



ELDRAZI MEDITATIONS

BUILDING AND PLAYING VINTAGE ELDRAZI

JASON JACO

IN ELDRAZI WE TRUST

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BUILDING AND PLAYING
VINTAGE ELDRAZI

1ST EDITION

JASON JACO



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CHAPTER 3: ELdraZI TACTICS

When thinking about how to build with Eldrazi in Vintage, it is tempting to think about identifying “core” cards for the Eldrazi strategy. But the “Eldrazi strategy” does not exist in a vacuum, and the strategic focus of some of these decks are radically different. I would argue the only cards that are at the core of any Eldrazi strategy are 4 copies of Thought-Knot Seer, because it is so efficient, disruptive, and potent for the mana cost. Rather than analyze every Eldrazi card available, we’ll simply limit our purview to cards that are most likely to be playable in Vintage, or have already proven playable in existing, tournament-viable decks.

ELdraZI MIMIC – This is a hallmark staple of “Tribal Eldrazi” decks that load up on tons of Eldrazi, and can reliably trigger Mimic on each subsequent turn to bank huge tempo profits. One reason the Team CFB Colorless Eldrazi deck in Modern was so powerful was because it could reliably deploy one or more Eldrazi Mimics on the first turn, and the opponent would quickly be at a low life total or dead by the fourth or fifth turn. When used in conjunction with Reality Smasher for example, Eldrazi Mimic can often become lethal on the third or fourth turn of the game. Consider this simple sequence in Vintage or Legacy:



Turn 1:
Play Eldrazi Temple and cast Eldrazi Mimic.

Turn 2:
Play Ancient Tomb, cast Thought-Knot Seer (triggering Eldrazi Mimic to grow it to 4/4 until end of turn), and attack with Eldrazi Mimic (4 damage, bringing the opponent to 16 life).

Turn 3:
Play Cavern of Souls (or another mana source), cast Reality Smasher (triggering Eldrazi Mimic to grow it to 5/5 until end of turn), and attack with Eldrazi Mimic, Thought-Knot Seer, and Reality Smasher (14 damage, bringing the opponent to 2).

If the opponent has used a couple of fetchlands, or cast a Force of Will, Gitaxian Probe or Thoughtseize, they will often just be dead in this scenario, or a similar scenario a turn or two later, depending on their spells that can interact with you (or if you take a turn off to cast another disruptive element like Thorn of Amethyst, or to use a Wasteland effect).

REMOVAL

DISMEMBER – Arguably the second biggest design mistake from *New Phyrexia* (only behind *Mental Misstep*), *Dismember* allows any deck access to excellent creature removal. For just the low cost of 4 life and 1 mana, *Dismember* gives any creature -5/-5 until end of turn at instant speed, which is a great option for colorless decks seeking efficient removal for tempo purposes. This was a critical tool in the original Eldrazi decks in Modern, and remains a valuable asset in both Legacy and Vintage Eldrazi as well. Critically, while *Dismember* is often cast by spending just 1 mana, it cannot be countered by *Mental Misstep*, because the converted mana cost is 3.

WARPING WAIL – An intriguing card from *Oath of the Gatewatch*, the multifaceted *Warping Wail* is jokingly referred to by some as “Eldrazi Command,” a colorless nod to the original Command cycle in *Lorwyn*, with powerful hits such as *Cryptic Command* and *Profane Command*. While not great at doing any one thing, *Warping Wail* covers a few of the blind spots Eldrazi decks may have, and is never a completely dead draw, so let’s briefly cover them in order.



1) “Exile target creature with power or toughness 1 or less.” This mode is more useful than you’d think, and allows you to take out commonly seen threats like *Young Pyromancer*, *Dark Confidant*, *Baleful Strix*, *Thing in the Ice*, *Phyrexian Revoker*, *Eldrazi Mimic*, *Magus of the Moat*, *Jace*, *Vryn’s Prodigy*, *Thalia*, most of the Humans deck, and more.

2) “Counter target sorcery spell.” Providing the ability for colorless decks to counter *Tinker*, *Yawgmoth’s Will*, *Treasure Cruise*, or *Dark Petition* is a huge boon to Eldrazi decks. While this is susceptible to a card like *Flusterstorm* or *Force of Will*, just the threat and potential out that *Warping Wail* provides is often enough to slow the opponent down to make sure the coast is clear before trying to resolve a huge strategic finisher.

3) “Put a 1/1 colorless Eldrazi Scion creature on the battlefield. It has ‘Sacrifice this creature: Add colorless mana symbol to your mana pool.’” This mode is also highly useful, allowing you to create a creature for a surprise chump block, or to cast on an opponent’s end step so that you might accelerate into a larger threat on your next turn. This is also worthwhile against *Dredge* decks, because you can create a token just with the intent of sacrificing it to trigger and remove all copies of *Bridge from Below* in the *Dredge* player’s graveyard. Having as many ways to interact with *Dredge* as possible is great for Eldrazi, because they will be racing to destroy whatever permanent-based hate cards you bring in from the sideboard, and *Warping Wail* affords you another way to combat their token

Lodestone Golem turned Workshop decks in to titans of the format – not only because it was a disruptive element on legs, but because it coupled that with a body large enough to provide a very quick clock. This is why Phyrexian Revoker will never measure up to Lodestone, and why Thought-Knot Seer is the logical heir to this throne. The size of Thought-Knot, combined with exiling the most relevant card in the opponent’s hand, is what makes it an all-star in all of these decks that feature it. Thought-Knot will kill the opponent in four or five turns on its own, even if the opponent manages to wrestle free of the other impediments on the battlefield.

Thought-Knot’s mana cost certainly adds a bit of inconsistency to the deck that prior versions did not have, but it also adds a couple of new dimensions to the deck that it did not have before. Instead of just making spells cost more, it strips away the best card in the opponent’s hand, and gives you more information with which to map out ensuing lines of play. Neither of these tactics have been playable in Workshop decks until now (apologies to Glasses of Urza). The sheer power of exiling your opponent’s most important card in hand from the game cannot be overstated. It is not simply a one-for-one trade of resources if Thought-Knot is dealt with, because whatever is drawn in replacement is unlikely to be as powerful as what was exiled originally, and you have additional information to work with for the rest of the game.

Thought-Knot does not fall prey to many of the counter-tactics which are often used to address Workshop threats. For example, holding Ancient Grudge and Dack Fayden in hand are just embarrassing against Eldrazi creatures, and Thought-Knot requires very timely and precise pin-point removal to deal with, like Swords to Plowshares or Dismember (which are often mediocre against the rest of the cards in Workshop decks, such as Sphere of Resistance and Tangle Wire).

PLAYING WITH WORKSHOP RAVAGER AGGRO TKS

The Ravager Aggro TKS Workshop deck utilizes the synergies between Arcbound Ravager, Hangarback Walker, and Triskelion to dominate the battlefield against token generating decks (like Young Pyromancer or Monastery Mentor) in particular. After the resources of the blue player are significantly taxed or depleted, a Triskelion often comes down and cleans up the most egregious remaining threats.

Arcbound Ravager can grow quickly to a lethal threat if unblocked, and Hangarback Walker can be used in a number of ways, to either feed Ravager, or to make a small army of flying creatures to evade blockers on the ground. Ravager can also be used to feed counters to Triskelion to finish the opponent off, and this can even provide a path to victory around sticky situations like Moat or Ensnaring Bridge.

While Workshop Ravager Aggro is a very expensive deck to build in real life sanctioned Vintage tournaments, due to the outrageous cost of cards like Mishra’s Workshop and

CHAPTER 10: UNPOWERED COLORLESS ELDRAZI (AKA JACODRAZI)

If you are new to Vintage, or returning to Vintage after a long hiatus, this deck in particular may have caught your attention, and perhaps may have driven you to purchase and read this treatise. Unpowered Colorless Eldrazi is a great entry point to Vintage, as it is well positioned against most of the current decks in the metagame, and is by far the most affordable competitive Vintage deck (ringing in around \$1000 in paper, with no proxies, compared to \$2600-4000 for Dredge variants, as of this writing). Many of the skills (and cards) required to pilot it overlap with the skills (and cards) required in Legacy and Modern. Do you have leftover copies of Eye of Ugin that were banned in Modern? No problem! Start playtesting Vintage and Legacy Eldrazi today!

Amusingly, this deck has been referred to by Vintage pundits [Stephen Menendian](#) and [Andy Probasco](#) as “the holy grail” of Vintage decks, in that it is not only competitive in Vintage, but is *optimally designed* to be unpowered, while being accessible to new players. But how in the hell did we get to a point in Vintage where an unpowered deck full of creatures could be competitive?

Some of this was addressed in Chapter 1, talking about the strategic orientation of most decks in Vintage, and how most are tuned to fight their battles on the stack. The ones that do not are typically abusing the graveyard with Bazaar of Baghdad, or abusing the battlefield with Mishra’s Workshop. Similar to how the Ravager Aggro Workshop decks could prey upon more prison-based Workshop deck with fewer creatures, JacoDrazi’s configuration of far fewer control elements allows it to prey upon other Workshop and Eldrazi decks alike, by virtue of having less dead cards in the main deck.

Unpowered Colorless Eldrazi (aka JacoDrazi), 10th Place NYSE IV 06-04-2-16 By Jaco

1 Chalice of the Void	4 Ancient Tomb	Sideboard:
4 Null Rod	4 Eldrazi Temple	4 Leyline of the Void
1 Crucible of Worlds	3 Eye of Ugin	4 Grafdigger’s Cage
3 Warping Wail	2 Urborg, Tomb of	4 Leyline of Sanctity
3 Dismember	Yawgmoth	1 Warping Wail
2 Phyrexian Metamorph	4 Cavern of Souls	1 Spatial Contortion
4 Eldrazi Mimic	1 Strip Mine	1 Ulamog, the Ceaseless
2 Matter Reshaper	4 Wasteland	Hunger
4 Thought-Knot Seer	3 Ghost Quarter	
4 Reality Smasher		
3 Endbringer		
4 Endless One		