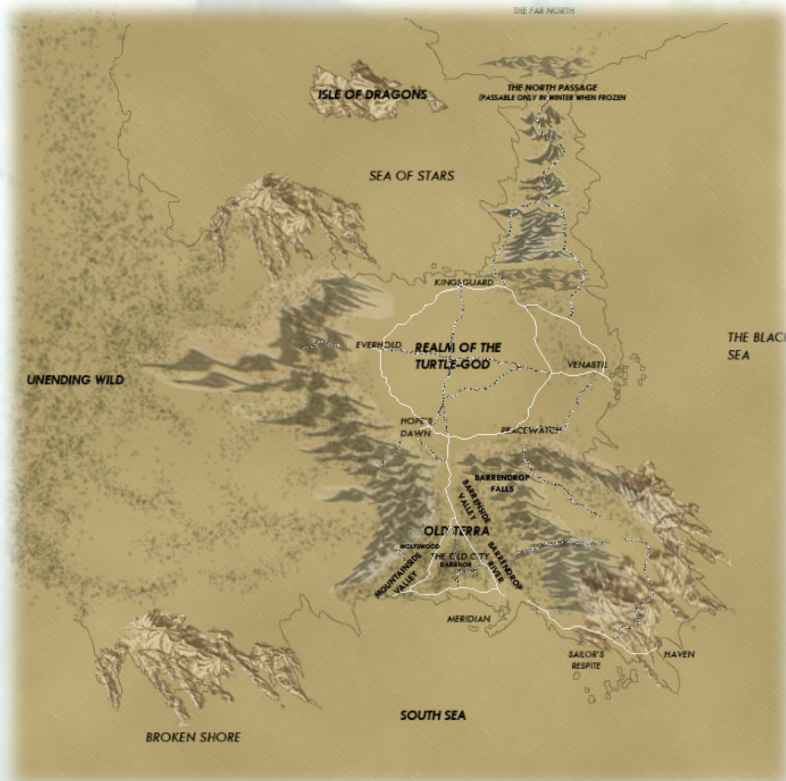
— *The Histories, The Book of Lights*

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The World of Terra

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**This is an older map that will be replaced soon, but still gives a sense of the general geography.*

Though the denizens of Terra hold to supernatural beliefs and the gods see the universe from a more metaphysical perspective, behind the scenes there is a lot of science at play. The planet Terra is smaller than Earth, and has been in an ice age long enough for the plants and animals to adapt to the extreme cold. In the fall, the animals' hides and musculature thicken to prepare for the harshness of winter. In this way, most creatures have two appearances depending on the season, and go through a period of change before the onset of winter where they consume more and build fat/bone/muscle density painfully fast.



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The Shard



The moon of Terra is not actually a planetoid, but a disc-shaped object (think Captain America's shield). It is a timeless relic, a piece of the Seed that birthed the Great Tree, unearthed in the Nether and placed in the sky by Malathier. It sits stationary at the border between Terra's atmosphere and the void of space. It hovers directly above the ruined Holy City of Harvenor, where it has remained for 700 years since it appeared in the sky. Every day the sun is eclipsed by the Shard — the noon meal is traditionally held indoors for the duration of this darkness, and animals are known to behave oddly during this time. The Shard was also where Malathier's Titans incubated, before they became too large and fell to Terra during the Second Age.

Shardstone



When the Shard appeared in the sky, fragments of Shardstone were scattered across the land. This material — pure primordial Order from the beginning of Time — has unique properties that make it highly sought after. Using a unique transmutation process, Shardstone can be infused with the essence of almost any other substance, though it is incredibly difficult and most do not possess the proper knowledge to do so. Shardstone is used in many monolithic constructs that otherwise would not be able to maintain their physical structure.

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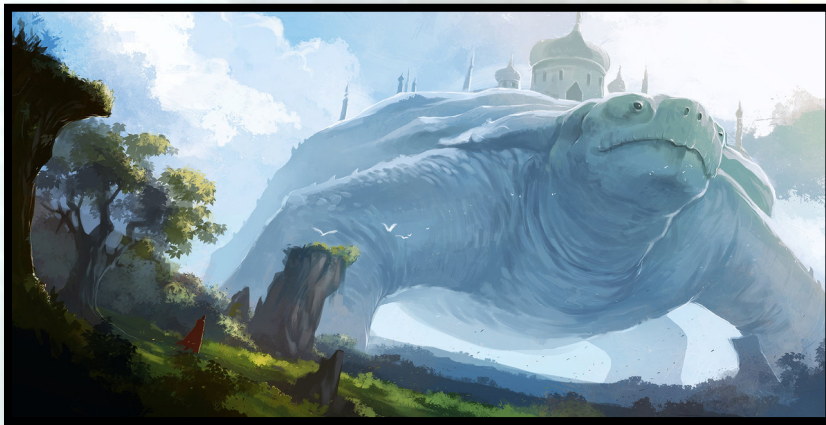
Titans



Malathier's second attempt to influence the Thier after his banishment, the Titans were incubated on the Shard, leeching the creation magic of the Seed to birth massive forms. Their bodies became infused with Shardstone, and when they were too large to remain on the Shard, they fell to Terra and wreaked havoc. The Titans proved near impossible to kill. Heroes arose during this time to hunt the Titans — many powerful houses were born after mining resources from the gigantic corpses, many of which still lay where they fell.

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Chelonia, the Turtle-God



A mountain moved in the air above her. Her eyes bolted open. She gasped and stood. What seemed like moss-covered rock and bone — massive amounts of white bone — hovered above them. A great face, with two erect nostrils sitting on the tip of a large, pointed head, gazed down at them. Margaret gazed back, unsure whether to flee. Steadman was awake, and reached a hand over to steady her. “The Turtle-God!” The great creature, big as a mountain, kept staring at them. There was no expression upon its stony face, only dumb animal curiosity. After a moment, it grew tired of examining the insects at its feet, and walked over them, cold drops of water falling from its underside, dampening their clothes and camp.
— *Songs of Terra: Book I*

The Fields of the Turtle-God were so named for the last and largest of the Titans to fall from the Shard. It spent so long on its surface that when it fell it took a large part of the Shard with it as its shell. Because it had so much time to infuse with the Creation Magic from the Shard, its dark instincts were sated, and it became a peaceful denizen of Terra. Although it consumes massive amounts of water and poses problems for travellers (a single footprint alone can reroute an entire road), it is considered a blessing just to see the Turtle-God.

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Magic



Magic functions differently in Terra than in most fantasy worlds: in this world, “magic” is the power that gave birth to the entire universe — the Great Tree. It is an energy of pure creation and prophetic vision. Magic caused Eia to be born from the Tree, and He used magic to create Terra and the Mother. The Immortals used magic to understand the order of nature and the universe, and to give birth. When Eia punished the Immortals for taking up arms against Man, he stripped them of that magic, leaving only a lingering amount — enough to bear life when they partnered with Man. In the present day, magic is rarely felt except in sex and childbearing, and cannot be wielded in the form of “spells” — no casting lightning bolts in Terra. It sometimes touches special individuals by allowing them to tap into the energy of the Tree, providing visions/prophetic hallucinations. However, there are still artifacts that provide unique properties to the user. Instead of being powered by magic, these items are usually biological relics, powered by the special functions of certain creatures. For example, the organ of a certain fish, breathed into, provides a more primitive form of compressed air for diving. Science fills the place of magic when it comes to the physical world of Terra.



Dark Magic

More powerful than Creation Magic, the magic of Malathier and the Chaotic Void is able to affect the physical world directly. Malathier has used it throughout time to open portals to the Nether, spread disease, corrupt the flesh of his mortal followers, and give birth to the Titans. Malathier is constantly working in the Nether to find some way of corrupting the Thier, endlessly building demon after demon in mockery of Eia's Children. Because of his chaotic nature, Malathier's creations (Corruptions) are always born in twisted, agonized forms, living torturous lives. The presence of Dark Magic has been known to distort reality and provide hallucinatory nightmare visions.

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The History of Terra

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Mythic Ages **Length: millions of years**



The mythological creation of the world.

Wandering Years **Length: thousands of years**



Oral stories from before recorded history, when man fractured into the many races.

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First Age
Length: 112 years
Age of Wolves & Demons



Marked by the founding of the first human city of Daranor and the war against Malathier's Wolves. Tribal societies at war with werewolf/vampire-like creatures.

Second Age
Length: 165 years
Age of Titans & Heroes



Marked by the creation of the Holy City, and Malathier's attempt to control the physical world with his Titans. Many of the Great Houses were born from the exploits of the Titan slayers.

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Third Age
Length: 445 years
Present Day
Age of Man



Marked by civil war (the Sovereignty War) and the foundation of the United Territories of Terra. Malathier's efforts to subvert the physical world are suspiciously absent.

Fourth Age
Prophesied to be a time of great destruction.

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Society



There are many different societies within Terra. While each city-state has its own culture, on the macro level most of the United Territories are comparable to Earth's Western civilization, with influences and inspiration drawn from the many world cultures that have made their way to the United States over time. Historically speaking there is not a direct analog time period in our own history. The society of Terran nobility is decidedly Victorian, but the technology does not reflect all innovations made during the Industrial Revolution — there are many anachronistic inventions and conventions pulled from the Middle Ages. The average citizen of Terra is much more tolerant than nobility, reflecting many of our modern beliefs and allowances, though they have less access to technology. For example, many of the fellaheen (peasants) of Terra are accepting of all sexual orientations, but do not have access to simple technology such as glasses or clocks. Terra is a large world, with room for creators to add elements from their own culture into the mix.

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Science & Religion

The science and religion of Terra saw radical changes throughout the three Ages. In the First Age, mankind held to more shamanistic/animistic beliefs. By the Second Age, a large-scale religion was well established in the Holy City of Harvenor, functioning as the prime authority over Terran society, hand-in-hand with the royal government. At the same time, a more rationalistic/scientific organization was being established in the mountains of Terra — the Cartography — organized around the principals of awareness and open inquiry. When the Titans destroyed the Holy City of Harvenor early in the Second Age, many of its spiritual thinkers/teachers were given a home at the Cartography, giving rise to a scientific organization that spends equal time researching the material world and the spiritual. By the present day in the Third Age, science and religion are one and the same.

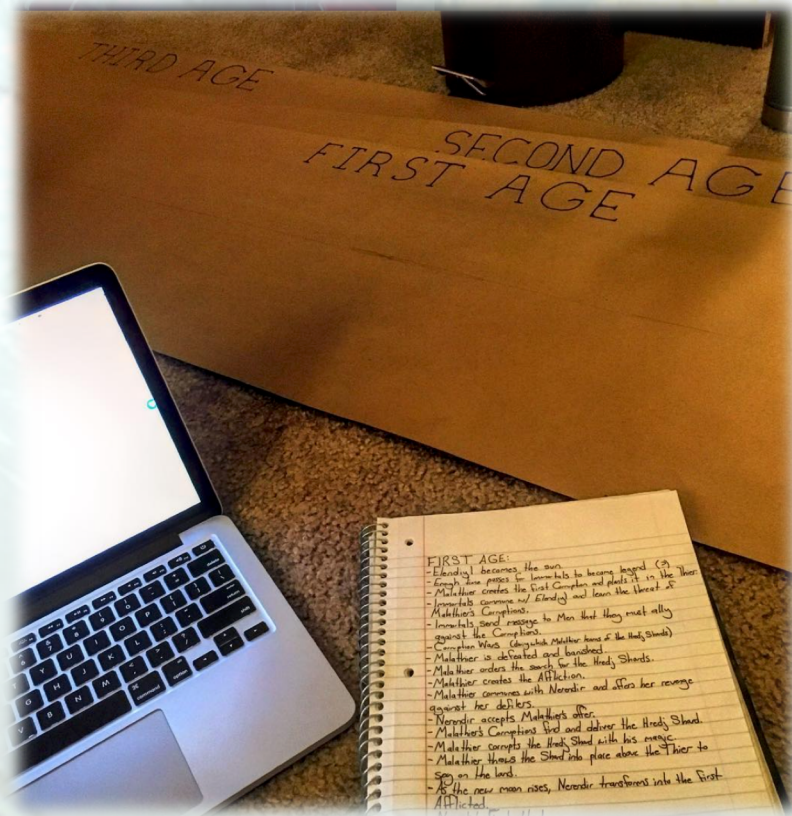
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Languages

Because of Terra's analogs to early North American colonial history, the primary languages spoken in Terra are Modern English (*Common*), Proper English (*Highspeak*), French (*Vastillean*), Spanish (*Everspeak*), and Latin (*Old Tongue*). This similarity with our world adds another element of familiarity to Terra.

The Old Tongue was primarily developed and spoken during the Wandering Years, and evolved over time into the three languages of Terra.

The non-human denizens of Terra will speak their own conlangs (constructed languages), that have yet to be developed.



Working in Terra

FIRST AGE:

- Enderbol becomes the sun.
- Gorgi and pines for Immortals to become legend. (3)
- Maltheer creates the First Corruption and plants it in the West.
- Immortals corrupts and Enderbol and learn the secret of Maltheer's Corruption.
- Immortals stand against to Men that they must ally against the Corruption.
- Corruption Virus (Angela Maltheer born of the Holy Shards)
- Maltheer is abducted and kidnapped.
- Maltheer orders the search for the Holy Shards.
- Maltheer creates the Affliction.
- Maltheer communes with Noradre and offers her revenge against her debtors.
- Noradre accepts Maltheer's offer.
- Maltheer's Corruption Virus and deliver the Holy Shards.
- Maltheer corrupts the Holy Shards with his virus.
- Maltheer throws the Shards into place above the Fiber to say on the land.
- As the new moon rises, Noradre transforms into the First Afflicted.

SONGS OF TERRA

When?

Finding the proper time period to set your story is an important part of the process. What mood do you want to evoke?

Mythic Ages

Spiritual mythology. Deep sense of religious awe. Closeness to primordial Time.

A good place for surreal works of artistic expression.

Wandering Years

Times of moral learning, when man was spiritually and literally lost for thousands of years, in many different landscapes. The basis for many of Terra's myths.

A good place for fables. For stories about moral lessons, wrapped in an engaging and well-written narrative.

First Age

Times of fear. Of the monster in the night. Also an age of great connectivity to nature and hope.

A good place for horror and mystery, encountering things previously not known to exist in the world. For stories about conquering fear.

Second Age

Times of epics. Of small men rising up and becoming heroes, and acquiring great wealth. Ideal for video game characters. Also a time of mass destruction, when the wealthy built on top of those who suffered.

A good place for stories of overcoming the odds. For stories about deeds.

Third Age

A time of tension. Of mistrust for the apparent peace. When people try to enjoy the leisure, but feel some anxiety of what must surely be coming.

A good place for stories commenting on modern society in any way—for speaking directly to the reader about the world they live in. For stories about characters.

Fourth Age

Apocalyptic, existential horror.

A good place for people who want to make stuff like the Animatrix, or The Road. For stories about suffering and ending.

Fifth Age

The next generation. Legacy retrospective.

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Visual Language



Terra's visual aesthetic is as wide and varied as the locations it contains. However, artists working in Terra should favor muted, earthy colors, with brighter tones added for accent only if necessary. Images from Terra should feel familiar and *real* — almost *mundane*, as if they were scenes from Earth — with minor elements added in subtle ways to remind the viewer that it is still a fantasy world. When in doubt, always aim for minimalism, rather than over-designing. Terra is a place that contains classical artwork similar to Earth's, so any influence from Renaissance paintings and sculpture will add the right flare to your artwork. If you're unsure of how best to go about this, reference the Design Pillars (below), and find classical artwork with these themes to inspire your own.

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When contributing to the world of Terra — unless your work is known for its heavy stylization — it is advised that you take an *additive*, rather than an *alterative*, approach to creation. This means your work should build on what came before, rather than changing known details to suit your needs. With your given subject, find details that haven't been determined and add your mark there — “constraint inspires creativity.”

Additive Creation

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Design Pillars

If at any point you become unsure whether your work fits into the world of Terra, you can always check it against the following design pillars. If you can mark off at least two of them, your work should fit in with no problems.

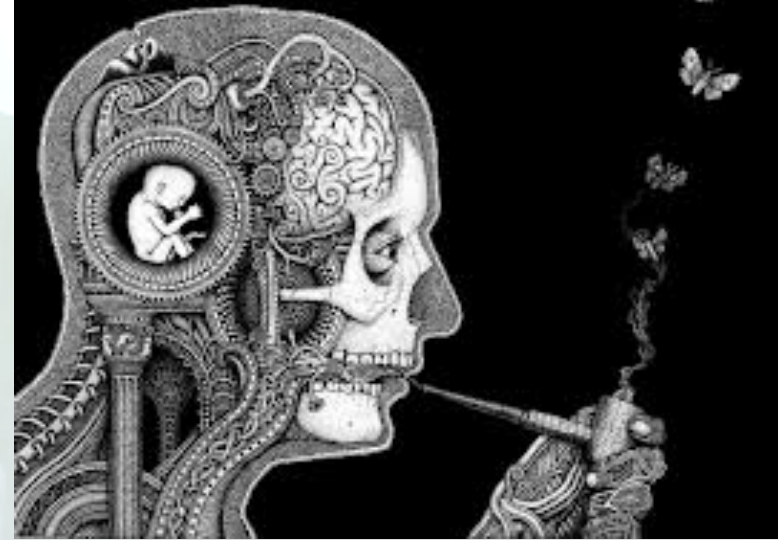
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Magical Realism



The presence of magical undertones in an otherwise real world. The feeling of the fantastical in the everyday. Hard to define, but often plays with geometry and colors that verge on the impossible. Instills a scene that *could* exist in the real world with the feeling that something is a little off.

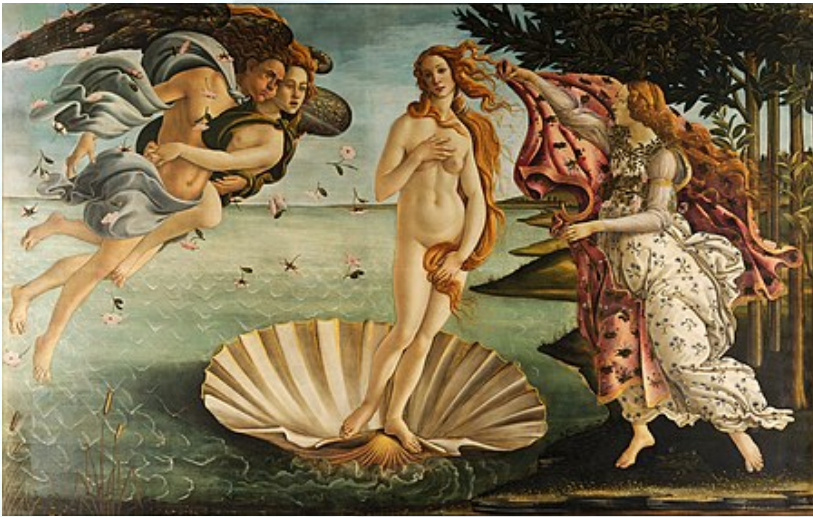
Existentialism



Deep contemplation on the nature of existence. The reduction of reality to its simplest components. Hallucinations and dreams are often a great narrative framework for exploring this topic.

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Sexuality



The presence of sexual/sensual undertones. Note that this does not mean 'pornographic'. Everyone has a different relationship with the subject, and there's room for your own interpretation. The creation myth of Terra includes a story on the origin of sex, so feel free to play with this.

"Everything in the world is about sex except sex."

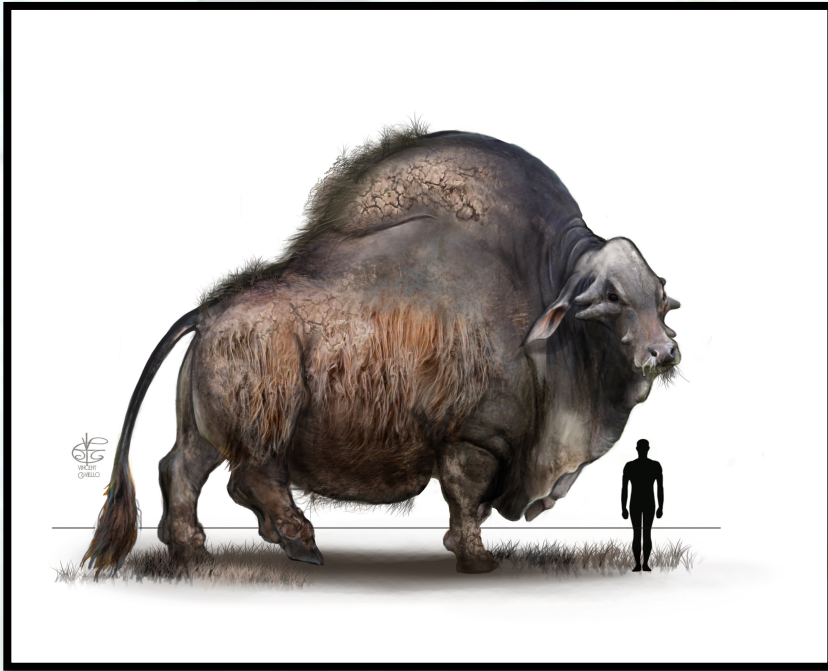
– Oscar Wilde

Abrahamic Motifs



Structural similarities between the mythology of Terra and Christian beliefs. Biblical/Abrahamic motifs. Used to evoke the same sense of deep history and awe.

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Creature Design

The creatures of Terra should feel like they wouldn't look out of place on Earth, walking alongside elephants, giraffes, and buffalos. Terra should feel like an alternate Earth — not more fantastical (like Middle-Earth), but with the same feel one gets walking around and looking at our own world — only with familiar forms mixed around in unfamiliar ways.

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Principles & Values

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Racial Inclusion

'We haven't judged others by the color of their skin since the founding of Daranor. Is such a thing still practiced in the noble families? You haven't once mentioned the color of my skin and I haven't brought up yours.'

— *Songs of Terra: Book I*

In the world of Terra, tribalism and racial inequalities were present in the Wandering Years, until the beginning of recorded history. When the first human city of Daranor was founded, its banners called for equality and non-discrimination, and it was declared a city of tolerance, a home for all of mankind. Since then, racial identities have vanished. Various skin colors and body structures are present in the people of Terra, but are not a topic of common discourse. Historically, the majority of Terra's denizens were brown or black skinned. White-skinned races arrived in Terra from across the Black Sea and quickly intermingled with the native population.

Gender Inclusion/Sexual Orientations

All gender identities present in our world are present in Terra, affected only by the presence of modern technology. For example, transgender Terrans exist, but gender reassignment surgery is not medically possible. The average citizen of Terra is accepting of — and perhaps indifferent to — homosexuality, though their primary concern is conception and childbearing (remember, having children is considered by most Terrans as close as they'll ever come to the Creation Magic of the Tree). Noble families have held on to ancient traditions longer and may exhibit more prejudice, but once again, this should never be presented as an endorsement of such views.

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Feminism

Although Terran society is decidedly patriarchal, this should not be seen as an endorsement of such values. Terran noblewomen are brought up in very oppressive circumstances, and sexual harassment is common. Any representation of these occurrences should always be presented with the intention of showing the misery that they produce. The female perspective must always be present in some fashion — especially considering that in the mythology of Terra, women (Immortals) were created before men.

Sex Positivity

“Sex is a doorway to something powerful and mystical, but movies usually depict it in a completely flat way.”

– David Lynch

Sex and childbearing are the closest that men and women can come to the Creation Magic from the early universe, and as such it is celebrated as a beautiful and elevating thing.

SONGS OF TERRA

Spirituality

Spirituality in Terra is reflective of many “New Age” ideas, and uses the concept of the Tree as synonymous with God, Consciousness, and the Universe. There is room for the spiritual beliefs of all collaborators within the world of Terra, as long as the philosophies are adapted and filtered through Terra’s creation myth. Remember that as a secondary world, half the fun is in asking ‘what if’...

Character Appearances

People should look like real people, not like supermodels. Many 80s movies are a good reference.

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Recommended Media

2001: A Space Odyssey
Animal Man (Jeff Lemire)
Annihilation
Avatar: The Last Airbender
Blue Velvet
The Dark Crystal
Dune (books)
Exodus: Gods and Kings
The Fountain
Game of Thrones (show)
The Lord of the Rings (film trilogy)
The Neverending Story
Noah
Pan's Labyrinth
Skyrim
Swamp Thing (Alan Moore)
The Thing
Voyage of Time