

EXAMPLE PACKET FOR WORLDBUILDING COMPETITION

This packet offers an example of each of the components of the submission packet.

NOTE: This example world does NOT use the topic of A.I. Instead, it uses teleportation as the technology of the future. We did this so that we weren't pulling any A.I. ideas off the table for you to use. **Your submission should imagine a future that includes A.I.**

Format your submission using the following:

- Times New Roman font, size 12
- Double spaced
- 1 inch margins
- Place page numbers at the bottom of the page
- Place title of submission in header and on the first page of each section

Do NOT put any of your names on the submission packet (they are being judged anonymously).

When you submit your materials, put them all in one document in the following order. Start each new section on a new page.

1. Reflection
2. World Description
3. Annotated Bibliography
4. Story Hooks

Save the document as a PDF or Word doc. Name the file with the title of your world or submission (come up with a unique name). This will help us differentiate submissions.

Examples: **eFluvialChoice.pdf** or **LandOfOz.docx**

For full guidelines and details, visit:

<https://engl.iastate.edu/2023/12/04/worldbuilding-competition/>

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REFLECTION: eFluvial Choice

What We Did:

We envisioned a future transformed by the discovery and spread of teleportation technology. Our approach to writing the world description was to imagine ourselves as historians placed sometime in the early 2400s, looking back at teleportation's impacts. We then worked out the main consequences of this process of technological change. In the political realm: global uprisings brought on by economic crisis, followed by a transformation of government's role in society. In the Cultural, Religious, and Intellectual realm: a controversy over the nature of the soul leading to the rise of a new religion, and new ethical dilemmas created by the possibility of avoiding personal death. In the economic and environmental realm: a world economy re-oriented around the production of two new materials that had serious environmental impacts, with a stark difference between Global North and Global South.

How We Did It:

We began by figuring out how our version of teleportation would work. We read Niven's essay to get ideas, and then met to decide what our own technology would look like. A technology that depended on the internet and new raw materials struck us as providing the best set of possible game scenarios. As a group we brainstormed some ideas for each of the three types of impact. Then we split up, assigning one or two group members to each impact type. They each went to the library and talked to a research librarian, who helped them locate books and articles to provide inspiration for more ideas. After that, we met again as a team and had the sub-groups present their write ups. Unfortunately, the things described in each impact area weren't consistent with one another. We had to go back to the drawing board, calling another team meeting where

each sub-group presented lists of ideas, not finished write-ups. We discussed those lists as a team, thinking through how they could fit together. After that, each sub-group wrote new impact descriptions.

Lessons Learned:

Don't start writing up the impact descriptions right away. Instead, have sub-groups brainstorm lists of possible impacts for each impact area, then bring those lists to a team meeting where everyone in the group can talk them through. Some of our coolest ideas came from those conversations because hearing about people's ideas for impacts in one area helped us imagine new possibilities for others. In addition, working out the whole thing as a group helped us make sure that every element in each area fit logically with the elements in the other areas: having it all hang together like that made the world feel much more realistic. It would probably also be wise not to wait until after spring break to get started, the way we did. That ended up being very stressful!

WORLD DESCRIPTION: eFluvial Choice

The Technology

Teleportation started with online shopping. In early 2052, the giant online retailer and cloud-services company eFluvial unveiled its new “eFluvial Choice” delivery service. Every customer who paid an annual fee got a receiving unit. The first-generation unit was the size of a refrigerator and similarly configured, with insulated double doors on top opening onto a large compartment, and a substantial sliding drawer on the bottom. The drawer contained a tank filled with a substance the color of green antifreeze and the consistency of human phlegm.

There are sending units and receiving units. Sending units are much larger and more expensive. Receiving units are comparatively smaller and cheaper. To send an item, you put it in the unit’s analysis compartment and, using an attached keypad, dial the number of the receiving unit. The sending unit then establishes an internet connection with the receiving unit and “analyzes” the item in its chamber by bombarding it with beams of subatomic particles. As those beams travel across the object, they liquify it, creating that gelatinous green substance, which runs through a drain into the tank below. Sensors attached to the beams compile a precise digital image of the liquefied object’s molecular structure, which is uploaded to the cloud. Once the receiving machine has downloaded that digital image, it uses its own reservoir of green goop to reconstruct the object by a process roughly analogous to the earlier technology of 3D printing. The object that appears in the receiving machine is indistinguishable from the one placed in the sending machine: their molecular structures are identical, even though each was built using a different reservoir of green goop.

That goop is the key to the process. It’s *hylomorphic protoplasm*, or *HP*, and is the “universal substrate” of all matter, a “chemically polymorphous essence” that was originally

discovered in 2040 by Dr. Marisol Villalobos-Novarro in a series of pathbreaking experiments conducted in her lab at Iowa State University. A few years later, scientists working under Villalobos-Novarro's supervision discovered that HP could also be turned *back into* matter. Even better, because of its "chemically polymorphous" nature, it could be transformed into anything if the activating particle beam was guided by a sufficiently detailed digital template. These discoveries earned Villalobos-Novarro and her research team the 2046 Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

From these two discoveries, it was only a short research and development step to the creation of "eFluvial Choice" and, with it, a far-reaching transformation of the global economy. By the late 2050s, "Matter Receivers" had become fixtures of daily life in the Global North. HP quickly became the world's most important commodity, since every Matter Receiver's tank needed to be regularly filled with it in order to "print out" objects. Over the course of the 2050s, the switch from conventional manufacturing to the large-scale production of HP happened far more quickly than most experts predicted, causing widespread political upheaval (see "Political Impacts"), as well as far-reaching environmental and economic consequences (see "Social, Environmental, and Economic Impacts").

This was the state of the art until 2132, when a scientist working at Michigan State, Dr. Orechukwu Obioma, discovered *biomorphic protoplasm*, or BP. HP could only be used to reconstitute inanimate objects. Any living animal or plant subjected to "HP teleportation analysis" would be killed and reproduced in the receiving unit as an uncannily detailed statue rendered in a chalk-like white substance. Obioma discovered a new configuration of beams capable of "burning" and "uploading" living things: his breakthrough experiment involved successfully teleporting a live "air plant" (*tillandsia capitata*). It wasn't long before the technologists at ISU followed up Obioma's discovery by developing a device with twin tanks of

HP and BP. This was a necessary innovation, because otherwise it would have been impossible to teleport both a plant and its pot, or a person and their clothing.

In the early 2140s, public “teleportation booths” began to appear in major cities; by the end of the decade such booths had become the primary means of travel for people across the Global North. The production of raw BP quickly took its place alongside HP synthesis as a major economic activity, accelerating the global process of environmental and economic change that the shift from manufacturing to HP synthesis had begun. Personal teleportation also gave rise to a new religion, the “Anti-Theseans” and a significant question in practical ethics: the dilemma of “Immortalism” (see “Cultural, Religious and Intellectual Impacts”).

Political Impacts

Shortly after its introduction, “eFluvial Choice” triggered a massive economic crisis (see “Social, Environmental, and Economic Impacts”). The political turmoil provoked by that crisis began in France in February 2053, where the first in what would become a global wave of large-scale “unemployment riots” broke out. These crowd uprisings were unprecedentedly widespread: unlike previous revolutionary outbreaks, the crowd was not primarily composed of lower-class people. This economic crisis was so quick and so far-reaching that business employees at all levels, from unskilled laborers to hedge-fund managers and CEOs, found themselves out of jobs overnight with little prospect of any future work ever being available. The expression of popular rage and hopelessness therefore cut across classes, driving huge numbers of people into the streets. In countries with single-party or authoritarian political systems such as Russia, Iran, and China, these uprisings led to violent revolutions or civil wars, several of which

lasted for decades. In pluralistic democracies, the uprisings led to the formation of new political parties which scored massive upset victories at the polls.

In the United States, key leaders of the “unemployment riot” campaign organized the “Six Pack Party,” which took super-majority control of Congress in the 2054 midterms and won the presidency in 2056. After passing a constitutional amendment to expand the Supreme Court to fifteen seats, the “Six-Packers” pushed through another amendment recognizing that all citizens had “a right to subsistence,” and specifying that this right required the government to provide citizens with a guaranteed basic income. This policy was approved with little controversy, though to avoid any appearance of “Socialism” the new safety-net program, which involved sending monthly checks to every US citizen over the age of 18, was called the “Perpetual Entrepreneurship Grant,” or PEG.

eFluvial, the one business entity left mostly unscathed by the crisis, took advantage of the situation by acquiring the assets of now-bankrupted corporations including Hooli, Microsquish, Pear, Klik Klak, FacePalm, AltaVista, and Pets.com. While the original Six-Packer platform called for nationalizing eFluvial, the company’s program of extensive lobbying and Super-PAC contributions allowed it to preserve its independence through the crisis.

The upheavals of the 2050s led democratic governments across the world to become much more sensitive to criticism and attempts to organize political opposition, a defensive stance they retained well into the 2100s. After the Six-Packer victories of the late 2050s, eFluvial, still worried about potential nationalization, leveraged its total control of all major social media outlets to offer government clients a new service: “Socially Protective Algorithm Management” (SPAM). Rather than actively hiding unwelcome facts or censoring dissenting political opinions, SPAM simply drowned them out by bombarding readers with non-political content scientifically

formulated to be almost impossible to ignore. After the spread of personal teleportation in the 2140s and 2150s, eFluvial supplemented this program with a second service, “Thought Scanning” (TS). This was also offered on a clandestine basis to any government willing to pay an annual fee. Initially, TS was imagined as a simple marketing tool: when people’s molecular structures were “uploaded” for teleportation, eFluvial scraped the resulting digital file for information about private thoughts and desires that could be of use to advertisers. As SPAM’s effectiveness diminished with the rise of the “pirate internet,” eFluvial executives realized that their TS data could also be sold to governments eager to recognize and pre-emptively silence potential dissidents. Some critics also maintained that eFluvial teleportation servers used “regularization” programs to eliminate neurodivergent or otherwise atypical traits from the cognitive structures of uploaded customers: it was undeniable that rates of mental illness substantially diminished, as did the output of truly surprising or distinctive creative products in the arts (the last film or TV series that was not a sequel or based on previously-existing intellectual property appeared in 2163). By the later 2100s, every nation in the world subscribed to eFluvial’s TS service and relied on it as a key pillar of what government officials called “social harmony.”

Though personal teleportation created new opportunities for invasive government surveillance, it also gave rise to new forms of subversion. Well into the 2200s, passports were still required for travel, and nations still defined the ability to police their borders as a key aspect of sovereignty. All personal teleportation devices were equipped with facial-recognition software that automatically sent biometric data to the national police of whatever country a person might be teleporting to. At the same time, however, the fact that a person could teleport in and out of a location instantly left room for criminals and terrorists to avoid detection. A new phenomenon

emerged called “cloud hacking”: either extra-legal or outright criminal manipulation and raiding of the vast online archive of objects and people that the teleportation system created and depended upon. The central importance of stored data to the world order also attracted the attention of political and religious extremists. Throughout the 2100s and 2200s, such groups regularly made attempts to destroy data centers or otherwise compromise the functioning of the “cloud” in hopes of provoking panic and societal collapse.

Cultural, Religious, and Intellectual Impacts

Personal teleportation raised fundamental questions about the nature of the soul and its relation to the body. The technical process, after all, involved people liquifying themselves while transforming themselves into digital files and then reconstituting themselves elsewhere according to the data in those files. In such circumstances, it’s reasonable to ask whether there might be something about a person that such files are unable to capture. According to all reports, people felt exactly the same after being teleported as they had before. Their sense of themselves was unchanged. Is that sort of anecdotal evidence enough? Would a person truly be able to *tell* if they had transformed themselves into a soulless husk?

The Pope at the time personal teleportation was introduced, Celestine VI, promptly issued an encyclical declaring that the soul did not in fact survive teleportation. Many Protestant and Eastern Orthodox clerics, Rabbis and Imams agreed. Buddhist and Hindu religious scholars, in contrast, argued that teleportation was roughly analogous to reincarnation, and therefore posed no risk to the soul. For this reason, the first teleportation booths to be established tended to be in cities with either large numbers of atheists or large Hindu or Buddhist populations. A teleporter malfunction in 2150 accidentally revealed that it was impossible to “print” more than one

iteration of an individual at a time. For reasons scientists remain unable to determine by experimental means, any attempt to generate an additional copy of a person, even using BP, only produces a chalk statue. Celestine VI's successor, Innocent XIV, took this newly discovered phenomenon, known as "One and Done," to indicate that the soul did in fact survive teleportation. He therefore promulgated a new theological concept, "The Digital Pluripotentiality of the Soul." Many Christian, Muslim and Jewish theologians and clerics reversed course in similar ways.

In response, a small group of committed believers abandoned their Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths to found a new religion: Anti-Theseanism. Anti-Theseans continued to believe that teleportation destroyed the soul; on its own, One and Done struck them as too poorly understood to justify acceptance of the new technology. Anti-Thesean ritual practice focused on "perambulation," the act of wandering on foot. As Anti-Theseanism developed, believers joined avoidance of teleportation with rejection of all things eFluvial: social media, the internet, and also any use of HP to "print" objects. They were also adamant in their belief that eFluvial secretly used "regularization" programs to eliminate neurodivergence and socially disruptive character traits, a view otherwise widely dismissed as a conspiracy theory. This stubborn opposition made Anti-Theseans unique in their ability to organize resistance, because they could subsist without access to HP and their minds remained inaccessible to eFluvial's "thought scanning" process. At the same time, neither the general public nor the US government saw Anti-Theseans as a threat. Their theology emphasized non-violence, and in popular culture they were appreciated for their photogenic strangeness: their ramshackle, creatively repaired vintage cars pulled by horses, since gasoline was no longer produced; their bizarre reverence for "original versions" of useless, obsolete objects such as postage stamps, coins, vinyl LPs, floppy

discs, license plates and hubcaps, which they assembled into geometric mosaics called “collections” and mounted on the walls of their temples.

After the advent of personal teleportation, it became possible to envision a “cloud” of digitally archived *people* existing in a manner similar to that “cloud” of digitally archived objects. A group of “cloud hackers” who called themselves “Immortalists” began experimenting with a new technique: rejuvenating themselves by having their current bodies broken down into BP, then reassembled according to an earlier blueprint. The result would be a version of themselves several years younger. Everything would be identical except that the new younger self would have no memory of the years that had passed since the moment they were archived. To solve this problem, the Immortalists developed a brain implant that replaced the missing memories. What resulted was something close to a cure for aging.

By the 2300s, this practice had begun to cause serious problems. Population growth mushroomed unsustainably as people continued to have families but stopped aging and dying. Under mounting demographic pressure, governments across the world imposed strict new family policies. Citizens were required to choose one of two paths: either to have children or to be personally immortal. In the space of a few decades, this dilemma transformed global literature. Where the most common subject matter for poems, works of fiction, films, and popular songs had previously been the ups and downs of romantic love, it now increasingly became the choice between family and “deletion” or childlessness and eternal youth.

Social, Economic, and Environmental Impacts

The introduction of “eFluvial Choice” caused a major upheaval in the global economy as conventional manufacturing rapidly became obsolete. eFluvial executives and corporate

strategists had expected their innovation to profitably “break old things,” but they hadn’t anticipated the speed at which the disruption would occur. Within months, nearly early everyone involved in the conventional production of manufactured goods lost their jobs as the businesses that employed them abruptly folded; this near total collapse in employment caused demand for goods and services to crater. The only surviving private corporation was eFluvial. Mass uprisings across the democracies of the Global North forced governments to take action to reconstruct an economic system that allowed individual citizens to continue to work, produce and consume in ways necessary for the survival of civilization. The solution adopted in the United States (see “Political Impacts”) was the institution of the “Perpetual Entrepreneurship Grant.”

In the “new normal” created by object teleportation, mass production was no longer necessary. The only thing that mattered in the manufacturing process was the prototype, which after analysis could be reproduced infinitely by downloading. Manual skills in the arts and crafts therefore became increasingly valuable. Anyone capable of designing and building something could now potentially market it broadly by distributing it through a “sending unit.” (eFluvial, of course, still controlled the vast majority of such units and therefore remained a key player in the global economy.) In the Global North, there was a period of turmoil as people adjusted to this new reality. Within twenty years of the crisis, however, living standards and life satisfaction had dramatically increased across the developed world.

Since it was now required for nearly all production of material goods, raw HP quickly became the most important economic resource in the world. BP would become similarly important after the advent of personal teleportation. In some ways, both were environmentally cleaner than petroleum and other conventional natural resources. The particle beams used in teleportation analysis and reconstitution were highly energy efficient and did not produce carbon

emissions. Since car and air travel also became obsolete, the accumulation of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere stopped and climate change slowed. Unfortunately there were other negative environmental effects associated with HP and BP production. Refinement of raw HP and BP at large scale creates “implication fields.” In the case of HP, the field gradually alters the molecular structure of every inanimate thing in a twenty to fifty mile radius, depending on the size of the facility. Every rock, building, clod of dirt, etc., in the vicinity is gradually transformed into a chalky powder, eventually creating wastelands covered in feet of talcum-like dust. The “implication field” of a BP refinery affects living things, gradually killing all plants and animals in its radius. Humans entering a BP implication field must wear protective suits at all times. While special shielding interrupts these implication fields when HP and BP are produced in small quantities, as in regular teleportation machines, large-scale production generates effects impossible to fully counteract.

In practice, these negative environmental impacts have meant that HP and BP refineries are primarily located in countries in the Global South: Africa, South America, and Southeast Asia. Many countries in these regions became “eFluvial Client States” during the crisis years of the 2050s, when the total collapse of their tax bases forced them to “outsource” most of their government functions. In exchange for receiving these services from eFluvial on an “emergency basis,” Client States were obliged to designate large portions of their territory as “sacrifice zones” for the construction of HP, and later BP, refineries. By the 2200s, the economies of these countries had fully re-oriented to the production of raw BP and HP.

Raw BP can only be created by subjecting living things to the “analysis” process. Initially, the preference was to use plants, but plants can only generate BP if they are fully alive at the point of analysis. The “implication field” phenomenon makes it impossible to grow plants

near refineries or to transport them there fast enough to be effective in the process. The solution developed by eFluvial was to use cockroaches as the raw material for BP production, because cockroaches are the only creature impervious to the life-draining effects of the implication field. Cockroach farming has therefore become a major industry in the parts of the Global South that are centers for the production of raw BP.

The manufacture of raw HP, in contrast, requires large quantities of inanimate matter. The matter that yields the purest results is human-produced refuse: non-food waste, glass and plastic bottles, metal cans, construction or demolition debris, household goods, old appliances, old cars, consumer electronics, etc. As a result there is a thriving global market in the extraction of recyclable waste: across the Global North, scrapyards have been picked clean and landfills have turned into active mine-sites with crews digging to extract as much human-made refuse as possible. Fishing fleets retooled to become “trash skimmers,” using their nets to remove floating plastic and other debris from the ocean. The only remaining conventional transport on the planet is devoted to moving this material to large refinery sites.

In daily life, this intense demand for what had previously been considered “junk” has had dramatic consequences. Instead of storing objects, people “analyze” them, transforming them back to HP and uploading a digital blueprint of their structure to the cloud, where they can be downloaded and reconstituted if needed. This makes good economic sense, because in practice “raw” HP is worth far more than any non-HP object. HP, after all, can potentially become *anything*. Trash has literally become treasure. If a person is tired of an object or no longer needs it, then, it makes far more sense to sell it to a Recycling Broker for analysis than to keep it. In terms of décor, from the 2070s on, extreme minimalism became the norm among lower-class

people; among the rich, an ultra-cluttered style known as “Victoriana” has proved enduringly popular.

At the same time, however, this arrangement created new vulnerabilities and risks. After the “new normal” had been in place for twenty years, there were many “legacy” objects in the cloud that could no longer be conventionally manufactured because the physical equipment to produce them had been liquified into HP for financial reasons. Governments and businesses gave little thought to the potential risks of this arrangement because the monetary rewards of “just in time” liquefaction were so huge. Generally when questioned, both government officials and business executives would dismiss any concerns about potential risks by pointing to the multiple, redundant backup and security measures built into the cloud to protect its content. Anti-Theseans regularly warned of the apocalyptic threat posed by this total dependence on cloud storage, but to the vast majority of people in the 2100s, such concerns sounded like the quaint ravings of backward-looking fanatics.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY: eFluvial Choice

Hobbes, Thomas. “Of Identity and Difference.” In *Elements of Philosophy the First Section, Concerning Body*. London: R. & W. Leybourne, 1656. Pages 97-101.

This is a philosophical discussion of the problems involved in identifying people and things as “similar” or “different.” The section on “Identity,” pages 100 to 101, gave us a framework for imagining the issues at stake in our version of personal teleportation. Hobbes cites the example of the “Ship of Theseus,” as described in a famous anecdote by the Greek writer Plutarch. (This is what gave us the name “Anti-Theseans.”) According to legend, a ship Theseus sailed from Crete to Athens was kept as a memorial by the Athenians, who replaced its various wooden parts as they rotted away. Eventually, the entire ship had been replaced with new parts totally identical to the old, which gave philosophers an opportunity to debate whether the currently existing ship could be considered the same as the original ship, or if it instead was another ship entirely. Hobbes proposes a solution that splits the difference: “a Ship, which signifies Matter so figured, will be the same, as long as the Matter remains the same; but if no part of the Matter be the same, then it is Numerically another Ship; and if part of the Matter remain, and part be changed, then the Ship will be partly the same, and partly not the same” (p. 101). We decided to have the Anti-Theseans agree with Hobbes.

Niven, Larry. “The Theory and Practice of Teleportation.” In *Galaxy Magazine* (March 1969): 128-146.

In this essay, Niven describes a variety of different ways teleportation has been envisioned in a science fiction context, supplementing and elaborating them with ideas of his own. He divides instances of sci-fi teleportation into two categories: teleportation by the use of psychic power and teleportation by means of some form of technological equipment. Niven devotes the bulk of the essay to teleportation of the second type. In keeping with his “hard science fiction” approach, most of his speculation is focused on the physics of teleportation, with only brief consideration of possible social, economic and cultural consequences the technology might have. The method of mechanical teleportation we chose to use in this game world is a variant of one that Niven attributes to the author Poul Anderson, who used it in his 1959 novel *The Enemy Stars*. Niven dismisses this technology quickly before moving on to his preferred method: using force-fields to bend space. We decided we would go with Anderson’s “plasma-based” teleportation model instead because it struck us as both philosophically interesting for its metaphysical implications, and the richest in terms of generating “playable” narratives.

Sherman, Howard. “Theories of Economic Crisis: Supply-Side, Demand-Side, and Profit Squeeze.” In *Science and Society* 53:1 (Spring 1989): 62-71.

This article is a critical analysis of attempts to construct models of economic crisis on the basis of data from both the Great Depression of 1929-1939 and the recession of the 1970s. Sherman points out the shortcomings of models that claim crisis is caused by wages getting too high and

therefore reducing profits (“supply side”) or by wages being forced too low and reducing profits by weakening consumer spending (“demand side”). Instead, he suggests a two-pronged model, in which economic depression is caused by situations where wages go down while costs go up. This model provided the template for the economic crisis we imagined would be created by the introduction of “eFluvial Choice,” though of course there the reason why costs “went up” was because a new, much cheaper, proprietary form of production was introduced that abruptly made all competing techniques of manufacturing and resource-extraction obsolete.

Sperber, Jonathan. *The European Revolutions, 1848-1851*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

In 1848, widespread economic crisis and social conflict created by industrialization led to an outbreak of revolutionary uprisings across Europe. The nature of the conflict and spread of these uprisings inspired the account of our world’s “unemployment riots” and the way in which they played out. Because the political context was very different – in 1847, none of the governments of major European countries were “democracies” in a sense we would recognize today—we adjusted our global revolutionary wave to reflect what might happen if an 1848-style uprising based on economic protest occurred in a modern democratic state. Sperber describes how the revolutionary period of 1848 to 1851 ended in an authoritarian backlash marked by a general fear of political dissent, which took the form of laws limiting freedom of speech, public assembly, labor organization, and so on. We updated that backlash to reflect what it might look like in a world with internet-based social media and powerful multinational corporations.

Wolf, Eric R. *Europe and the People Without History*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.

This is a sweeping history of global economic life from 1400, just before the Portuguese and Spanish began their experiments with long-distance sea navigation, through the height of European imperialism in the early twentieth century. Wolf's main goal is to show how the rise of capitalism and the industrial revolution were global phenomena which impacted not only the European countries where they began, but the rest of the world as well. We took inspiration from two things in this book as we developed our world. The first is Wolf's idea of "modes of production," which he defines as "the ways in which human beings confront their world in order to modify it in their favor" (p. 386). For Wolf, the impulse to engage in this systematic modification of nature is unique to human beings, and the need to harness that impulse, manage it, and distribute its products is what has given rise to governments, social structures, and cultural values. Thinking of "production" in this way made it easier for us to imagine what might happen if our current "mode of production," centered on natural resource extraction and factory-based manufacturing, were replaced by object "printing" using a synthetic medium. The second source of inspiration was Wolf's broad historical account of the global consequences of European commercial expansion. His narrative stops in the late 1800s, but we extrapolated elements of it through the present and into the future to arrive at our picture of a Global North where raw materials are processed and consumed in ways that boost living standards, and a Global South where raw materials are produced or extracted at considerable environmental and social cost.

STORY HOOKS: eFluvial Choice

Character Roles

The following are some of the character roles that might be playable in our game world:

- **Cloudhackers:** Rogue computer programmers skilled in the infiltration and manipulation of data in the storage cloud the whole teleportation infrastructure depends on. They form underground communities protected by their skilled use of anonymization technology, and have developed their own distinctive jargon, initiation rituals, and codes of behavior. “White hat” communities help the powerless or victimized pursue justice; “black hat” communities focus primarily on the accumulation of wealth.
- **Recycling Brokers:** Itinerant traders who specialize in trash, which they acquire in the Global North and transport to the Hylomorphic Protoplasm refineries of the Global South using railways and container ships. They are one of the few groups of people who still regularly travel long distances by conventional means, rather than by teleportation. Their role as mobile traders in a very valuable raw material makes them vulnerable to threats by rebel groups or criminal gangs looking to get around eFluvial’s choke-hold on the global supply of HP.
- **Ordinary Heroes:** While the world of “eFluvial Choice” might seem like a utopia at first glance, in practice it’s also characterized by intrusive surveillance, difficult personal choices, and global economic inequality. Ordinary people in many different walks of life could find themselves in positions where they feel compelled to resist this system or somehow subvert it. In the Global North, doing so would require them to leave behind the comforts of abundance and high-tech convenience for an uncertain life at the margins

of society. In the Global South, resistance could be met with violence, and would require complex personal and political choices.

Story Hooks

The following are some story hooks that might provide the seed of an idea for a game module (story) that might take place in our world:

Hook 1 Title: “Progeny”

Spotlight Character Role: Cloudhackers

Description: According to the Global Demographic Control Policy of 2308, when a person becomes a parent, their blueprint in the cloud is marked “auto-delete,” and therefore no longer archived after every teleportation. This means they lose any chance at immortality and must instead age normally. It is 2321. Player characters are approached by parents who want to have a child but don’t want their own blueprints deleted. They are willing to pay handsomely for hacking into the database to procure pirated copies of their archived selves. To what extent are the players willing to help, and what secrets or opportunities might they unearth while infiltrating eFluvial’s Central Data Node?

Hook 2 Title: “Which Side Are You On?”

Spotlight Character Role: Recycling Broker

Description: While overseeing a large shipment of trash to an HP refinery in the Niger Delta, a group of trash brokers are taken hostage on their container ship. It turns out the raiders are from a rebel group trying to seize control of the Nigerian government and expel eFluvial. Their goal is

to end HP and BP production in the country so they can stop the environmental degradation caused by the refineries. The means they pursue in accomplishing this goal, however, are violent: they organize raids on local eFluvial facilities and terrorist attacks against eFluvial executives in the Global North. Do the characters find a way to escape their captors, leaving the current power structure in place? Or do they decide to join the rebels in their struggle against eFluvial?

Hook 3 Title: “The Digital Soul”

Spotlight Character Role: Ordinary Hero

Description: After using the teleporters, one member of the player group (see note below) experiences a strange mental “glitch”: every minute or so, they have a five-second “absence” during which all their senses go dark. A medical exam reveals nothing wrong and no solutions, but there’s a rumor that the Anti-Theseans have a remedy for this condition...if you can convince them to talk to you. How will the players attempt to negotiate with the Anti-Theseans? What will they learn in this pocket of anti-tech anti-teleportation culture?

Safety note: To have a player character be the one who experiences the teleportation “glitch,” it is important to get that player’s consent before running the game. An alternate option would be to have the glitch occur to an NPC (perhaps a friend of a player character who is traveling with them).