MAGE: THE ASCENSION
20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION
Victorian Age

MAGE: THE ASCENSION
20TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

Victorian Age

Satyros Phil Brucato, Hiromi Cota, Sebastian Freeman, Alan Gowing, Victor Kinzer,
Seanan McGuire, Lauren Roy, Bianca Savazzi, John Snead, Kieran Turley,
Rachel Wilkinson, Jonathan Woodhouse, Pete Woodworth

Credits

Developers: Chris Allen, Ian A. A. Watson

Additional Development: Dixie Cochran, Satyros Phil Brucato, Malcolm Sheppard

World of Darkness Line Developer: Matthew Dawkins

Writers: Satyros Phil Brucato, Hiromi Cota, Sebastian Freeman, Alan Gowing, Victor Kinzer, Seanan McGuire, Lauren Roy, Bianca Savazzi, John Snead, Kieran Turley, Rachel Wilkinson, Jonathan Woodhouse, Pete Woodworth

Editor: Nimrod Jones

Art: Chris DeJoya, Sam Denmark, Romane Faure, Marco Gonzales Michael Gaydos, Laura King, Jeff Laubenstein, Aaron Riley, Ivan Vegar

Art Director: Michael Chaney

Graphic Designer: Aileen E. Miles

Creative Director: Richard Thomas

© 2022 PARADOX INTERACTIVE AB.

All rights reserved. Reproduction without the written consent of the publisher is expressly forbidden, except for the purposes of reviews, and for blank character sheets, which may be reproduced for personal use only. Mage: The Ascension, and the World of Darkness are registered trademarks of Paradox Interactive AB (publ). All rights reserved.

Visit World of Darkness online at www.worldofdarkness.com

Printed in Canada

Table of Contents

Introduction 13

The Cost of Technological Progress 14
Resistance 15
Imperialism 15
Tone: A Gaslit Mystery 15
How to Use This Book 16
Chapters 16
Inspirational Media 17
Films 17
Television 17
Books 17
Further Material 18

Chapter One: Societies of Shadow 21

Gender, Gender Roles, and Equality 23
Magi in Society 23
Awakened Conflict 23
Awakened Among Sleepers 24
Apprenticeships and Initiations 26
Secret Societies and Other Organizations 26
Secret Societies Worldwide 27
Joining a Society 29
Society Leadership 29
Members and Power Structure 29
Manners Maketh Magus — Etiquette for Magi 30
Basic Etiquette 30
Customs and Courtesies 30
The Precepts of Damian 31
The Protocols 31
The Entente 32
Pacts and Promises 33

Chapter Two: The Council of Nine 35

Where Are We Now? 35
Sanctums in the Storm 36
A Broken Council 38
Traditions at War 40
The Traditions of Magick 45
The Ahl-i-Batin 47
Akashayana 49
Chakravanti (Euthanatoi) 52
Chorus Celestial 54
Dream-Speakers 56
The Creation of Shamanism 57
The Order of Hermes 58
Sahajiya (Cultus Ecstasis) 60
Verbenae 62

Chapter Three: Towers of Stone, Vessels of Steel 65

The Order of Reason Through the Victorian Age 65
From Dark … 65
…To Light 66
Albertan Reformation 67
Rise of the Difference Engineers 68
The Victorian Reformation 69
The Scramble for Africa 69
The Path to the Technocracy 71
The Blocs of the Order of Reason 72
The Exploratory Society 72
The Grand Faculty 74
The Ivory Tower 75
The League of Constructors 76
The Syndicate 77
The Conventions of the Order of Reason 78
The Guild of Analytical Reckoners 80
The Society of Celestial Masters 82
The Hippocratic Circle 84
The Guild of Electrodyne Engineers 86
Void Seekers 88
Golden Guild 90
Invisible Exchequers 92
The Lightkeepers 94
Brotherhood of Mechanicians 96
The Skeleton Keys 98

Chapter Four: The Crafts 101

The Great Crafts 102
The Bata'a 102
The Hollow Ones 104
The Wulong 106
Wardens of a World of Magick 108
The Comanche Puha 109
The Kopa Loei 109
The Ngoma 110
The Sisters of Hippolyta 110
The Taftani 111
Independent Technomancers 111
The Dalou'laoshi 112
Jidai (Next Era) 112
Zulu Mechanists 113

Chapter Five: Dramatis Personæ 115

Lighting the Shadows 116
A Shrinking World 116
Player Questions 117
Creating your Character 118
Step One: Concept and Identity 118
Step Two: Attributes 119
Step Three: Abilities 119
Step Four: Advantages 121
Step Five: Finishing Touches 122
Merits and Flaws 122
Spark of Life 122
The Prelude 124
Character Questions 124
Progress and Development 127
Shifting Alliances 127
Raising and Learning New Traits 127

Chapter Six: Spells & Steel: Victorian Magicks 129

A Study in Contrasts 129
Magick Rules for Victorian Mage 130
Elegance, Catastrophe, and the Uncanny Middle 130
The Straits: Ties That Bind Reality 132
Game Systems for the Straits 132
Straits Backlash Manifestations 133
Quiet: The Brink of Madness 135
Game Systems for Quiet 135
Of "Madness" in a "Rational" World 135
Manifestations of Quiet 136
Territories: Victorian Reality Zones 137
Game Systems for Territories 137
Territory Zones 137
Converting Territories 139
Culture, Context, and the Arts 141
Of Mass Media and the Shaping of Paradigms 141
Of Orientalism and the Noble Savage 141
Enlightened Arts: Focus in the Victorian Era 142
The Heart of Victorian Metaphysical Arts 142
Common Victorian-Era Focus Elements 143
Noted Innovations of Victorian Occultism 145

Chapter Seven: Storytelling Gaslit Mystery 153

ABCs of Storytelling 153
The World of the Victorian Era 154
Genre, Setting, and Flavor 156
The Importance of Being Honest 165
Genre Variants 167

Chapter Eight: Dangerous to Know 179

Common Victorian Weaponry 179
Absinthe, Opium, and Other Concoctions 183
Game Systems 184
"The Theatre of My Miseries" 184
Bedlam Bound: Mad Marauders 185
Auld Muddy 186
Razor Jake 187
Crossroads and Cobblestones: Mortal Antagonists 188
The Arcane Practitioner 190
The Blade in the Fog 190
The Blooded Warrior 191
The Constable of the Law 191
The Costermonger 192
The Decadent Demimonde 192
The Domestic Servant 193
The Fervent Revolutionary 194
The Footpad 194
The Gentleman Scholar 194
The Resurrection Man 195
The Rough-Necked Hombre 196
The Soldier 196
The Street-Thief 196
The Urchin 197
Eaters of the Weak: The Fallen Nephandi 197
Of Predators and Prey 198
Shadows of Reason: The Night-Folk 201
The Faerie Folk 201
Ghostly Phantoms 203
Primordial Wehr-beasts 204
Strait Apparitions 205
Un-Dead Vampyres 208

Chapter Nine: Around the World 211

A Brief Overview 212
The British Empire: Sun Never Sets 213
Britain 214
The Empire 217
The Crimean War 220
Europe: The Old Continent 222
The Revolutions of 1848 — the Fall of Monarchs 223
The Tides of War 224
The Decline and Modernization of the Ottoman Empire 226
The Kulturkampf (1872-1886) 227
The New Wonders of Europe 228
The Revival of the Olympic Games (1880-1896) 229
North America: Our American Cousins 230
Ruthless Purges 232
Mass Migrations 232
An Era of Immigration 233
Call the Presses 235
The Mexican-American War and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo 236
The Gold Rush 236
New Religious Movements 237
It's Electrifying! 238
Manifest Destiny 238
Industrial Revolution 239
The Gilded Age 239
Fight for the Future 240
South America: The New World 241
The Pearl that Sparked a Revolution 242
Cuba 244
The Empire of Brazil 244
Argentine Confederation 246
Chile and Araucanía 248
Africa: Land of Plundered Spirits 249
Magi in Africa 250
The Traditions 251
Regions 252
Ethiopia 252
Egypt 252
Southern Africa 254
Central Africa 255
West Africa 256
Dahomey 256
Asia: Empires Old and New 257
The Early Victorian Days (1838-1858) 258
Middle Victorian Asia (1858-1880) 261
Late Victorian Asia (1880-1910) 264

The Republic of Colombia, South America, following a trail roughly parallel to the Orinoco River
1891

The heat was oppressive. It bore down with such density and pressure that it seemed to carry literal weight, as if the air itself had become tangled in the temperature and refused to be dissuaded. Emma flicked a jeweled wasp away before it alighted on her face, wondering once again how her simple desire for knowledge had led her to this place, so very far from the cool fogs and rolling hills of England. She had wanted to see the world, had expressed that desire to her *parens*, and somehow that desire had translated itself into a berth on a Chorister ship bound for South America; as if vomiting every meal she'd eaten since childhood into the starving sea would be somehow educational.

But then, perhaps it had been. She had learned that the waves were less terrible below-decks. After months surrounded by rotting wood and rough, if well-meaning, sailors, she had learned that anything would seem to be an improvement.

She could have done without the wasps, to be fair; and the constant feeling of observation from the trees, filled with all manner of wondrous beasts of which she had yet to learn the names.

"Learn," Master Ogden said, voice firm, eyes kind. He had truly been the best parens she could have asked for, unfocused and flighty as she was. He had told her, more than once, that she would have done very well in an earlier age before the Order had narrowed itself so. He had said that, as the world widened, perhaps the Order and Houses Hermetic would widen itself in turn, remembering what it was to be great, and how it was to be so open that all seeking enlightenment had no choice but to stumble through its doors. "You are not there to influence, not there to lay claim. Come home with only what you are given freely and use that to expand your understanding of the world. You are my finest student. Show the world what that means, and what it means to be Hermetic."

Too often, it meant looting and pillaging like a common pirate, like these were still the days of Rome and the endless expansion of Hermetic thought across the world. Master Ogden had been right when he said that the Hermetics were Empire's children — not its heralds. They had been born when the world seemed to be an apple ripe for the plucking, and now they were the worms clinging to its gnawed-upon core, watching in dismay as other hands reached for other apples, intent on devouring them in turn, even as the first had been devoured.

To be true to the teachings of Trianoma, it was necessary to retain an open mind toward all teachings and all theories of magical thought. Only by understanding the wonders of the world could those wonders incorporate into the rich tapestry of the Hermetic Record. Only through the Hermetic Record could the paths to Enlightenment be charted and made clear.

Every time the Order had allowed itself to grow narrow in its thinking, it had paid — oh, how it had paid. The destruction of Díedne; the betrayal of Tremere. Their names were artifacts and incantations now, curses to spit into a darkened room. However, they had once represented bright and living figures in the great equation of the universe. Their loss had lessened the Order in ways that would never truly heal. They were gone, and they would not come back.

Emma sometimes thought she might have done well in Díedne, had those teachings yet been open to her. But that door was closed, and so she had gone to Criamon, following the twisting tongues and delicate riddles of the Adepts who had come before her, and she had learned such wondrous and essential things. Still, as Master Ogden always said, the world is a riddle, and it was her duty to solve it as best she could. That couldn't happen until she found as many clues as she could. She would travel to the edges of the Earth to bring them home.

The Choristers had left her at the port, heading on their pilgrimage down the coast, doubtless to bring the word of their God to anyone that would listen. It was distasteful, the way they preached and preened and pretended that only their precious Lord could have had any hand in the making of the world. They could have done with some of the tapestry of

Hermetic thought, which would have shown them quite clearly that even omnipotence would come with patterns and predictable flourishes the world simply didn't show. Their God might well have had a hand in things — Emma didn't know, and was quite opposed to asking, as asking often served as the precursor to a sermon — but it seemed doubtful that he could have done it all on his own. Even the greatest Adepts took apprentices to keep their workings moving smoothly. Surely the same would apply to the gods.

"Hold!"

The shout came from the woman leading their expedition to the Orinoco, where they would be meeting up with a local riverboat captain to continue the journey downriver. Emma stopped immediately, willing herself not to pant from the combination of heat and exertion. The jungle pushed in around her, blocking out the worst of the sun while trapping the humidity under its leaves, turning the world into a sauna.

Leaning forward, she tapped the elbow of the man she'd hired to escort her on this expedition. He was a charming young Dream-Speaker of Brazilian extraction whose response to her offer of employment had been laughter, followed by quoting an exorbitant fee that he had been willing to cut by more than half once she assured him she was not traveling with the Choristers. Whatever she might think of their tendency to witness to the world, it seemed that they were even less well-regarded by the people they had come to "enlighten."

Really, if they would just confine themselves to the Church, they would have done better for themselves. But then, she had met some who'd say the same of the Hermetics and their universities, and as she had no more interest in being confined than she did in a simple life of privation and prayer, she supposed it wasn't her place to say anything.

"Shh," he said, only barely glancing back at her. "Something's up ahead. Amoya wouldn't have called a stop otherwise."

"Something…large? Dangerous? Venomous?" They had seen quite a few snakes since leaving the last town behind. Emma wasn't sure she could believe her escort's claims that each was more venomous than the last. She was *quite* sure she didn't want to test her doubts. That would involve something that could potentially kill her biting her. If she'd been in the mood for sporting with snakes, she would have stayed home and danced with the Quaesitori.

"Something foul."

A chill seemed to blow through the sweltering jungle. Emma put one hand to the hollow of her throat, clutching the small piece of meteoric iron that served as her Showstone, letting strength flow from it into her, bolstering her bones. Whatever they had stumbled into, they would be able to face it. They were magi and consors, and this was a world of wonders, ready and eager to be understood. Nothing could be so dire as to stop that understanding.

There were five of them in the group: Emma and her escort, two porters who carried the bulk of the supplies, and Amoya herself, who was approaching now, a machete in her hand and a scowl upon her face. Her skin was several shades darker than Emma's own, itself far darker than fashionable in English society this season — a parting gift of the father she had barely known. Both women wore trousers as a concession to the jungle's heat and density; and there the resemblance ended.

Emma dressed in surprisingly tidy khakis — although not that surprising, given the amount of Art she had applied to the fabric to prevent it from tearing, staining, or otherwise disgracing her in the eyes of strangers — and plaited her hair back to keep it away from the reaching creepers and branches. Amoya wore a stained pirate's shirt under an open vest, and allowed her hair to tangle as it wished, occasionally acquiring leaves, feathers, or live butterflies from the brush around them. Her wild, single remaining eye made the sight of her bearing down on Emma, machete in hand, a rather daunting one.

Cultists were the same the world over. Sybaritic, uncouth, and far too interested in what the flesh could do in the moment, rather than in what art and the soul could do in the great fullness of time. By some sort of cosmic joke, they were the Tradition most invested in the study of Ars Tempus.

"Hermetic," spat Amoya, switching the machete to her other hand to grab Emma by the wrist. "With me."

"I'd prefer it if you didn't touch me…" began Emma, her final word turning into a shrill and undignified squeak as the other woman hauled her forward, away from the line, away from her guide, and toward whatever had caused their procession to stop.

Through a break in the trees, Emma could see three things, quite clearly:

The camp in the valley below, situated on a patch of ground that had been cut clean and then burnt, possibly several times, so that all that should have been green and growing had been reduced to feathery ash. It blew around the tents erected there like the dust of London; and, like the dust of London, it looked like it would never, even given a million years, come clean.

The trees around the artificial clearing were twisted and charred until they somehow became parodies of themselves, like they had been encouraged to grow along channels that no trees should ever have sought to emulate or know. Their bark was scarred with deep gashes, too precise and carefully spaced to be accidental — even if Emma had been able to tell herself such pretty, pointless lies. It was writing. Someone had used the living bodies of the tainted trees to write a paean to things she didn't want to read too closely, lest she began to understand what they were trying to communicate. To write those words at all was a crime. To write them in Enochian was…

… blasphemy.

As to the third thing, it, too, was blasphemous in its way: a cavern in the earth, gaping like a wide and toothless mouth, leading down, down, down into the depths, down below where the water table, shallow due to the nearby Orinoco, should have led to its collapse. Emma fancied she could smell the reek of it from where she stood. It smelled of death, despair, and all the things she'd thought to leave behind in fair England, where the only true fairness was in the uniform unfairness of it all.

"What does it say, *Hermetic*?" demanded the woman beside her.

Emma glanced her way. "You can read it?"

"I know enough to recognize Enochian when I see it." Amoya turned and spat into the brush as if the word had somehow befouled her mouth. "I can't read a word of it, or your people would have scraped out the inside of my mind to keep me from spilling their secrets, but I know the filthy look of it."

"I can't tell you what it says."

Amoya's eyes narrowed. "When I agreed to let you and your pretty escort on this expedition, it was on the condition that you follow my instructions. What does it *say*?"

"I'm not refusing to live by the terms of our agreement," Emma said. "I'm telling you, with the utmost respect and honesty, that I can't read it, for to speak such things aloud is to grant them credence, and to do so as a speaker of Enochian and worker of my Will upon the world is to grant them *power*. If I read you what is written on those trees, I invite it into our presence. That would be sincerely unwise of me."

"Not wanting to be turned inside-out by something that can burrow into a hole like that one, I'm with the English girl," said her escort, who had crept up on them while they were focused on the clearing.

Emma was unsure as to the wisdom of sneaking up on women carrying machetes. Under the circumstances, she felt it wiser not to say anything.

"That's a Pit, isn't it?" The escort — Rendell, his name was Rendell, and she needed to remember that people outside the Order had names they were fond of and attached to,

that she could use without remembering their associated honorifics and qualifications — nodded toward the clearing below. “Saw one of them once in a jungle a lot like this one.”

“What happened?” asked Emma.

“I ran,” he replied, without a hint of shame. “Hang around a pit, lots of awful, twisted-up things are likely to take notice of your presence — and once they’ve noticed you, there’s not much you can do to keep from becoming an awful, twisted-up thing yourself. I like my face the way it is. Don’t need extra arms or too many teeth.” He flashed a quick, dazzling smile. “No one buys drinks for the boy with too many eyes.”

Emma took a breath and looked over her shoulder to where the porters waited, silent and burdened with the group’s gear. Then she returned her attention to Amoya.

“We can’t allow this to stand,” she said quietly.

Amoya raised her eyebrows, apparently surprised. Somewhere in the trees an impossible bird cried out and was silent.

Everything seemed silent at that moment. Even the buzzing of the bees had stopped.

“Really, Hermetic?” she asked. “Don’t you want to run? Back to your safe little workshops and locked doors? This isn’t a training exercise. No one’s going to draw the wards and call time when they feel like you’ve learned enough.”

Emma took a deep breath, feeling the pollen and humidity fill her lungs until it was as if she had breathed in the entire jungle. She had never known the air of India, where some people said her family’s ancestors originated. She *had* known the cool rains of Scotland, where the kumpania had camped the day she was born; and then the sooty air of London, where the orphanage had been located. Finally, she had known the clean, cool air of the Hyde Park Chantry, who took her in upon her Awakening and apprenticeship. She thought she might well have been waiting her entire life for air like this, air without preconceptions of who she was, air that still deserved protecting.

“I don’t know what the Order did to you. Whatever it was, I suppose I’m sorry, because even if it was in response to your own actions, clearly it was not explained enough to make it bearable,” she said. “I don’t know why you dislike me so, or why you accepted my money when you clearly abhor my company. It doesn’t matter. That,” she gestured toward the pit, “is an abomination in the eyes of any possessing the sense to see the natural order of things, and it must be unmade.”

“There are three of us, Hermetic,” said Amoya.

“Yes.”

“None of us sing the same song.”

“Does that matter?” asked Rendell. “I don’t know this Enochian, but it seems to me it’s a thing that doesn’t belong here. If something doesn’t belong here, we have a duty to do away with it.”

“It’s the tongue of the angels,” said Emma. “They spoke it before humanity learned to speak for ourselves. Presumably, they speak it still in whatever fold of the universe they occupy.”

“Well, they never spoke it *here*,” said Rendell firmly. “I’m with the Hermetic. We unmake this.”

“Then down we go,” said Amoya.

• • •

If the jungle had been hot and humid and oppressive, it was a winter morning in Wales compared to what waited in the pit. The air there was hotter, thicker with moisture, until it felt like moving through a veil of clinging fog. It carried with it a thousand scents, each fouler than the rest. Emma’s skin felt as if it would crawl cleanly from her body in disgust.

They left the porters in the jungle with instructions to return to the port if the magi did not return before the sun came up. Amoya had contacts there who could send a larger force to undo this terrible corruption.

One of the porters agreed, after a sufficient bribe, to visit a gambling establishment that Emma knew to belong to a local Fortunae. He would be able to send word to the Order. Her last days, if not her last actions, would be added to the Record, and she would be preserved in the only manner she had ever desired, listed alongside Trianoma and Bonisagus. Only a name, barely a child compared to the workings of the greater magi who came before her and would one day come after her. Yet, it would be enough. It had always been enough.

Rendell took the lead, a stick of some herb Emma didn't recognize clenched between his teeth, eyes half-lidded as he chewed. Somehow, this didn't seem to be interfering with his vision. He walked with easy certainty down the center of the tunnel, never coming close enough to brush against the walls. That was for the best. They were made of some fleshy, pulsing substance that glowed faintly, marked here and there with structures Emma could only think of as veins that had somehow grown into the shape of Enochian runes, spelling out filth she could barely stand to consider.

So compellingly vile were some of the words on the walls that she had to look away, cheeks burning, lest she considered them too deeply and found herself unable to forget them later.

Amoya brought up the rear, machete in one hand and bottle of clear, sharp-smelling liquid in the other. She had developed a slight sway to her walk, an easy roll that managed to imply the dock of a ship beneath her feet, the whisper of the sea at her back.

It would figure, Emma considered grimly, that she would be descending into a pit in the earth with two magi whose Will worked better when bolstered with certain mind-altering substances, condemning her to be the only one truly sober. Perhaps that could be her addition to the Record — if she lived long enough to write it. *Learn how to practice your Art when so piss-drunk that Zeus himself couldn't sway you to his perversions, and you'll be far happier when things turn dire.*

Even wine would have been too much for her, and Amoya's bottle held something far more potent than wine. Emma kept her eyes away from the walls and continued following the comforting shape of Rendell's shoulders deeper into the darkness.

We'll see the Orinoco together, she thought, firmly. *We'll sit on the deck of the ship that takes us to whatever's next, and I'll ask Amoya to pour me a drink, and I'll drink it, whatever it is. I'll sip, and I'll watch the sun go down, and I'll never think of this place again, not for the rest of my life. I'll go home to London and teach my apprentices things of which the Record never dreamed. This won't be where I end; this won't, this won't.*

The tunnel curved gently, winding deeper and deeper into the earth. The air began to take on a note of char hitherto only hinted at; it tasted of brimstone and ash, like all the gates of Hell opening wide.

"Braver than I thought you'd be, Hermetic," said Amoya.

"Bravery is as bravery does," said Emma. She glanced to the Cultist, who had pulled up even with her, walking by her side. "Why do you dislike me so?"

"Don't dislike you." Amoya took another swig from her bottle. "I *hate* you. Not the same thing, not by quite a few leagues."

"Why?"

"Because you damned Hermetics are going to destroy the world."

Emma bristled. "We'll do no such thing. We make no attempt to make others think as we do; we incorporate everything we learn into our Records, and our Art. Nothing is lost when it falls into Hermetic hands."

"But that's where you're wrong. *Mystery* is lost. *Enigma* is lost."

“I belong to House Criamon. The study of mystery is my Art.”

“And when you find one, do you look at it, say ‘that’s a pretty puzzle,’ and leave it alone? Or do you pick it apart until it’s solved, and then write down the solution?”

Emma didn’t answer.

“That’s how you’ll kill the world. One mystery at a time, with a needle through its heart to keep it mounted under glass. When there’s nothing left to discover, it’ll be easier for people like the ones who dug this hole to come along and take it all apart. You don’t think of yourselves as the villains of the piece because you’re not the ones knocking people down and prying their faiths and beliefs and cultures from their hands, but you’re complicit. The ones standing by and writing it all down are as much a part of the story as the ones that act. And you Hermetics, you never act.”

“I’m acting now,” said Emma quietly.

“Then you’re better than most, and you’re still not worth my time.”

Amoya brushed past her, nearly knocking her into the wall as she moved to catch up with Rendell. Emma stumbled, putting one hand out to steady herself. It brushed against the runic veins curving through the fleshy stone—

The taint flows like wine through the cups of the earth, remaking what it touches in the image of those who came before and after, of the Nephandic masters of the light and darkness, and all shall be unmade and all shall be remade and all—

Emma pulled herself free of the terrible loop with a gasp and hurried to meet the others.

“This place must be destroyed,” she said, once she was close enough to keep her voice low and tight and unable to carry. “What it holds is unspeakable.”

“That was the intention,” said Rendell. “You have any ideas as to how we’re going to achieve it?”

“They’ve used Enochian to stabilize the place, to keep it from folding inward on itself. It’s an affront to nature,” said Emma. “I can… Enochian is a negotiation as much as it’s a language. I can argue with what’s been written if you can cleanse the taint somehow. If you can make this — *not*.”

“I can unmoor it,” said Amoya. “Can’t guarantee we’ll have time to run once that’s done, though.”

“And if you can unmoor it and tear down its defenses, I can tell the spirits of this place to come and finish the unmaking,” said Rendell. “It’s going to be dangerous.”

“We’re in a Nephandic pit,” said Amoya. “Everything is dangerous. You sure about this, Hermetic? You’ll never go back to your precious study if you die here.”

Everything is study, thought Emma. She forced herself to smile at the Cultist. “Then I suppose we’ll be an unsolved mystery for someone else to worry about,” she said. “Shall we cleanse what should never have been tainted?”

“We’ll try,” said Amoya.

Together, the three of them walked deeper into the earth, and only darkness lay behind them, and only darkness lay ahead.

Introduction

"Every empire, however, tells itself and the world that it is unlike all other empires, that its mission is not to plunder and control but to educate and liberate."

— Edward W. Said

The Victorian era (1837-1901) was a turning point for magi around the world. Previously, the Order of Reason's magi had spread their unified paradigm across most of western Europe, but they had made no more than minor inroads elsewhere. However, this was a time of massive colonial conquests by many western European nations and the westward expansion of the United States. The Order of Reason encouraged and benefited from these conquests as their paradigm spread to most of the colonized nations and peoples. In addition, many members of both the Chorus Celestial and the Order of Hermes at least passively supported these imperialist conquests.

This was also the era when members of the Traditions, and countless Crafts scattered across the world, first understood the magnitude of the threat posed by the Order of Reason and their paradigm. A growing number of magi opposed to colonial conquests or the Order of Reason's paradigm saw the value and, later, the absolute necessity of joining forces with other magi in an attempt to preserve their freedom and often their lives. Most Traditions and Crafts remained relatively disorganized, both internally and externally, but near the end of the Victorian Age, some began working together to combat the Order of Reason's encroaching strength.

For many Traditions and Crafts, and most people conquered in colonial wars, this era was a time of great tragedy. Despite valiant attempts at resistance, the armies of imperialist governments almost completely exterminated entire peoples, like the inhabitants of Tasmania, and successfully destroyed whole cultures, languages, and Crafts. European colonizers forced others to change in drastic ways to survive in the new and rigidly limited world the Order of Reason helped to create. In addition, nations like Siam that successfully avoided conquest often had to change their culture in drastic ways to appear more European — and thus more "civilized" — to western European elites.

As imperialist conquests continued, Order of Reason members advised colonial governors, missionaries, and robber-barons about the necessity of combating "dangerous superstitions," while also doing their best to either kill or discredit the indigenous magi they encountered. Some of these latter magi slowed or even stopped the advance of the colonizing forces. Others learned to adapt advanced western technology to their uses, rejecting the Order of Reason's false claim that technological progress required submission to the Technocratic Union's control.

A few nations even threw off the yoke of colonial oppression. Several decades before the start of the Victorian Era, Haitian slaves drove out the French landowners that had previously enslaved them. Early in this era, Afghani soldiers almost completely wiped out the British forces during the First Anglo-Afghan War. In both cases, local magi helped in these victories and managed to temporarily halt the advance of both colonial oppression and the Order of Reason's paradigm across their lands.

For most Tradition magi opposing imperialism and working to halt the Order of Reason's advance, complete or lasting triumphs were rarely possible. Most large-scale efforts at open resistance failed badly, like the Chinese Boxer Rebellion. However, magi often won small victories that gained time for themselves and the cultures they were part of to adapt to the changing world. Fending off conquerors and oppressors for long enough might not halt the spread of the Order's paradigm outright, but it could offer a chance at survival.

The Cost of Technological Progress

In Western Europe, the Order of Reason is solidifying its hold on both the paradigm and the hopes and imaginations of Sleepers. The result is a self-reinforcing system built on vast amounts of natural resources stolen via imperialist conquest. The Order of Reason develops or copies inventions like steam engines, percussion caps, electric light, and surgical anesthesia. Popularizing these technologies, while astounding and exciting many Sleepers, makes them more open to future paradigm-altering inventions in what becomes a feedback loop. For the first time in human history, magi can alter the paradigm with both sufficient speed and over a large enough area that Sleepers began to see technology advance in substantial ways within a decade or two, rather than over generations or centuries. The Order of Reason's connections to imperialist governments allows them to swiftly introduce new inventions across the globe.

During this time, most technomancers sincerely believed in their mission. Some members of the Order of Reason sought to improve the lives of Sleepers and uplift the entire world. However, still bound by their prejudices, the advances they create occur alongside atrocities for which they are directly or indirectly responsible. Greedy and power-mad Sleepers use Maxim guns to slaughter tens of thousands of people resisting colonial conquest, and steamships transport colonizing armies faster and in greater numbers than previously possible. As troubling as the consequences of their actions may be for some members of the Order of Reason, most considered it a small price to pay for their grand endeavor, and continue to develop ever more deadly weapons. Ultimately, all but a handful of the Order of Reason care more about the fact that these conquests helped to spread their paradigm across the world than the horrors these conquests caused.

Even amid all the suffering, proponents of the Order's paradigm would point to how new technology also produced wonders. New medical techniques helped countless Sleepers survive illnesses, injuries, or events like difficult childbirth that would previously have killed them. Other innovative technologies allowed for the printing and distribution of books and the spread of literacy to millions whose parents and grandparents were completely illiterate.

However, the exceptionally uneven distribution of these wonders and the changing paradigm had the unavoidable consequence of increased urbanization, as growing numbers of Sleepers left rural areas to work in urban factories and provide for the needs of these factory workers. For the first half of this era, cities were cesspits of disease and pollution, where residents lived harder and significantly shorter lives than people living in less crowded regions. Meanwhile, in rural areas and nations far from western Europe, most of the wondrous new technologies were either absent or only found in the hands of wealthy elites not inclined to share the benefits these new technologies provided.

In this era, the Order of Reason adopted and helped promulgate scientific racism, which ranked all of humanity on a scale with white western European men at the top. Some Order members sincerely believed in it, but all of them found it to be a convenient justification for imperialist exploitation of non-European nations. However, despite their efforts, the Technocratic Union could never bring scientific racism into the paradigm itself. The targets of these claims, those

History & Change

This book describes the history of the Victorian Era and the various Traditions, Conventions, and Crafts. While this history forms the past of **Mage: The Ascension 20th Anniversary Edition**, there is no reason your particular campaign's history must progress in the same fashion.

While it makes sense to assume that history progresses normally, the characters may somehow change it. Perhaps one of the Crafts, like the Bata'a, ends up becoming the ninth member of the Council of Nine, or perhaps portions of Africa never suffering colonization. Exceptionally determined and lucky characters might even deal a major setback for the Order of Reason in the Victorian era.

Some such changes will only affect magi; others, like preventing the colonial conquest of one or more nations, could have a dramatic effect on world history. Major changes should be relatively difficult to accomplish, but a group of determined magi can work wonders. It's always important to remember that the characters are the protagonists of their story, and in the right sort of campaign, they should be able to change the world.

it established as somehow lesser, firmly knew they were not innately inferior in mind or body to the imperialists wanting to steal their land and their labor. Their living experience, and indeed their very existence, served as a bulwark against such a malignant change to the model of reality.

Resistance

Resistance to conquest and oppression is one of the central themes of this era. Across the globe, imperialist forces conquer and oppress indigenous people, while these same people struggle to preserve their freedom and their way of life. However, oppression and resistance are not limited solely to colonized peoples. Much of the Victorian era reflects the history of a relatively small number of exceptionally wealthy western European men extracting vast sums of wealth from everyone else. In western Europe, income inequality soared during the Victorian era, and until the 1880s, the lives of the European poor and the working class were, at best, no better than they had been at the beginning of this era.

The Order of Reason was one of the driving forces of this growing inequality. This was a time before consumer capitalism when the Order of Reason largely consisted of members of the educated, wealthy elite, who cared far more about extending their paradigm across the globe and increasing their power than about improving the lives of Sleepers. While some new technologies they helped create aided large numbers of people, most primarily or exclusively aided the wealthy. Innovations like machines that enabled them to employ fewer workers while making ever greater profits or new farming techniques that drove the poor from their ancestral lands. Both within western Europe and abroad, objections to industrialization among the lower classes became common and occasionally violent.

As a result, unskilled and semi-skilled workers came together to create the first modern labor unions and to perform actions like the London dockworkers strike of 1889, where almost 100,000 strikers won better pay and also helped raise support for unions across Great Britain. Protests and even outright rebellions against European imperialism, like the Indian Rebellion of 1857 and the Chinese Boxer rebellion of 1899, also ignited in colonized nations across the globe.

Imperialism

By the second half of the 19th century, even Sleepers using completely mundane technologies could, in theory, completely circumnavigate the world in less than three months, permitting a level of travel and contact with distant and radically different cultures never before possible for anyone except powerful magi. The vastly increased speed of travel and the potential for cross-cultural contact that came with it could have ushered in a new era of wisdom and understanding. However, the Order of Reason, and a disturbingly large number of Sleepers, had little interest in peaceful contact with distant cultures. Instead, imperialism was one of the hallmarks of the Victorian era.

The first colonial conquests, both relatively limited in scale, began with the Spanish colonization of the Americas in the early 16th century, and the Dutch colonization of India in the 17th century. A combination of bad luck, inferior weapons, and rapacious tactics made the inhabitants of the Americas exceedingly vulnerable to European diseases and allowed a small number of invaders to conquer a large region. Similarly, in India, the Dutch made trade deals with powerful local leaders, and swiftly and brutally exploited instabilities caused by local wars.

However, the efforts of the Order of Reason and a small number of wealthy and powerful European merchants and politicians vastly increased the scale of colonial expansion that followed. Using large numbers of troops, and covertly aided by the Order of Reason's most destructive magicks, colonial forces destabilized or conquered entire nations that were not already crumbling due to epidemics or civil war. By the dawn of the Victorian era, colonialism began transforming into imperialism. Rather than just settling colonies and using military force to seize natural resources or ensure favorable trade arrangements, a growing number of western European nations began conquering and ruling entire nations.

Europe's growing nationalism in part motivated this transformation. Western European nations try to prove their superiority by conquering ever more territory, while also working to reduce the power and wealth of their rivals by preemptively conquering and holding regions of interest to these nations. Alongside nationalism came raw greed. For small numbers of wealthy western Europeans, imperialism offered an opportunity to obtain funding and support from their nations' governments. If their efforts succeeded, they could then extract vastly more wealth from the nations they conquered and ruled, both in the form of booty from an initial conquest and from the vast array of taxes, fees, and tariffs they imposed on colonized peoples. While the Order of Reason endorsed imperialism as a method of imposing their paradigm on increasingly large sections of the planet, the chance to gain a truly vast amount of wealth and mundane power, extracted both from the inhabitants of the conquered nations, appealed to the Conventions' leaders.

Tone: A Gaslit Mystery

The tone of **Victorian Mage** is *Gaslit Mystery*: a merging of industrial technology that illuminates the darkness, and of the secret things the shape of which even such artificial light cannot fully reveal.

You could express this *gaslit* element in several ways: as the traditional atmosphere for Victoriana thrillers; as the innovation that transformed a world lit by elemental fire into one illuminated by man-made technology; as a hazy and often toxic light source that blackened walls and filled buildings with poisonous fumes; even as the metaphorical "gaslighting" that occurs when an abuser manipulates his quarry into a false "reality" of his design — a term that comes, in fact, from a Victorian-set melodrama called *Gas Light*. Historically, the coal-fueled gaslight marks the end of the

earlier colonial era and the rise of the industrial one, before giving way to the even brighter artificial light of electricity. Although you won't find such gaslit streets in the Great Plains or the Sahara Desert, the image of gaslights glowing amid London fog is still an archetypal feature of Victorian adventures.

Meanwhile, *mystery* supplies the counterpoint to illumination. Its Greek root, *mysterion*, refers to initiation and secrecy, of things shut away quietly and held in confidence. A variation, *maistrie*, refers to the mastery of skills and knowledge, and both roots suit the enigmatic wisdom of a magus. By nature mysterious to begin with, the combination of the Awakened's secret fellowships and the swirling mist that cloaks gaslit cities at night perfectly evokes the atmosphere of **Victorian Mage**.

How to Use This Book

This book is a supplement for **Mage: The Ascension 20th Anniversary Edition**, which you need to use this book. **Victorian Mage** provides detailed information on magi and their organizations and magick during the Victorian era. It also includes both discussions of and rules dealing with the fact that in this era the Order of Reason's paradigm had not yet fully encompassed the Earth. This book also provides general information about gaming in the Victorian era, and an overview of the cultures and magicks found in various nations and regions.

Chapters

Chapter One: Societies of Shadow examines the overall society of magi in the Victorian era, covering the society and social rules of magi in the vast European cities like London or Paris, as well as the somewhat different rules governing magi in colonized nations and in the non-European lands that are still free. With a focus on Victorian etiquette for magi, it also covers how the hypocrisies and prejudices common in this era are also present in the societies of magi themselves.

Chapter Two: The Council of Nine discusses the place of the Traditions in this era, and what they think about the Order of Reason, colonial conquest, and each other in this era of disunity, both between Traditions and within them. Since the fall of the Solificati in the 15th century, only eight official Traditions remain. This chapter discusses each of the eight surviving Traditions in detail, as well as possible options for a new ninth Tradition.

Chapter Three: The Order of Reason explores the complex dynamics of the various Conventions in this era. As they ever spread their paradigm across the globe, the Order of Reason is rapidly changing, and it has not yet reached its modern form. Consisting of more than a dozen separate Conventions split into five blocs, each focuses on a particular type of magickal endeavor, like exploration, technology, or political power. This chapter looks at both the blocs and 10 of the more important Conventions.

Chapter Four: The Crafts provides information about the smaller organizations of magi, including the European-based Hollow Ones, and a multitude of non-European Crafts, like the Bata'a and the Wulong. In addition, this chapter provides information on several entirely new Crafts, including ones based around indigenous magick and non-western technomancy.

Chapter Five: Dramatis Personae includes all the necessary rules for creating Victorian magi. This chapter discusses Archetypes, Abilities, Skills, Backgrounds, and Merits and Flaws appropriate for Victorian magi.

Chapter Six: Victorian Magick contains new rules for using magick, including how the use of magick is different in different locations, depending upon local Sleepers' attitudes and beliefs, where the Order of Reason's paradigm has not yet spread across the globe.

Chapter Seven: Storytelling the Victorian Fantastic provides suggestions and assistance for running campaigns and creating scenarios in the Victorian era, including incorporating a wealth of ideas and tropes from popular Victorian fiction, ranging from Westerns to early science fiction by Jules Verne or H. G. Wells, to strange tales of distant locales.

Chapter Eight: Dangerous to Know includes a wealth of information about antagonists and other Storyteller characters, including Marauders, Nephandi, and various corrupt secret societies. This chapter also explores the worlds of the other supernatural creatures magi are likely to encounter, whether ancient vampire noble or angry working-class werewolf. Finally, it contains brief write-ups of some of the diversity of Sleepers characters might encounter, from dissolute aristocrats to cowboys and abolitionists.

Chapter Nine: Around the World contains descriptions of the world in this era, incorporating in-character travelogues and broader setting information. This section is designed to provide a smattering of information about many of the various locales that characters in this era are likely to visit.

Future Fates: A World in Flux

In all incarnations, **Mage** is a game about dynamic possibilities. Therefore, the *Future Fates* concept detailed in **Mage 20** (p. 22) applies to the Gaslit Mystery era. According to the Storyteller's wishes, historical events and situations may take one of three paths in the course of your **Victorian Mage** chronicle:

- **History is set:** Events follow the course of history as we know it in the 21st century: The United States crushes the remaining indigenous nations; World War I awaits the new century; the Russian Revolution changes the face of geopolitics, and the Order of Reason becomes the Technocratic Union. Adventures in this setting take place against a backdrop in which the overall course of history is established and unchangeable.
- **History is different:** Certain elements might follow historical precedent, but others differ from history as we know it: The United States outlawed slavery from the outset, and so there's no Civil War; China expels the British East India Company before the Opium Wars begin; Victoria grants women the legal status of full citizenship when she first ascends the throne. This "alternative history" setting is familiar in some regards but fluid in others.
- **History is changeable:** Everything we think we know about this era is wrong. Either the setting differs radically from real-world history, or events and situations are open to change as soon as the chronicle begins. Perhaps the Etherites defect a few decades early, led by a Zulu genius whose steampunk innovations kick the legs out from under the British Empire; maybe Japan greets Admiral Perry with a force both technological and magickal; there might be no Technocratic Union, no World Wars, no 20th century ruled by machines. Under this option, your players can change the course of history… and probably will.

In real-world hindsight, the Victorian Era is a grand tragedy. In **Victorian Mage**, it can be anything you and your players desire it to be.

For additional inspiration, see the **Mage 20** entry "The Triumph of Steam and Steel" (pp. 131-134), plus the "Alternative History" entry and the Afrofutrism sidebar in **The Book of Secrets** (pp. 279-280).

Inspirational Media

The following serves as a starting point to dive into the many books, films, and TV shows that more or sometimes *less* accurately describe the Victorian era.

Films

Anna and the King (1999)

This is an excellent film adaptation of the story of King Mongkut of Siam hiring English tutor Anna Leonowens for his children, and more generally about his struggle to avoid having Siam conquered by either the British or the French. Starring Chow Yun Fat and Jodie Foster, it contains a wealth of historical detail, while also being wonderful to watch.

The Great Train Robbery (1978)

A classic caper film with an all-star cast about a train robbery at the dawn of the era of rail.

Picnic At Hanging Rock (1975)

A surreal and moody film about the real-life disappearance of several white schoolgirls and their teacher during a picnic at Hanging Rock, Victoria, on Valentine's Day in 1900. In addition to being excellent, it provides a fascinating look at Australia at the end of the Victorian era.

Television

Sherlock Holmes (1984-1994)

This television classic starring Jeremy Brett contains adaptations of all of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories of his eccentric consulting detective. The details of life in Victorian London are exquisite and it's also an excellent introduction to Victorian storytelling and what London looked like 130 years ago.

The Wild Wild West (1965-1969)

Although old and quite dated, this series is also a wacky romp, generally featuring a different threat from bizarre Victorian-made science every week. This could be an ideal inspiration for a light-hearted Western campaign.

Books

Shamans: Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination, by Ronald Hutton (2001)

This excellent short book examines what traditional spiritual and religious practices were like in the regions that western travelers used as the basis for their ideas about shamanism, and also how western authors transformed these disparate practices into a created vision of the oldest and most "primitive" form of spirituality. If you want to understand how different lived realities and academic theories about these realities can be and how ideas can be made to serve colonial ends, this is an invaluable book. It's also essential for understanding the Dream-Speakers in this era.

Orientalism, by Edward Said (1978)

A brilliant and powerful work that examines how western European colonialists and imperialists created widespread prejudices about "the East." These prejudices contrasted the vibrant and progressive West with the allegedly primitive and irrational "Orient," and in the Victorian era were widely used as an excuse to invade and conquer "primitive" nations to westernize them.

Everfair, by Nisi Shawl (2016)

A wonderful, very mildly steampunk alternate history about European reformers and indigenous activists transforming most of the horrific Belgian Congo into a far more humane and independent nation. This novel provides both a terrifying vision of what the Belgian Congo was like in the Victorian era and the story of an alternate history that a few dedicated magi might be able to accomplish.

Madame Blavatsky's Baboon: A History of the Mystics, Mediums, and Misfits Who Brought Spiritualism to America, by Peter Washington (1996)

A well-written and engaging history of Victorian mystic, Helena Blavatsky, and the Theosophical Society, an eccentric but quite large spiritual organization and movement that she started in the late Victorian era. This book is essential for understanding the Hollow Ones and very useful for understanding the Western European spiritual movements of the day.

Europe and the People Without History, by Eric R. Wolfe (1982)

As one of the definitive books about colonialism, it examines the entire colonial enterprise rather than focusing on a single nation or region. It provides a brilliant and exceedingly readable introduction to what colonialism was like for both the colonizers and the colonized.

Further Material

As well as the above, an immense amount of material relating to the era exists, examining it from a myriad of angles and perspectives.

Nonfiction Books

Ancient Healing: Unlocking the Mysteries of Health & Healing Through the Ages, by Publications International, Ltd.

The Element Encyclopedia of Secret Signs and Symbols, by Adele Nozedar

The Element Encyclopedia of Secret Societies, by John Michael Greer

Inside the Victorian Home: A Portrait of Domestic Life in Victorian England, *The Invention of Murder: How the Victorians Revelled in Death and Detection and Created Modern Crime*, *The Victorian City: Everyday Life in Dickens' London*, and *The Victorian House: Domestic Life from Childbirth to Deathbed*, all by Judith Flanders

Labour and the Poor, Vol. I-X, by Peter Mayhew, Angus B. Reach, Alexander Mackay, Shirley Brooks, and Charles Mackey

Servants: A Downstairs History of Britain from the Nineteenth Century to Modern Times, by Lucy Lethbridge

The Triumph of the Moon: A History of Modern Pagan Witchcraft, by Ronald Hutton

The Victorian Underworld, by Donald Thomas

What Jane Austen Ate and Charles Dickens Knew: From Fox Hunting to Whist – the Facts of Daily Life in 19th-Century England, by Daniel Pool

Fiction & Graphic Novels

A Season in Hell, by Arthur Rimbaud

The *Bloody Jack* series, by L.A. Meyer (stop at *My Bonny Light Horseman*, though; after that, it gets pretty racist)

The *Castle Falkenstein* series of RPGs by Mike Pondsmith, most especially the sourcebook *Comme il Faut: All Things Right and Proper*.

The *Clockwork Century* and *Borden Dispatches* series, by Cherie Priest

The Crimson Petal and the White, by Michael Faber

The *Devil's West* series, by Laura Anne Gilman

Dracula, by Bram Stoker

Drood, by Dan Simmons

The *Elemental Masters* series, by Mercedes Lackey

The *Flashman Papers* series, by George MacDonald Fraser

From Hell, by Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell

Girl Genius, by Phil and Kaja Foglio

The Great God Pan, *The White People*, and *The Novel of the Whiter Powder*, by Arthur Machen

The King in Yellow, by Robert Chambers

Lá-Bas (*Down There*), by J.K. Huysmans

Les Misérables, by Victor Hugo (more accessible in the play and movie of that name)

Mortal Love: A Novel, by Elizabeth Hand

The Portals of Opium, by Marcel Schwob

Ruse, by CrossGen and Marvel Comics

The Songs of Maldoror, by the Compte de Lautréamont

The *St. Croix Chronicles* series, by Karina Cooper

The Stress of Her Regard, by Tim Powers

Tales of Mystery and Imagination, by Edgar Allen Poe

Wuthering Heights, by Emily Brontë

Movies

A Dangerous Method

The Age of Innocence

Amistad

Angels & Insects

Beloved

Bram Stoker's Dracula

Brotherhood of the Wolf / Le Pacte des Loups

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee

The Chess Players / Shatranj Ke Khiladi

Crimson Peak

The Crimson Petal and the White (miniseries)

Dances with Wolves
Dead Man
The Four Feathers (Shekhar Kapur's 2002 version)
Frankenstein and *The Bride of Frankenstein* (James Whale / Boris Karloff versions), *Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell*, *Frankenstein: The True Story*, and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*
From Hell
Gangs of New York
Gaslight
Geronimo: An American Legend
The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly
Gothic
Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes
Haunted Summer
The Horseman on the Roof / Le Hussard sur le Toit
The Hound of the Baskervilles (1959 Peter Cushing and 1939 Basil Rathbone versions)
The Illusionist
Imprint
Kayamkulam Kochunni
Lagaan
Les Misérables (1998, 2012 and 2014 versions)
The Man with the Iron Fists
Mangal Pandey: The Rising
Jet Li's *Once Upon a Time in China* series
Peter Pan (2003)
The Prestige
Pride and Prejudice
Pride and Prejudice and Zombies
Shaka Zulu
Sherlock Holmes and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows*
Soldier Blue
Sweeney Todd
Vidocq / Dark Portals: The Chronicles of Vidocq
Wuthering Heights (1939, 1970, 1992, and 2006 mini-series versions)
Yojimbo and its sequel *Sanjuro*
Young Sherlock Holmes
Zulu
Zulu Dawn

Chapter One: Societies of Shadow

"I see. I imagined that he was cast out of all decent society."
"If society were really decent, he would have been."
— George Gissing, *The Odd Women*

The Victorian era is a time of great upheaval for magi across the globe. The smoking imperialist war machine crushes all before it, while its masters in the Order of Reason struggle with a moral rift surviving well into the next century. The Traditions also wrestle with the imperialist credo while pre-industrial allies feel the boot of colonial oppressors on their throats. Invading forces annihilate native cultures and their magi defenders with terrible efficiency. Victorian society demonizes the foreign and the lower classes in equal measure, with the slum-dwelling masses as reviled as the exploited populations of central Africa. Magi, night folk, and Umbrood wage terrible battles on both sides of the Gauntlet as they duel to control nodes and territories. A time of great change indeed.

We often view the Victorian period only through the grimy lens of the British Empire. Our very term for the era, "Victorian," refers to the Empire's monarch as a touchstone. However, focusing only on eerie gaslit streets and grand candlelit balls excludes much of the period's history and culture. Wars, great and small, rage across the world, while the empires of the West extend their reach far and wide. A hundred cultures lose battles against invading powers and fade from history. Millions die of famine in India and Ireland even as imperialist masters eat bread made from corn grown on the starving peoples' land. Manipulation pushes India's diverse cultures and religions into conflict while the East India Company, and later the British Crown, plunder its wealth.

Cultural tourism brings exotic goods to colonial ports, filling the musty corners of gentlemen's clubs and museums with objects better left untouched. The plunder of innumerable cultures flows freely into the conquerors' hands, much of it to vanish for good, destroyed through neglect or disappearing into private collections. Alongside cultural artifacts come no small number of arcane threats. More than one London building unwittingly contains treasures capable of unthinkable horror. The telegraph, steamships, and railways revolutionize travel and communication, tightening the Order of Reason's grasp on the world, allowing them to map "inappropriate" locations out of existence.

Magi in this era explore the mysteries of distant lands, deal with peoples long-separated from the rest of humanity, and experiment with enigmatic magick. Some magi defend their homelands from imperialist forces while others seek to explore the edges of existence. Not every magus is an adventurer. Some fight shadow wars in the smokestacks of the industrialized world. Others dine in high society, pulling

Cartography, the Magick of Reduction

The Exploratory Society wields one of the greatest weapons of the Victorian Era. By combining great geomantic works like the creation of railways and telegraph lines with the punishing Victorian educational system, the Exploratory Society sink "undesirable locations" into the Umbra. Legendary cities, sites of power, magical islands, and any place the Order of Reason deem an ongoing threat to their paradigm simply fade away.

Exploratory Society cartographers decide on the Order-approved landscape and make arrangements for new maps and revised books. The occasional text or chart escapes the purges but is easily dismissed as fiction or the work of the ignorant. The city of El Dorado, the Island of Hy-Breasail, and hundreds of lesser-known mythic sites fall not to musket-fire but to the compass and telescope.

strings that kill as surely as cannon fire. Darkly-purposed secret societies and clandestine depravity disguise themselves beneath a thin veneer of propriety and draconian morality. Trust nobody, especially not your allies.

Awakening grants magi the tools to transcend Sleeper notions of class, race, gender, and culture, but the magi themselves harbor many of these same prejudices. Awakening grants insights into the world. A callow highborn woman hears the thoughts of beggars she looks down on. An unfeeling doctor senses the horrific spiritual landscape his macabre treatments create. This gift of insight is a curse for some while others choose to ignore it, cleaving to their previous life. Awakening grants enlightenment, not compassion. A magus may find a thousand reasons why she doesn't need to help that child dying in the gutter or why those native workers need flogging. The Awakening offers a second chance to be a better person, but some remain unchanged in their views.

Awakening is a time of vulnerability. For the powerful magi that prowl the hallways of every occult society and university, a naïve magus is ripe prey. Merry Jill Sweeny, a London tosher who combs the fetid sewer filth for items of value, Awakens in the darkness after nearly drowning. Jill quickly finds herself thrown into a world where she's a highly-prized resource. An upper-class gentleman with a promising smile seeks her out in her slum. A strange raggedy woman with mismatched eyes and a horde of rats stalks her through the sewers. A famous Indian doctor offers her a job without explanation. Who can she trust and who does she choose? Beware, young magus, for the world is much larger than you can imagine! Temptation and corruption waits behind every corner.

Not every magus is willing to clash with friends and colleagues for the sake of others; it takes a good heart with courage and a strong mind. For all too many, creeping back to the familiar justifications and excuses is easier than standing up for the oppressed. What harm, they say, if I use my position in government to vote down the rights of women because the time is not yet right? What harm indeed, if I use my connections in the army to have locals driven from their lands in South Africa so I can open a new diamond mine and surely make more *productive* use of it than they? Greed and self-interest are powerful motivators; just ask the Nephandi, although it doesn't take a soul bought and paid for or a Nephandic caul to forge a petty racist with delusions of grandeur.

Consider the story of a colonial magistrate with a head stuffed full of Victorian ideals. An interest in the occult, born out of boredom and some long-stifled academic leanings, blooms into writing papers on the subject. The magistrate enters into a correspondence with a powerful Order of Hermes maga, the attention of whom he has attracted. With each piece of arcane lore the maga feeds him, the magistrate Awakens. Upon discovering that his mystery correspondent is a native woman, he must adjust his core beliefs to accept her as his superior. Even if the magistrate accepts his new master, he is unlikely to treat his plantation workers any differently, or allow his wife to speak her mind in public, at least not without some further reasoning from those he considers his peers.

By contrast, a magus from a pre-industrial state operating in an area of imperialist influence has a difficult road ahead. These magi must contend with a prevailing social system built to oppose and oppress them, doubly so for women or those whose sexualities stray from the strict Victorian moral code. Knowing that they are equal to or better than their oppressors makes things even more difficult. Wisdom, experience, and strength of character enable these magi to deal with those that would bully and belittle them. Those lacking these traits often "flame out," drawing the social and physical ire of imperialist forces.

A Ngoma magus from Western Africa visiting London may find himself scorned for his clothing, his looks, and his "unrefined" accent by Sleepers who couldn't begin to comprehend his knowledge and power. Given that our Ngoma friend can humble his bullies with a gesture and a few well-chosen words, how difficult is it for someone like him, used to absolute respect and deference, to restrain himself? Other magi offer some solace from the world of Sleepers. These men and women are, by definition, enlightened and some even share a rational and open-minded worldview.

Gender, Gender Roles, and Equality

Victorians frown upon women taking prominence outside the home, though this slowly changes as the 20th century looms. The American Civil War enabled women to take on new roles and this encourages change. Europe, despite having Victoria as one of its most powerful heads of state, rarely accepts women taking on non-traditional functions. Some upper-class ladies find freedom with the death of their male "protectors," but most are just as stifled as their lower-class counterparts. Outside of Europe, gender roles become increasingly blurred, especially for European colonists living on the frontiers where the lifestyle requires everyone to do their part.

Magi are more cosmopolitan than the average Sleeper, and they generally treat all genders as equals. Even the stuffiest Order of Hermes magus must acknowledge that there are many competent magae within the ranks of the Awakened. Within the Awakened community a vocal minority still believes in "a woman's proper place," but in most cases, they are decried as fools. Women initiates usually find the meritocracy within the Awakened world refreshing after decades of domination by family, friends, and society.

Some women achieve and hold high-level positions within the Awakened community, though "boys clubs" thrive in certain groups, such as the Order of Reason. Layers of glass ceilings and passive discrimination face any maga intent on advancement in these organizations. The more egalitarian Traditions and Crafts, such as the Verbenae and Dream-Speakers, are blessedly free of this bias. The contrasting freedoms offered by Awakened and Sleeper society require a steady mind to manage and keep separate. While in council with her allies, a maga's word may be law to a hundred men, yet when she wishes to address a Sleeper town council they may ask to speak to her husband instead. This dichotomy is enormously frustrating, throwing open a staggering number of doors for the Awakened woman even as it denies her those self-same opportunities among the very people who she has now outgrown.

Instead of letting her true self be forced underground, revealed only behind closed doors to the Awakened few, many a Willworking woman seeks fulfillment beyond the fringes of Victorian society. Some travel to far-flung places or Umbral realms where the tethers of gender mean nothing. Others remain where they are but actively strive against the strict mores and rules that class and sex would impose upon them, embracing rebellious or outrageous elements and movements as a form of resistance. Society pushes back, however, and a maga's enlightened perception may be decreed as madness or even cut short by the horrors of the era's medical treatments for those judged unsound of mind.

A Short Note on "Historical Accuracy"

When playing your Victorian chronicle, decide in advance with your players how you want to handle the inherent sexism, classism, and racism of the era. These subjects can cause hurt, with a long history of suffering behind them. Don't let "historical accuracy" become an excuse for bigotry and prejudice inflicted on your *players*. Remember this is a game, and it's meant to be fun. There isn't a lot of fun found in having your words and wishes ignored.

Magi in Society

Every magus began as a Sleeper, likely spending a great deal of their time soaking in the Sleeper beliefs and prejudices of their time. The Victorian world isn't a kind one: imperialist states can be cruel and class-driven. Outside of them, the colonies are rough places to live with little physical or social protection. Beyond the West and its colonies, much of the world is gripped in the throes of conflict, the necessities of survival, or long-running problems of their own.

A magus may come from the wealthy elite, the impoverished underclass, or any of the handful of sub-classes in between. Very concerned with the class divide, everyone is keenly aware of where they sit within the hierarchy; a working-class laborer looks down on the "criminal classes," while the upper class tallies their worth in distance from the throne while begrudgingly admitting the fabulously wealthy into their ranks. A magus' class deeply colors their world view, tainting dealings even among the Awakened.

Of deep importance to an Awakened of this time is their opinion on the great social force of the era: imperialism. The conflict between imperialist philosophy and the lands that fall beneath its control serves as a primary driver for many of the key political events of the age. A powerful force that rampages across the world, imperialism causes untold harm, destroying cultures wholesale, nurturing slavery, massacres, displacement, and forced reeducation, to name but a few atrocities. Distance and propaganda enable average people to willingly buy into the benefits reaped by imperialism. After all, scholars and statesmen alike claim they are civilizing the world, bringing unity and safety to everyone.

Awakened Conflict

For magi, this age is a troubled one; the Order of Reason reinvents itself, shedding the last vestiges of morality and ridding many of its more egalitarian elements. The Ascen-

sion War runs hotter than it has in centuries. Spiritualism and hermeticism rise and gain popularity, offering the more spiritual Traditions the opportunity for a greater grasp on the consensus, while science reigns unfettered by the power of the Church and gives the Order of Reason's luminaries terrifying free reign. The War spreads to every corner of the world, born on the tide of imperial power.

The Order of Reason rides high at the forefront of this expansion, but the Traditions are not altogether innocent of wrongdoing. The Order of Hermes freely plunders Egypt for lost secrets, while more downtrodden mystic organizations find themselves invigorated by fresh recruits from decimated native populations. Some Traditions come close to breaking apart during this time, as the divide between Tradition imperialists and oppressed colleagues grows. In 1884, a convocation in Paris intended to discuss the issues facing magi in the colonial regions devolves into violence, almost starting an intra-Tradition war.

Many Tradition masters and their pupils subscribe to the philosophies expressed in imperialism and a few take it further, seeking to convert magi that don't follow their beliefs. Dark rumors of mountain castles, secret Horizon Realms, and isolated estates where foreign magi undergo "resocialization" plague the Traditions. While these places do exist, only half of them are secret Nephandi plots; the rest are true believers, who think they are helping "poor deluded fools." With a history of marginalizing their own (House Díedne and House Ex Miscellanea for example), the Order of Hermes is at the forefront of this movement, joined by elements of the Chorus Celestial and Verbenae. These views conflict sharply with other magi both inside and outside of the above Traditions. The Dream-Speakers fight desperately to save their people across the globe while the Akashayana and Batini do the same for their strongholds in the East.

In short, the Traditions are in as much turmoil as the Order of Reason at this point, mostly due to centuries of distrust and infighting brought to a head by colonial expansion. This internal conflict tends to involve younger members of the Traditions, who are deeply invested in the tumult of their time, even in the face of disapproval from ancient masters. Regardless, a minor shadow war rages among such rivals until the late 1880s, marked by assassination and betrayal.

Magi not interested in fighting the Ascension War or the imperialist struggle must still consider the ramifications of both in their daily lives. Both the Order of Reason and Traditions take a join-or-die attitude in the face of these great conflicts, and magi choosing to stand apart too overtly paint a target on their heads. A staggering number of secret societies, clubs, and lodges arise, offering protection, community, and increased understanding among the various factions. Magi from the Far East and Africa travel to spread word of their philosophies, while in the Americas, secrets groups meet in the dreamlands or the vast wilderness, unseen by their colonial oppressors.

Awakened Among Sleepers

In society at large, Awakening is the ultimate form of social mobility. Even the weakest of magi may garner large fortunes through the clever use of magick. Carelessness, though, may attract unwanted attention from night folk, fellow magi, or even Sleeper authorities. Pity the magus whose transmutations of lead into gold bring the Peelers and Board of Inland Revenue to his door! A clever enemy can frame a magus for a crime, and point to inexplicable wealth or influence as proof. Organizations with centuries of wealth and power, like the Traditions and Order of Reason, might be willing to shower the right recruit with gifts in exchange for their unquestioning obedience, and have the structures to protect them from unwanted attention. Of course, wealth can't buy the manners, contacts, and "breeding" of an upper-class upbringing.

Wealth is only the first step for someone wishing to move social class. The magus may need to overcome racial and gender prejudice while forging new connections, either through magick or impressive acts of social manipulation. Etiquette itself is the final gauntlet through which the nouveau riche must pass. The careless manners of the upper class come from rigorous drilling and tremendous social pressure. Emulating these requires practice and, most likely, a teacher.

Walking away from your previous life is very hard in a society that places such massive importance on social currency. A magus born to Birmingham's slums may struggle to hide her accent and manners from new highborn allies. The struggle worsens when her old friends call to see her fancy new house, or demand favors in exchange for concealing her "unfortunate connections." Once again, the great magickal organizations are happy to help, and in some cases *require*, their new initiate to reinvent their life. Like choosing a craft name, this personal reinvention also serves a practical purpose in hiding possible ritual magick connections.

While magick might let a magus live a life of leisure, the Awakened do not rest on their laurels. They feel the drive to engage with the world and change it. Magi often choose professions outside of the norm that challenge them while fulfilling their long-term goals or dreams. Explorers, builders, philosophers, and romantics, the magi attract attention, and by doing so find themselves called on to fall in line. An outspoken magus positing unpopular opinions finds himself in short order beset on all sides by societal pressures, backed up by draconian laws and a network of gossips capable of destroying hard-won social capital in mere hours. Victorians know that they must sever a tainted connection else risk losing their social standing. Scandals and other social disasters fast find one without a friend in the world. Even the lower classes suffer from this social ostracism, though the upper and middle classes feel it most keenly.

In some cultures, a magus might already have an established role to assume, such as a shaman, witch doctor, or cunning man. These established paths offer societal sanction for otherwise hard-to-explain behavior. Some magi have no choice but to walk away from such traditional roles. In the

Congo region, after European invaders eradicate entire tribes, the surviving magi are now bereft of those they once helped. Amid the smog-belching factories of Britain, old traditions from the countryside wither and die beneath the boot-heel of poverty and pain. Even where such practices survive, a Willworker cannot always conform to the expectations of Sleepers. Many seek to forge a path of their own.

Magick and talent let a magus choose from a multitude of jobs. A railway consultant, helping to constrain the local paradigms. An engineer shielding miners from dangers hidden underground. A cataloger of arcane artifacts brought back from university-sponsored expeditions. A writer turning his adventures into fanciful "penny dreadfuls" in the hope that one day someone may realize the truth behind the fiction. Professions like alienist, spiritualist, or consulting detective draw strange events to a magus' attention. In 1883, the alienist, Albert Westenra, battles malevolent Umbrood possessing colonial children across the African continent. Such cases become almost commonplace as Victorian scientific curiosity overcomes age-old superstition. Agatha Webley, an American Euthanatos maga, runs a secret detective business. Her clients are the richest women on the continent. Her cases are the kind that the Pinkertons refuse to take, considering them "flights of imagination and feminine fancy." Doctors and scientists come across their fair share of weirdness, also. They encounter strange magick, terrifying diseases, and supernatural events.

Imperialist expansion across the globe awakens things better left undisturbed. At home, in old Blighty, the shift from rural to urban living leaves the wretched poor with little or no recourse when the darkness preys upon them. Engineers excavate the bones of ancient cities, ripping open centuries-old plague pits and forgotten graveyards with aplomb. In 1860, nighttime sewer works near the Thames break into a sealed Roman chamber. Engineers find brickwork with scratch marks made by human nails, and an ancient skeleton with evidence of cannibalism. For the next three months, a silent figure stalks the underclasses of London, nicknamed the "Spitalfields Rector" for its occasional use of Latin and favored hunting grounds. The Rector vanishes without a trace after an estimated twelve killings. The police, finding no bodies, spend little time investigating. The missing persons, of lowly origins, lack significant connections.

With the invention of the steamship and train mean, magi no longer need to rely on magick to cover vast distances. The abundance of travelogues and fiction, like *Around the World in Eighty Days*, makes things much easier for those using elegant travel magick. With clever planning and just a whiff of elegant magick, trains run like clockwork, and carriage horses never run lame. Many magi take this as a cue to journey farther, going beyond their maps to explore lands outside the Order of Reason's grasp. They meet with new peers and interact with each other free of the strictures and rules laid out by their ruling organizations, often embracing a spirit of discovery and camaraderie. Imperialist forces are rarely far behind earnest adventurers, however. The Order of Reason reaches out across the globe, mapping the undesirable elements out of existence, and seeking technologies unknown to the West.

In Europe and North America, Victorian morality divides the world into two spheres. The pure sphere of hearth and home; and the grubby, corrupt sphere of the outside. The parallels between the home and a magus' sanctum are undeniable. Many a magus treat their home *as* a sanctum, enhancing its defenses using the power of this belief. The widespread use of lamps and candles as light sources means intruders are never sure what the copious shadows hide. Is that flickering flame is a fire spirit preparing to attack or just a bad wick? The "pure" Victorian household conceals a multitude of sins. Domestic abuse is common, even if better concealed among the upper and middle classes. Household power resides in the hands of the husband. The Church, society, and the law enforce such patriarchal authority. Codes of silence and propriety allow such dark acts as a Nephandus would revel in to flourish unhindered.

Victorians consider raising a family a high social duty. Being childless draws pitying glances. Surely every woman wants to be a mother, and all men desire to extend their line? Seeking a "good match" involves pursuing unmarried men and women with vigor. Refusing too many offers leads to gossip or worse. A magus has much to hide and admitting a Sleeper into one's innermost life complicates matters. A prospective husband or wife may have to pass inspection by the magus' Chantry. They may have connections they are unaware of that make them a danger to the magus. They might unknowingly meddle in sanctum defenses. Even an offhand remark at the gentleman's club about a wife's strange habits risks drawing unwanted attention.

Family is a potential weakness that enemies can exploit, requiring much effort to protect and ward them. A magus might hide family members, bind entities to protect them, or cast protective spells on them. Pity the poor thief that jumps a magus' husband in a dark alley only to find themselves facing the very face of Old Nick, himself.

Marriages between magi sometimes flaunt social Sleeper conventions. A wealthy English woman marrying a wild man from the Irish wilderness raises quite a scandal. Nobody in Sleeper society realizes that they are both Verbena magi sharing a deep spiritual connection. All they see is an "unfortunate alliance." Some groups, such as the Hippocratic Circle, experiment with breeding programs in the hope of creating new magi, not so removed from what happens in the upper classes of Sleeper society. A hideously inbred family of magi might capture night folk, demons, or other magicians in the hopes of breeding a dark messiah.

Relationships and connections are vital to the upper-class Victorian. They weave this social network from a young age: going to the right school, the right university, marrying well, and raising seemly children. The smart magus uses these connections to access resources and intelligence not available to others. Magi devote much time to elegant magick surrounding etiquette and protocol. With a carefully enchanted letter or calling card, and the right turn of phrase, a magus may enter any home or meet almost anyone. It barely takes any magick work at all, if the magus has enough skill.

Servants have a great deal of knowledge of the inner workings of their master's homes. They might share gossip

and information with others of their rank, so long as doing so wouldn't damage the family reputation overmuch. Servants are ubiquitous in the Victorian era, from the wealthy employing dozens of men and women, to the lower middle class scraping together enough to employ a single maid. The relationship between servant and family is somewhat akin to a lopsided marriage, and this goes double for a magus. Small wonder then that most magi have servants that know at least a little of their "other life." The principle of conspicuous consumption applies to magi as well as Sleepers. As such, they often have more retainers or assistants than they truly need. By contrast, some magi choose or are assigned the role of servant. This may be for spying, espionage, protection, or inspiration. Sleepers in positions important to the Traditions or Order of Reason often find themselves with such extremely competent servants. The magi carefully manage their unwitting charges from a supposedly inferior position.

Apprenticeships and Initiations

Both the Traditions and the Order of Reason aggressively recruit not only to replace their losses but to expand their influence. While gender, race, and class don't concern most magickal organizations as a whole, factions within them carry prejudices of their own. The Order of Reason tends to distrust magi from outside of the industrial world, believing most of them to be potential spies from the Traditions and Crafts. Once a recruiter has tested the loyalty of a prospective magus, they assign them a mentor. Within the Order of Reason, this codified process tends to pigeonhole new apprentices and stifle creativity. The Traditions practice a more chaotic approach, which, for different reasons, can leave an apprentice with an unsuitable mentor. Some Tradition masters collect and trade apprentices, gaining prestige from their exploits.

The Order of Reason has a serious problem with classism. Only the exceptional few among the lower classes have a chance to overcome crushing poverty and child labor to reach the scientific understanding necessary to join the Order's upper echelons. The Order routinely places lower-class magi into its accelerated education program, which compresses the brutality of a decade of Victorian education into a scant few months. The use of experimental brain surgeries and drugs breaks more apprentices than it educates. Survivors graduate to the normal mentor-led curriculum. The Traditions generally accept members for who they are, but imperialist leanings often leave magi pigeonholed into Traditions associated with their cultures. A First Nations magus, for example, may find himself shepherded towards the Dream-Speakers, despite a keen interest in hermetic philosophy.

This era of heightened tensions results in rushed initiations and apprenticeships with more emphasis placed on protocol and less on actual magickal training. While the Horizon Realms remain strong and the Council of Nine Mystick Traditions holds considerable sway over Tradition magi, they struggle with the massive paradigm shifts occurring worldwide and the influx of new magi from across the globe. Some Traditions, like the Order of Hermes, still take pains to train their initiates for years. Others take a much more pragmatic approach. With training left in the hands of the individual mentor, this leads to a patchwork of training styles and knowledge. A handful of voices (mostly Hermetics) call for a formal curriculum, but the fractious Traditions are slow to change centuries-old habits.

Nascent magi supplement their sparse education by joining the worldwide plethora of secret societies and clubs. These secret societies range from the likes of the Green Men of Norwich's social club to the Running Stream Lodge of the Great Plains, to the hidden village of Abre-Mfalme in the Congolese jungles. These diverse groups pursue a variety of social, magickal, and political goals. Society members share magick techniques, provide protection, and give advice. Some clubs serve as little more than social outlets where magi meet and talk to others of their kind. Many societies accept members from all magickal paths, especially those presided over by powerful independent magi since they have little fear of political backlashes.

Whereas membership in a cabal usually requires formal oaths and links to a Chantry, most secret societies require only common interest. With the dawning of the 20th century, opinion on secret societies sours as stories of betrayals and corruption circulate. The infamous House of Phantoms affair in 1899 prompts Traditions and Order of Reason to officially ban membership in secret societies, dissolving the last social connections between the two groups. Improved teaching methods drive the final nail into the coffin of secret societies, removing their function as substitute mentors.

Secret Societies and Other Organizations

Magi band together in social groups, forming secret societies, for a common purpose. This may be companionship, information sharing, traveling the Umbra, or some other reason. Secret societies often accept magi regardless of affiliation, making membership secrecy especially important. Your Order of Reason superiors learning that you regularly share a billiards table with a Chakravanti is not a recommended career move. That said, hypocrisy is rife, and the upper echelons of the Traditions and the Order of Reason share more than a few club memberships themselves. More than one Tradition master censures his underlings for interacting with "the enemy" while taking brandy and cigars with a high-ranking luminary three times a week.

Secret societies arise from the turmoil of the Victorian era. While the great magickal powers engaged in low-key war

both within and without, human nature seeks sanctuary. Some magi need only a place they can speak their minds without fear. Others seek companionship, allies, or knowledge. That what happens within their walls stays secret is an unspoken rule, allowing magi to speak freely most of the time.

The Traditions and Order of Reason have overarching goals that don't always have a place for their individual members' agendas or social needs. In these cases, the secret society steps in to fill that gap. Much like every gentleman in London has a club, most magi worldwide have a secret society they call home. A magus needs his Tradition or Convention to be a magus, but he needs his secret society to help fulfill him personally.

Secret societies usually have unAwakened staff, and may rarely have members of groups outside the Awakened community, such as night folk and Umbrood. The ghosts of two fallen members of the Lion Society in Singapore provide advice to their younger members, treating them as their own children. Some groups invite those on the cusp of Awakening, guiding them along their journey. Many secret societies cross the boundaries of culture, race, and class in pursuit of their goals. The larger ones have multiple chapter houses across the world. Membership in clubs like the Twilight Northerners (daring Umbral explorers) or the Boston Twists (famous Certámen duelists) offers prestige and perks unavailable elsewhere.

With so much to deal with in Chantries and Cabals, you may well ask yourself, why use societies in your game? Secret societies offer a reflection of Sleeper culture in the era. They add a layer to player characters, and they offer the Storyteller a way to introduce new story threads and supporting characters. Lady Baxley, a Verbena, needs an expert in an esoteric healing art to save the life of the Nephandus holding her sister's soul. Baxley's Verbena cabal mates would never help an infamous dark magus, but maybe she can persuade someone in her dining club to help.

Secret Societies Worldwide

Gentlemen's clubs and societies flourish in Europe, North America, and the colonies. Their Awakened counterparts thrive, too. Their ranks filled with magi from these nations and a smattering of others. In the industrial world, secret societies hide in plain sight, masquerading as exclusive social clubs. The Edgeworth Club, for example, is a group of lower-class orphan magi, predominantly street children, who gather together in a London rookery for protection and knowledge-sharing. The magi are the self-appointed protectors of street kids and have traded blows with more than one dark creature in the fog-choked streets. The Order of Reason would dearly love to capture and reeducate these young magi. The Edgeworth Club has connections to the Hollow Ones, with the club serving as a kind of "internship" for prospective Hollowers.

North America plays host to colonial clubs, imported social groups from the African continent, and First Nations lodges and societies. Spiritualist clubs and groups travel around North America, proving very popular and providing excellent cover for all manner of Tradition magi. The gentlemen's clubs "back East" conceal factions dabbling in everything from debauchery to scientific research. The Offenbach Continuum in Boston foremost consists of Electrodyne Engineers along with a few other dogged mystery-hunters. The group's studies focus on a strange silver-white portal, known as the Continuum, discovered deep under the city.

The New World nurtures more openness for these groups' offerings than Europe's more restrictive atmosphere. Magi in the American south, a center of voodoo and hoodoo practices, hide their gatherings behind fronts of Sleeper agents and theatrics. Sleepers and Awakened mix harmoniously in the shadow of powerful Umbrood. The Devil's Dancers is a mixed group of practitioners, both Awakened and Sleeper, who travel throughout the South as part of a carnival. The dancers specialize in dealing with Umbrood, especially those angered or corrupted by recent colonial expansion. They both conceal and work their power through their performances.

In the great plains and beyond, the First Nations battle illness, famine, and draconian laws to stay alive and keep the flames of their cultures from guttering out. Native societies and lodges persevere by hiding ritual sites in the wilderness, disguising meetings as hunting trips, and developing secret signals and codes. Outside of the material world, the Shamans use the Maya dream zone or the Vulgate as sanctuaries, never truly meeting face-to-face but instead in spirit or thought-forms. The Rainmaker Society is one such group of First Nations medicine men and their allies aiming to preserve knowledge and culture. Generally peaceful, the group trains new magi, helps elders escape persecution, and hides cultural treasures. Rainmakers partially control a vast network of tunnels that fade in and out of the Umbra at certain times of the year. These tunnels cross half the continent and are home to the remnants of more than one culture already lost to the Sleeping world.

In the wider world, secret societies conceal themselves with greater care, especially given the colonial governments' paranoia towards local cultural groups. In China, secret societies among Sleepers work to support the common people, protect them from over-harsh treatment at the hands of the imperial dynasties, and instigate rebellions. The Wu Lung, Akashayana, and Euthanatoi all sponsor Sleeper societies while running their clubs and groups from even deeper in the shadows. Even then, arrogance on the part of some Wu Lung and Metal Dragons means that they can miss even better-hidden secret societies of peasant magi conspiring under their noses. These latter groups communicate through a network of Umbrood emissaries related to the celestial courts, although such envoys may alter or fail to deliver messages if the correct forms are not observed or the content simply offends them. The Society of the Moon Hare is one such Awakened activist group instigating rebellions and defending the people from monsters, both literal and figurative. The group's leadership regularly strikes against Wu Lung and Metal Dragons, and both groups actively hunt its members.

In Japan, the arrival of the famous Black Ships of Admiral Perry's fleet opens up the country to external influence. Awakened groups have better access to Japan than ever

before. New societies find their way into major cities, intent on learning a little of the strange Yurei traps and automatons crafted by Japanese magi. Cross-cultural societies form the basis for a new wave of interaction between the great magickal groups and the Japanese Awakened. Japan's Two Shoe Society's ghost hunters travel the occidental world seeking knowledge of the spirits of the West. Elders of the society suspect that unquiet souls of disrespected Western ancestors might well have a hand in fueling imperialist aggression, and wonder if they might lay such spirits to rest.

India's Awakened community, long accustomed to the cults of the proto-Chakravanti, embrace the concept of secret societies for teaching and social purposes. In turn, the East India Company's depredations prompt a rise in political and martial societies. India's native magi, scarred by the legacy of the Himalayan Wars centuries before, shy away from open warfare. Instead, groups focus on more subtle solutions to British occupation. In a twist, the majority of the Order of Reason in India oppose imperialism and quietly work to oppose its influence. These anti-imperialists must act carefully and use societies like the cryptic Blue Cog Cognate to spread their message. Members of the Cognate never meet in person, exchanging messages through newspaper advertisements and dead drops.

In Africa, secret societies take on the role of spies, educators, and archivists. Groups like the Elephant School, dominated by the Ngoma, preserve and teach cultural heritage. On the other hand, the Lion Society, a secretive militant sect of native magi from all Traditions, fiercely opposes both Nephandi and mortals engaged in slavery, profane cults, and other such practices.

Colonial influence means that gentleman's clubs are common in Africa, but they are far outnumbered by native societies. Magi across Africa usually arrange meetings as part of other events, such as safaris, celebrations, religious events, charity events, or schooling. These events hide the true nature of the group, allowing them to meet without too many prying eyes. Outside of the cities, strongholds and meeting places hide in the abundance of open space, provided one is careful not to attract the attention of an Order of Reason spy. The Children of Kabezya-Mpungu are primarily central African magi influenced by the philosophy of balance in all things. These magi believe the Order of Reason does bring some benefits, but they reject the harmful influences of imperialism. They fuse the technological and mystical in their magickal practices, attempting to make themselves into a bridge for the moderates in both the Order of Reason and Traditions alike. The Children walk a narrow and dangerous path, but they use their contacts on each side of the conflict to great effect.

Joining a Society

Whether for security concerns or the allure of exclusivity, secret societies don't advertise. These groups keep themselves small. Growing overmuch risks the attention of the great magickal groups. Both the Traditions and the Order of Reason dislike secret societies, seeing them as subversive or security risks. Fraught with tentative messages and clandestine meetings, joining such a group becomes a perilous affair.

Some societies actively recruit members based on common interests or recommendations from existing associates. Slow to trust, societies seek tests of loyalty, a display of knowledge, sponsorship by an existing member, or all these things. More mercenary clubs expect initiates to bring unique knowledge, gifts, or resources to help the organization. The Storyteller should decide what makes sense for the game based on the player characters and the narrative. An entire story arc might focus on joining a secret society, such as uncovering a Nephandi scheme, exposing an Order of Reason mole, or granting the knowledge necessary to free a family member from a dark curse.

Society Leadership

With no official recognition, nobody regulates the leadership of secret societies. Apocryphal stories speak of Nephandi masters sacrificing innocent club members, Marauders carrying their fellows away to bacchanal-like Paradox Realms, and even the occasional Sleeper stumbling into a leadership role. Leadership may be hereditary, democratic, merit-based, or bought. Some groups have councils or cabals of leaders, while in others a single guru or wise woman dominates the proceedings.

The Ivory Gentlemen of Hartford exclusively consists of conservative, male magi with a strong interest in politics and colonial exploitation. The Ivory Gentlemen offers great financial and social rewards to their members, but the inner leadership consists of a patient Nephandus, a viciously racist Hermetic, and a grasping member of the Invisible Exchequer. The misery inflicted worldwide by this group is almost incalculable, and when its activities come to light in the 1900s, the Order of Reason uses its example to ban membership in secret societies.

The Society of Melancholy Inspiration is a commune of artist and writers, based in the small town of Ancona in Italy. The group's members, both magi and Sleeper, hope to influence the world through art and beauty. Several wealthy Sleeper patrons support the society including, hidden among them, a vampiric dilettante. Carlotta Bonacini, a somewhat naive Verbena maga, nominally leads the collective but calls for opinions before making most decisions.

Members and Power Structure

What a societies' members do for and take from the society is key to understanding that group. The Four Rings Society, for example, has a strict (mostly age-based) hierarchy and its members strive to learn and share information about Umbrood and ghosts. The Offenbach Continuum, on the other hand, cares little for structure and has a single, tightly focused goal to understand the subject of their interest. Members of the Continuum share resources and debate the nature of the strange object, but outside their common obsession, they lack a cohesive structure.

Some groups harbor prejudices or include barriers to prospective members. The Edgeworth Club distrust adults, while the Lion Society is so paranoid about Nephandic infiltration that they constantly test each other. The Ivory Gentlemen only admit members with an upper-class English (not just British) upbringing, regarding everyone else as inferior. The Four Rings Society is open to others, but cultural differences and barriers to mystical understanding have so far kept their non-Japanese membership small. Some societies operate a tiered membership, like the Blue Cog Cognate, who mentor Sleeper scientists, offering them hints and guiding them towards Awakening. Cross-faction groups, like the Rainmaker Society, gain much from their diversity. Their understanding is broader and their members harder to pick out of a crowd.

Societies rarely exist without support staff. Social clubs, like the Parisian Mystic Diner's Club, who dine on mythic beasts and ephemera, require scores of servants to keep them operating smoothly. Practically-focused clubs may require assistants to support their day-to-day tasks. These servants are often ignorant of their master's true nature, but some societies find it more useful to grant such retainers a measure of occult knowledge. The Devil's Dancers travel with Sleeper performers, a few of whom the magi helped in the past, after which they pledged their assistance in return.

Structure reflects purpose. Social clubs like the aforementioned Mystic Diners tend to be informal affairs, whereas groups like the Lion Society operate a cell structure where captives can't expose the entire group. Membership commonly comes with responsibilities, such as the Blue Cog Cognate's seeding of technomantic material into schools and educational institutes, or the Rainmaker Society's transcribing of oral records. The time invested in society activities usually depends on what the member is willing to give. Few societies have the influence to demand copious amounts of their member's time.

In return for responsibilities and time, secret societies share resources with members in line with their goals. A meeting place is the most common. Like mortal clubs, these meeting spots might have grand sleeping arrangements, like the Ivory Gentlemen's decadent mansion on the outskirts of London, or ritual spaces like the Edgeworth Club's (rather drafty) summoning circle. Occult libraries are common, as with the Elephant Society's famous Living Library, and the Four Rings Society's grand archive. Most clubs offer some form of social

connections. The Edgeworth Club knows every fence and corruptible peeler in London, whereas the Devil's Dancers have a network of friends spread across the American south.

Secret societies usually have uncodified standards of behavior or etiquette that can trip up newcomers and reveal would-be infiltrators. Rules against the use of uncanny magick or otherwise drawing Sleeper attention to the society are common. Open conflict with club members inside club grounds, breaking the Entente (see below), or bringing the club into disrepute are likewise grounds for punishment. As well as these obvious protocols, most societies have a list of minor traditions and practices unique to their history and nature, such as greeting etiquette, rules around gift-giving, and expectations around time-keeping. Depending on the nature of the secret society, punishments for transgressions range from minor censure to expulsion, or worse.

Manners Maketh Magus — Etiquette for Magi

The Victorians produce countless books on etiquette, and with good reason. The social landscape of the industrial world is a nightmarish labyrinth of protocol and decorum designed to exclude those not born to it. Outside the imperialist sphere of influence, magi contend with social situations and complexities beyond anything the likes of which a London gentleman might conceive. Each culture has its traditions, laws, and etiquette, as does each group of Awakened, let alone all the legions of Night Folk and Umbrood. The great library in Doissetep contains an entire annex dedicated to protocols and pacts from mortal and Umbrood to Night-Folk and Fae courts.

Some wonder why magi choose to inflict new rules upon themselves when they have the choice and power to ignore such protocols. These rules, both great and small, protect the Awakened from each other and offer a framework of stability in a world that can otherwise be cruel and chaotic. Rules enforce structure, ensure a magi's place within it, protect the weak (sometimes), and reign in the foolish and dangerous.

Basic Etiquette

Approaching another magus in public is a delicate affair. A pair of Chorus Celestial magi might know each other by symbolism hidden on their clothing or an archaic version of a common blessing. An Order of Reason luminary at a cafe might doodle an equation on a piece of paper, dropping it for his suspected ally at another table to complete. Outside of the great magical organizations, a magus must rely on local conventions and variations of the Entente (see below) when making contact. In all cases, approaching another magus with weapons or will-working tools holstered is considered good form. Trust is a rare thing in these times. Sometimes introductions are better made by another Awakened rather than forcing an acquaintance where none is desired.

When first meeting another magus, it is polite to refer to them formally, usually citing their presumed rank. Err on the side of caution; respect is a valuable currency when dealing with other magi. Treating a potential senior with respect is both good sense and honorable. A delicate social dance ensues when meeting a magus from an alien culture for the first time, as both sides try to figure out exactly how much deference they should show. Once the magi have gone through these formalities, they acknowledge each other and become acquaintances. This acquaintance may grow to become something less formal depending on time and circumstances.

The terms magus (pl. magi), maga (pl. magae) and magum (pl. maga) refer to masculine, feminine, and non-binary magi respectively, but many younger magi consider the latter terms archaic and use magus and magi for all genders of the Awakened. Internally, the Order of Reason refers to their Awakened members as luminaries, but few outside their ranks use this term. Magi rarely bother with Sleeper titles except at public events, preferring instead to use Awakened rank, if any (See **M20**, p. 141).

Several broad social contracts are generally followed among magi in the Victorian age. Note that outside of the Protocols and the Precepts of Damian, these guidelines are only that, and not enforceable rules. Breaching guidelines damages a magus' reputation, resulting in ostracization or worse. Reputation and respect are crucial, so most magi avoid overt breaches whenever possible.

Customs and Courtesies

The Order of Reason has the Precepts of Damian, handed down to Queen Victoria by the College Invisible. The Traditions have the Protocols, with their foundations in the Order of Hermes. For magi outside these groups, the Entente is a set of conventions generally recognized by magi in the industrial world.

Numerous minor pacts and agreements exist outside of these codes of conduct, some common sense, some practical rules, and others cross-cultural agreements. Mortal sorcerers, Umbrood, and Night-Folk inspired many of these pacts and agreements, mostly through their own social contracts. Examples of the more obscure rules include several hundred yards of text concerning gifting, spawned by dealings with the Fae courts of old; a mistranslated old Hermetic law prohibiting the eating of garlic before meeting with vampires; and the forbidding of the use of spirit magick on 7th March every year in a tiny coastal village in Northern France.

The Precepts of Damian

The Precepts of Damian form part of the Order of Reason's *raison d'être* and manifesto. Professor Damian, a representative of the College Invisible, the unseen masters of the Order of Reason, outlines these guidelines to Queen Victoria in the late 19th century. These rules bring the Order of Reason's goals into sharp focus — a new philosophy for a new era. Within a few months of the precepts' release, the College Invisible release clarifications to senior magi within the Order to help with their correct interpretation. New clarifications of the precepts and their initial interpretations, listed below, become a yearly event within the Order of Reason as the world changes and the interpretations require updating.

Order, Stasis, and Consensus

Bring Stasis and order to the Universe. Predictability brings safety. Once all is discovered and all is known, Unity will be won.

This lofty precept requires the illuminated to reign in their use of uncanny magick. It outright bans the use of catastrophic magick except in the most extreme circumstances. The illuminated must lead by example, and the structured advancement of their magick means that one day, everything they do will fall within the realm of the mundane. Luminaries use this rule as a measure of their fellows, looking down upon those breaching it, and ostracizing those flaunting or skirting it.

Technology and Training

Convince the Masses of the benevolence of science, commerce, and politics and of the power of Rationality. Conflict and suffering will be eliminated in our Utopia.

This precept requires illuminated agents to use the trappings of science at all times. The successes of the Order of Reason must come from science and rational thinking rather than mystical nonsense. The precept encourages the illuminated to create and herald benevolent scientific wonders for the betterment of others. Luminaries most often uphold this ideal by sponsoring and partaking in events that celebrate modern science and technology.

Safety and Security

Preserve the Gauntlet and the Horizon. Chaotic individuals who open gateways with impunity threaten the stability of our world. Uncontrolled portals also allow outside forces, such as Nephandi, access to our world. This must never happen.

This precept is a straightforward series of commands: thicken the Gauntlet, patrol the Horizon, deal with those who would endanger the world. The term "chaotic individuals" causes many luminaries to question their connections and acquaintance with long-term friends in the Traditions. A lot of soul-searching leads to friendships decades in the making broken asunder.

Knowledge and Surveillance

Define the nature of the universe. Knowledge must be absolute, or chaos will envelop all. The elemental forces of the universe must not be left to the caprices of the unknown.

This Precept commands the illuminated to catalog the entire universe. Some of the more zealous factions within the Order use this Precept to justify terrible breaches of personal privacy. Some luminaries use this precept to excuse mixing with Tradition magi. After all, one cannot learn if one cannot observe closely.

Progress and the Pogrom

Destroy Reality Deviants. Their recklessness threatens our security and our progress toward Unity.

This rule gives the luminaries the moral authority to do whatever they want to destroy reality deviants. In the Victorian Era, the definition of "reality deviant" is somewhat lax and many luminaries decide on a case-by-case basis who they consider as such. A British Void Seeker visiting South Africa may decide that a Zulu Ngoma magus is a threat to the Order while playing billiards twice a week with two Verbenae warlocks in his club back home in old Blighty.

Enlightenment and the Empowered Elite

Shepherd the Masses; protect them from themselves and from others.

This precept is a favorite of those within the Order who see themselves as shepherds of humanity, taking a paternal, and oftentimes condescending, approach to Sleepers. Luminaries cleaving too much to this rule appear condescending to the masses — something particularly irritating to higher-class Sleepers patronized by a magus of a lower social class. Not knowing one's place in the world is a huge faux pas in Victorian society that trips up more than one luminary, with devastating consequences for the Order's agenda.

The Protocols

Inspired by the ancient Code of Hermes, the Protocols are the basic rules of behavior laid out by the Council of Nine, the high council of the Traditions. A magus breaking a protocol usually finds themselves answering to a tribunal of their peers. The sad reality is that in Chantries with imperialist leanings, those of the "right breeding" are rarely punished as harshly as their lower-class counterparts.

Respect Those of Greater Knowledge

A rule grounded in common sense. Respect the magus who, with a blink of her eye, can turn you into a smoldering cinder. Joking aside, the concept of "greater knowledge" is a hotly debated topic among the more imperialistic magi who regard the native magi of colonized realms to be "naturally" below them in terms of knowledge. Classist leanings pollute this concept, too. Upper-class magi regard themselves to be naturally more knowledgeable than their lower-class counterparts. Imperialist magi wage a controversial campaign for the Tradition's ranking system to include sub-divisions denoting social class so adepts from the upper classes won't have to bow to native masters.

A Tutor's Debt Must Be Repaid

The specter of classism rears its ugly head again. Upper-class magi happily teach their peers with little expectation of payment, whereas a working-class magus might find themselves little more than an indentured servant. Even years later, a student may be socially hampered and put upon by a former master, and vice versa.

A Magus' Word is his Honor; Break Not a Sworn Vow

Aside from formal punishments, breaking a sworn oath is a sure way to ruin your reputation, a very precious thing in the Victorian age. In a recent case, Lord Bartholomew Northman bani Flambeau broke an oath to a Moroccan Euthanatos maga. Although he received only a minor censure by a tribunal of his peers in London, Northman found himself banned from his social clubs and his name fouled in London society. Eventually, he emigrated to Australia to avoid the shame.

The Will of an Oracle Must Always be Obeyed

Though rare, a few Oracles yet remain, mostly cloistered in Tradition strongholds. More than one arrogant, imperial magus disrespecting a "half-dressed savage" finds themselves a living lesson in the foolishness of imperialist ideals. Most oracles are unspeakably old and have zero patience for what they see as the fleeting zeitgeist of the era's great Sleeper powers.

Betray Not Your Cabal or Chantry

A warning dating back to the earliest days of the Traditions. Betrayal is one of the Traditions' greatest sins and the one that hits them the hardest when it occurs. Imperialist magi punish the breaking of this rule especially harshly when dealing with one of their own. A magus from the lower classes isn't expected to understand true honor, but a fellow gentleman should know better.

Conspire Not with the Enemies of Ascension

New methods of travel and communication offer new opportunities for conspiracy. Magi arriving in a new region are often looked on with suspicion unless they have social connections who can vouch for them. A letter of introduction or the word of a respected person opens many closed doors.

Protect the Sleepers; They Know Not What They Do

Most Tradition magi consider this the whole reason for the organization's existence. This protocol theoretically makes things *very* difficult for imperialist magi, but in practice, this protection is often only extended against supernatural threats. An imperialist magus might stand by or even help Sleeper forces in the Congo conquer or slaughter villagers, but feel obliged to defend those same villagers once under a Western power's rule if an Umbrood attacked, justified by a twisted form of *noblesse oblige*.

The Entente

Intended to guide those living in industrialized societies, this set of social rules are among the first things taught to a newly Awakened magus. These rules enable magi to function in society without having to worry about their lives turning into a battlefield or driving themselves into paranoid seclusion. Although drawing inspiration from the Precepts and Protocols, magi living in the industrial world consider these rules more practical. If you choose to live within the European empires, these rules are both wise precautions and helpful protections.

While there is no formal power enforcing these rules, magi consider breaking the Entente as poor form, damaging the breaker's reputation, and even making her fair game should others wish to act against her.

Maketh No War, Without First Offering Fair Declaration

Awakened society considers a day's notice before commencing hostilities the bare minimum, though some more "loutish" enlightened consider shouting insults mere seconds before lobbing a fireball to be fair play. Older and wiser magi may give written warning days in advance, hoping that the very threat of all-out war is enough to bring their enemy to the negotiating table. Breaking this rule invites others to do the same to you. As the realities of modern warfare and espionage take hold, this rule's importance wanes significantly.

Bestow Knowledge on the Newly Awakened

This rule was once part of the Code of Hermes. Nowadays, this "bestowal" might be as little as spending a few hours having tea and explaining the basics of enlightenment, or as much as considering the initiate as a new apprentice or cabal-mate. At the very least, a magus is expected to explain the Entente to his fellow Awakened.

Steal Not from Your Fellow Awakened

This includes thefts of knowledge and objects related to the working of magick. Breaking this rule invites others to retaliate in the same manner, and the aggrieved party has free reign to punish as they see fit, either personally or by dragging a Willworker in front of a bush court. Being branded a thief is a good way to ruin a reputation and get expelled from many social circles.

Family is Sacrosanct

You do not injure a magus' family unless they are actively complicit in her actions. Victims of such transgressions are often surprised to find dozens of allies eager to help them enact vengeance. Imperialist magi frequently ignore this rule when dealing with native peoples, and justify it with all manner

of pseudo-science and racist nonsense from phrenology to racial superiority. After all, if the magus is of a superior race, he can hardly be expected to give the same courtesy to a "savage" that he would give to a fellow gentleman.

Honor Your Word

Magi wield vast power and most take the view that honor and responsible use of magick is key to living a good life. Most magi consider keeping to the letter — if not the spirit — of an agreement good form. Reputations are made and lost on adherence to this rule.

Respect Your Elders and Betters

This is another rule that straddles the gap between old codes and common sense. Betters, in this case, usually refers to those of greater enlightened power rather than referring to social constructs or imperialist racial beliefs.

Be Subtle in Your Arts, Lest Others Know You For What You Are

Also known as the Rule of Shade, this has been in place since the Burning Times, long-observed and later adopted by the Traditions as a semi-formal 8th Protocol. The rule makes a lot of sense both because of Sleepers and because the witch hunts of the past aren't so far distant in many regions.

Pacts and Promises

Outside of polite society, there is little to stop magi from exploiting Sleepers or even supernatural entities. Their ire, however, and the resulting destruction and exposure would be bad for everyone. The pacts and promises below are general guidelines governing what is expected of magi outside of industrial society.

These rules are known by many names, aren't the same everywhere, and are enforced only by social pressure. Each geographic region and culture has a handful of additions to these rules, usually concerning cultural taboos or requirements. In China and its surrounding territories, for example, the Wu Lung extol the virtues of the Heavenly Paths, a twelve-volume set of rules with the more general pacts as their basis. The paths are rarely enforced, but most Wu Lung and their allies make an outward show of obeying them. In Australia, some native magi cleave to the Bone Rhymes, straightforward rhyming rules heavily influenced by Umbrood and containing practical wisdom when it comes to dealing with spirits. The Bone Rhymes list a dozen or more formal greetings for various Umbrood lords. A magus using these greetings for the correct spirit usually receives a positive reaction.

The general pacts and promises are as follows:

Respect Power and the Unknown

Some variants of this rule include asking permission to enter the territory of or offering gifts to host magi. Imperialist magi exploit this pact, bargaining it into permanent footholds in new territories. Word of such abuse gets around as the era progresses, and this rule slowly turns more towards resisting the unknown, causing many native magi to isolate themselves and their people from imperialist expansions or to actively rebuff attempts to enter their territory.

Trouble Not Mortals or Expose the Awakened to Their Scrutiny

The latter part of this rule may not exist in regions where people believe in magick and magi are known to exist, such as portions of the pre-colonial United States. Knowing the Order of Reason's dislike of uncanny magick, native magi often flout this rule, even bringing cadres of Sleepers from their Territories to meetings with luminaries.

Twist Not the Soul of Men Against a Magus in His Domain

This pact specifically refers to the eroding of local paradigms and Territories. Usually only broken in times of war, the Order of Reason's ignoring of this rule inspires several native magi to infiltrate "secure" Order of Reason territories to undermine their paradigm through cults and other similar groups.

Warn Travelers of Dangers Within Your Domain

This is just good manners, but it is not unheard of for magi to "forget" to warn those that have sufficiently infuriated them. Imperialist magi can expect to fall victim to a great many "mistakes and omissions."

Be Like the Waters and Dance Before the Silver Moon

The Order of Reason (the silver moon in this case) can't be fought or reasoned with. Native magi who try to go to war with the Order end up dead or worse. This new promise, spread by the ghosts of dead magi, tells native magi in unconquered territories to avoid the Order's attention, at least in the short term.

Chapter Two: The Council of Nine

"I ask for no other epitaph on my tomb but 'SHE TRIED TO FOLLOW TRUTH'."
—Annie Besant

The world of the Awakened is vast. The horizons of Earth give way to the distant stars and the depths of the spirit worlds. In the old times, the Mystick Traditions could dominate the world as if on a whim. Magick elevated them above and beyond mortals. At the heart of the Traditions, offering unity of magical practices, the Council of Nine stood mighty and beyond challenge. Hubris walks hand-in-hand with power.

The impossible happened. A Tradition fell, and Nine became Eight. The mystical significance shattered. None of the great and powerful on the Council knew what to do. A rabid flurry of activity, proclamations, and arguments about the tragedy stretched from months to years, and they did nothing. What had been legendary became disconnected. They ignored and neglected growing threats.

Amid the haze of self-absorption, bickering, and doubt, wickedness crept in. As King William IV of England lay on his deathbed in 1837, new tragedy struck. Three of the masters of House Tharsis perished, each consumed in green flame. Days later, unknown assailants attacked the Verbena witch, Brianna ni Lug, in the Tradition's Horizon Realm of Three Grove. None of the guardian druids could cure the venom inflicted. An army of steam-powered, metal men attacked the headquarters of the Knights Templar. In Washington D.C., a pair of Chakravanti Aided fell into an ambush, their target slain at the cost of both falling to Jhor. In Concordia, the protections failed for a moment as a series of ritualistic murders brought infernal entities into the Council Chamber. The resulting struggle took the lives of Cassius Rune of the Cultus Ecstasis and Jh'dabal of the Dream-Speakers. Cassius suspended the moment of his death long enough to whisper his last words to Quaesitori Bianca Ginelli — who immediately left Concordia for Earth.

Where Are We Now?

As Victoria takes the crown, the British Empire blossoms with technological might and scientific bounty. Meanwhile, the Traditions that have for so long held to a world of wonders and dangers, and an age filled with magick, are now scattered and fractious. With little more than lipservice paid to it for so long, the Ascension War has suddenly heated up into a deadly and desperate conflict once more, four centuries after it began. The Order of Reason rises alongside the newly crowned empires of the world. They seek to end the Traditions and their "unsound" ways, to protect humanity from itself and the horrors of a world unbridled.

Despite such dangers, the truest threat to the survival of the Traditions may be themselves. In pride and hubris, many within the Traditions support the rise of new empires just

as they did centuries ago. Their wiser brothers and sisters watch with a sense of dread and horror, and rebellion stirs. Clashes within each Tradition begin with words, reasoning, and politics — but they quickly move to other means. Rivals unleash magick in open challenges, to directly sway minds, or in outright assassination attempts. Trust erodes, friendships fray, and the smallest divergences in perspective can kill.

The Order of Reason is not the only entity to rise on the back of the British, French, Russian, and Ottoman empires. Some among the Chorus Celestial and the Order of Hermes benefit greatly from rampant imperialism. Pro-imperial factions have long existed in both Traditions and grown in power over time. The Order of Hermes used this to isolate themselves to their studies, and the Chorus Celestial had factions all too ready to co-opt any strong emerging monotheist faiths. Neither anticipated the voracity of the Order of Reason's integration programs within civil power structures. Nor did they greatly care at first, as it seemed so divergent from their desires. Too late they realized the scope of the threat. Denouncers of such imperialist philosophies latched onto these failings, and internal strife now rips at the core of these Traditions.

Some desperately believe that the very survival of their Traditions is bound to these new institutions and empires. They cling to the idea that control might yet be wrested away from the Order of Reason. They hope that once this is achieved they can then change or channel the rapacity of conquest and exploitation. Others challenge this position, already seeing the threats and travesties that the British Empire wreaks all around them. They see the flaws of the ancient, hidebound Traditions mirrored in the actions of the empire — desiring power for power's sake, and hoarding resources gained from the suffering of the many for the use of the lucky few. Ironically, their words echo the rhetoric and accusations spoken by the Order of Reason. A few, falling to despair, fear that it is already too late to change course. They fear that their Traditions are not towers of strength but isolated islands of a fading dream alone in the storm. Internal disagreements too often lead to blood and politicking rather than any real achievement or solution.

In the eyes of their peers, a sense of superiority and exclusivity often isolates the Order of Hermes from the rest of the Traditions. In truth, the Order of Hermes is an old and wily beast, far from disconnected or out of the fight. They can be found embedded in secret societies and masonic lodges across the British Empire and in their contemporaries elsewhere. Others are desperate to bridge the divide and restore the full Council, as they still see it as the best hope for the Traditions and the future fate of humanity.

The Chorus Celestial often finds themselves at odds with the Verbenae and Dream-Speakers across the world. The more aggressive philosophies espoused by the Choristers support the missionary persecutions of native populations from whom those Traditions draw many Awakened recruits. As explorers and settlers push out, and as indigenous populations resist attempts at colonization, the Awakened unleash their powers on both sides. The Ahl-i-Batin also find themselves clashing with the Chorus Celestial amid the struggles of the Ottoman Empire. Their ranks are torn between supporting an imperial ideal or opposing it as a tool of oppression that grows ever more callous as it finds itself under assault by outside influences.

Sanctums in the Storm

At the dawing of the heart of the 19th century, the Traditions — already on a precipice —fight each other, are at war with the Order of Reason, and discover darker truths. Newly Awakened and younger members of the Traditions all too easily feel lost even before the maelstrom descends upon them. Yet they are neither alone nor without support. The Mystick Traditions have not stood for the turn of ages to crumble in the metaphorical blink of an eye so easily now. Each has sanctums amid the storm.

Ahl–i–Batin

Once every three years, members of a Batini group, calling themselves the Scions of Babel, gather at a small garden in an unremarkable town some sixty miles south of Baghdad. Here, they talk of all they have seen and heard in the previous years, and meticulously record everything. More importantly, they plan how to influence the new course of events.

The Scions of Babel actively seek to guide the actions of young or disenfranchised cabals, steering each towards others who may aid their endeavors. They keep constant contact with each of these cabals, ready to feed more information and potential avenues of resources to them. They record the results of each interaction and carefully map the effects of their activities on the Order of Reason's programs. The Scions insist this is vital to the survival of the Ahl-i-Batin, and even the Traditions as a whole.

Akashayana

On a cold mountaintop, seven masters from various Akashayana sects gathered. They had seen the dangers of war and empire, and now the rise of the Order of Reason blending the sciences of the whole world into an unassailable paradigm. Even the mastery of the martial form now faltered before automatic weapons and lightning guns. They decided the Seven Dragon Riddle would be the solution.

Opening accessible martial schools across the globe is the Riddle's physical expression. While also places of practice and education, the schools form a great working by the seven masters. An echo of the way Paradox grips the world, they are a battleground in which to fight the Order of Reason's agents. So long as the 'parent' school or temple (usually one of the seven masters' sanctums) still stands, being within the walls of a Riddle school enhances the abilities of even mundane practitioners of Akashic philosophy.

Chorus Celestial

The gates of Haven are open to any who can find it and claim sanctuary. Not a single place, as such, Haven is a collection of four nodes, linked by an Umbral realm, that shift around the world. The Sister of Gabrielle, Jaqueline Deschamp, created Haven when she slew the Nephandus Francoise la Morte. The act either killed Jaqueline also or led to her Ascension.

The nodes all appear the same: a simple stone arch in a local style leading to a plain courtyard of Greco-Roman design. No malefic entity may pass the arch. and magick suppresses violence within the courtyard.

Chakravanti (Euthanatoi)

In India, the Chakravanti are almost overwhelmed by the burden of death they have taken upon themselves. The Jhor is a very real danger and, as the world slips deeper into chaos and suffering, the Euthanatoi's duties grow daily. The loosely organized Tradition must face the fact that too many of their number have succumbed to the darkness they carry.

Hidden in the Indian wilds is a forgotten city that has no name. At the heart of the city is a titanic statue of a wheel made of interlocking arms reaching out from a central point. This is the Chakravanti touchstone, where one weighed upon by Jhor may come and face the judgment of the self. Those who pass, return to the world to take up their burden anew. Those who fail, do not return at all.

Dream-Speakers

The Hill exists purely within the strange Umbral realm, known as the Dreamtime. By Umbral roads or the dreams of lost seekers, only the Dream-Speakers can reach it, and within it walk far from the world.

Fr the Dream-Speakers, the Hill is a bastion not of physical might, but matters of the heart. The Dream-Speakers face some of the very worst the 19th century has to offer, often standing against impossible odds with acts that can all too easily feel futile and hopeless. Standing upon the Hill, a Dream-Speaker meets a litany of their selves — everything they were and everything they are. One self feeds the wisdom of a different road traveled to the other. When a Dream-Speaker walks down the Hill they are only one, and yet they are not alone.

Order of Hermes

Resting high atop a New England coastal bluff is an old stone tower, an edifice most out of place among the modern buildings of the cities that grow around it. The common onlooker sees only grass, rock, and sea spray —enchantments of the most cunning nature shroud the tower from casual observation. One must know what they are looking for to find it. This is the Order of Hermes' Chantry of Wayshrine, guarded by House Shaea — and it holds a grand treasure.

The Arcanabula Victus is a mighty tome, thick with pages of the wisdom of the ages. Penned at the dawn of creation, bound within its pages are the Names of all things: people, objects, locations, events, and even moments in time. Written not with words but images, overlaying in layers that run impossibly deep into the page, studying the book may reveal the path to success for whatever problem rests upon the scholar. Understanding the answer — *that's* the real trick.

Sahajiya (Cultus Ecstasis)

In the time-tangled back- and under-streets of England's city of Birmingham rests one of the Sahajiya's secrets — the Scribbling. Scrawled graffiti appears all over the growing

city, following the proud tradition of expression through urban vandalism that has existed since the days of Rome. Yet the writing on some of these Birmingham walls holds real power, one that the Cultus Ecstasis is all too happy to guide and focus.

The dispirited, disheartened, and those in the grip of ennui all look for a release of their spiritual woe, and the Scribbling delivers. Unlike opium dens that rob one of will and spirit, often in accordance to some Order of Reason scheme, the Scribbling encourages the lifting of voices and inspires creativity to transcend the flesh and the moment. Poetry works its way into graffiti, stories, and songs among work crews as they gather in small canal-side pubs. In the thriving, rebellious pulse of the Scribbling, the Sahajiya can draw a moment into eternity.

Verbena

In 1817, the Verbenae across the world gathered at over a hundred different locations — from Stonehenge to Ayers Rock, the blood witches brought sacrifices to sacred stones. At a signal, fires lit and ancient songs enticed wild powers. Storms rolled and lightning danced across mountains and plains alike as the Verbenae enacted their workings from dusk until dawn. This is the Song of the Stones – a preparation for what was to come.

Across the world standing stones, primeval statues, and sacred hills are often places of power and sources of great nodes. Lesser sites — once the focus of primeval worship — are little more than objects of archeological curiosity in these modern days, except to a Verbena who knows the Song. With blood spilled on earth and rock, and words of power on their lips, the Verbena may touch the wellspring of the ancient world.

A Broken Council

The Council of Nine has been a broken thing for centuries. Long enough that for many it has always been the Council of Eight. Still, whispers suggest that it shall yet be nine again, that all the seats shall be filled, and the power of the Mystick Traditions unified once more. Amid the turmoil enfolding the globe, reports of Umbral beings bringing revelation, self-proclaimed prophets, and the hushed counsel of ancient masters are easy to dismiss as mere hearsay or wishful thinking. Those trying to delve into the truth of such stories find either frustrating dead ends or even darker fates.

Pragmatists of this new age see those harking back to the glory days of the Council of Nine as naive dreamers. The Council today seem as distant masters, more concerned with their squabbles than the world at large. In contrast, though, many magi yet hold fast to hope for the Council's future and the belief that it may serve as the key to victory against a resurgent Order of Reason.

The current conflict with the Order stemmed from a sudden shift, moving from acknowledged adversarial viewpoints to outright hostility with surprising speed. First to vanish were chantries near areas of colonial expansion. Individual magi of relative repute suffered attacks or simply vanished without warning. Power struggles were common enough among the Traditions that a few of these incidents could be put down to personal rivalries turned vicious. As the frequency and hostility of these events increased, it became clear that only exceptional bad luck or exceptionally talented strategic planning could be at work.

Politics and poison crept into Horizon's council chambers, and the masters' hearts and minds. Colleagues, students, old friends, and Chantries all suffered losses. Hubris and arrogance clothe a magus as easily as a waistcoat or robes might. Discourse slipped into open accusations of one cabal working against another. In this confusion, more than a few opportunists were indeed doing just that, adding to the growing chaos. Despite its successes, many were convinced that the Council of Nine had been a mistake, an error, that made them easier targets. By reaching out to other Willworkers and accepting their weaker understanding of the truths of the world, the Council of Nine had weakened each group's lore and secret ways. Any unity of purpose in facing common enemies failed in the minds of these men and women, who decided that new destinies and methods must be sought alone.

Now, in the aftermath, some whisper of massive-scale Qlippothic influence within the Traditions while the Order of Reason initiated its programs. This has led to the belief that a Nephandic influence may also have spread within the Order of Reason, corresponding to the Order's own internal strife and restructuring. Among those bold enough to investigate such a possibility, particular names keep bubbling to the surface: the Chantry of Broken Mirrors, a Nephandus called John Never-Eyes, and the Hermetic House of Tharsis.

Some masters and adepts have tried to unravel the rot that has spread across the remaining Council, but Paradox has exacted a terrible toll on all who have so far tried to unroll such a large segment of Time. All too often, the result has been a backlash of Quiet infusing investigators' minds and Avatar, trapping them in a nightmare.

All these rumors of Nephandi, and of masters turning Marauder, also serve to sow yet more doubt and division among the Traditions. The worst of it comes almost entirely by their own hand. Humanity has a strange way of reacting when full of fear or faced with the unknown. Such a lesson the Traditions should have learned well by now, while the Order of Reason has been sure to record it in its new training manuals.

In the wake of all this, factions within the Traditions began to argue for new rapprochements with the Order of Reason. They claim, in a variety of ways, that the Ascension War is a conflict for the vainglorious, and that there are better ways — that an accord can be reached with the Order to the benefit of both parties. After all, they argue, this whole conflict was more of a healthy rivalry only a few short centuries ago. Some Tradition magi have already made accords with their Luminary counterparts without the support of the Council of Nine, to varying degrees of success. The risks are great.

Delegations do go missing, some only to be seen later among agents of the Conventions, others vanishing completely. More than a few Chantries in the care of such cabals fell silent and empty in recent years, their nodes capped with new Convention constructs.

In the wake of the Council of Nine withdrawing into infighting and isolation, the state of the Traditions does seem to be a sorry one. However, all is far from lost. The Traditions are not yet dust in the wind. Isolationism, nihilism, madness, and deluded notions of peace bought at freedom's price — these are terrible dangers for the Traditions, and the Ascension War itself stands on a knife's edge. Yet, the Council of Nine's secrecy has helped to insulate many of the Chantries outside of Concordia's walls from its deadly politics. The earthbound Chantries now act with increasing freedom to face the threats of Convention, Nephandus, and Marauder as they see fit. This freedom exemplifies the heart and soul of the Traditions' stake in the Ascension War.

The Keeper of Horizon

News of the discord in Concordia ran a shockwave through the Traditions. The Solificati had been gone for a long time by Earth's reckoning, and the Council had held. So, what went wrong?

Several beings may have the answer: an enigmatic entity known as 'Dream of Hope', John Never-Eyes (if he exists), and perhaps some in House Tharsis. One creature certainly knows — the Keeper of Horizon.

Though a magus once, not long ago, no one recalls the Keeper's name. The Keeper resides in a fragment of Concordia split away from the floating city and cast into the depths of the Astral Umbra — the broken concept of a tower tumbling through the star-laced night. The Keeper itself was there when things changed for the worse, and has been Marauder ever since. The Keeper's Quiet ripped it away from the Horizon and tore all memory of its identity from the world.

To restore the Keeper one must find it, enter the Quiet and remind the Keeper of its name. Then the Quiet will end, and the Keeper may tell of what it knows.

Visions for Tomorrow

Those with an eye to the future and an ear for prophecy know that the Council of Nine is far from finished. They have heard the stories of prophets in the Umbra, and talked to cabals that encountered them. They have cast divinations, and supped from the cup of fates. They know more is yet to come. The greatest scholar pulling at the skein and threads, the Euthanatos Ishann Amand, penned a letter that materialized at eleven Chantries around the world just as the sun rose in each location. Ishann has not been heard from since. The contents of the letter were as follows:

Another departure waits at the gate of the wheel
Those whose truth is known will be denied
By loom of reason cast aside
By the broken clocks abide
With material strength, we will heal
The limits that we have seen
Are but beginnings of another dream
You have until the sky turns red
To awaken all you can
Ere' men of metal come
I see lightning stretch across the world
A cage of power, built by words
Numbers dance, but Two was one too far
Everywhere is nowhere
Unless you speak in code
The empire's greatest fortress
Is its greatest downfall
For the stone has not forgotten
The sword will heed the call
The grail is the lie
Wearing cauldron's truth
A dragon holds the scepter
A cat wears the crown
A wolf howls its last
The dead man knows

This is not the only cryptic message spreading among magi. Other prophecies and auguries suggest similar metaphors. To succeed, the Council of Nine must be restored to its full nine seats. To this end, the Traditions, so grand in their shared wisdom, now look to the Crafts and the workers of the Art across the globe as the spread of imperial powers opens once distant places for closer scrutiny. Maybe the new Ninth Tradition is already there, simply waiting for its time to rise and take its place on the Council. As such, the Council of Nine, or at least those operating with its restoration as their intent, eagerly respond to all rumors of potent magickal activity emerging around the world. Anything outside the boundaries of the known lore and practices of the Traditions themselves draws these hopefuls, looking at the possibility that a new peer may exist.

The so-called Hollow Ones gather attention with their power bound in modern mysticism. Their practices draw from popular literature or stage productions instead of any of the Old Ways held sacred by many of the Traditions. This is a concern for some. They fear that these practitioners are

eroding the ancient secrets or using inferior tools and methods that they only partially understand. Magi watching the Hollow Ones closely believe that maybe, just maybe, there is something in their strange, cobbled-together mysticism that could subvert the growing Consensus far more readily than the Traditions would willingly admit. With this observation, perhaps the future of the Council and the ninth seat rests with them.

A far more popular belief among the Tradition masters is that one of the Crafts from the far corners of the world shall rise to take the ninth seat. They read explorers' journals about the Ngoma in Africa, send out their agents into the world to talk with the Taftâni, listen to reports out of New Orleans and Africa alike of the Bata'a and exchange letters with those familiar with the Wulong. Some trawl the Umbra for chance meetings or journey to realms they had previously ignored simply to see who else they may discover. So fevered — some may say desperate — is this search that at times entire cabals are sent to scour unknown regions of both Earth and Umbra looking for any sign or portent. Likewise, magi pursue rumors of Oracle activity until they can deliver answers as to the veracity or even consult the Oracle in question.

In an age of imperialism spreading across the globe, the Traditions have no shortage of reports and rumors to investigate. They have encountered numerous Crafts, some unique to very limited regions, and several even occurring across Europe itself as cultures mix and new practices spring up. Cabals chasing rumors across the world contend with many dangers. On a hidden island off Japan's coast, they may discover dancing dragons wielding imperishable swords. In remote regions of Britain, they may face down painted warriors with armor of sun-bright bronze. Cities greater than Rome hide in jungles with no ready source of stone, offering more mysteries than answers, guarded by strange clans of people with bows that spit lightning. Sometimes, the tales and rumors lead to nothing at all. Of course, many cabals see all this "chasing of dragons" to be a waste of time and resources better focused on more immediate matters, like Convention Luminaries in their backyards.

Traditions at War

Make no mistake, the Ascension War burns hot. The reach of the Order of Reason through its imperial interrelations touches almost every corner of the world. The Consensus, once a far more limited phenomenon for magi to exploit in their will-workings, becomes more global in its reach and impact. Paradox closes in on the Traditions (and many Crafts). A factor the Order of Reason seems to be able to mitigate easily or outright ignore. As the Traditions feel the shackles of Consensus drawing around them on Earth, so their methods in the War for Reality change. This comes more easily to some than others.

In the wake of the rising Paradox against their Art, the obsession with occultism, secret societies, and strange outlandish tales of faraway places falling under the imperial yoke that is sweeping the British Empire and most of Europe offers a small advantage to the Traditions. Hand-in-hand with science and technology, the gentry and rising middle classes of England all too readily sup up seances, tarot readings, and tales of Masonic orders with roots in private education institutions and the nobility. The Traditions seize upon these for methods in which to wrap their workings when they must, rooting the possibilities of such notions firmly into the minds of the masses. As the Order of Reason's paradigm comes to rule and establishes the mass Consensus, so too do cunning magi alter small parts of it in discreet but specific ways.

Ahl-i-Batin

The Ahl-i-Batin find themselves in a war they are not ready for, on a battleground they failed to realize they were building. Their ideal of "oneness" led many from the Tradition to support the birth and growth of the Ottoman Empire. Some held reservations, but many saw it as part of their belief made real, shaping the world towards the universal One. A grand harmony upon the back of empire. Now, they look in horror at what has been wrought of their vision and seek to fix what should never have been.

As the Batini supporting the Ottoman Empire dwindle, the rest of the Tradition aligns itself outside of the embattled state. Revolt in India and the mysticism clashing in China and Japan provide opportunities for breathing room. The ideals of the Ahl-i-Batin paradigm make it easier for the Batini to reposition themselves at the edges of the expanding nations or communities within the 'Old World'. The peoples existing on borders, or in transition, become a voice of unity and reason where tensions flare. As a result, the Ahl-i-Batin have become unifiers among the Traditions, too. They look to bring together Awakened of like ideals but conflicting paradigms in a new harmony that can better face the Order of Reason. This also drives them to seek the prophecies of the Council of Nine and the Dream of Hope. The Aghniat Alwahda, a group dedicated to deciphering the mystery of Ishaan's last letters and restoring the Council, rises to prominence.

The support they garner from their efficient mediations means that often the Ahl-i-Batin are one step ahead of the Order of Reasons' agents when they come. By the time a Luminary or mundane operative appears in an area, the Batini and their friends are long gone. Many make the mistake of thinking this evasiveness, along with the talk of harmony or oneness, displays passivity in the Tradition, a meekness of character. Such assumptions could not be more wrong. The Batini understand connections better than any, and while other Traditions may appear more immediately dangerous, when the Ahl-i-Batin choose to strike at last the results are always devastating. A dedicated Batini can bypass any wall or door and cripple a whole organization, and they do so. They will break the world if that is what it takes to fix the "all" that is One. Increasingly, the Order of Reason realizes it must take special measures when an Ahl-i-Batin may be present in an area of operations.

Akashayana

For many other magi, the Akashayana seems shrouded in the mysteries of the East. They take full advantage of that reputation against agents of foreign imperial exploitation, as well as the Luminaries of the Order of Reason. The Order of Reason desperately tries to debunk the tales of warrior monks, village heroes, and trained soldiers dispatched by a lone gentle master of the martial arts. The Akashayana clash with the Order of Reason in ideological battlegrounds where the Order struggles to gain ground, despite their early success pushing into Asia.

The disciplined, reserved wisdom of the Akashayana finds support among exploited and threatened populations, from simple respect to folk hero status. As such, they employ a strange mixture of open defiance and guerrilla tactics against the Order of Reason and its mundane agents. They strike in shocking displays of exceptional skill then vanish into a population all too ready to hide them. In the worst parts of the Hong Kong expansion, the Phoenix Brotherhood has emerged to bring healing, comfort, and in some cases justice for local people.

The mysticism travels with them into the West, and East across the ocean to the American coast, as does the protection of the community. Amid terrible conditions for Asian immigrants, who build railways and work mines across Europe and America, the same desire for justice and heroes exists. As they work to assault the strongholds of the Conventions in the heart of their power, this desire serves the Akashayana well. The Vajrapani and the Shi-ren sects bring the war to the Order of Reason, just as the Order's agents brought war to them. The Wo Hu Shehui do what they can to support civil unrest in Asian communities across Europe and North America, even as they, in turn, exploit such incidents as cover under which to kill prominent Luminaries.

Chorus Celestial

The Chorus Celestial is split. Many still support the older institutions that underlie the modern empires or push the aggressive missionary works that began in earlier centuries. After all, theirs is a history wrought from strife and misery but also one of power both temporal and divine. Others are not so sure. For them, the attitude of righteous glory that had been held by the Tradition for the last few centuries gives way to a feeling of doubt. The Chorus Celestial has benefited greatly from the rise of empires over the years, but the faith in the One has been eroding, replaced with greed for money and political power. The Order of Reason begins to use these entities, great and small, as another tool of growing control, and one that threatens to crush the Chorus Celestial.

The Chorus' response is one of control, seeking to use the very mechanism of imperialism to upset the ironclad grip of the Order of Reason around the world. The Conventions may bring Consensus and science, but the Choristers believe that faith is stronger. Desperate people turn to prayers in the face of suffering and oblivion. They scream out for salvation, for help, for *anything* — and that kind of raw focus holds power. This is nothing new for the Chorus Celestial. It served them against foes in the past, against the other Traditions — and worse. It will serve them now.

Fire and brimstone preachers whip populations into frenzies or keep communities in moral line against Order of Reason business or development interests. Insular groups resist expansion and innovation as works of evil forces, and regressions of education become the norm even as public school reforms sweep many nations. Wherever people

gather, they seek to add the influence of the local church or faith structure. Religious fever begins to pool in isolated communities. The Chorus Celestial refuses to fall before the Order of Reason, choosing faith and fear as its weapons.

A growing movement within the Choristers rejects such means, however, stemming from what seems an unlikely source: the guardian order of the Knights of St. George and the Dragon. As old, grim ways become the favored weapon, and persecution a tool they are more than willing to use, the Knights admit their first women members. Their oath to protect humanity against the monsters applies within as without, and they support other orders and groups into forming a movement known as the Missa Misericordiam. Care, compassion, and a championing of the weak and oppressed become the weapons of the Missa Misericordiam against the empires of the world, seeking to change policy and politics for the betterment of humanity and its freedoms. Increasingly, the miracles of the Chorus are turned upon those who would make slaves of free peoples.

Chakravanti (Euthanatoi)

The Chakravanti have always existed somewhat at the fringes of societies. Sometimes their membership hides in plain sight as part of public (if feared) organizations. Other times they exist as the shadowy unknown with names only whispered. Some Chakravanti prefer working unseen, while others vanish after shocking displays of power. In both cases, the anonymity of the individual magus is a constant. Despite similarities to the Akashayana's methods, especially in places such as India, rather than 'folk hero' they attract the concept of 'lone hero' and even 'antihero'. This concept blossoms in both the penny dreadful and dime novels that sweep America and the British Empire, with similar works appearing across Europe. Gunslingers and mysterious strangers capable of besting many foes in moments of derring-do become a pulp favorite, especially when loosely based on stories of famous outlaws and lawmen — some of whom may be entirely works of fiction themselves.

Fittingly, with their dedication to the karmic wheel, the Chakravanti in the war are ever in motion. Typically, they strike the target fast and hard, and they then vanish. Their mastery of entropic causality makes them hard to find and almost impossible to predict. However, these very acts of socially conscious mystique also limit the Tradition, sparking a response from the Order of Reason to debunk and discredit the modern folklore they conceal themselves behind. Despite these efforts though, there always seems to be a story of an untouchable vigilante or a bloody-handed madman killing for occult reasons. Both easily serve as the masks of Chakravanti on the hunt.

Spread across Europe's capital cities, a Chakravanti group called "Parinaam ke Spinar" employ deliberately brutal methods to shock communities. Their targets seem randomly chosen, but follow a pattern only they can discern. The right deaths with the right sensationalism at the right time shifts the turning of the wheel.

Dream-Speakers

Rising to the challenge of colonial imperialism and the Order of Reason, the Dream-Speakers find their anchor among the native people in every land "discovered" by spreading empire — and in the homelands of the empires themselves. Perhaps uniquely among the Traditions, there is little dissent within the Dream-Speakers. The threat to their main sources of membership is simply too pressing and real. This is not a cold war turning hot, nor assassins in high society, but entire peoples wiped out for being in the way, for the crime of existing. The Dream-Speakers are at the heart of a global conflict that offers only one option: resist or die. As they rise to face the terrors the world's empires and the Order of Reason bring, they know something more: they are not alone.

The Dream-Speakers have not been idle. While the fight before them is monolithic, they are not about to shy away from it. The Umbra is their haven, their battleground, and their greatest weapon. A place the Order of Reason still struggles to truly comprehend, with only the Exploratory Society reaching into the spirit world. Here, the Dream-Speakers play to their strengths and push the fight back to Earth, sabotaging the Order as it tries to operate beyond the Veil. The spirits of wild and city alike stir into wakefulness at the call of the Dream-Speakers — allies about whom the Void Seekers and Celestial Masters are learning they didn't know as much as they thought. The dark and "unexplored" or "untamed" regions of the world are yet full of tales and myths, stories anathema to the Order of Reason. These things bring power to the Dream-Speakers. Living legends burst forth from whispered folklore, laying waste to the profanity of iron and steam birthed by the Order of Reason, and leaving a new story in its wake to haunt the dreams of imperial masters.

Tragically, the violence and persecution inflicted on so many populations mean the Dream-Speakers are often fighting one retreat or another on Earth itself. They know that without help, they cannot win this war, only survive. Many Dream-Speakers gather under the banner of the Bejo Samaal. Hoping to bring focus to the Traditions before it's too late, they seek to restore the Council of Nine. Other Dream-Speakers are reaching out to Tradition cabals near their various zones of conflict seeking whatever aid they can get while they are still strong. If they heed these calls, the Dream of Hope remains real, and victory is still possible.

Order of Hermes

Vast libraries of lore held in echoing vaulted chambers, and Houses of secret purpose. For their image as masters of magick, these are the foundations of the Order of Hermes. Their secret societies hold Sleeper followers throughout the upper echelons of society in Britain, France, and beyond. They are embedded in the great libraries, museums, and universities of the world. Unfortunately, so too is the greater sum of the Order of Reason. This leads the Order of Hermes to believe themselves very much on the front line of the Ascension War in this age. Despite the Order of Hermes'

often self-important perspective when it comes to this, they are not wrong.

Around the globe, the battle lines between the two Orders have been drawn as a cold war wages through the halls of universities and colleges, leading to "tragic accidents" among opposing faculty members. The clandestine activities of the Houses increase as they make use of elite lodges and secret societies to empower the workings of their Art. In turn, these groups are subject to attacks, and even outright destruction of a nature that can make crime periodicals and newspaper headlines. Open use of magick is also on the rise as the Order of Hermes within the British Empire has come to see the true dangers it faces, challenged almost daily as old bastions fall.

This desperate galvanization of the Order of Hermes brings to the fore a power that has rested too long on its laurels, and this power is *hungry*. The potential for new Houses within the Order arises as acolytes learn to adapt ancient lore in new ways. As occultism seeps through society, gripping social clubs in rapt fascination, the Order of Hermes seizes the opportunity to grow in ways it never considered before. Even as the hallowed halls of antiquity become blood-sotted battlegrounds, so new memberships and initiations take place in private houses across the British Empire and beyond.

With this new spark, the Order of Hermes may be able to take the Conventions unaware. Paradox may be tightening its grip, but the Order of Hermes has only just begun to fight. Cloak and dagger has long been a prized art among the Houses. Better to ask forgiveness than permission, adepts and acolytes start turning more to fire, lightning, and the furious power of the sigil of Mars. Indeed, a fellowship formed of like-minded magi among Houses Flambeau, Shaea, and Verditius has taken the moniker "Knights of the Wand." This group are determined to demonstrate to the Order of Reason just what the inheritors of centuries of mystical mastery are capable of when backed into a corner.

Sahajiya (Cultus Ecstasis)

The cover of the urban myth, the local legend, or "what everybody knows" is a huge convenience in countering Paradox, but it doesn't come about entirely by itself. At the heart of this attitude of quasi-occult fascination lie the Sahajiya, the Cultus Ecstasis.

In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, while the Order of Reason faces down the Traditions throwing lightning, calling down curses, or punching through walls, they may have overlooked the Cultus Ecstasis. An oversight that's costing them. While many Sahajiya resist the British Empire and its contemporary shadows, some have seen and seized an opportunity. The Empire has led to easy access to the minds of the masses, useful for building the Consensus and the technocratic paradigm, but useful too for showing true *wonders* to the world. Penny dreadful, dime novels, music halls, street performers, circus acts, irreverent publishers that thumb their nose at the status quo, fiction columns in newspapers, and club magazines! The will of the Cultus Ecstasis subtly works at subverting the grand systems of imperialist social control.

The Tradition has seen the need and want in humanity's heart, and noticed the Sleepers taking steps to fulfill that desire. While not the instigators, the Cultus Ecstasis are certainly keen to help the results along. Through these methods, they have left chinks in the armor of Consensus relied upon by the Order of Reason — an angle of assault for which the Order of Reason seeks to formulate an effective counter.

Victorian morals and sensibilities replace the somewhat *laissez-faire* attitudes of the previous century. Though the middle classes grow, there is still a stringent divide between the wealthy and the gentry and nobility. Work references become vastly important for inner-city employment, which helps keep the masses humble and in line. Houses built next to mills better increase productivity, and keep the working poor both working and poor with little time for distraction. Deportations rise to provide free labor in colonies and remove social dissenters and reformers, poets and dreamers alongside the murderers and rapists. But, for all their understanding of logic, reason, social structuring, and politics, the Grand Faculty, Ivory Tower, and Syndicate have developed a blind spot when it comes to the human heart and spirit.

Despite all these attempts to break the hold of wonder over the "unwashed masses," the Sahajiya persist — and often succeed.

Verbena

Though not forgotten, the Verbenae seemed to fade from sight in the previous century, like a dying breed of an old paradigm fading from the world. The truth is rather different. To ask the Verbenae themselves, they have become a wolf in sheep's clothing. They exist at all levels of society within the British Empire. Their legends are so deeply ingrained in the collective consciousness that no one realizes that they're there at all.

The Industrial Revolution, Victoria's empire — it's all covered in blood. Blood spilled on battle fields, the blood of workers in dangerous working conditions, blood in industrial accidents when new technologies fail or experiments go wrong. The calling of blood still pulses through the whole of the world, the essence of life itself. Even in the heartlands of the empire, quiet ceremonies that honor the Old Ways still happen. In the botanical gardens and hidden in the sciences of flora and fauna, some yet observe the ancient practices. Here, the Verbenae wage their war against the Order of Reason. From the village wise women to whispers in the halls of power, Verbenae's roots spread everywhere. While they are divided in many ways, they pursue the fight on every possible front.

Curses from a thousand years ago work as well for the Tradition today as they did then. The Verbenae are further buoyed upon the impact of tales brought back from the spreading edges of empire; stories of witchcraft and foreign occultism among native practitioners of Africa and South America. This stirs a resurgent (if more secretive) interest

in old Western witchcraft among the people of Britain and Europe. Botany and herbalism have always been part of the arsenal of the Verbenae, but a subgroup of the Moonseekers have found ways to operate under the noses of the Hippocratic Circle. Many of the botanical gardens of Britain are owned by old families, with seemingly little interest or politics and cities, but who do spend an *awful* lot of time in the wild.

Outside the British Empire, the Verbenae readily come to the mutual aid of Chakravanti and Dream-Speakers cabals, mixing curses and shape-changing with the talents of the Good Death and summoned spirit allies alike. In these conflicts, the Traditions' true strength manifests through their common purpose. Most notably, a loose collection of Verbenae cabals, known as the Nine Hunters, are experts in shape-shifting magick, who delight in outwitting and ambushing Order of Reason agents hunting Tradition magi in rural locations.

Dream of Hope

Dreams of hope and a better world fill the subconscious and conscious minds of humanity alike. The masses call out to something better — and something hears them. A new age of industry brings new spirits of inspiration and technology into being. Spirits of the elements become spirits of steel and glass, of steam and locomotion. Those who understand these things know that a world filled with humanity's dreams is the source of perhaps the greatest power for the Ascension War. The possibility for change rests in the human spirit calling not for what *is*, but for what *could be*. Such passion bleeds and fuels the Umbra and takes form as Dream of Hope.

Those who have seen it claim that Dream of Hope has appeared over battlefields, walking solemnly across the Umbral shadow of the carnage wrought. These same battles later spawn tales of miraculous survivors, of people supposedly dead returning home safely, and other such stories of hope. Likewise, the being's presence can stir truly desperate acts that should have no chance of success into incredible triumphs against the odds. Some Awakened debate if Dream of Hope is a Sending from the Oracle of Entropy, but those who have encountered it see no particular evidence of such.

Dream of Hope appears as a feminine figure in a flowing and trailing shroud, or sometimes robes. Its face looks different to each observer, but all agree that it matches their personal views of beauty without being exceptionally so. Some see a slender sword resting on Dream of Hope's hip, while others recall a child's laughter and the sensation of a fresh splash of water before the entity vanishes. This has led to several cabals, considering Ishann's mention of a grail, to call Dream of Hope by another name: Lady of the Lake. While none can claim to know Dream of Hope's true purpose, it has shown no hostility to any magus, and indeed many attribute a victory or even their lives to the spirit.

The Umbra

The Umbra is the final line of battle and the first place for betrayal. Umbral sanctuaries have long protected the Traditions, and the masters often retreat to these places when they tire of the world's growing limitations upon their Art. With their internal reformations coupled with the Order of Reason marching across the world in the wake of imperial pogroms, many feel that the Enlightened Science paradigm cannot be challenged. Thus, some choose to hide in the Umbra and, fearful of discovery, eliminate any that may reveal them to their enemies — people they may have once called friends. Blood soaks the hands of the Awakened as old rivalries flare up, and new ones are created.

Those living on Earth are far removed from the greater politics of Horizon, Concordia, and the Umbral sanctuaries. The Order of Reason is the lesser threat in the Umbra. The fractious factions of adepts and masters in Horizon can get a magus killed. Beyond the veil, rivalries grow more immediate and real, with certámen, the magus duel, becoming just another name for murder. These distractions make it all the easier for the Void Seekers and Celestial Masters to expand their interests.

A few new Umbral Chantries emerge, separate from the political infighting rife in Concordia and Doissetep. They're a desperate attempt to provide security and sanctuary from the Order of Reason as Horizon becomes distant, isolated, and dangerous. With the world so nearly mapped and ordered, many of the Traditions look to the Umbra as a preferred place to seek wisdom, perspectives on the truth, and find the increasingly elusive keys to reality. Tales have also begun to circulate of increasing Oracle sightings in the realms of the Infinite Tapestry and some cabals turn their attentions into tracking down these possibilities.

Umbral exploration increases at a frantic pace with the discovery of new Realms, and the effect of the evolving human collective subconscious projected into the spirit world. All of these are essential tools for Traditions looking to survive the next century, the next decade, or even just the next year. The Dream-Speakers are the single most active organization in the Umbra, with many shamans learning the ways and powers of the new spirits that appear in this era. They watch the formation of new Realms with an interest that borders on fanaticism, studying how Earth affects its shadow under the influence of Enlightened Science. They are learning a great deal, and their Art here gathers, slowly rising like a storm sweeping across the ocean.

War Without Reason

As the Traditions desperately try to rally in the wake of the bloodshed in Concordia and internal fracturing, many

see the Order of Reason as their only real enemy. They hope that the factions within the Traditions can re-unite, that pro-imperial and anti-imperial attitudes will balance out soon or be forgotten. Tragically, this is wishful thinking at best, and willful hubris at its worst. Another force preys on the cracks in loyalty, the distrust, and the sense of hopeless panic: the Nephandi.

As the power of Enlightened Science rises and the grip of the British Empire reaches across the globe, the Nephandi grow in numbers. The desperate, the wicked, and the broken emerge in imperial bedrocks and conquered lands alike, and the mechanisms of empire make these numbers legion. Many Sleepers turn to revolt and protest, and the Awakened among them often find their way to the Traditions or Crafts. Others, for whatever reason, just want to watch the world die — or can't imagine any other outcome from this time of tumult. The Cauls call not just the dispossessed of an Awakened nature; the greed of the wealthy threatens to consume the world, and to the Devil the consequences.

For the Traditions, the Nephandi threat spurs of internal wariness. Members turn to desperate acts as the world remakes itself in the Order of Reason's image, and some magi of a darker bent may fall prey to their own failings. The world's empires foster places for infernal practice to flourish, and for a Nephandus to work their will while hiding their presence. The Ascension War provides more cracks for a Qlippothic magus to fall through, unnoticed and unchallenged until it is too late.

The Traditions are not blind — however disrupted they may be — and sects, cabals, and whole organizations within each Tradition exist to hunt down and eliminate the Nephandus. While they must be as careful of the Order of Reason and internal politics as any, these groups are dedicated to their task above other considerations. Corruption and seduction are techniques that come easily to the Nephandi, so those who hunt them become proficient in ferreting out conspiracies within their own ranks. Seemingly isolated incidents can prove to be parts of a far grander scheme.

Currently, a multi-Tradition cabal hunts the perpetrator of a series of ritualistic killings across London, while dodging Order of Reason agents doing the same. When the original suspect, the Chakravanti Lizabeta Verlaschi, was found dead, killed by a Qlippothic rote, three local Chantries joined the investigation. So far, two of the hunters have also died, and a Chorister cabal in Kensington fallen prey to the Order agents investigating their trail.

A Growing Madness

Marauders are far less widely acknowledged as a threat to the Traditions. These magi, lost in the depths of Quiet, are not a new phenomenon. Their impact, however, on the world is now different. Few Tradition magi have had to deal with the Paradox of their actions bleeding across onto other Awakened, threatening to draw them too into the Quiet. That this fate befell otherwise unlikely candidates in Concordia and prominent earthbound Chantries alike makes the new spread of Marauders even more troubling.

Few Traditions have any standing groups that directly deal with Marauders. So rare and unique is each case that no two encounters are alike. However, more magi are turning Marauder in the last few years than have been seen in the last century, and certain workings of magick suddenly seem more likely to risk the Quiet. While the Traditions broadly agree that a Marauder should, if possible, be saved, a cabal is often on their own as to *how* when encountering one.

The Traditions of Magick

Where once there were Nine now stand Eight. The Mystick Traditions are heirs to the secrets of reality itself. Knowledge and secrets love company. As the largest Willworker collectives gathered by common practice, learning, and philosophies, they grow into power to form these Traditions. They have seen past the veil draped across human consciousness. They learned the secrets of the world, and with tool, focus, and will touched the threads of the Tapestry. If the masses of humanity are Sleepers, then those of the Traditions are the Awakened — capable of altering reality to their need and whim.

The Traditions in the Victorian era stand at the forefront of the greatest conflict they have ever known: the Ascension War. Until now, this war has waxed and waned irregularly. Yet, as the 19th century continues and the British Empire expands, the imminent threat to the Traditions increases. The Order of Reason kills or captures Awakened for "enlightenment" in increasing numbers. They often operate almost in the open alongside mortal authorities' exploitation and oppression. The Traditions learn to conceal their presence among humanity and, of course, fight back. Magi, by their nature, are not ones to bow before a challenge. The cold war of centuries between Magick and Enlightened Science is about to get very hot indeed.

Yet the Traditions do not stand united — not even internally. Many cabals within the Traditions flourished with the rise of the great empires of the past. Power, after all, is the business of magi, even those who think themselves benevolent. As new empires rise and seek to shackle the world to their rapacious hunger for wealth and resources, other cabals oppose such actions. The Traditions fracture within themselves along such lines of ideology. Now, even as they collectively rail against the rise of the Order of Reason and the "enlightenment" it brings to humanity, the Traditions clash with each other over their influence upon the structures of Sleeper power. Into this mix comes the popular rise in occultism, and the spread of secret societies worming their way through Sleeper and Awakened culture alike. Some see this as another threat, drawing unwanted attention

from things they do not understand in a time when secrecy is paramount. Others embrace the potential of those being close to Awakening being drawn to such groups or using them as smokescreens for their own activities.

Revolutions and revolts erupt around the world, the result of a human spirit that will not be ground into dust. Some succeed — many more end in bloody tragedy. The Traditions likewise follow in the footsteps of both sides in any given conflict, sparking yet more in service to their agendas. Increasingly, cabals assemble not along lines of Tradition but of ideology, personal trust, or sheer desperation. Some press to regain control of the old mechanisms the Order of Reason has usurped. Others fight to end those same levers of power and deny them to those who would exploit such influence over others. Regardless of how any individual falls on these matters, the freedom to act and remake the world from that which it is to that which it *should* be still lies at the heart of the Traditions' purpose.

More than ever, the choice of each magus counts in the gathering storm. A decision made in a split second today could completely change how tomorrow unfolds. Subtlety, cloak and dagger methods, secret societies — these constitute the new world of the Traditions, where a single slip-up can bring down wrath and blood in a moment. Trust is a fickle thing, loyalties shift within the boundaries of each Chantry, and the old masters hide as much as they teach. The newest of the Awakened must tread carefully. This is a crucible that either shapes them into something great or destroys them utterly. Each magus finds that, sooner or later, the whispers and shadows have served their purpose and the time comes to confront the adversary — who may well wear the face of someone formerly a friend. Then, with an act of will, reality bends to magick in glorious and catastrophic ways, before truth must once again be hidden. Until the next time, at least — if there is a next time.

Power calls to power, and the magick of the Traditions, be it mighty works of druidcraft or the karmic cleansing of the great cycle, yearns to be used. It *needs* to be used. The Avatar once awoken rests fitfully, if at all. The mind of the Awakened blazes with insight, knowing that it knows not enough, that there are sacred duties to perform or ancient oaths to uphold. Even Sleeping minds yearn for these wonders and lap up the strange, the occult, and the macabre in equal measure. Cultures blend, faiths mix, and music, too, collide in the expansion of the human dream — even as cold reason courses its path through the world. Old principles once thought inviolate now unlock new methods, with the Order of Reason driven forward by the grasping hunger of science to know all things. The myriad paradigms of the Traditions must adapt, much to the horror of conservative masters or stolid adepts. The essences of Questing, Dynamism, and even Primordial rise among newly Awakened Avatars in the Traditions, pulling in ever newer directions and possibilities.

Wearing finery made possible by imperial conquest, a magus of the Traditions walks the British Empire shrouded in the arcane lore of lost centuries, with a pocket full of rotes less than a week old. In corset and sweeping skirts, another magus defies the expectations of both Order of Reason agents and her old masters in distant Horizon Realms alike and seizes her destiny. A Nephandus never sees the eldritch gunslinger hunting him until it's too late; after all, whoever heard of *magic bullets* when a Willworker is supposed to use enchanted knives and sacred chakram. A production in the finest opera house finds itself mirrored in the dirty streets of the city, performed in perfect unison yet depicting the total contrast of poverty, and sways the hearts of the whole community towards a sense of unity. Horses dash through the night, chasing the train upon which runaways hide from the pursuing riders, only for the dour men on horseback to watch aghast as the engine and carriages vanish into a tunnel and yet never emerge.

This is the age of Queen Victoria. The time of the British Empire upon which the sun never sets. This is also the time of the American West, the rise of the United States, and the birth of new nations that will last out the next century. The Order of Reason believes they stand at the dawn of victory with the creation of a Consensus built around the Technocratic Paradigm — a true Technocratic Union.

But that is not yet decided.

Magick is the truth; reality is a lie.

The destiny of the world will yet be shaped by the will of the Awakened.

The Ahl-i-Batin

If we remain divided, we will *fall.*

During this era, most Ahl-i-Batin have two closely related goals: defend against the threats posed by both European imperialism and the Order of Reason, and unify the Council of Nine so that it can better defend itself from what they see as the Order's growing power. While the Order of Reason secularized the Cabal of Pure Thought, transforming it into the Lightkeepers, the Ahl-i-Batin still remember how the members of this Convention hunted them all across the Middle East. Alas, they see no evidence that the Order of Reason's motives or tactics have become any more benign.

However, for all their emphasis on unity, the Ahl-i-Batin are themselves divided. For the entire Victorian era, there are effectively two separate branches of this Tradition. Deeply enmeshed in the politics and governance of the fading might of the Ottoman Empire, the larger of the two has considerably more secular power.

While most Batini lack any official position within the government, they have placed themselves as trusted advisors and confidants to many senior Ottoman officials. In addition, they use their command of Correspondence to relay messages across the empire faster and more accurately than even the increasingly common telegraph lines. While they have significant ideological differences, this branch of the Ahl-i-Batin also regularly work with Taftâni members in their effort to protect the Ottoman Empire from both external aggression and internal movements seeking to splinter this empire.

This branch of the Ahl-i-Batin is also loosely allied with the Mübarek Maharet Meclisi (Court of Sacred Sciences). However, a branch of this Craft is increasingly dominated by barely religious technomancers who are increasingly dismissive and contemptuous of the Subtle Ones' mysticism and religious faith. As a result, these Batini have been warning the other members of the Council of Nine of the Order of Reason's efforts to co-opt some groups of non-European technomancers into their fold as part of the Order's plan to expand their paradigm across the entire world.

These more secular Batini also use their talent with Mind magicks to both locate corrupt and treasonous members of the Ottoman government, while subtly influencing officials they know to be wise and honest so they will be more likely to uncover the efforts of these wrongdoers. A few Subtle Ones actively work within the Ottoman government, almost always in crucial but easily overlooked positions where they use a combination of social connections and the ability to anticipate their colleagues' and superiors' needs and questions to make themselves indispensable, occasionally dropping crucial tidbits of advice in the correct ear.

The other branch of the Ahl-i-Batin focuses on what has always been at the heart of this Tradition, a mystical quest for unity. Like generations of their teachers before them, these Batini seek to understand the truths hidden in Mount Qaf. Some of these mystics focus only on their enlightenment, dwelling in the slopes of this sacred mountain, and rarely turning their powerful gaze away from its glorious summit. However, for most Ahl-i-Batin, mysticism and religious faith go hand-in-hand. They see the wisdom they derive from their contemplation of Mount Qaf as something they must share with the world. While the other branch of the Batini concerns itself with the mundane politics of the Ottoman Empire, most of the more mystically inclined Subtle Ones seek to impart their wisdom and their increasingly strident calls for unity to the Council of Nine.

Between the threats posed by the Fallen and the Order of Reason, and the fact that the Council of Nine now consists of eight Traditions that are primarily united by their disagreements, these members of the Ahl-i-Batin have been attempting to convince magi from different Traditions and Crafts to work together for both mutual defense and shared enlightenment. Unfortunately, their efforts at unifying the Council of Nine have experienced serious problems because of tensions between primarily Western European Traditions, like the Order of Hermes and the Celestial Chorus, and Traditions where all or most members are from elsewhere in the world. Far too many members of both the Order of Hermes and the Celestial Chorus have embraced imperialism as both a wonderful boon for their particular nations and a method of "civilizing" supposedly less enlightened peoples. Few members of non-Western Traditions, like the Akashayana or the Dream-Speakers, have any patience for such ideas.

Disagreements about imperialism also lie at the heart of the division between the more secular Batini, who work with and occasionally for the Ottoman government, and the independent mystics more closely connected to the Council of Nine. Although both groups oppose the Order of Reason and efforts to destroy the Ottoman Empire, they differ about the best way to achieve these goals. Most Subtle Ones working with the Ottoman government vividly see the threat European imperialism poses to maintaining their state's independence. They also better understand how the Order of Reason is using Sleeper imperialist ventures to advance their agenda.

By contrast, many Batini working with the Council of Nine see the necessity of the Traditions unifying as being sufficient reason to not protest or even criticize European imperialist conquests in both Africa and Asia, especially since many of the younger members of the Western European Traditions openly celebrate these efforts. The bigotry and support for imperialism within both the Order of Hermes

and the Celestial Chorus offend most of these Subtle Ones, but they hold their tongues in an attempt to prevent the Council of Nine from further fragmenting.

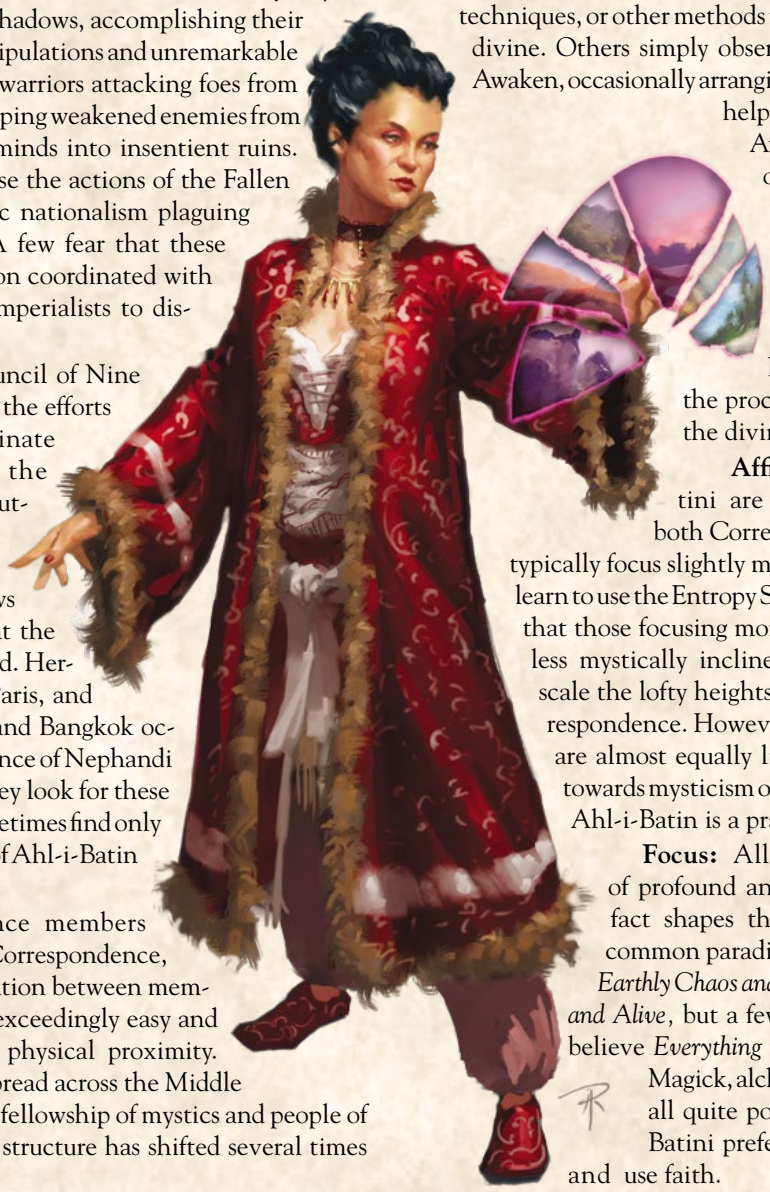
Defending Against the Fallen

Despite their disagreements, both factions within the Ahl-i-Batin come together to help cleanse the Middle East of the Fallen's taint. With their ability to use the mysteries of Mount Qaf to see and travel anywhere in an instant, many Batini regularly watch for signs of Nephandi influence among both magi and Sleepers. When one of them finds such evidence, they call upon their fellows. An informal network of magi dedicates themselves to locating and destroying the Fallen and attempting to save any they may be in the process of corrupting. Many of the more martially inclined Taftani dismiss the Batini as unworldly mystics, good for little beyond writing confusing treatises on religious philosophy. However, any who see Batini hunting the Fallen swiftly gain respect for members of this Tradition.

While almost no Batini seek fame and the majority prefer to work from the shadows, accomplishing their goals through subtle manipulations and unremarkable coincidences. Fearsome warriors attacking foes from all directions at once, keeping weakened enemies from fleeing, and blast their minds into insentient ruins. Of late, some Batini sense the actions of the Fallen in the rise of the ethnic nationalism plaguing the Ottoman Empire. A few fear that these efforts are in some fashion coordinated with attempts by European imperialists to dismember this state.

The rest of the Council of Nine know about and support the efforts of the Batini to eliminate Nephandi all across the Middle East, but few outsiders understand that the Subtle Ones' mastery of Correspondence allows them to notice and hunt the Fallen all across the world. Hermetics in London and Paris, and Akashayana in Beijing and Bangkok occasionally uncover evidence of Nephandi plots. However, when they look for these corrupted magi, they sometimes find only corpses, because a group of Ahl-i-Batin got there first.

Organization: Since members excel at either Mind or Correspondence, maintaining communication between members of this Tradition is exceedingly easy and does not depend upon physical proximity. Instead, the Batini are spread across the Middle East but remain a united fellowship of mystics and people of faith. The Ahl-i-Batin's structure has shifted several times to meet changing circumstances. During the Victorian era, it is split into different divisions, based on shared projects. While the groups mostly cooperate and share information, each is in charge of their own efforts. However, all report to the Tradition's council of Master Murshids, who work together directing and overseeing the Tradition as a whole, even as they struggle to reconcile their differences about imperialism. Currently, there is a division that aids the Ottoman government, one that works with the Council of Nine, one that watches and attempts to thwart the Order of Reason's machinations, and, of course, a division that hunts Nephandi.



Initiation: Many Batini live as Sufi mystics seeking promising candidates among their students. Others use their magicks to observe the pupils of other mystics and darwīshes, as well as poets, artists, and people with strong faith. They watch for the patterns of thought and emotion that are commonly associated with someone on the verge of Awakening. Some Batini openly mentor promising students — teaching them poetry, calligraphy, ecstatic dancing, various ascetic techniques, or other methods for attempting to grasp the divine. Others simply observe those they think may Awaken, occasionally arranging incidents that hopefully help them along their path to Awakening. When someone seems on the verge of Awakening, the Batini observing them usually speaks honestly, if often cryptically, about what they may become, and helps guide them through the process of becoming one with the divine.

Affinity Spheres: Most Batini are highly accomplished in both Correspondence and Mind, but typically focus slightly more on one. Batini cannot learn to use the Entropy Sphere. Most Batini assume that those focusing more on Mind are somewhat less mystically inclined than those seeking to scale the lofty heights of Mount Qaf using Correspondence. However, adepts of either Sphere are almost equally likely to be inclined more towards mysticism or practicality, and the ideal Ahl-i-Batin is a practically-minded mystic.

Focus: All Ahl-i-Batin are people of profound and esoteric faith, and this fact shapes their magicks. Their most common paradigms are *Cosmic Order and Earthly Chaos and Creation is Innately Divine and Alive*, but a few particularly grim Batini believe *Everything is an Illusion*. High Ritual Magick, alchemy, and crazy wisdom are all quite popular practices, but some Batini prefer a more direct approach and use faith.

Akashayana

Harmony chokes and dies amid the stifling chains of this new world order.

During this era, the Akashayana is barely a single Tradition. Instead, differences in faith and nationality divide it into a variety of largely independent sub-Traditions. The heart of the Akashayana is in China, but this is also where it is in the most trouble. Britain, the United States, and a growing number of continental European nations are carving up the region. China's loss of the First Opium War in 1842 brought an end to the Wulong's attacks on the Akashayana because both groups understood they needed to become allies to resist western imperialism. However, the Wulong's proposed "alliance" primarily consists of Wulong magi expecting all Chinese Akashayana to follow their orders without question — an arrangement few Akashayana are willing to accept.

In both Burma and Vietnam, colonizing armies and the missionaries that followed dethroned Buddhist monasteries from their previous positions of power and influence. Meanwhile, the Order of Reason's efforts reworked the paradigms of both nations, and European rule reduced the inhabitants of these nations to second-class citizens. The Chinese Akashayana witnessed these losses and understand that without an exceptionally clever plan and far more luck than they have recently had, China is next, and all but their most isolated monasteries may soon face destruction. The internal reform movements within China also pose potential threats. Sun Yat-Sen, a leader of one of the most powerful of these movements, is a Christian seeking to modernize China, and many Akashayana worry that his policies would make China less compatible with their paradigm.

The only region where the local paradigm is still entirely compatible with the Akashayana is Tibet, which is a largely independent nation theoretically under Chinese rule. The local Akashayana influence the Tibetan religious hierarchy toward closing this nation to all westerners for the entire Victorian era, allowing it to remain not merely politically and socially free, but also permitting its paradigm to remain unchanged, even as the Technocratic Union's paradigm slowly envelopes the other nations of East and Southeast Asia.

In the Nine Traditions, the Akashayana maintains the appearance of unity, out of the necessity of avoiding power grabs disguised as offers of help from other Traditions. To accomplish this, the Chinese branch of the Akashayana serves as the Traditions representatives to the Council of Nine. The Tibetan Akashayana ignore the Council of Nine, just as they ignore the rest of the outside world, while most of the Southeast Asian Akashayana simply struggle to survive.

One of the greatest threats faced by the Akashayana is a belief that they and their practices are irrelevant or outdated. In both Japan and China, a growing number of new Asian magi embrace various forms of technomancy, and increasing numbers of young people all across Asia study Western science and technology because they see these ideas as their nations' only hope for survival and their best chance for personal and familial success. Outside of Siam and Tibet, fewer young people spend time in monasteries or studying the classics that form the basis for Akashayana practice and encourage people to Awaken in this Tradition.

The Siamese Akashayana

The one bright spot in all the Akashayana's turmoil is Siam. In this independent nation, the kings, along with most of the male population, normally spend a portion of their adolescence in a temple as a novice monk, and the Akashayana use the temples as an especially fertile recruiting ground. Also, rather than attempting to act as a secret power behind the throne, like the Wulong in China, the Siamese Akashayana openly work with the kings as advisors.

King Mongkut ruled Siam for much of the Victorian era, and unlike most of Siam's rulers, he did not merely serve as a monk for a year or two in his late teens or early 20s; he remained a monk for 27 years and only left when he ascended the throne. As a result, his ties to the Siamese Akashayana are exceedingly close. They worked with King Mongkut and his successor, King Chulalongkorn to ensure that Siam remained a free and independent nation, despite attempts to conquer it by both French colonizers controlling Vietnam to the east and British colonizers controlling Burma to the west. Both kings are firmly in charge, but the Akashayana provide useful and occasionally invaluable counsel.

One of the most unique features of the Siamese branch of the Akashayana is their belief that rejecting Western technology and attempting to undo the Order of Reason's paradigm is utterly doomed. Instead, they follow the lead of the Siamese kings — struggling to adapt the nation to the modern world and to "modernize" Siam both socially and technologically. At the same time, the Siamese Akashayana also attempt to learn ways to adapt their Tradition to existing in this new world, even going so far as to incorporate some types of technomancy into their practice.

Outside of Tibet, Akashayana are regularly in danger from the Straits. Even in the remote monasteries and rural villages where they traditionally thrived, the Order of Reason's paradigm continues to encroach. A growing number have experienced the Straits when performing magicks that would have been elegant 50 years ago. Some believe this is just a temporary disturbance, but as the Victorian era continues, ever more understand that the world is changing in ways that are hostile to them. Their choices are to either find a way to halt, or if possible undo these changes, or learn to adapt to them.

Future Fates: The Boxer Rebellion

The Chinese Boxer Rebellion of 1899-1901 occurs alongside the culmination of several decades of effort by the Akashayana faction that calls for widespread violent resistance to Western domination of China and eventually in all of Asia. They help Sleeper martial societies to train warriors in secret techniques, while also encouraging these societies' anti-European and anti-Christian beliefs. By 1899, the rebellion's mortal leaders believe they are ready, and their force of more than 100,000 wins several initial victories far from large cities. The Akashayana's magicks successfully defend them from the opposing efforts of Order of Reason Luminaries.

At its peak, the rebellion even garners the support of China's Empress Dowager Cixi but is ultimately doomed. The Order of Reason's paradigm is too firmly entrenched in and near the various large Chinese cities. The Sleepers in the rebellion are not immune to bullets or cannon; the magic of the Akashayana struggles to aid them. The eight Western nations that are carving up China eventually sent 20,000 troops with modern armaments, which defeat the combined might of the Boxers and the Chinese army. The aftermath of this failed rebellion results in crippling reparations, large-scale executions of anyone suspected of supporting it, and widespread disillusionment with the idea of restoring China to its previous glory. Although the vast majority of the Akashayana involved in this rebellion can avoid execution, their mortal allies are not so fortunate.

However, the rebellion's failure is not inevitable. Larger stockpiles of modern weapons and an alliance with local technomancers like the Dalou'laoshi (p. 112) could potentially have turned the tide, as could a successful effort to at least partially restore the previous paradigm in Beijing and other large Chinese cities.

In addition to the national divisions that plague this Tradition, four major factions propose drastically different answers for how the Akashayana should respond to imperialism and the changes it has brought and continues to bring to Asia. The legalists embrace order and hierarchy, while the warriors seek to devote themselves to and fight for a worthy cause. The monks are ascetics seeking transcendence from worldly concerns, and the Mohists prize universal respect and caring, rejecting any hierarchy interfering with these principles. These factions are some of the few organizations within the Akashayana that transcend national and cultural boundaries. The legalists tentatively support the Wulong, but many members increasingly believe that they should

retreat further into the wilderness, into areas that are as yet untouched by changes to the paradigm, and attempt to hold these regions as their own. In contrast, most warriors seek to drive out westerners from China. Some offer Sleepers military advice, hoping they might imbue them with magicks that they may withstand modern weapons. Vehemently anti-Western, they hope to see Christian missionaries and Western imperialists alike gone from the region.

By contrast, many monks, especially in Siam, advocate subtlety. They believe the Akashayana should hide in plain sight, in cities, rural villages, and remote monasteries. While teaching mediation as they have always done, they focus more on people in cities in an attempt to appeal to people seeking Western education and knowledge by promoting the idea that mediation and similar practices train the mind in ways that prove useful in all aspects of life. The members of both the legalists and the warriors decry these ideas as surrendering by another name, but supporters reply that their plan allows the Akashayana to survive even if the other plans fail. The unbending reed snaps if the winds blow too hard. Meanwhile, ever more Mohists advocate supporting one of the various internal reform movements. They admire the efforts of Sleeper reformers like Sun Yat-Sen. Although the legalists dismiss this plan as helping Westerners destroy their nations, both the warriors and the monks could potentially be persuaded to support it.

Organization: During this era, the Akashayana's various groups focus on Buddhist temples, Buddhist and Taoist monasteries, yoga ashrams, and a variety of mystically inclined secret societies. Some of these groups are largely independent, but most ally themselves with one of the Akashayana's four major factions discussed above. Each of the four factions possesses at least some degree of overarching hierarchy, but these hierarchies are currently weak, disorganized, and exceptionally prone to factionalism.

Initiation: Some wait for new students to arrive by a mixture of chance and fate. Others belong to long-standing familial traditions and examine their relatives for signs of Awakening. However, many Akashayana look for new members in their local temples and shrines. Sleepers visit to meditate, pray, and leave offerings, and Akashayana monks at these temples watch for signs of Awakening. These monks approach anyone displaying signs of Awakening and work to recruit them, encouraging them to turn their back on their worldly life and join the temple where they could work to gain the enlightenment that is the basis for Akashayana practice. However, once a prospective magus has become part of a temple, the next step is up to them. For all Akashayana, the Enlightenment of Awakening is an exceedingly personal process.

Affinity Spheres: Mind, Life, or more rarely, Forces or Prime.

Focus: Their most common paradigms are *Bring Back the Golden Age* and *Everything's an Illusion*, but some of the more martially inclined members believe *Might is Right*. Akashayana practice includes alchemy, craftwork (especially among the Siamese Akashayana), faith, martial arts, and yoga.

Chakravanti

(Euthanatoi)

Death is my burden, not yours — you are a burden upon the world around you. Your greed is a curse that has starved hundreds. I relieve the world of you.

The flash of a knife, the flare of gun smoke, the final crimson spray that marks the end of one life. The Great Wheel turns a fraction more, as a necessary death clears the way for it to spin. The secret is that life should improve the world with every incarnation and death should leave the way clear for better things. The first doesn't always happen, but the second is inevitable. The dutiful burden of the Chakravanti is ensuring the inevitable, and that it comes at its due time to the most deserving. The mystic arts of death are their providence. Kismet draws them towards their deserving victims —lives that poison the world and make it weaker, poorer, or broken in some way. Bad karma catches up with people, and when it does it wears the face of the Euthanatoi.

The Chakravanti is a Tradition bound together by the heavy burden they take on themselves and by the blood-spattered paths they must walk down, doing what is necessary to keep the cycle flowing. Many cultures around the globe have whispers of shadowy organizations that bring death to the deserving, but such people are not often seen as heroes; rather, as entities to be feared, working to their particular sense of justice than the morals of society. As such the Chakravanti, while at their most prominent throughout India, Asia, and Africa, exist everywhere. They vary in aspect as widely as the cultures in which they dwell — and now conceal themselves within. The Order of the Black Widow, and the many cults in India, use disparate techniques and details of philosophy, as do the Feather of Ma'at and the Roots of Yggdrasil. Yet they are unified by their dedication to what must be done, and the terrible price they must pay to do it.

Destiny, fate, and entropy fuel the Art of the Euthanatoi. Of all the Traditions, their focus lies most in the mortal world, fulfilling a duty they long ago swore themselves to uphold. However, while the Chakravanti are killers, they are not blinded by bloodlust. The Wheel turns smoother with less disruption on the path of the departed. A snake bite, a strange disease that afflicts only a single target, or a bad reaction to local food and climate — all hallmarks of a passing death-magus. Bad luck slays as efficiently as a dagger, and with less trace. Such subtlety is not always possible, however, and so the Chakravanti appear as solitary figures or small bands moving like fleeting shadows, untouchable as the mist. They slay with flashing blades, lassos and garrotes, weighted entangling weapons, and impossibly sharp razors that dance on the air and never miss. Reports of such attacks tend to vanish before making it to their destination. The Order of Reason, however, pays more heed to deaths under unusual circumstances. As they watch for where information ceases to flow, the Chakravanti falls ever more under their gaze.

Every Euthanatos risks the taint of jhor, a stain upon the soul that comes from the repeated taking of life. It forms a precipice between prescient balance and all-consuming madness. While engaging in the Thanatoic Arts, too easily can one become lost completely to the duty, not realizing that it has become something else — a terrible desire, a hunger crying to be satiated with yet another life. Justify the killing as "balance" after the fact. Given the precepts for the burden of death, spotting a Chakravanti slipping into jhor isn't easy; the line is so very fine. Yet despite the risks, and growing rumors of Euthanatoi falling to infernal practices, the assassins of the Tradition continue to produce a staggering body count across the 19th century.

Europe sees a different manner of fate-bringer at work, one that inspires fear as a method to clear the way for the Wheel as well as using death. Their assumed names (often ones planted purposefully by Euthanatoi or by helpful Sahajiya in penny dreadfuls) and deeds may be shared by more than one death-magus, creating an urban legend of vengeance, justice, and terror across the cities of the British Empire and the other European powers. Such names live in infamy through the minds of the population, and they act as very real cautionary tales for the high and low of society alike.

Some Euthanatoi investigate famous mundane, albeit disturbed, murders or the depredations of Night Folk, bygones, or even Marauders and Nephandi. Others use these grisly murders as cover for their activities, or they appropriate the killings into their web of terror. Tangling with such a twisted collection of killers comes with its own risks, however. Members of the Tradition find themselves dodging detectives even as they hunt their dark mirrors in European and North American cities and towns.

In the often-cruel American west, Chakravanti live the life of the urban legend — the lone stranger, the man with no name, the righteous killer. Heartless rail barons, greedy plantation owners, abusive clergymen, and soldiers soaked with the blood of women and children all come under the gaze of the fate-bringer. Some are every bit the monsters that exist in Europe or prowl through the colonial fringes. The death-magi seek repayment for the blood debt wrought upon native peoples by imperial ambitions. Chakravanti are often the only effective hand of justice or vengeance for isolated towns facing the cruelties of the powerful and the greedy.

Yet, the mantle of "hero" rests poorly upon magi just as bathed in blood as those they hunt, so they rarely stay beyond the need of their burden and duty.

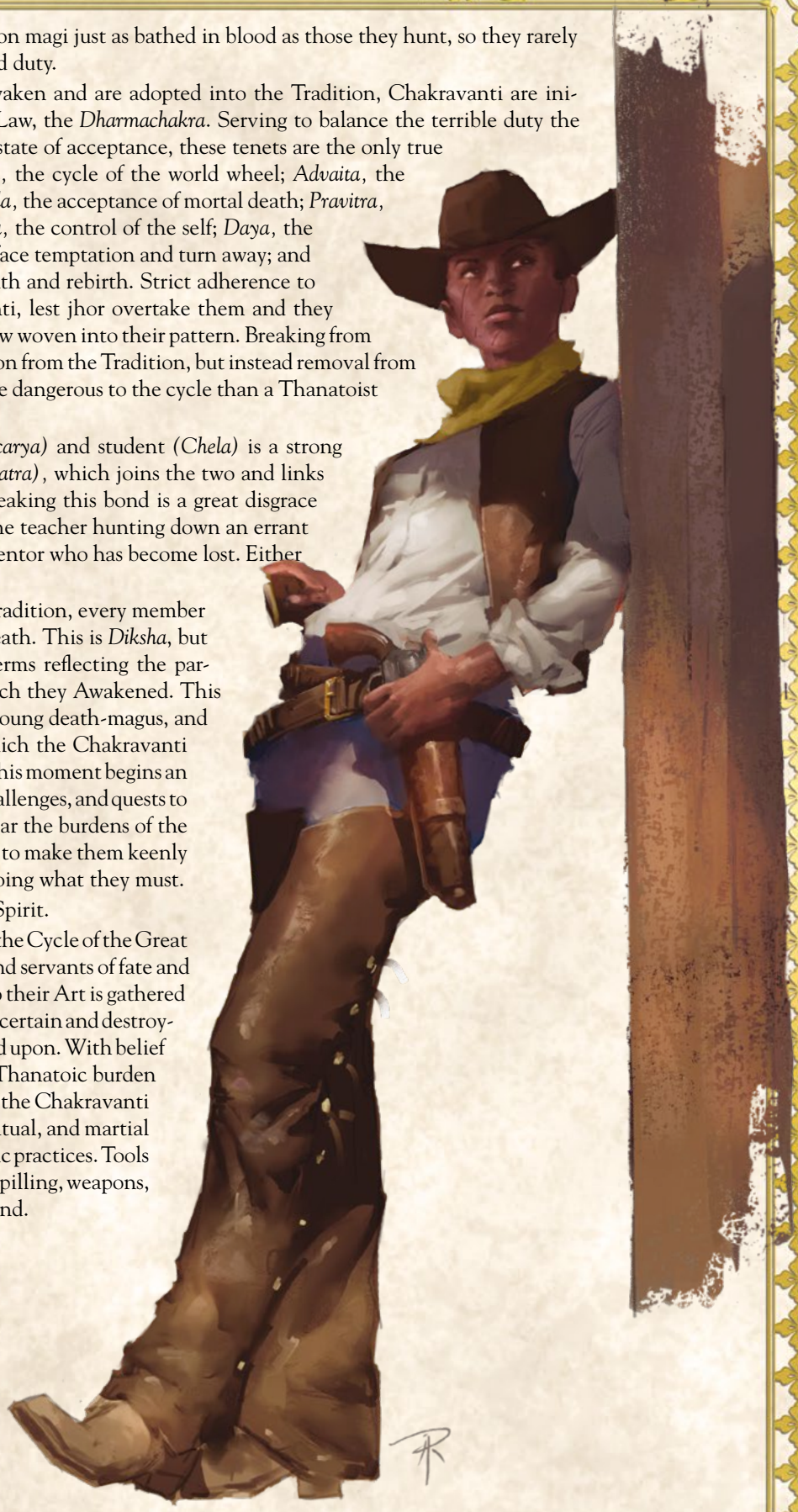
Organization: As soon as they Awaken and are adopted into the Tradition, Chakravanti are initiated into the Eight-Spoked Wheel of Law, the *Dharmachakra*. Serving to balance the terrible duty the Chakravanti undertake with a peaceful state of acceptance, these tenets are the only true formality within the Tradition. *Samsara*, the cycle of the world wheel; *Advaita*, the unity of all things in fate and fortune; *Kala*, the acceptance of mortal death; *Pravitra*, the responsibility of guardianship; *Dama*, the control of the self; *Daya*, the heart that knows compassion; *Tapas*, to face temptation and turn away; and *Punarjanman*, the inner truth of life, death and rebirth. Strict adherence to this code is essential for the Chakravanti, lest jhor overtake them and they succumb to the bloodstained darkness now woven into their pattern. Breaking from the *Dharmachakra* does not mean expulsion from the Tradition, but instead removal from the wheel entirely. There is nothing more dangerous to the cycle than a Thanatoist lost in jhor.

The bond between the mentor *(Acarya)* and student *(Chela)* is a strong and lasting one, bound by a life-oath *(Vatra)*, which joins the two and links the student to the Tradition forever. Breaking this bond is a great disgrace to both parties and ultimately leads to the teacher hunting down an errant student or the student facing a former mentor who has become lost. Either way, it ends in blood.

Initiation: When initiated to the Tradition, every member of the Chakravanti undergoes a ritual death. This is *Diksha*, but some Chantries and cabals use other terms reflecting the particular societies and cultures within which they Awakened. This brief spirit journey reveals much to the young death-magus, and provides the needed insight without which the Chakravanti would become as others fear them. From this moment begins an extensive teaching process full of tests, challenges, and quests to see if the prospective fate-bringer can bear the burdens of the duty to which they have been called, and to make them keenly aware of the terrible price incurred by doing what they must.

Affinity Spheres: Entropy; Life or Spirit.

Focus: Their keen understanding of the Cycle of the Great Wheel makes the Chakravanti masters and servants of fate and fortune. With the turning of the Cycle, so their Art is gathered and unleashed — making the improbable certain and destroying any surety their targets may have relied upon. With belief in a born and destined duty, fueled by a Thanatoic burden that forms the paradigm of the Tradition, the Chakravanti mix the practices of crazy wisdom, high ritual, and martial arts with fragments of faith and shamanistic practices. Tools include sacred places of reflection, blood spilling, weapons, and any tool of chance that comes to hand.



Chorus Celestial

We have been tested, we have learned, and we shall not be found wanting.

The miracles of the Divine flow through the world. A song stirs upon the lips, sharing in the will and power, the Art of the One, and the servants of darkness are turned to pillars of salt, dust in the wind, or burn beneath the cleansing light of the dawn. Disease and affliction fail before a gentle touch and soothing voice, and even the seas may part before the will of one who can sing with a voice that commands all things. From the faintest ember, glorious flames may rise, and the strength of the faithful has been proven time and again throughout history. The One has willed it; the One is at the heart of all things. To hear the One's voice and discern its will, is to know all things — with the power to command and the duty to guide them.

Though the Order of Reason challenges the principles of faith as a concept at its very core, the mechanisms of imperialism around the world lean heavily still on old, wealthy institutions and churches. Religions have long been power players when it comes to the rise and fall of nations, and likewise, faith and prayer remain embedded in the lives of people the world over. The parish becomes involved in every aspect of a community's social life across Europe, and chaplains of many creeds speak benedictions over soldiers upon the myriad battlefields of the age. These have long been the bastions of the Chorus Celestial, and they remain so under the stern and careful guidance of the Septarians. An iron fist of faith lies at the heart of the Tradition, one that will not compromise and spurs increasingly toward fanaticism in its adherents.

Acts of militant messianism and missionary work color the 19th-century Chorus Celestial in shades of blood. The Choristers supporting everything from forced heathen 're-education' to outright murder of populations in the name of the One. Where before there had often been great divisions in attitude between the Tradition and the secular churches they supported, churches that would have named the Chorister heretics if discovered, this brutal juxtaposition of identity within such established faiths now leads the Choristers to seize power there with a strength born out of the fear of *losing* that grip once again.

The Septarians are divided among themselves, however, as each chooses to align with one or another of the great faiths, and internal interpretations thereof, across the world. Where once this formed a subtle striving to find the truth of the One from many sources, it has turned into an inner conflict of dogma that mirrors that of the Sleepers. Chief among these are the Divinitatem Regius, a subsect within the Septarians settled deep within the Church of England. They have begun hunting down any Choristers in the British Empire refusing to bow to their stringent structures.

This leads to division within the so-called 'guardian orders' of the Chorus Celestial. Never before has the Tradition faced such a bloody split from within. The Order of Knights of the Last Temple side with the Divinitatem Regius, providing an experienced militant hand to the Septarian sect. Meanwhile, the Knights of St. George and the Dragon and the Sisters Gabrielle rally against the rivalry, attempting to aid a wider cause, battling against the infernal power that seems to be breeding in parts of the Tradition. The other major sects of the Septarians, such as the Papal Choir and the True Missionaria, also court members of the guardian orders. Willing members emerge from among the remnants of the Templar Orders, who, though long shattered, sense a chance to rise again.

This infighting mirrors the distresses of Concordia, and despite the best efforts of the Knights of St. George and the Dragon and the Sisters Gabrielle, Nephandi among the Chorus Celestial rise in number. The desperate and often violent grip the Choristers have begun pursuing has also made them vulnerable in some regions to the agents of the Order of Reason, as individual Willworkers find themselves suddenly isolated. The edge of faith-tied emotion that many Choristers wrap themselves in among local communities can burn them just as easily in the face of even a minor indiscretion.

Hidebound dogma or unforgiving strictures do not consume all Chorus Celestial. Many realize that they cannot stand alone against the Order of Reason, or indeed against their peers. Thus is born the Cordis Legentibus, a movement gathered from all orders led by Monists that survived the Septarian purges. The Cordis Legentibus exist for the express purpose of finding harmony, and allies with the other Traditions against threats from within and without the Chorus Celestial. They are also the most vocal against any imperial support the Chorus Celestial continues to show — at least, in the few forums where discourse is still an open thing.

The more radical Palabra Fugaz de la Doncella, or Fleeting Word of the Maiden, an order born in the early 18th century, has gained quiet prominence. Spreading from southern Spain, the Palabra Fugaz de la Doncella focuses less on the Ascension war or internal strife, seeking instead to be a gentle hand of divine mercy offered to all. They do not tolerate the wicked and fight if necessary, but with a gentle heart — the order's actions inspired, it is said, by the works of Miguel Cervantes. After meeting them, many worry the Fleeting Word is on the verge of Marauderdom, as their idealism seems to rest on the edge of madness.

Organization: Once, seventeen Chancellors formed the Curia, the ruling council or synod, that guides the Tradition since its founding during the rise of Rome. The most respected is the Pontifex Maximus, a mostly ceremonial position but one of symbolic importance in these changing times. Each Chancellor commands a territory. Regional exarchs enforce their directives while supervising Presbyters, the local leaders of Chorus Chantries and cabals. This structure still exists but is as fractured as the Tradition, and rife with politics as the Septarians pull in all directions — resulting in there being no less than three Pontifices at this time across Britain (Divinitatem Regius), France (Cordis Legentibus), and Italy (traditional). The guardian Orders that oppose Septarian actions have declared themselves independent of the structure, returning to old ideas of Chapter Houses within each order headed by a Preceptor. Meanwhile, the Palabra Fugaz de la Doncella eschew any such titles, being either Squires or Knights, each with a unique name taken for their deeds.

Initiation: The strict scriptures once employed by the Messianic voices to educate *Catechumen* or apprentices are still in use. Deviating from them is considered a great sin by some of the sects. These venerate the true way of the One (which is whichever way the sect says it is); opposition requires conversion or to be returned to the One. Others have taken to a more flexible approach, modeling their teachings on a need — with some taking some very esoteric paths. All initiates in all cases are also taught to sing; poor is the Chorister who cannot lift their voice in harmony with others.

Affinity Spheres: Prime; Forces or Spirit.

Focus: The High Ritual practices of a myriad of faiths shroud and permeate the paradigm of the Chorus Celestial. While they diversify and integrate them to create a resonating harmony, the focus of these practices draws forth the miracles of the Divine. The voice and word of the One is a song, and so the songs of the Chorus lift and shape the Art and pluck at the threads of the Tapestry in holy delight. A voice raised in song is the oldest tool of the Chorus, but a gathered community sharing in that song where light banishes darkness and joy chases aware sorrow is perhaps their strongest. *Prayers, candles, sunrise & sunset, fasting, food & drink, warmth, sacred places, and song* are all common tools of the Chorus Celestial. Practices include *Faith, High Ritual, Social Manipulation, and Mystical Repetition*.

Dream-Speakers

In your arrogance, you think you can shackle magick itself; but people will always dream of freedom.

The Dream-Speakers have long been one of the least geographically limited Traditions, and one of the few where magi from different continents periodically visited one another. Dream-Speakers capable of stepping through the Gauntlet remain in contact with their fellows by traveling through the Umbra, and they use spirits as messengers. As a result, the Dream-Speakers are somewhat more unified than most of their peers. Groups of Dream-Speakers in North and South America, Africa, Siberia, Canada, Lapland, and Mongolia all have their own unique cultures and practices, but they have also been sharing ideas and magickal techniques with one another for centuries.

While these magi may have friends, allies, and even mentors from different continents, Dream-Speakers have long organized themselves on a purely local level. Korean Dream-Speakers share magickal techniques and advice for dealing with various types of spirits with African or Inuit comrades, but they rely upon other Korean Dream-Speakers to help them handle immediate problems like natural disasters or war. In addition, almost all Dream-Speakers possess roles that are an accepted and acknowledged part of their local culture, frequently providing advice and aid to their communities. However, their local focus has gradually begun to change.

During the Victorian era, Dream-Speakers share information about threats from imperialist invaders and the Order of Reason. As colonial conquests increase, some Dream-Speakers respond by trying to organize on a worldwide level for the first time. A few spirit-talkers from Mongolia and the Amazon rainforest are now working to aid their fellows in Africa, opposing the Order of Reason's attempts to destroy local Tradition members, the Nodes, and other sacred sites these magi use. This aid largely consists of commanding or making deals with spirits sent to aid embattled Dream-Speakers. However, powerful Dream-Speakers occasionally walk through the Umbra to defend their allies or attack their enemies directly.

For much of the era, the Dream-Speakers stand at the forefront of resistance to imperialism, mostly because their global scale allows them to coordinate these activities in a manner that is harder for members of many other Traditions. These Dream-Speakers attempt to halt the murder and oppression of Sleepers under their protection. They also battle other aspects of exploitation. Resource extraction on a

vast scale in mining and logging operations, and the wholesale slaughter of animal life, such as bison and passenger pigeons, directly affects the Umbra, warping and changing it in terrible ways. Although most members of this Tradition are far more concerned about their own cultures and, to a lesser extent, the lives of other Dream-Speakers, a growing number see how the tide of conquest is disturbing and, in some cases, actively corrupting the Umbra and its inhabitants. While no one can predict the outcome of this damage, many magi fear that some of the most powerful spirits could turn on humanity as a whole or become twisted into monstrous beings.

Before Victoria ascended to the throne, the Dream-Speakers were one of the most conservative Traditions — the heart of Dream-Speaker magick involved working with spirits and the Umbra. While the Umbra was never static, most of its changes were fairly gradual. However, the spread of the Order of Reason and its paradigm has already altered it at a shocking rate. In Western Europe, the Gauntlet is far stronger now than it was in even the last century, and this change washes across the globe at the heels of advancing armies.

A thousand years ago, Dream-Speakers able to sense and communicate with spirits were as common in Western Europe as they now are in much of East Asia. These European Dream-Speakers occupied a similar social position as modern Dream-Speakers do in the nations where they are still common. Today, a few Dream-Speakers still Awaken in cities like London and Vienna, but they are quite rare. After their Awakening, other Dream-Speakers provide initial training and then direct them to remote rural areas, where the Gauntlet is thinner and some local Sleepers still remember the old ways.

The Creation of Shamanism

One of the Order of Reason's most powerful tools is their ability to impose external classifications on anothers' culture and magicks. One of their many triumphs in this endeavor in the late Victorian era was creating the concept of shamanism. The folklorists whose work the Order of Reason inspired took existing interviews with and travelers' reports about indigenous Sleeper practitioners, along with actual Dream-Speakers' abilities to see and communicate across the Gauntlet, and transformed the rich and strange diversity of these many disparate practices into a rigidly defined idea of what European scholars called shamanism.

Instead of magi wielding vast power on both sides of the Gauntlet, or providing important spiritual guidance to their communities, these reports describe shamans as semi-sane people peddling ineffective medical cures. Nothing more than a primitive and limited remnant of humanity's earliest forms of religious expression. Moreover, these shamans supposedly all use more or less the same techniques and hold the same beliefs. A lie that serves to weaken the abilities of any Dream-Speaker using different methods while also working to confine and limit their abilities to a scope that the Order of Reason finds less threatening.

More importantly, these reports also allege that shamanism is only found in sparsely inhabited and often physically challenging regions far from areas the Order of Reason or the colonizing armies considered worth attempting to conquer and control. Anyone claiming similar practices or powers in well-settled regions is dismissed as either insane or a con artist. According to the definition promoted by the Order of Reason, shamans only exist in the most "primitive" cultures.

This vision of "shamanism" is a direct and exceedingly successful attack on both the Dream-Speakers and the Sleeper practices they caricature. It serves to weaken their power in areas facing imperialist aggression, while further marginalizing Dream-Speakers in Western Europe and other areas already dominated by the Order of Reason and the social and cultural systems their efforts spawn. However, this same effort also serves to alert more Dream-Speakers to the threat posed by the Order of Reason, convincing many of the necessity for greater cooperation.

Organization: Within the mortal world, most Dream-Speakers rarely interact with other members of their Tradition in person. Teachers instruct students, former students visit their teachers, and Dream-Speakers from nearby settlements occasionally call on one another. However, most of the organization and socialization of this Tradition takes place within the Umbra.

By meeting in the Umbra and using minor spirits as messengers, Dream-Speakers maintain a large but loose network of allies and associates, regularly exchanging favors and providing magickal advice. The Dream-Speakers are one of the least hierarchical of the Traditions. While any member is free to call upon their friends and allies all across the globe for aid, their lack of hierarchy also means that getting the Tradition as a whole to respond to a problem is exceedingly difficult. All such attempts involve lengthy negotiations, compromises, and promises of future favors.

Initiation: There are two primary methods of becoming a Dream-Speaker. In most cultures, experienced Dream-Speakers train and advise individuals who seem to possess the potential to Awaken. However, all across the world, some people hear snatches of what the spirits say and catch glimpses of the Umbra. Some of these individuals spontaneously Awaken, while spirits or far away Dream-Speakers tutor or mentor others. Although some spirits that mentor newly Awakened Dream-Speakers fill their minds with lies and half-truths for selfish reasons, most Dream-Speakers eventually gain sufficient power and knowledge to see through these lies and to understand that they may become the ally of a powerful spirit, but that they should never be any spirit's servant or underling.

Affinity Spheres: Spirit, Forces, and Life are the most common, but all Dream-Speakers are expected to possess at least some expertise with Spirit.

Focus: The most common Dream-Speaker paradigms are *Creation's Divine and Alive* and *Bring Back the Golden Age*, but some of the more fatalistic members believe in *A World of Gods and Monsters*. Their most common practices are craftwork, crazy wisdom, medicine work, and shamanism.

The Order of Hermes

As the greatest of magi, we have a responsibility to the world.

Despite its status as one of the more politically homogeneous Traditions, internal tensions are high within the Order of Hermes, even if it is not actively at war with itself. Most members are well-educated and middle-class or wealthy city-dwelling men and women of Western European ancestry. One of the most patriarchal of the Traditions, the bulk of members are men, and women wishing for respect or to hold important offices must work substantially harder.

The Order's greatest tension is between older, more traditional members and the more radical members, most of whom are younger. Some of the traditionalist members are many centuries old, and most are upper-class white men increasingly out of touch with the changing nature of the Victorian world. Many have difficulty understanding that personal fealty is now less important than wealth or official position.

Despite having no love for the upstart technocrats of the Order of Reason, both old and young Hermetics share some of the attitudes of the Order of Reason, including at least a mild disdain for the accomplishments of magi from other Traditions — especially magi who are not light-skinned people of Western European ancestry. However, the traditionalists and the radicals diverge substantially as to how they think the Order and their nation should deal with non-European nations and their inhabitants.

Most traditionalists see little value in any civilizations outside of Europe and the Middle East, but they also still think of colonialism as a method of rapidly acquiring wealth and military glory before returning home. Some barely comprehend the potential of imperialism to bring the entire planet under Western Europe's domination. They remain puzzled at why anyone should care about ventures like the Great Game between Great Britain and Russia over control of Afghanistan. Nevertheless, many Hermetic traditionalists invested their money in various colonial ventures and have become exceedingly wealthy.

The radicals within the Order of Hermes are mostly younger and less likely to be members of the upper class. Instead, most are white middle-class men and women, who see wealth rather than family as the true marker of success. The majority embrace and actively support western Europe's imperialist conquests. Some fervently believe that these conquests help "civilize" the more "savage and backward" portions of the world, and will ultimately benefit colonized peoples. Others care only for the benefits that these conquests bring to their own nations.

Whether they care about conquered peoples or not, most of the Order's younger members are fond of discussing Rudyard Kipling's "White Man's Burden." Both old and young members are also convinced that people including magi from other cultures are somewhat "backward" or "primitive," and they see their Tradition as a civilizing force. However, the Order's radical members better understand and occasionally take part in the complex web of money, politics, and military might that forms the heart of Western European imperialism.

While there are some exceptions, most of these reformers see middle-class and upper-class white men practicing hermetic magick as inherently wiser, better informed, and more intelligent than other magi, or indeed other people. To them, all magick is ultimately Hermetic magick, but only their Tradition understands how to properly understand and practice it. Despite the protestations of the traditionalists, who neither trust nor approve of the Order of Reason, a few of the most radical younger members admire some of the Order of Reason's efforts. However, even they understand the increasing necessity of concealing themselves. The Order of Reason has not yet started hunting down Hermetics, but most of its younger members despise members of the Tradition, and the Order of Reason's attempts to stamp out superstition increasingly include efforts to discredit, disgrace, and impoverish known Hermetics.

Traditionally, Freemasonry was closely associated with the Order of Hermes, and many older members were recruited because they were Freemasons showing signs of Awakening. However, the Order of Reason also included Freemasons, so members of the Order of Hermes must be increasingly circumspect in their efforts at recruitment. Instead, the Order has found a new way to conceal their activities and locate recruits — the growing popularity of occultism and ceremonial magic.

Although some of the more socially adept members of the Order of Hermes helped encourage the rise in interest in ceremonial magic among well-educated members of the middle and upper classes, few of them predicted how popular it would become. By the last decades of the 19th century, people in salons across the major cities of Western Europe regularly discuss ceremonial magic, and thousands join various occult organizations and actively practice it. The Order of the Golden Dawn was largest, but several groups split off from this organization, and followers of the occultist, Éliphas Lévi, founded several French ceremonial magic societies.

The similarities between the Western ceremonial magic practiced by these Sleepers and the practices of the Order of Hermes are far from accidental, and Hermetics helped popularize the use of magic circles and tarot cards as mystical tools. As a result, members of the Order of Reason

now regularly encounter perfectly ordinary Sleepers, with no connection to any magi, attempting magic with rituals that are at least superficially very similar to those used by the Order of Hermes. These same rituals and practices also appear in popular novels, giving them even greater visibility.

Identifying Hermetics has become harder, and revealing someone's interest in ceremonial magic no longer causes a scandal. In addition, the Order of Hermes has noticed an increase in new members. Many Sleepers with a serious interest in ceremonial magic who then Awaken are eager to join the Order of Hermes. This same popularity and awareness of ceremonial magic permit some of the more subtle magicks practiced by Hermetics to remain Coincidental, even in the heart of cities like London or Paris. This fact angers and dismays many in the Order of Reason, who are growing increasingly tired of the public's tolerance for "superstition."

The popularity of ceremonial magic has also led to another growing tension within the Order of Hermes. Almost all of the Order's leadership are men and most were originally Freemasons. Freemasonry did not even have a branch that admitted women as secondary members until the 1890s. However, most of the recent Sleeper organizations devoted to ceremonial magic admit women as members, which in turn increases the number of women joining the Order of Hermes.

By the late Victorian era, the numbers of men and women among initiates are far more equal than ever before. It's also increasingly difficult to ignore the fact that the women joining the Order of Hermes are as intelligent, driven, and well educated as the men. Some of them held positions of power and prestige within Sleeper organizations like the Order of the Golden Dawn. Many who join the Order of Hermes are decidedly unhappy when they learn that it is run by centuries-old men who mostly have great difficulty considering women as their equals.

Organization: The Order of Hermes has always been an extremely hierarchical and status-conscious Tradition, becoming somewhat more so in the Victorian era. The Order is theoretically divided into thirteen Houses. In practice, there are only eight: Bonisagus, Flambeau, Janissary, Quaesitori, Tharsis, Thig, Tytalus, and Ex Miscellanea, which contains the other six Houses (Shaea, Mercere, Jerbiton, Criamon, Luxor, and Merinita). Thig and Luxor are the Order's newest Houses — Thig is promoted from a long-standing Doissetep cabal in 1846, and Luxor is the first American House, founded in 1872. Members attain positions of leadership within their House, and from there can rise to positions of leadership for the entire Order. Members attain such positions based on a combination of age, magickal skill, and a mixture of ancestry and popular acclaim. Although it does not forbid women from leadership roles, the Order places a myriad of subtle barriers against them attaining such positions. The women attaining important positions must work harder than male magi to do so, and many men in the Order proudly proclaim how intellectually and magickally superior they clearly are compared to most of their female peers. Members not fully of Western European descent are usually limited to low-ranking positions in their House and the Order as a whole, and few question this idea. The primary exceptions are House Janissary and House Shaea, which both originated in the Middle East and still draw a moderate number of members from the Ottoman Empire.

Initiation: Alongside ancient manuscripts, modern lectures and pamphlets on Western ceremonial magic mean that anyone literate can learn this style of magick and Awaken. However, the Order of Hermes rarely seeks out these self-taught magi, unless they are well-educated members of the middle or upper class with connections that bring them to the Order's attention. Instead, most recruits are either academics dabbling in the magick they are studying, Freemasons, or members of one of the various increasingly popular societies and private clubs all across Western Europe devoted to the study and practice of ceremonial magic.

Members of the Order keep track of these various orders, clubs, and other more or less secret societies, like the Order of the Golden Dawn. They use their connections in such groups to provide invitations to special parties and lectures to individuals displaying signs of Awakening, and with what the observers consider to be appropriate attitudes and breeding.

Affinity Spheres: The Order's primary focus has always been Forces. In this era, Spirit is also relatively common, and some members favor Matter after the fall of the Solificati.

Focus: *A Mechanistic Cosmos*, *Cosmic Order and Earthly Chaos*, and *Tech Holds all Answers* are the most common paradigms, but *Bring Back the Golden Age* becomes increasingly popular in the later Victorian Era. The core of Hermetic practice is High Ritual Magick, but alchemy, Art of Desire, and dominion are also popular.

Sahajiya

(Cultus Ecstasis)

The world is full of more than you know, but not more than you could imagine.
Let me show you your wildest dreams.

Time flows in a straight line. Very clever men in the orders of education hold to this knowledge, which feeds into the conventional wisdom of the masses. The Sahajiya know it is also wrong. With a flash of color, the rise of the crescendo, the touch of soft flesh upon flesh... time *changes*. Inhale deeply of the curling coiling pink smoke, let the blue petals rest beneath your tongue, and watch the flow of time all around you as it happens, before it happens, and after it happens — all at once. Look hard enough, let go into the moment just that little more, and you can even see the eddies of times that never were and never will be — but you know what they say, *never say never*.

Victoria's reign is locked in prim and proper ways. A constructed morality lies over the human heart and soul, a stratification of emotion and expression creeping across the world. A set of rules applied neither fairly nor evenly. Some of this is not new, but doing old things in new ways has always been the kind of trick humanity excels at. Every magus breaks the rules one way or another, but the Sahajiya truly understand that is what they are doing. The rules of society, social strata, and appropriate behavior have never been the kind to bind the Cultus Ecstasis — and they will take the Sleepers along with them for the ride.

The rise of *avante-garde* art movements carries the Tradition into the mid-19th century like a wave of expression, railing against the interminable control of social consciousness that strangles 1800s society. Amid this explosion, from 1825 and recognized by 1850, are the Cultus Ecstasis of the Nouvelle Nouveau, a group known for inspiring groundbreaking artworks and supporting the Sleeper artists that create them. This complete challenge to the predominant principles of the age serves to excite collectors, and *avante-garde* salons become one of the great scandals of behavior among even the upper classes.

Through altered perception the Sahajiya sees time, shaping it around themselves and others like the ripple of silk around a dancer. Throughout the ages, poets, bards, thespians writers, and more have explored this same nuanced understanding of perception in response to the senses through art, and have cultivated to an even greater extreme via magick and paradigm. The Cultus Ecstasis are keen to release their handiwork into a world now filled with science, technology, and empirical fact, harnessing both the prosperity that floods into the homelands of great empires and the tensions that stir a sudden slew of new plays, operas, songs, street theatres, music hall performances, and circuses. Slipping between the grand and the squalid are magi like the Troubadours Exotique — performers who take the stage of the Grand Opera Hall or the fleapit music halls alike. The tales they shape shame and excite in equal measure as they grip the pulse of the hoi polloi and mock the powerful — or stir the urges of actual virtue in place of false morality within the hearts witnesses. Revolutions are born on the back of such things.

The written word blooms into domination across Europe and America, with literacy on the rise among the common folk and schooling becoming more widely available. The eruption of exposure to "exotic" cultures, and the ensuing

fascination they engender, makes it easy for the Tradition to coax cracks into the stern Consensus the Order of Reason is building. The Inkblood, wearing strange tattoos, write and print tales of faraway places in vast numbers — penny dreadfuls and dime novels re-awaken tales of legends once forgotten, or spin entirely new ones into life. Arthur, Robin Hood, and even dinosaurs leap into the imaginations of readers. Little wonder that idyllic English countryside picnics, walks, river trips, and seaside visits seem to last forever. Time weaves around the readers and thence the masses around them in turn — time enough for the Mystick Traditions to recover and respond to imperial expansion and the rise of technological dominance.

Even though opium dens and rampant addiction are tools of imperial control, the Sahajiya do not shy away from intoxicants and hallucinogens. The Phantasmagoria cult's private clubs play cat and mouse with the agents of law and order, their illegal and unregistered gatherings using concoctions that free the mind rather than chain the body. Likewise, the pleasures of flesh tantalize and delight, weaving a tantric power into the sect, often hidden in the glimmer of red light. As such, the Phantasmagoria has drawn heavy focus from the Order of Reason as acts of sexual freedom are the most blatantly contrary to the official values of Victorian Britain. Hellfire clubs that once existed without direct persecution become increasingly forbidden — even the wealth and power of some members may not protect them. More often, however, the Order expresses its hostility to the Sahajiya through the policing of the lower and middle classes' morality. Dismissal from work for even a rumor of impropriety becomes a norm.

Such propriety ruins deep but, when the circus comes to town with ha'penny tickets or the singing starts down the pub, the Sahajiya proves it understands what the Order does not: the *heart* of humanity. They both validate that humanity within the masses and provide time for that experience. The Revelers target not the agents of the Order of Reason themselves, but rather the institutions around which it has consolidated itself, and the foundations of those institutions. They promote original works of art and expression, and protest the suppression of performances, creating a clamor for uncensored works to be seen; and lo and behold, the Shajiya ensure they appear.

As the rest of the Tradition whirls itself into one frenzy of passion and sensation or another, a quieter sect of seers within the Sahajiya works in the background. As fortune tellers, card readers, and other esoteric mystics of no fixed abode, they move with the circuses, street performances, and Bohemian movements spreading across Europe. They slip into the cracks of each community they pass through. Their concern is not so much the masses as touching the personal lives of the people they encounter.

Time is as ripples in a pond, ever in motion, always changing, and malleable for those taking a moment to toss pebbles in the first place. This is the wisdom of the Sahajiya. This is true.

Organization: The individual is key to the Cultus Ecstasis. They have no formal hierarchy from which to hang the trappings of organization. However, the recent rise of activist behavior in resisting the Order of Reason has led to informal groupings gathering and coordinating efforts, via writers' circles, performing groups, secret societies, and so forth. In a given region, these bands communicate with each other quite freely, providing a coherency that few expect of the Sahajiya.

Outside of these small displays of unity, the Revelers often gather at, well, revels. Fêtes and fairs, grand performances, and any number of barn dances serve as a social gathering place for the Cultus Ecstasis.

Initiation: A new Sahajiya faces the challenge of their mentor and peers to shed their inhibitions. These blinders to perception limit the initiate, and so they must cast them off by choice. To the outsider, the cycle of behavior this forms seems as though the Cultus Ecstasis chases excess. Each layer of limitation is stripped away to experience the world with fresh senses and perceptions. After the first steps, the Reveler follows their own path of experience to advance along as they feel and see fit.

Affinity Spheres: Time; Mind or Life.

Focus: The art of seeing and influencing time is not an easy one. Mortality, after all, does seem tied to a strict linear flow. Yet this is the prison of the senses, and the keys to that prison are anything that challenges those senses, dims or heightens them, or twists them in unexpected ways. A single moment of wonder is all it takes to shift matters temporal. Learning to seek those moments reveals that time itself is malleable to one's will. The Sahajiya's tools may follow a theme but are rarely consistent in and of themselves. Without new experiences to shake the senses, perception becomes fixed and useless. Sex and drugs are common tools to the Cultus Ecstasis, but many go for something that inspires a new sensual reaction; for one that might be a new opera, where for another it is diving into freezing waters off a cliff.

Verbenae

We are the cracks in your Reason, the turning of the season, the rise of the storm, and the howl of the wild.

A curse that coils like a cornered serpent and splinters bones. A charm to leave no trail in the woodland. A word to seal a wound in three heartbeats. Blood spilled upon a sapling's roots to grow an oak overnight. A dance beneath the moon to hear the whispers of ancient stones, and the wisdom of when the world was young and whole.

Verbenae magick is ancient; tied to the very roots of the world and the most primeval of forces. Brutal wisdom where compassion and morality serve as a very different façade to that of most of the modern, 19th-century world. The Verbenae still revel in their "old ways." but have learned degrees of subtlety from painful lessons across the centuries. They are always there, in every quiet corner of the world among wild places, and where the wisdom of ages still speaks to the people of today. They're where old superstitions of agriculture or hunting are still upheld — even if never spoken of openly. The crazy old hermit, the newly learned druid, the wise woman, the witch, the houngan, the blood magus, and many such others serve as masks for the Verbenae across the world. Remnants of ancient cultures and mystick ideals of seasons, trees, beasts, blood, and sacrifice all add their threads of power to the Art of the Tradition — an Art that many now dismiss as primitive superstition. Despite the dangers of Paradox under the growing Consensus, the Verbenae blood magi enjoy being underestimated by their "civilized" allies and adversaries alike — a lack of belief is a lack of defense, in the eyes of the witches. The beast you don't see is the one that wounds you deepest.

The Tradition has seen a sudden surge in recruitment, comparatively speaking, as the Victorian obsession with macabre occultism seems to draw almost as many Awakening Avatars to the druids as to the Order of Hermes or the Sahajiya. No one place in the world offers the Verbenae a singular bastion. Their political footprint in human affairs is infrequent, but the British Isles and Ireland have always held a special connection for the Tradition and continue to do so through this era. However, the rise in occultist membership, especially within the British Empire, is forming a divide within an often-diverse Tradition. Many feel that these new initiates bring with them too many new ideas, approaches, and desires to influence and mingle with the masses in a way that older witches deem dangerous. By the same token, the initiates believe that the wisdom of the ancients should be brought directly to bear against the Order of Reason and that now is the time for open challenges against the power structures that be. The Verbenae are becoming radical and brazen in their deeds across imperial heartlands.

The calling of old magic ripples through the quiet village communities of Britannia as the Tradition's roots re-assert themselves into the hearts and minds of rural communities. Stories of the 'folk', fighting against those modern embellishments that turn fairies into children's whimsies, are increasingly remembered and retold by families that have kept them for centuries. Hermits living solitary lives beyond the edges of towns, well versed in herb lore and matters of animal husbandry, become a fact once more — and seemingly out of nowhere. Little local legends, long left fallow, revive and appear with increasing frequency on everyone's lips even as iron and steam sweeps in to disrupt lives. The common folk pass along these stories not as idle tales but as a memory, and warning, of what should not be disturbed.

Life begins in blood and ends in blood. The brutal rise of new empires spurs the Verbenae to action. Recent events in Concordia galvanize the Tradition further, along with the divisive new intake of initiates, to emerge from its quasi-forgotten state in

the "civilized" places of the world. The druids, witches, and keepers of the old ways stir, actively seeking to restore their preeminence in the world. They neither tolerate nor broker any new accord with the Order of Reason. They have seen the results of these "understandings" and will not get burned a second time. The imperial machine used by the Order of Reason is something the Tradition actively seeks to tear down as part of their newfound presence on the stage of the Ascension War.

The modern Verbenae are a tough breed willing to challenge the world with the will of legendary heroes. The Spears of Lugh, a young sect within the Tradition, seek lost wonders to help in the war, while the ancient Cŵn Annwn shift their skins and hunt men who despoil the sacred wild. The Keepers of the Cauldron study the prophecies of other Traditions as much as their own, seeking to restore the Council of Nine — believing this to be the weapon that will end the Ascension War. The Traditions are the old ways, after all, and the Verbenae the oldest. Each empire to challenge them has fallen in turn, and the Order of Reason is simply the newest to do so. Hadrian's Rome could not fully close its mailed fist around the ancient isles. It is time the new empire of the Order of Reason learned the same lesson Caesar did when he came to Britain and wrote of "nothing but trees and nightmares."

Organization: The coven is the keystone of Verbenae organization. Typically gathered in multiples of three where the Verbenae feel at their strongest, the covens usually claim wilderness regions or old places of worship to past gods under their care and protection. Rare is the solitary Verbenae, as although plenty live in semi-isolation their paradigm still yearns for co-operation, peers, and a gathering of will. The Tradition venerates age and experience over youth and enthusiasm, but the blood magi also love their heroes, who in turn are often younger members of a coven.

Lineage plays a role among the druids, too. Being of a bloodline with heritage within the Tradition and its mysteries affords a young witch no small respect. However, the deeds of one's ancestors are just that, and a young Verbenae is expected to live up to those ideals, not lean upon them. The Tradition's covens gather at the sacred points of the year, particularly seasonal changes and eclipses. Imbolc, Beltain, Lammas, and Samhain form the four most common gathering times based on the Celtic calendar, but the Verbenae follow the signs of nature and the land more than dates on in a diary.

Initiation: A new initiate undergoes a sacred rite of death and rebirth as their sense of identity and purpose is torn at and tested. This initiation is bloody and painful, and follows, or is interspersed with, periods of long study into old stories and ancient lore. The newly Awakened Verbenae must find their connection to the raw life of the world that surrounds them, to hear the rhythm of their heartbeat in the silence of a standing stone, to know what it is to be raven, wolf, and deer — to know what it is to master all these things and yet not be apart from them. When this is done, the initiate is one with the coven, who have shared these same trials and revelations. As a result, the coven's loyalty to one another is almost unbreakable.

Affinity Spheres: Life; Matter, or Prime.

Focus: The wisdom of the ages is the key to the Art of the Verbenae. They have learned to be highly flexible with that knowledge. Tools symbolic as well as literal fill the magickal arsenal of the Verbenae, and the witches learned long ago that a sharp kitchen knife is every bit as good as a thrice-blessed athame. Forgotten alphabets and languages, sacred locations and natural formations, flowing with the cycles of nature and releasing the inner nature of self as well as dancing, singing, and revelry are all among the practices of the Verbenae. The paradigm of *Creation is Divine and Alive* and *A World of Gods and Monsters* are most common, along with *Bring Back the Golden Age* becoming a more prevalent belief. Knives feature as the most common tool for the druids and witches, with blood a close second. Potions made in cauldrons and magic symbols painted with enchanted woad onto the skin are also common.

Chapter Three: Towers of Stone, Vessels of Steel

"Science is always discovering odd scraps of magical wisdom and making a tremendous fuss about its cleverness."

—Aleister Crowley

Since the first sparks of the Renaissance, the Order of Reason has sought to usher humanity through the gates of Enlightenment. Now, in the wake of the Industrial Revolution, the Order stands ready to transform the world again; conquering illness, famine, and poverty through science and steel. Though the plumes of factory smoke and waste of city life may cost a few hundred thousand lives here and there, Luminaries believe this sacrifice serves the greater good: beginning a new age of prosperity. The Order stands in stark contrast to the superstitious members of the Council of Nine, shunning occultism in favor of furthering scientific understanding of the world. Exploration, experimentation, research, and debate are their tools, and they seek to use them to elevate humanity.

Most members of the Order of Reason truly believe theirs is a noble goal. In pursuit of this shining ideal, they will kill so many and destroy so much; and still, it will not be enough to forge their envisaged perfect world from the ashes.

The Order of Reason Through the Victorian Age

The Order of Reason's storied history stretches back to the so-called Dark Ages, a fitting place for the Light of Reason to emerge. Though the Order began as a ragtag coalition of militant factions tired of the existence of occultists, it thrived over the centuries that followed to become a world-spanning power. Like the devices that its scientists invented, so too the Order reinvented itself time and again, culminating in the Conventions of the Victorian Reformation and the Technocratic Union that lies beyond.

From Dark...

Arguably the first members of the Order of Reason, the Craftmasons were a group of scholars who found the arcane teachings of the Order of Hermes anathema. Where the main body of the Hermetics sought to keep magic to themselves, a

gift reserved for the elite, the Craftmasons viewed knowledge as something to be shared with the people for the betterment of all of humanity. This fundamental difference of opinion culminated with the Masons breaking from the Hermetics and going their own way.

Depending on whom you believe, either the Hermetics hounded the Craftmasons, forcing the renegades to take up arms against their former allies, or Stephen "Robin Hood" Trevanus started a military campaign that forced the Hermetics to defend themselves. Regardless of who started it, by 1183, that there would be no peace between the two sides was clear. After several decades of successful raids against the Church and local magi of Nottingham, Trevanus had honed his militant sect into a fighting force. In 1210, he took his band across the English Channel to France.

Are We The Baddies?

Yes.

There, we said it.

The Order of Reason supports and is complicit in the advance of imperialism across the globe, shackling and exploiting countless people for the sake of an elite few and a grand vision of empire. Innumerable atrocities, slavery, and brutal conquest all occur under the Order's auspices. Some Luminaries believe in the Order's supposed higher goals. For plenty of magi, however, the brutality and conquest is the *point*.

Even among magi holding lofty ideals of enlightening all humanity, when presented with the monstrous evidence of what Order-backed imperialism looks like, they often choose to ignore it. Facing the truth about what most of humanity goes through ground down beneath the boot-heel of empire is *inconvenient*. Order magi are privileged to do what so many Sleepers cannot — pretend it isn't happening. Many idealist Luminaries are cosseted dreamers, willingly blind to the price that others pay on their behalf.

You *can* play Order of Reason magi who are genuinely good people, earnestly fighting for humanity rather than trying to shackle and choke it beneath an oppressive regime; but the Order *fights* against those tendencies. Ultimately, a chronicle featuring Luminary player characters is likely to be either the darkest kind of horror, witnessing the ravenous machine of imperialism from within, or a story of breaking loose from the Order's authority and rebelling against its monstrous excesses.

But make no excuses for the fundamental nature of what the Order of Reason is doing in this age.

There, the Craftmasons encountered countless magi, trade, and artisan guilds that shared their enemy. With grievances ranging from magical plagues to old-fashioned extortion, there was no shortage of allies for the Craftmasons. Trevanus mustered his forces for a confrontation at the White Tower of Mistridge and opened fire with cannons. Few Hermetics at the Covenant survived the battle. No one knew it at the time, but those were the first shots of the Ascension War.

...To Light

In the wake of their success in France, the Craftmasons allied with the Golden Guild to the benefit of both factions. Exactly one century after the fall of Mistridge, the Craftmason Council took the idea of partnership to its natural conclusion: a society of magi that would benefit the world. It sent invitations around the world, though most concentrated in Europe. In 1325, the groups gathered in Mistridge, the site of their first victory. It was here in the Languedoc-Roussillon region of Southern France that they convened the Convention of the Ivory Tower.

Several large factions joined the Craftmasons: the Cabal of Pure Thought, Celestial Masters, Cosian Circle, and Solificati. Beyond these, a handful of independent scientists also attended. After a month of conferring, negotiating, and planning the future of the world, they invited the Artificers, Golden Guild, and Void Seekers to fill the gaps of knowledge among the existing groups. The Order of Reason was born, eight member-factions strong.

Unfortunately for the nascent organization, the Solificati alchemists saw themselves as shut out from the Convention's decision making, as well as out of place amongst the rest of the scientists who often dismissed alchemy as too steeped in occult ritualism to be taken seriously as a science. Within a decade, the Solificati abandoned the Convention to join the Traditions. Shocked by the seemingly sudden departure of the Solificati, the newly-formed Inner Circle demanded more information and insight into their membership to prevent such an event from ever occurring again. They created a secret police society answerable only to them (see **The Razors of the Order** sidebar). Records of the activities of this secret society are spotty, at best.

As the Renaissance birthed a new world, the Order saw itself go through changes. The first two members of the Order — the Craftmasons and Golden Guild — went head-to-head in a struggle to determine the best solution to the Diggers Rebellion in 1649. The Diggers were a socialist commune of farmers who routinely disregarded property rights, much to the chagrin of their landlords. Deep believers in the idea of the greater good, the Craftmasons saw the Diggers as a model for the common people uplifting themselves. At the same time, the Golden Guild saw the landowners as victims, swindled by their tenant farmers. Even the charismatic William Trevaine — great-grandson of Stephen Trevanus — was unable to break this stalemate.

By 1670, it was clear that neither side was going to give ground, and the Inner Circle gave a previously unthinkable order. The High Guild, the Cabal of Pure Thought, and an unknown faction (presumed to be the Inner Circle's secret police) swarmed the Craftmasons, attacking in an overwhelming wave of magic. If there were any survivors, they kept quiet about the fact.

In the wake of the Craftmasons' destruction, a key guiding principle of the Order of Reason changed. No longer was the Order's mission to spread knowledge and power, and to uplift the world; the Order's mission was to create a perfect world as they saw fit. Scientific achievement and technological progress would benefit the people — but on the Order's schedule. The Craftmasons' cornerstone belief that information should be free was as dead as its membership.

Over the following centuries, the Order saw the birth of new guilds and orders, many of which were at least friendly to the group. Examples of these new scientific societies include the Voltarian Order, founded in 1806, and the Difference Engineers, founded in 1823. While not signatories of the original Convention, these new groups began working alongside the Order.

The Razors of the Order: The Ksirafai

Technically non-existent for its entire 400-year history, the Order of Reason's brutal secret police do not exist during the Victorian Era for a new reason: they're no longer affiliated with the Order — at least, that's the official position.

Today, in the Victorian era, even the most knowledgeable Willworkers are unsure of the truth. After their part in the massacre of the Craftmasons, the Ksirafai purged all records of their existence, even going so far as to destroy their Construct. They then approached the Order of Hermes under a new name. The group presented the wreckage of their former home as proof of both power and commitment to fighting the Order of Reason. The Hermetics inducted them, dubbing them House Janissary. Yet rumors still circulate that the Inner Circle remains in contact with them. Are the Razors truly gone?

The legacy of the Ksirafai can still be felt to this day. Whenever a member of the Order leaves the safety of their Construct, they would do well to remember that they are likely being watched. If their goals ever fall out of alignment with the Order's, someone will notice. Anyone who has studied the history of the Order of Reason knows what happens when you get noticed.

Albertan Reformation

After Queen Victoria ascended to the throne in 1837, her consort Prince Albert took a hand in creating a stable atmosphere for scientists, bringing the Age of Discovery to its apex. This provided the social framework that the Order needed to cement themselves as the power behind the throne, as well as the guiding force of Europe and the rest of the world. Now known as the Albertan Reformation, these years forever altered the face of Europe. A mere three years into the Queen's reign, Ada King, countess of Lovelace, created what was believed to be the first computer program, designed for Mr. Babbage's theoretical Analytical Engine, giving the world a glimpse of information science.

The Difference Engineers, having already constructed several analytical engines, had mixed feelings about releasing this technology to the general public. On one hand, they were proud that the Territory of Europe was changing to permit more sophisticated technologies, but several of the programs they had developed could cause destructive weather patterns to which they'd rather the sleepers not have access.

In 1851, the Albertan Reformation of the Order of Reason reached its apogee, with the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations held in London. This exhibition formed the backdrop for the Order's leadership to gather and reform their constituent Houses, better reflecting their current membership, as well as the future aspirations of the True Scientists. By the end of the six-month-long expo, nine Guilds emerged as the core of the new Order of Reason. Along with a proposed new name — the Technocratic Union — the Order has two new missions: to bring peace and stability to Europe (and eventually the rest of the world) and to bring about a utopia through scientific and technological achievement.

- The Guild of Analytical Reckoners: Mathematicians and information scientists.
- The Hippocratic Circle: Life science specialists, particularly in human biology.
- The Society of Celestial Masters: Explorers of realms beyond Earth.
- The Guild of Electrodyne Engineers: Physicists exploring the world of voltaic science.
- The Void Seekers: Leaders of the European exploration and colonization of Earth.
- The Golden Guild: Masters of mesmerism and the 'art of desire'.
- The Invisible Exchequers: Economic experts maintaining the Concert of Europe.
- The Lightkeepers: Philosophers finding secular order in a deeply religious continent.
- The Brotherhood of Mechanicians: Engineers devoted to the creation of new works.

Through a combination of her canny maneuvering and the Order finding it in their best interests to keep Queen Victoria healthy, England's leadership would be one of the few constants in Europe. Over her lifetime, Victoria would see France overthrow its government four times, Spain twice, Italy unified, and the Ottoman Empire attempt then abandon democracy, to say nothing of the five different attempts at unifying Germany.

Rise of the Difference Engineers

After studying intricate mechanical looms in use by weavers, Charles Babbage theorized a machine capable of performing mathematical functions. As his theories revolved around differences and sums, he dubbed the theoretical machine the "Difference Engine." In 1822, Babbage created the prototype, "≠0." The Difference Engineers were taken as much by surprise as anyone else when Babbage published his notes. Although they had been working along parallel lines, Babbage's engine possessed an elegant simplicity that they had overlooked. Speculation about Babbage's true identity reached a fever pitch, but never amounted to much, especially after Babbage publicly abandoned the construction of "≠1" in 1842.

The following year saw the rise of Lady Lovelace, the world's first Sleeper programmer. Drawing from both Babbage and Italian engineering, Professor Luigi Menabrea, Lovelace taught herself the language of machines. In 1851, due to the publicity of Lovelace's work, the Difference Engineers reinvented themselves as the Analytical Reckoners. With such tightly programmed algorithms being produced by Sleepers, the Engineers saw the gauntlet thrown down and rushed to find ways to become more elaborate — and paradoxically — more efficient. The theoretically-minded took their calculation engines to new heights of complexity, filling entire warehouses, while the more pragmatic took pleasure in tearing out anything non-essential. The advancement of calculation technologies pushed the operational capability of these computers far beyond simple sums and differences.

The Reckoners reached a point where their ability to create tools to answer questions exceeded their ability to ask questions, sparking a divide among them. Many Reckoners saw the frontiers of programming and machine languages, and they recognized a new field of science that lay entirely outside the realms of the physical world. This new field was not a physical science like chemistry or physics, but a virtual science. As this sect of the Reckoners gained a better understanding of the theories underpinning their works, they began to regard themselves as virtual adepts.

Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha

Born in the German Confederation in 1819, Prince Albert was just four months younger than his cousin and eventual wife, Queen Victoria. Even at a young age, the two were quite the pair, with Victoria confessing privately that she found him deeply attractive. When they reunited as adults, they were completely taken with each other. Their marriage in 1840 was inevitable.

Prince Albert, however, was far more than just a pretty face. Soon after the wedding, Queen Victoria had his desk brought in next to hers, making him her personal secretary. From this proximity to the Queen, as she carried out affairs of the state, Albert quickly became adept. During the Queen's nine pregnancies, he ran the country in her stead. His skill at statesmanship caught the Order of Reason's notice, but his reforms won their attention.

In 1847, the Prince was elected the Chancellor of the University of Cambridge. Although many in Parliament had written him off as a bumpkin since he hailed from a young nation, Albert stunned England when he revealed how behind the times the classics-only university was. He founded programs in natural sciences and philosophy, making Cambridge an institute of modern science.

Four years later, he organized the Great Exhibition: the first World's Fair. For six months, many nations shared technology and culture. During the Great Exhibition, Prince Albert met with the Order of Reason, coordinating resources and leading to a vast network of scientific sponsorship. In addition to resources, the Prince revealed his plans for modernizing Britain and the entire world. Instead of the current hodgepodge of factions, Prince Albert found natural directions already present in the Order's membership and drew a plan for a revitalized organization. His proposed technocratic union would allow the factions to specialize and develop their talents, while also ensuring that the Order's missions around the world could be carried out.

Sadly for the Order, Prince Albert did not live to see his plans come to full fruition. Although he grew sick and passed in 1861, his legacy lived on as his museums, educational programs, and social reforms continued their impact on society. As for his Queen, Victoria fell into deep mourning, wearing black mourning clothes until she, too, died some 50 years later.

The Victorian Reformation

In 1861, Prince Albert died, leaving the Order without a champion on the national stage. That changed in 1885 when the Invisible College, led by Reginald Proctor, approached the Queen about creating a world government. Such theoretical governments had long been a topic of curiosity among the intelligentsia, but Proctor was the first to outline a specific plan with a chance of succeeding.

Still in mourning, two decades after beloved Prince Albert's fatal illness, Queen Victoria seemed like a stone, utterly unmoved by anything Proctor said. Indeed, her placid face made it seem as though she ignored all arguments that the Chancellor made throughout his three-hour presentation. Only when Proctor offered the Queen a break — which he assumed she would take and not return — did he learn the truth: she already knew most of his plan. Whether she gained her knowledge from her spies, extrapolation from Prince Albert's original plan, or her own ingenuity, no one could say. One thing was sure, though: Queen Victoria agreed.

She threw her support behind the plan, with some specific requests and cunning provisions to account for minor rebellions and revolutions to placate unruly masses, while still leaving plenty of room for the Order to content themselves as the power behind the throne. Additionally, the Queen had one more surprise to reveal. She had an Awakened military unit of her own: the Skeleton Keys. She insisted on the addition of the monster-hunting military police to the Union. Proctor agreed and the Lightkeepers finally had a martial companion Convention.

This new direction for the Union left some of the Conventions in disarray. In particular, the Analytical Reckoners and the Electrodyne Engineers found themselves at odds between the merits of theory and practice. Because of this, voting blocs began to grow within the Conventions. Most of them tied two Guilds together, but some furthered the schism between scientists. By 1885, the following political Blocs had cemented themselves as powers within the Order, wielding political power beyond the Guilds themselves.

- **The Exploratory Society:** Formed from the Celestial Masters and the Void Seekers, the Explorators seek to map our Earth and the worlds beyond, as well as colonize them.
- **The Grand Faculty:** The Hippocratic Order, joined by the theoretical science arms of the Analytical Reckoners and the Electrodyne Engineers, believes in the uplifting power of knowledge, striving to usher everyone into a new era, both Sleeper and Awakened alike.
- **The Ivory Tower:** Comprised of the Lighthouse and Skeleton Keys, the Tower strives to create and maintain a system of secular governance, free of the meddling of unpredictable churches.
- **The League of Constructors:** The applied scientists of the Analytical Reckoners and the Electrodyne Engineers, combined with the Mechanicians, tirelessly generate new inventions to better the world around them, winning the support of the rest of humanity in the process.
- **The Syndicate:** The Golden Guild and Invisible Exchequers manipulate the financial forces, both recognized and illicit, to bring order to the chaos of the world markets.

Despite some of the infighting that the rise of the Blocs caused within their member Conventions, the Blocs prove largely effective in combining the power of their members, ensuring that their interests are well represented on the world stage. With the might of the Order properly focused, they could direct their attentions beyond Europe.

The Elemental Dragons

In this era, the five Elemental Dragons are a counterpart to the Order of Reason holding sway across several Asian countries. Initially, the Dragons' technomancers are divided along national lines, clashing often with their peers from another country or within the other Dragons, and warring with the Order of Reason itself when the forces of imperialism penetrate the region. The Dragons and the Order may have similar driving philosophies, but the shape of the future itself is at stake.

In 1896, the Meeting of Dragons sees the Elemental Dragons and several other regional magickal groups come together in a more formalized alliance. They later join the new Technocratic Union, merging into its Conventions.

The Scramble for Africa

Long before the Albertan Reformation, European explorers, slavers, and miners probed and prodded the African continent, looking to turn its 11 million square miles into a source of wealth despite the moral implications. By the 1850s, most of the European nations had a foothold somewhere along the outer regions of the vast continent. In Africa, the Order found themselves at odds with everyone, including themselves.

The Bantu nations of Central and Southern Africa believed just as strongly in the merits of technomancy as the Union did, having conquered a significant portion of the continent through martial and agricultural superiority. The Explorators had brief contact with the Awalaye and

Wamukamwami, two loose confederations of Central African medicine people and doctors. While some of their practices seemed mere superstition to the members of the Order, the efficacy of the medicinal practices and precision at future predictions were impossible to ignore. These new scientific frontiers piqued the interest of the Hippocratic Circle, Analytic Reckoners, and Electrodyne Engineers, as they desired better understanding of the Awalaye's medicinal practices and future prediction precision, as well as the Wamukamwami's apparent superior understanding of Etheric Mechanics.

Unfortunately for the more theoretical members of the Order, these discoveries were made *after* the Explorators sacked and pillaged multiple Awalaye and Wamukamwami Constructs. Instead of being able to talk directly to these African scientists, the Grand Faculty were left piecing together artifacts and notes. What could have been an incredible exchange of technology was little more than a tragic jigsaw puzzle. Although the Hippocratic Order and etheric faction of Electrodyne Engineers tried desperately to get the Void Seekers to find and make peace with the African technomancers, the Seekers completely brushed off their peers, refusing to believe that there could be anyone worth talking to in Africa.

Future Fates: Victoria's Legacy

In 1885, the Invisible College meets with Queen Victoria to discuss the idea of a World Government. From this meeting's success and the revelations therein, the Order of Reason finalizes its reorganization as the Technocratic Union in 1897. However, the meeting between Reginald Proctor and Queen Victoria is by no means a sure thing. The stern leader may have no patience for Proctor's wild ideas; conversely, the meeting could just as possibly go exceedingly well.

Depending on the desired feel of your chronicle, you could resolve the Victorian Reformation in several ways:

- The Victorian Reformation succeeded: The world's stage is set for the next few decades and the conflict within the Analytical Reckoners and the Electrodyne Engineers is resolved by splitting each of the two groups along bloc lines. From the Order of Reason, the new Technocratic Union emerges as…

Order of Reason	Technocratic Union
The Exploratory Society	The Void Engineers
The Grand Faculty	The Progenitors
The Ivory Tower	The Ivory Tower
The League of Constructors	Iteration X
The Syndicate	The Syndicate

- The Victorian Reformation failed: In the Queen's eyes, the friction between the Grand Faculty and the Constructors made many of the supposedly pre-eminent scholars appear to be little more than bickering children. The strife between the two blocs spreads to the others, causing the Technocracy to emerge, not as a union of the existing factions, but as an alternative to the Order. In this world, there are two separate technocratic societies, each vying for world control and their particular mastery of Science. Such divisions within the power behind the thrones would most assuredly exacerbate the tensions within the Concert of Europe that led to The Great War, if not causing it to occur earlier.

Order of Reason	Technocratic Union
Celestial Masters	League of Constructors
Grand Faculty	New World Order
Syndicate	Void Engineers

- The Victorian Reformation exceeds all expectations: Stunned by meeting with the most powerful monarch of the time, the Grand Faculty and League of Constructors put aside their differences. Throughout the meeting, they find common ground, ensuring that the home for the future Research and Execution division is the Grand League of Science and not the Void Engineers. The Grand League of Science creates a technological pipeline for the Technocracy's theory, application, and fabrication obviating the need for Q Division. Safe airship travel and a Golden Age of Ether create a world that prospers scientifically, dominated politically by the rest of the Technocratic Union. Improvements to communication and travel prevent the Crisis of 1914 from spiraling out of control and becoming The Great War, but at what cost?

Order of Reason	Technocratic Union
The Explorer Society	The Void Engineers
The Grand Faculty & The League of Constructors	The Grand League of Science
The Ivory Tower	New World Order
The Syndicate	The Syndicate

In 1879, the Seekers starting the Anglo-Zulu War shattered any hope the Faculty had of contacting and partnering with the Africans. Not until over a hundred years later were the African technomancers willing to share their knowledge with their Western counterparts.

Just before the Victorian Reformation, the Berlin Conference created a pact between the most powerful Western nations, effectively carving Africa up for colonization. Thirteen European nations and the United States set the stage for the Scramble for Africa. The Void Seekers, Golden Guild, and Invisible Exchequers in particular oversaw a great deal of the exploitation of Africa, with significant spoils of the colonization ending up in the coffers of the Order.

The Path to the Technocracy

The Order's great successes marked the last decade of Queen Victoria's life. The world was shrinking. As banks and other institutions gained easier access to properties and partnerships via rail, the Syndicate grew in power and the total number of banking institutions dropped. The advent of the telegraph and Bell's cutting-edge invention of the telephone further accelerated the consolidation of financial power, the number of banks plummeting from over 500 in 1890 to just eighteen in 1920.

More breathtakingly successful, the Explorators developed ships capable of traveling through air and space. In 1892, Archmaster Kepler and Captain Savage set foot on the Moon. The next year, Archmaster Tychoides set off

Future Fates: Autochthonia

Tychoides' discovery of Autochthonia in 1893 sparked a new age for the Order. His brief experiments with the flat segments that made up the million-sided polyhedral planetoid revealed that there were mineral-rich veins that lead deep into its core. Not only did they serve as seemingly limitless power conduits, but they also had a unique, unerring vibratory frequency. Tychoides hypothesized that the analytical engines that his peers among the Constructors created would reach new pinnacles of calculatory power here.

Two years later, his hypothesis would be confirmed by the installation of the Order's largest engine. The Reckoner, Hadiyah al-Sharif, nearly lost her arm to the engine during a test as it processed the entire punch card stack in a matter of seconds instead of the expected three hours. Within months, outfitted with punches and feeders of its own, the engine could modify its programming based on calculations. Al-Sharif planned to create a perpetual cycle of machine learning, separate but compatible with human interactions. Each iteration of the engine took an increasingly longer time to complete as the engine created ever more complex programs for itself to run. Iteration 1 took a mere nine days compared to Iteration 5's eight months.

In 1897, a series of strange things happened with Iteration 5. Instead of taking longer to process the instructions, the engine began generating and completing iterations faster than Al-Sharif could count. Her days became little more than hauling millions of punch cards in and out of the room and reinforcing the bolts that kept the engine anchored to the ground. Without warning, the engine eventually went completely still. When Al-Sharif went to inspect the machine, it ejected a single punch card. The card, translated from Arabic, said "Computer is Ready." Since then, the Computer has been a fixture of Autochthonia, endowed with apparent sentience and seemingly endless capacity for self-improvement.

Depending on the nature of your chronicle, Autochthonia may be very different:

- The Computer gains sentience due to Hadiyah al-Sharif's programming: The Computer becomes a device of immense power for the Constructors, giving the bloc a new direction in which to move, rebranding themselves as Iteration X. The newly created Virtual Adepts view the Computer as a source of untold intellectual riches.
- An eons-old spirit possesses the engine: The Computer initially appears as the savior of the Virtual Adepts as they usher in a new future under the banner of Iteration X. As time goes on, the Computer becomes manipulative, gently guiding the path of the entire Technocracy to suit its unknown ends. The brightest among the Virtual Adepts begin to suspect the Computer's true nature, leading to their exodus from the Technocracy in the 20th century.
- Autochthonia is never discovered: Tychoides expedition turns up little of interest other than empty space that could be populated with human-made satellites. The Void Engineers and Iteration X plan a joint venture to create a network of workstations for hazardous experiments at the Earth's Lagrange points.

on a solo space voyage around the Sun. During the fateful voyage, Tychoides discovered an alien planetoid in Earth's antipodal point. Mirroring Earth's orbit around the Sun perfectly was far from the only unusual property about the world (see Autochthonia sidebar). Naming it Autochthonia, he turned over further exploration of the world to his peer, Hadiyah al-Sharif, a Master of the Analytical Reckoners.

By the time the Order reformed as the Technocratic Union in 1897, Syndicate and Lighthouse dominion of global finance and politics seemed all but certain.

The Blocs of the Order of Reason

Although not technically Conventions of the Order of Reason until the Victorian Reformation in 1897, the following Blocs form the backbone of the Order's politics during the Victorian Age. At least two member Conventions make up each Bloc's political base, with the Grand Faculty and the League of Constructors vying for individual scientists within the Guilds of Analytical Reckoners and Electrodyne Engineers.

The Exploratory Society

The siren song of the unknown drives the Celestial Masters and Void Seekers to the farthest reaches of the Tellurian. No matter how many enlightened officers fall to the indescribable horrors of the terrestrial and celestial void, the Explorators still ride out into the unknown. The Explorator bloc holds two of the few remaining Conventions with an unbroken lineage tracing back to the first gathering of the Ivory Tower. The Void Seekers and Celestial Masters claim this legacy with no small amount of pride, but their status as a unified bloc within the Order of Reason is much more recent.

For most of the Order's history, the Celestial Masters and Void Seekers each served as playful foils to the other. Old Seekers scoffed at the frivolity of wandering among the stars when the Earth hid so many undiscovered wonders and more than a few Masters chided the Seekers for their provincial discoveries. Luminaries outside the exploring Conventions could easily imagine the two groups bore legitimate resentment for the other, but nothing could be further from the truth. Underneath their barbs, an unspoken competition drove the explorers to push each expedition farther into the unexplored wilds of the void. Not only to sate their need for

Future Fates: Ether

Since the start of the Electrodyne Engineers, an informal group has experimented with the elusive element they call Ether. Known variously as the Society of Ether, Etherites, or Sons of Ether — and known in ages past as House Golo, the Natural Philosophers' Guild, and most recently as the Pupils of Parmenides — they relied heavily on theories involving the glowing gaseous substance, but many scientists failed to extract Ether, making its existence dubious. Because of this, some Engineers condemned Etherites as frauds. To make matters worse, the descriptions and experiments involving Ether seemed to defy the rest of the laws of nature. Braving the criticism of their peers, the Etherites claimed their designs and applications allow for communication across vast distances, safer lighter-than-air designs, fully functional prosthetics, and more.

While the newer members rankled under the skepticism of their mainstream peers, some of the older Etherites remembered the greedy imperialism of the Void Seekers ruining their chances of learning from the African Etherites, the Wamukamwami. Together, these formed a potent cocktail of resentment among the Etherites.

Depending on the desired flavor of your chronicle, you could regard Ether in the following ways:

- The Technocratic Union rejects Ether: In 1905, the Technocracy votes to purge Ether from Consensus. Overnight, etheric scientists around the world see their works fail or worse. Virtually all Technocrats experimenting with Ether abandon the Union in favor of forming a new version of the Electrodyne Engineers, the Society of Ether. A brief suborbital skirmish breaks out as Void Seeker spaceships cross guns with etherships. The Society seeks out and joins the Traditions, pursuing vengeance upon their betrayers.
- The Technocratic Union formally adopts Ether: The 1905 referendum is tabled after a prominent Etherite, Andreas Vargo, delivers a stunning demonstration of Ether's properties. Hailed as the "Czar of Ether," Vargo releases a series of manuals describing the nature and applications of Ether. Without the Society of Ether's defection, the Traditions look to Crafts to fill the empty seat left by the dissolution of the Solificati. Reeling from the loss of Hawai'i to the American military, the Kopa Loei join up. The next two decades see a worldwide rise of Ether-powered airships, a corresponding decline of coal-powered cargo ships, and a bloody purge of Technocrats throughout all of Polynesia.

discovery but to make sure their flag waved highest over the ever-expanding borders of the empire.

This competitive spirit drove Sir William Herschel to wander out beyond the boundaries of the ancient celestial maps. No Master had ever returned from beyond the known void, and the Order quickly wrote off his expedition into the darkness as lost. When he returned years later with celestial cartography leading to the ice giant Uranus, the Explorators bloc, as it is known today, truly took form. The empire might stretch to every corner of the globe, but when Herschel banished even the celestial void's farthest boundaries, the rest of the Luminary Order took notice.

Each year, the Void Seekers and Celestial Masters join each other's expeditions in unprecedented numbers. While their cooperation is born from the unified need to see, map, and define the farthest reaches of existence, the two groups demonstrate their capacity for truly revolutionary work when properly aligned. The Celestial Masters no longer spend endless nights mapping the stars; now, they study the fundamental nature of the heavenly realms through enlightened spectroscopy. What was once a need to merely walk among the heavens to banish oppressive gods, has grown into an insatiable need to understand the most fundamental secrets of reality. This study of the high realms guides the Void Seekers' work in defining their own home, allowing them to carve clean, perfect slices of time and structure out of the incoherent reality zones currently covering the world in chaos.

The Explorators are about to undertake their greatest work to date. Calculations made early in the century have revealed that a pathway to Venus will open, and the exact moment the topography of the heavens will be visible to anyone with the Enlightenment to see. The two Conventions are planning a great expedition to the islands of Hawai'i to gaze into this schism between the worlds and create a definitive map of the solar system. The Invisible Exchequers refused three times to fund the project, claiming it as a waste of resources. That was before the lead designer for one of the new Electrodyne skyships, Lord Thompson, personally solicited funding from one of the oldest masters of the Golden Guild, playing on his rivalry with the newly-formed Exchequers. The cornerstone of Lord Thompson's practice is etched into the bridge of his masterwork: "To Measure is to Know." Understanding this deceptively short phrase is central to mastery of the Explorator's arts.

Once this expedition is complete, the Explorators will have a perfect measurement of the spaces between worlds, and Lord Thomas knows this discovery is necessary if any of his ships are to return from the deep void. The incoherent ebb and flow of the aetheric currents can be tamed if they can only be measured, and just as the early Void Seeker banished

that dragons lurking at the edge of the map, the Explorators will cast them out beyond the edge of the celestial sphere, ensuring humanity takes its place among the stars.

As the expedition to observe Venus' revelations draws closer, the excitement within the Explorators' halls is drawing the critical eye of the Lightkeepers. The work of perfecting the empire on the ground is far from over, and several masters from the Ivory Tower worry that the Seekers are being distracted by the lure of a return to the high adventures of their youth. Thus far, the Lightkeepers are allowing the expedition to commence because, as the Celestial Masters have repeatedly reminded, a perfect measurement of the skies allows the Order to define the stars. No matter how skilled their Conventions' great hunters are, there are always new threats sneaking through the celestial veil. If the skies can be tamed as perfectly as the world's frontiers, then those hunters may be able to hang up their guns and serve a good beyond putting down the deviants of the world.

The Explorators know there will always be another horizon to cross, another savage threat to fell, but they also know the Lightkeepers tolerate their whims only while they are useful. More than a few of the most adventurous spirits within the bloc chafe under the yolk of their responsibilities to the Order, but their superiors keep them in check. The spirit of adventure is necessary to drive the Explorators to Enlightened discovery, but children standing wide-eyed at the bow of their first ship must grow into captains guiding the world through uncertain waters. That is not to say the admirals of the Order's maritime fleet trust or believe in the money-changers and bureaucrats writing their orders, but they have seen what lurks beyond the veil, and their first loyalty is keeping Queen and country safe from threats only they can understand.

The Grand Faculty

Wanting neither master nor servant, knowledge is a force of its own, as primal and powerful as a thunderbolt. No knowledge should not be sought, for it will be found; and if not by the Order, then by whom? For what purpose? Good or ill? The Grand Faculty proposes to bring science and reason to the masses — and why shouldn't they? Though the Sleepers have only just begun to learn of the true nature of diseases, they have already taken great steps to fight back contagions. This century alone has seen the Sleepers step from superstitious beliefs about miasma and bad air being the source of illness to creating vaccines, sanitizing water sources, and even "pasteurizing" foods to cleanse them.

The Order believes that the dissemination of knowledge has saved millions of Sleepers; softening the impact of multiple epidemics while avoiding countless others entirely. After the Great Stink of 1858 made it obvious to even the dullest among them that London needed to be fixed, the Sleepers made it happen. While the Grand Faculty had pushed the issue, the people didn't need any further help from the Order of Reason to dig out millions of cubic feet of earth and construct over 13,000 miles of sewer systems. Ordinary people, armed with ordinary knowledge, did it themselves.

That's the goal of the Grand Faculty: to arm the planet with the knowledge it needs to run smoothly. It's wildly inefficient to continuously save the world when you can simply teach the world to stop getting into trouble. The Faculty is having a massive effect; even at the basest level, it's impossible to underestimate the boon that this has been to the Order. Sleepers are turning from old wives' tales, from occultism, from the nonsense of the Traditions to Science, Reason, and the Order. Soon, the correctness or power that Reason imparts will be impossible for superstitionalists to ignore. Thus, the advancement of knowledge empowers humanity, and the world becomes a vast technocracy.

Politically, the Grand Faculty regularly butts heads with the Exploratory Society. Although the Seekers frequently come into contact with interesting civilizations, they never do so peacefully. While the Faculty is not an endlessly benevolent group that never exploits indigenous people for their technology, they at least recognize that indigenous peoples have value. A view seldom shared by the shoot, loot, and scoot members of the Explorators. The closest the Explorators come to valuing other people is holding slave markets and assigning a literal price to purloined flesh and labor.

Members: Members of the Faculty hail from three of the member Conventions: the Hippocratic Circle, the Guild of Electrodyne Engineers, and the Guild of Analytical Reckoners. Interestingly, neither of the Guilds fully fall within the Grand Faculty's voting bloc, nor that of the League of Constructors. Instead, individual members and smaller factions decide for themselves which of the two Blocs best represents their needs. Overall, the more theoretically-minded members of the Engineers and Reckoners gravitate towards the Faculty.

Of course, love of knowledge is but half of the Faculty's charge, the other half is using their power to enable the world to preserve itself, leading some of the Guilds' more hands-on technicians to vote with the Faculty. Although it's easy to dismiss peers that join the Constructors over the Faculty as hard-hearted bastards who don't care about humanity, doing so is discouraged by the Faculty's leadership. There is no such limitation, however, about calling the Explorators bastards.

Outlook: Since the formation of the Blocs, the Faculty and the Constructors have been each other's best ally and worst foe. Thinking of the two as simply enemies would be a mistake. Competing for members of the Guilds of Electrodyne Engineers and Analytical Reckoners might be an obvious point of contention between the two, but the Faculty and Constructors have much in common. Both Blocs believe that each new device or theory advances the Order along the road towards a future free of superstition. Their efforts in bringing this future to life could not be better aligned. What the Faculty theorizes, the Constructors build.

This mutually beneficial arrangement is best exemplified by the two main sects of the Reckoners, who will one day be known as the Iterators and the Virtual Adepts. The Iterators build the machines and the Adepts devise the perfect ques-

tions to ask them. One could not exist without the other, two halves of the same whole.

Through membership with the Bloc, individual scientists gain access to deep resources within academia. Every member of the Faculty is granted full visiting professor rights at every college and university within the Order's control, which is to say, most of them. The ongoing Sino-Japanese, Sino-Soviet, and Russo-Japanese conflicts mean that many of the resources of East Asia are difficult to access, but the Faculty guarantees the rights nonetheless.

The Ivory Tower

The world grows ever larger. As British exploration, expansion, and colonization efforts continue, the Order of Reason strives to fulfill Prince Albert's mandate to bring peace and stability to the world. While the other blocs focus on the discoveries, scientific advancements, and economic advantages these new-to-the-empire lands open up, the Ivory Tower sets its sights on one overarching goal: global unity.

The sheer abundance of distinct and disparate cultures they're aiming to consolidate might be overwhelming for other blocs to consider, but the challenge invigorates the Ivory Tower. The bloc's member Conventions are new in name only. They've been doing this work for centuries.

In lands the Crown sets its sights on, the bloc supports both missionary and military operations. Wherever the empire has gained a foothold, they focus on supplanting indigenous cultures with Eurocentric ideals. The Ivory Tower helps impose laws that expropriate colonized countries' power and place it in the Crown's control.

At home, the bloc spreads the notion that the colonies' indigenous peoples are *lesser* — less civilized, less intelligent, less capable of governing themselves — and that, therefore, Britain's stewardship is for their own good. Both scholarly works and pulp novels support this portrayal, many of them published by Ivory Tower-backed presses.

The Lightkeepers, standing alone in the Ivory Tower for a majority of the period, continue the crusade started by their predecessors in the Cabal of Pure Thought. No longer wishing to unite the world under one Christian church, they set their sights on a single, secular world government, run by politicians the Lightkeepers have quietly and deftly maneuvered into place. Though they are no strangers to eliminating threats and removing dissenters themselves, the talents of Inspector Rathbone's Skeleton Keys are a welcome addition to the bloc in the latter half of the century. A significant number of the Skeleton Keys' members are police officers and inspectors, opening extra avenues of authority to the Ivory Tower's goals.

This is all, of course, for the benefit of the Sleepers — or so the magi tell themselves. The Exploratory Society and the Grand Faculty push both physical and theoretical boundaries. The League of Constructors turns their materials and hypotheses into working wonders. The Syndicate funds both expeditions and industry. Someone has to be certain these improvements — and the knowledge gleaned from them — are safely monitored for the good of the Masses. The Ivory Tower keeps careful track of its colleagues' plans. It openly advocates for those that advance its agenda, while strenuously objecting to those deemed frivolous or a waste of resources. This has led to friction between the Lightkeepers and the more adventuresome Exploratory Society, especially those voyages proposed by the Celestial Masters. At least the Void Seekers' earthbound discoveries show immediate benefits.

Agenda: The Ivory Tower takes a keen interest in media-related advancements. Less than a century passes between Joseph Nicéphore Niépce's first photograph with a camera obscura and the Lumière brothers' first motion picture presentation to an audience of two hundred. Though slow to catch on at first, typewriters go from the frustrating, expensive machines Mark Twain described as "curiosity-breeding little jokers" to enjoying widespread use in business and personal correspondence. The Tower makes use of both, making forays into the film industry from its very inception and strengthening their already-established holds within print media. Entertainment is as valid a method for shaping the Masses' opinions as is the dissemination of carefully-curated facts.

The advent of the telephone and telegraph presents the Tower with both a breakthrough and a dilemma. Communication moves faster and breaking news spreads rapidly, forcing operatives to be increasingly more vigilant. Once a narrative's out, it's harder — though not impossible — to alter. However troublesome that may be, these new technologies also offer increased opportunities for surveillance. Listeners tap into the telegraph wires along England's Great Western Railway, and an ocean away, agents intercept the dots and dashes of Morse Code messages. When Antonio Meucci constructs his first electromagnetic telephone, the Lightkeepers take notice. By the time Bell patents his in the United States, the Ivory Tower's there to help lay the infrastructure.

The Lightkeepers' and Skeleton Keys' varied approaches toward their duty of vigilance against unauthorized applications of Enlightened science and rooting out occult sections within their jurisdictions sometimes cause friction within the bloc. Although they have replaced God with government, the Lightkeepers still hold to methods passed down from the Cabal of Pure Thought. They prefer subtle actions over splashy ones, guiding Sleepers toward Consensus while letting them think they've reached their conclusions independently. The Skeleton Keys, on the other hand, enjoy a good adventure — some display a frustrating tendency toward fisticuffs.

While the most confidential details of their investigations remain in the privacy of their lodges, several storytellers in the Skeleton Keys' ranks enjoy regaling unEnlightened audiences with embellished versions of their exploits. The Lightkeepers seize the opportunity for profit in their colleagues' showmanship, publishing those stories as adventure novels to capture the public's imagination and sway their opinions in favor of colonialist ideals.

Despite their differences in methodologies, the Lightkeepers and Skeleton Keys complement one another more

than they clash. Both Conventions place great value on education: members of the Lightkeepers' Lighthouse Methodology are scholars, and many Skeleton Keys attended prestigious institutions before their Enlightenment. The Lightkeepers' Lanterns and Torches often join Skeleton Keys in the field, lending their investigative skills and several centuries of deviant-hunting tactics to the chase.

Holdings: To unite the world, the Ivory Tower must start at home. The Skeleton Keys opens doors for the Lightkeepers with their connections on the police force and in London's high society, helping the bloc pursue its agenda of political dominance. With Queen Victoria's support, they intend to rid London of charlatans and enemy reality deviants. Meanwhile, they support the other blocs' efforts, spreading messages of bringing good health and prosperity to every corner of the globe, while helping to destabilize colonized countries' governments, quashing their autonomy, and seizing control of their resources.

In the decades following Victoria's demise, the Tower's scholarly conquests take less and less precedence, as their focus on surveillance and policing rise to the fore. From these origins, the New World Order will be born.

The League of Constructors

Theory is for academics, for the elite's drawing rooms and restricted laboratories, places from which most average people are barred. To prove the worth of science and technology to the Masses, the League of Constructors believe they need to *see* science at work. Not only that, but they need to understand how science can work *for them*. What can the Constructors produce to make Sleepers' lives easier? What can they put out into the world that has immediate, tangible benefits with a scientific basis the user accepts, even if he doesn't fully understand? It's not about convenience so much as it is about control: if the unEnlightened depend on the apparatus and mechanisms the League introduces, they take one more step toward Consensus.

The Brotherhood of Mechanicians works extensively toward this goal. Their transportation and agricultural contributions are often overshadowed by the Void Seekers' vaunted travels into the Earth's last unknowns, and by the Celestial Masters' jaunts across the skies. If it weren't for the Brotherhood's industrial innovations, some of the Exploratory Society's ships would still be years from taking flight. As much as some Mechanicians wonder what might happen if they stopped manufacturing parts for the Explorers' machines, supporting their endeavors yields materials upon which the Brotherhood themselves rely. The system works — for now.

The Guild of Electrodyne Engineers and the Guild of Analytical Reckoners split their membership between the League of Constructors and the Grand Faculty. While the Faculty work in the realm of theory, their associates in the League put their assumptions to the test. The Electrodyne Engineers endeavor to bring electricity and its applications to the Masses, while also letting their ideas run into the realm of the wild. They exchange notes with members of the Hippocratic Circle regarding electrical impulses and the human brain. The Reckoners are interested in the Circle's conclusions as well, but from a different standpoint: the machines they build perform complex calculations, bigger and faster than human capability. Someday, perhaps, they might even begin to *think* like humans. Should the Reckoners succeed, they'll leave any moral or philosophical implications to their Faculty counterparts.

Friction between the blocs isn't simply a rivalry between theory and application, or a competition for resources and members. The Grand Faculty emphasizes promoting Technocratic knowledge and ideals to stamp out the Traditions' dangerous superstitions. Bring the Awakened to heel, and the Sleepers will follow. The Constructors certainly recognize the threat reality deviants pose but prefer deferring the problem of rogue magi to the likes of the Lightkeepers and Skeleton Keys, freeing them up to inspire the unEnlightened.

Agenda: It's easy to assume that each Convention within the League of Constructors works independently of the others, that they vote together because of similar interests while pursuing vastly different agendas. The Mechanicians devote their efforts toward improving the lives of the unEnlightened, championing innovations on both the industrial and domestic levels. To them, the internal combustion engine is as essential to Sleeper progress as the sewing machine and the dishwasher. They identify with the unEnlightened working class in a way that makes other Technocrats uncomfortable, especially the Skeleton Keys.

The Engineers continue their experiments regarding electricity and Ether. How the unEnlightened have benefitted from the former is a byproduct of their science rather than the primary intention. Certainly, the Electrodyne Engineers are pleased with the way the Masses have embraced the telephone and telegraph. Wires crisscrossing not only countries but spanning an entire ocean? Sleeper ambition is marvelous! However, the Engineers are already thinking bigger. While they proudly share their energy transfer devices and demonstrate new lightning weapons to the Order, they closely guard their Etherships and research into the elusive element. The secrecy hasn't gone unnoticed to their allies within the League, and it is a source of much consternation.

The Reckoners build machines capable of answering the mathematical questions their Grand Faculty colleagues pose, but they have bigger dreams for their creations. They work on programs that can make leaps of logic. They study human decision-making, and they attempt to teach their analytical engines how to recreate those choices — and how to make better ones. A breakthrough is on the horizon when the discovery of Autochthonia grants the Reckoners the perfect environment to run their most ambitious program yet.

As separate as the Conventions appear, their works complement one another, moving the bloc ever closer to its future fate. Where the Hippocratic Circle looks toward organic and biological solutions, the Constructors aim to boost human potential by manufactured means. Some of their innovations have military uses. Others, like adaptive

devices, have everyday utility. At the end of the century, the League of Constructors become Iteration X.

Holdings: The League has significant connections outside of Europe, thanks to the Guild of Analytical Reckoners' vast contacts in India, West Asia, and the Americas. The Reckoners make significant donations to academic institutions, granting the Constructors access to facilities and research libraries in prestigious colleges and universities. The League also benefits from the Brotherhood's ties to labor and unEnlightened workers. They own several factories throughout England and can manufacture new parts quickly, cheaply, and in large quantities when the need arises. The Electrodyne Engineers keep their Etherships' whereabouts and very existence secret, but they maintain a small fleet should they need to flee the Order — and possibly the Earth. Whether they invite their allies within the League remains to be seen.

Though the Syndicate finances the Order of Reason's grandest undertakings, the individual Conventions are wise to maintain their own, separate funding. To that end, the Mechanicians, the Reckoners, and the Electrodyne Engineers all own a significant number of patents based on member inventions that are ready to be used by the unEnlightened Masses. They enter into manufacturing agreements with Sleeper companies that are heavily skewed in the Technocrats' favor, investing the profits in new and exciting scientific exploration.

The Syndicate

Of all the blocs within the Order of Reason, the Syndicate is the youngest. Even before the Albertan Reorganization, collaborative relationships thrived among the Conventions. Especially renowned for funding and coordinating complex operations reaching across continents, the Opium War with the Qing Dynasty was the Golden Guild's last great venture. In the decades the developing trade relationships with India, the process cultivated a robust opium trade that ran the drug straight through Chinese port cities before sending it across the British empire. A faction of Dalou'laoshi operating within the Qing courts grew tired of the economic and health problems caused by the flood of opium within their empire. They moved against the Golden Guild and arrested a wave of Guild merchants operating within China. The rage that boiled over in the Golden Guild's highest ranks consumed the Daedaleans with war for three years, drawing considerable resources from both the Void Seekers and Lightkeepers.

By the signing of the Treaty of Nanking, a growing faction of financiers within the Guild had grown tired of the conflict and the toll on their ranks. While the Order and Britain ended the war with impressive spoils and international power, several Guild members felt that a handful of old masters in their Convention wielded too much influence within the Order, while they wielded too little. There was no question that the practice of the Golden Guild was fracturing. The merchants and guild-masters maintained the singular importance of *Ars Cupiditae*, but a growing number of Guild members worked as clerks in banks, focusing on the power of pure numbers and financial might. The discontent that developed during the Opium War made it clear something needed to change within the Golden Guild.

When the Opium War ended, influential Guild members spearheaded a cross-Convention project that grew into the Great Exhibition of 1851. The Exhibition marked the first venture in which Guild financiers had unilateral power to organize themselves and work with merchants as autonomous equals. After the awkward tensions that defined the Guild during the Opium War, the buildup to the Great Exhibition was exhilarating. The Guild jumped at the chance to formalize their new working relationship when Prince Albert made it clear his intent for restructuring the Order of Reason, using the Exhibition to complete the negotiations. The Invisible Exchequers and the Golden Guild emerged from the Exhibition ready to restructure the whole British Empire, and they have lost none of that fire.

Wherever patrons of great works walk you can find Guild agents carefully complementing the Invisible Exchequers' analytical funding work. The Order's financial bloc is more collaborative than it was when they were a single Convention. The Syndicate has its fingers in nearly every significant financial venture across the empire. Beyond funding the other Conventions, they are building the trade networks and economies that define the next century of human development.

Some among the other blocs whisper that the Syndicate's power extends too far, setting the stage for an inevitable backlash. Chafing at the patent review expansion spearheaded by the Exchequers, the Electrodyne Engineers protest loudest, claiming such strict financial parameters on invention and development will corrupt their work. They are hardly the only Luminaries concerned about the rapid ascension of the Syndicate, but the Syndicate's track record thus far has earned far more supporters than detractors. Their expansion of patent systems across the United States and the British Empire is only one of the collaborations they have developed across the Order. The establishment of standardized time zones, the expansion of national banks, and the separation of currency from physical commodity standards all center on the Syndicate, but involve Luminaries from across the Order.

The Syndicate's great economic work often obscures the basic principle that binds the Guild and the Exchequers together. They both work their Enlightened will through the labor of others. Where the Golden Guild plays the motivation and desire of merchants, artists, and engineers like the strings of a fine fiddle, the Exchequers are building an economy of interconnected value across the known world. The connections making up that economy are people living their lives, and dreaming of the lives they could build for themselves in the world they've been told is coming. The Syndicate works with human potential the way a Constructor works with metal or the members of the Hippocratic Circle restore flesh. They understand how to take the effort of the other Conventions and maximize its power in the world,

refining Enlightenment in ways an artisan can never fully understand. Unlike the other blocs, the Syndicate Masters don't promote their work for primacy within the Order's timeline. They understand that the other blocs are merely components of their economic working and are content to let the rest of the Order vie for the elevation of their paradigms within the coming economy.

Once the Syndicate's great work is done, the Exchequers believe primal energy will gather in their Enlightened Market as efficiently as it does in any of the centers of power the Order has controlled for the last 400 years. The sheer scale of the Syndicate's resources indicates they may have already tapped the energy of their Enlightened Economy, but if so they haven't shared the details of this primal innovation outside their bloc.

The Conventions of the Order of Reason

The Albertan Reformation reshaped the Daedaleans of yesteryear into the Technocratic Union as it stands today. The Great Exhibition of 1851 gave the Conventions a renewed purpose and direction, and Queen Victoria has placed the power of the British throne — and thus its empire — behind many of the Order's efforts. Though this means the Conventions are well-situated to carry out their sundry agendas, much work remains to be done.

The Council of Nine stands in opposition to the Order's aims. While their influence is scattered across the world, these rogue magi put up an impassioned defense when they learn the Order of Reason is coming for them. The Traditions and the Technocratic Union vie for control of new territories while clashing over countries and cultures the British Empire sets out to conquer. The Conventions view colonization as a path to Consensus. They pursue their aims ruthlessly and violently, supporting military forays to seize land from indigenous peoples or inciting bloody conflicts between local factions — tipping the scales in favor of whichever side the Union wants in power. They exploit a region's resources, diverting material goods back to imperial nations' factories. The Invisible Exchequers take the lead in disrupting and destroying colonized peoples' economies, while other Conventions help mold policy, education, and industry in those areas to better resemble European models.

The Traditions attempt to undermine their efforts where they can. However, for some Council magi, sticking their necks out makes them targets. The Order's mandate includes re-educating any that can be brought to reason while eradicating all that refuse.

The blocs within the Technocratic Union work together to impose order on a global scale, but the approaches within the individual Conventions differ widely. Even within a given Convention, several Methodologies approach the same goals

from different angles. The Guild of Analytical Reckoners builds machines and algorithms that calculate potential outcomes for every plan. The Society of Celestial Masters, the Void Seekers, and the Guild of Electrodyne Engineers take to the skies, the seas, the stars, and the Ether to extend the Order's influence, acting as scouts and occasional ambassadors in new lands. The Hippocratic Circle pushes the boundaries of modern medicine in operating theaters and field hospitals around the world, seeking exhaustive knowledge of the human body — sometimes at horrific costs. The International Brotherhood of Mechanicians takes the raw materials the empire imports from its colonies and turns them into steam-powered and piston-driven wonders even the unEnlightened can use. The Lightkeepers and Skeleton Keys build eyes-and-ears networks, intercepting communications and responding to occult threats. The Golden Guild and Invisible Exchequers concern themselves with the flow of material and economic wealth, manipulating consumer desires.

The Victorian era is a time of sharp scientific advancement. The Industrial Revolution has mostly run its course by 1840, but its effects still echo through society. UnEnlightened workers use technology that, a few decades ago, was beyond their imagination, making it easier for the Conventions to introduce more complex machinery to the public. It also affects recruitment within the Conventions, as more and more people from the lower and middle classes have access to technological and scientific concepts. This ruffles feathers among some of the Technocrats from old money, high privilege, and the loftiest halls of academia. The Electrodyne Engineers feel this keenly with methodologies split into the working-class inspired Voltarian Order and the Society of Ether, who name their ranks after the gentry. The Brotherhood of Mechanicians, in particular, welcome these new Enlightened.

Flashes of Genius come to people from all walks of life in this era, many of whom find a representative from a fitting Convention waiting close by to draw them into the fold. The astronomer examining stellar spectra finds a Celestial Master at her door, mere moments after her brilliant revelation about a distant star's composition. A London banker, seeing patterns in columns and rows after studying ledger after ledger, receives a request for a meeting the next morning from a director of the Invisible Exchequers. A weaver sits at her loom, pondering the works of Babbage and Lovelace. Later, she attends a talk hosted by a Reckoner, and the presenter asks her to stay and talk.

Not everyone has a recruiter nearby to guide them toward the Technocratic Union. A London policeman investigates an antiquarian bookshop and interrupts an occult meeting. What he sees leaves him shaken, doubly so the feat he pulled off fighting the practitioners and their strange conjurations. A nurse treats an outbreak of disease among the explorers she's accompanying and seeks the aid of local doctors, whose practices differ from her own. She gains sudden insight into the cure, combining her knowledge with theirs in a way her peers insist shouldn't work. A factory worker, studying row upon row of new machines, sees a way to make the process even *more* efficient. His bosses ignore him, until the day they come in and find he's done a week's worth of work overnight.

The Conventions keep their eyes on scholars and soldiers, on surgeons and stargazers. They make large donations to academic institutions and provide governments with new weapons and methods of transportation and communication, asking for access to information in return.

Every fifteen years, the Conventions' representatives meet to review the Time Table and make adjustments for the years ahead. The Victorian era presents so many new opportunities and global developments that it can be hard to stay on track. But now, more than ever before, it's imperative to gain and maintain control over the Masses — first in Britain and Europe, then throughout the world.

Changes come about fast these days, and the Order of Reason wants to be certain they're the ones guiding the future to its ideal Consensus. They do this all in smart suits and uniforms, wearing lab coats and pith helmets. They refine their world-spanning agendas in genteel drawing rooms over snifters of brandy and in starkly lit operating theatres over carved-up cadavers. Reporters write headlines that sway public opinion toward Ivory Tower-approved facts, while operatives intercept private communications as they sing along the wires.

The future is theirs for the taking — if the Order can only seize it.

The Guild of Analytical Reckoners

With a veritable sea of data to be discovered, information is the new frontier. Analytical engines are the vessels navigating this new ocean, and programmers are the captains charting their explorations with every punch card of output. Half engineers and half theoretical mathematicians, the Reckoners come from all ranks of society. The thirst for knowledge is the true agent that binds them together.

Lady Lovelace wrote the first Sleeper program in 1843, using a complex series of basic arithmetic operations to reveal the secrets of Bernoulli numbers, calculating as many of the elusive numbers as she wished in a feat dreamed about by every mathematician since Pythagoras. With such a promising example laid out, the chase was on. The Reckoners developed algorithms and programs to calculate other mathematical constants, the terrain beneath the sea, and even unobservable facts about the solar system. Unlike the messy studies of naturalists and other biologists, the virtual world is mathematically perfect, Platonic, precise, and predictable to the tiniest fraction — so long as one has the right instruments and knows how to use them.

More important than the challenge that Lovelace presented was the impact her paper had on the Consensus. By putting the idea of automatic calculation and a virtual world of numbers into the dreams of Sleepers, the limits had fallen away. No longer did the Reckoners need to think of themselves as Difference Engineers; with an equation, they could tackle any problem.

Over the past few decades, the Guild of Analytical Reckoners has become increasingly divided, although not nearly as much as their cousins in the Electrodyne Engineers. As the distinction between developing analytical engines and using them becomes starker, Engineers have begun specializing in one or the other. Engineers focused on the perfection of algorithmic design and turning kernels of knowledge into entire trees, find more in common with theoretical mathematicians and philosophers than they do with their applied engineer compatriots. As such, programmers divide their pursuits into the physical and virtual sciences. In the future, this sect will be known as the Virtual Adepts, splitting off from their more machine-oriented lab partners, the Iterators, and, eventually, the entire Technocracy.

Tychoides' recent discovery of Earth's shadow, Autochthonia, created a need for Reckoners to travel off-world. Tychoides' rudimentary experiments demonstrated the new world's amazing properties. Rich in minerals and electricity, new parts and entire machines can be fabricated in situ, eliminating the need to transport any additional engines but vastly increasing the need for additional engineers and scientists.

Despite technically being a new Convention, many of the members of the Guild had already been affiliated with the Order of Reason in some capacity or another. Fittingly, their first official guild house (or "0th Guild House," as they refer to it) was erected in the 'new' nation of the United Kingdom, specifically Cardiff, Wales. Thanks to their strong ties to the scholarly communities of mathematicians, the Reckoners boast the most culturally diverse Convention in the Order, with a heavy presence in Europe, India, West Asia, and the Americas. While the Reckoners also technically have members in East Asia, the Tongzhi and Meiji Restorations of the 1860s led to a sharp rise in Sino-Japanese tension, causing contact with the East Asian members of the Reckoners to be spotty at best.

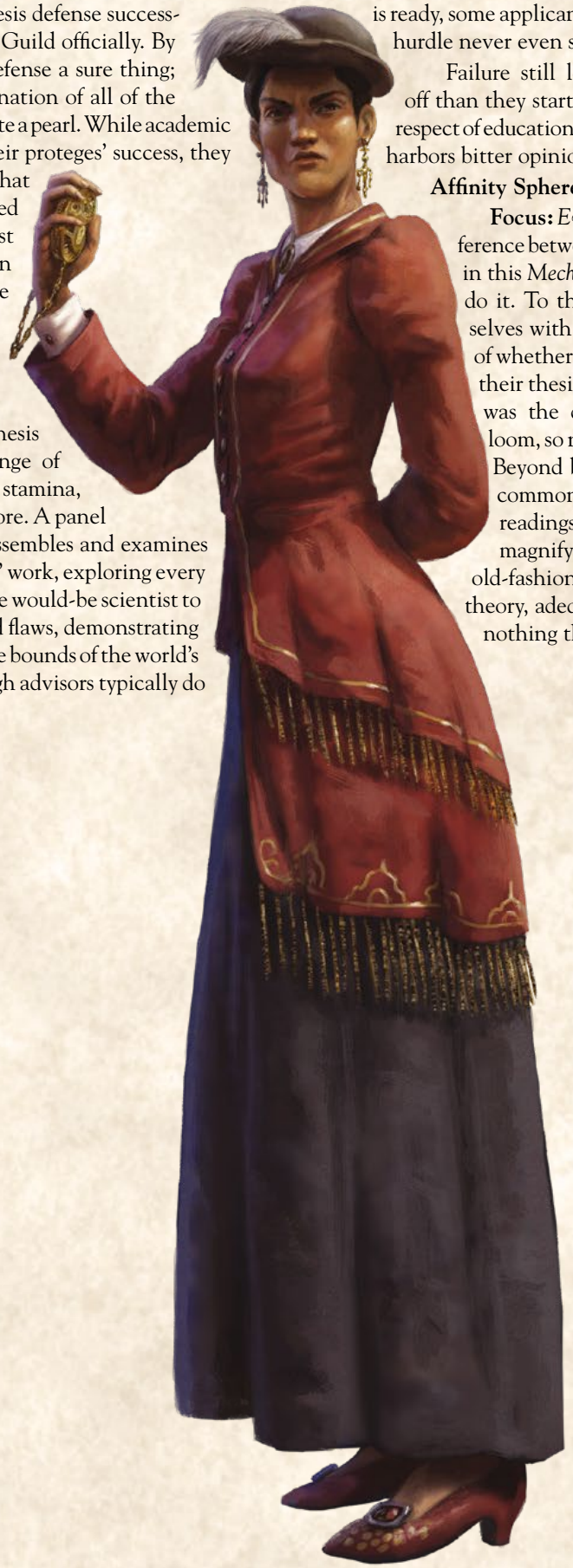
Organization: Largely born from academia, the Guild of Analytical Reckoners maintains a loose hierarchy. Initiates start as Teaching or Research Assistants, working closely with a tenured Professor (although many Professors spend little time outside of their laboratories). Assistants proving capable may be promoted to Assistant Professors, granting them access to a classroom or laboratory that they share with other Assistant Professors. Over time, they're granted tenure, becoming full Professors, preparing potentials, performing research, or whatever else they wish. Despite a clear separation between levels, many Reckoners have wide latitude to pursue their own research projects, as anyone in an oversight capacity generally has better things to do with their time than to manage anyone.

Initiation: Inducting new members into the Guild is a lengthy process that often takes a decade or more. Screening potential members for the appropriate amount of intelligence and recklessness begins in their teens or earlier. Charles Babbage's success in a field saturated with lords, ladies, and military officers demonstrated that greatness can come even from inauspicious beginnings. Thus, the Reckoners donate generously to schools for two reasons: to increase the number of potentials, and to slip carefully designed puzzles into the curriculum. Although the puzzles have multiple solutions, only one is made known to the school administrators. The Reckoners pay special attention to behavioral problems that result from disciplinary actions resulting from the puzzles, as they signal students with special aptitude in logic and the willingness to defend their ideas.

Such students often find themselves the beneficiaries of sponsorship to mathematics and engineering-focused colleges, where they end up serving the Reckoners, knowingly

or not. Students capable of persisting along their academic paths to their thesis defense successfully are inducted into the Guild officially. By no means is a successful defense a sure thing; thesis defense is the culmination of all of the Reckoners' efforts to cultivate a pearl. While academic advisors are invested in their proteges' success, they harbor no illusions about what would happen if they inducted someone prematurely; most Sleeper scientists don't even understand the importance of the Analytical Engine, let alone how a secret society could better humankind.

Thus, the Reckoner thesis defense is a brutal challenge of intelligence, willpower, and stamina, often lasting a full day or more. A panel of two to five Reckoners assembles and examines all aspects of the applicants' work, exploring every possible mistake, forcing the would-be scientist to explain away any perceived flaws, demonstrating how their work stretches the bounds of the world's sum of knowledge. Although advisors typically do not permit their protégé to defend unless certain their charge is ready, some applicants fail. Most who would fall at this hurdle never even stand before the panel.



Failure still leaves them economically better off than they started, improving the popularity and respect of education, even each of the fallen candidates harbors bitter opinions of their first teacher.

Affinity Spheres: Matter, Time

Focus: *Everything is calculable*. The only difference between the possible and the impossible in this *Mechanistic Cosmos* is knowing how to do it. To that end, Reckoners enrich themselves with knowledge of all sorts, regardless of whether it has any apparent connection to their thesis. After all, the Difference Engine was the direct descendent of a weaver's loom, so no knowledge should be discarded. Beyond books and knowledge, Reckoners commonly carry devices to aid in gathering readings and analyzing them: slide-rules, magnifying lenses, barometers, and good old-fashioned chalk and slate. With the right theory, adequate data, and hard work, there's nothing that can't be done.

The Society of Celestial Masters

Humanity has gazed at the stars in wonder and fear since the first spark of enlightenment stirred in their souls. Stars guided the earliest travelers across rocky seas, foretold the fate of those powerful enough to retain court astrologers, and whispered the secrets of the heavens with each eclipse and roaming comet. For all the knowledge and power humanity gleaned from its earliest stargazing, the lights soaring above enslaved it for millennia.

Just as the sun banishes the darkness of night, the first daringly-named Celestial Masters stood in defiance before the terrible and wondrous void. Where their predecessors told fortunes and watched the skies for portents of the next disaster, the Celestial Masters peered past the veil, eventually stepping out in great ships to travel the darkness between worlds. To this day, their work is grounded in the *Tantrasamgraha*, or A Compilation of Systems. A cabal of enlightened astronomers in Kerala, India, wrote this mathematical magnum opus at the dawn of the 16th century, opening the door to the heavens. Pedro Álvares Cabral carried one of the first transcriptions of the manuscript to Portugal. From there, the text spread throughout the Convention and laid the foundation for generations of study and exploration.

The maps of the heavens encoded into the Tantrasamgraha's equations guided the first skyriggers to other worlds and inspired early study of the nature of reality across the cosmos. The Celestial Masters learned how truly dangerous the broader Tellurian is as they walked among the stars. The Masters' innate bright-eyed wonder and defiance slowly transformed to steely resolve. They understand what lurks within those twinkling pinpricks in the sky, desperate to claw its way back onto the Earth. Where once they stood in defiance of superstitious fears, now they know the face of fear — and they refuse to bow before it.

While the Masters still look up at the sky in wonder, reaching for the secrets of the cosmos, they also carry the heavy burden of purpose. They trek ever further into the heavens to feed their insatiable need to know what awaits them, but also to protect humanity from the awful secrets waiting in the darkness — secrets that would shake the foundations of empire if revealed before the world is prepared. By some small miracle, the earliest Masters returned from their journeys. More enlightened minds have been lost to the void than anyone is willing to admit. That all changed in 1701 when Tychoides proposed the simple theorem: Any perfect description of an object is the object itself, relegated to the order of things by divine providence.

At the time of publication, the true power of Tychoides' theorem was lost on the other Conventions. His fellow Masters understood that you can not only define an object according to this principle, but you can also define the makeup of space itself. This stroke of genius opened as many doors for the Celestial Masters as the initial publication of the Tantrasamgraha. Now they could not only walk among the stars but reconfigure the fundamental structure of space as they traveled through it, banishing the horrors living beyond and making it safe for less enlightened explorers to retrace their footsteps. The Masters no longer stand alone in defiance of the darkness between stars. Now they stand with humanity at their back, ready to ascend into the celestial spheres.

The Celestial Masters endured negligible reorganization at the Great Exhibition. When they saw the Order's full potential collected in one place, they realized how many opportunities they were squandering by keeping their work within the Convention. In subsequent years, the Celestial Masters have initiated dozens of cross-Convention ventures. Their work with the Analytical Reckoners is dramatically expanding the foundation laid by Tychoides' original theorem, revealing that the structures the Reckoners design into their thinking machines is reflected in the dance of the celestial spheres. While the Reckoners see this discovery as validation of long-held beliefs, it is a revelation for the Celestial Masters, leaving many to wonder if the things they fight in the night are only the beginning of the battle to come.

Most Luminaries scoff at what they see as alarmist tendencies among the Celestial Masters, but the financial and administrative benefits of their spatial and temporal reconfiguration techniques are powerful motivators. To the Exchequers, the time zones cutting across the primal energy flows of the world are a revolution for business and travel. To the Masters, however, they are a bulwark against enemies more powerful than their collaborators could ever fathom. While the Masters resent that their warnings are treated with such profound disrespect, so long as the empire is safe they endure their questionable reputation.

The Celestial Masters' fellow Explorators are the one Convention that understands their work. The Void Seekers may traverse the hidden places of the Earth below, but their challenge is similar. Several Seekers are now applying the Celestial Master's spatial reconfiguration techniques across the empire to dramatic results, while others are transferring to Celestial skyships. The hunger to extend the boundaries of reality is not easily quenched, and what were two enlightened visions is increasingly looking like one.

Organization: Accomplishment defines power and influence among the Celestial Masters. Research, refine, explore, publish, and repeat. Working within the Masters' organization has far fewer limitations than at many of the other Conventions. The most accomplished Masters captain skyships secretly streaking across the sky. More than a few of the old skyriggers are still in service, but they are being quickly replaced with a fleet of new Electrodyne vessels navigating the etheric currents flowing between the celestial

spheres. The caliber of a Master's ship speaks volumes about the respect they command within the Convention. Even the lowest ranking officers on the Electrodyne vessels are marked for greatness. Some sky gazers never leave the ground, though. A great deal of the Convention's work happens in observatories and universities across the empire. For years, the hierarchies within these laboratories mirrored the chain of command on the skyships, with a research director managing the work of their Construct. The Convention has shifted this structure considerably in the last several decades, allowing students to drive more research exploration under the supervision of experienced Masters. The expanded autonomy given to the Convention's youngest initiates is yielding impressive results.

Initiation: One must take bold risks to realize bold rewards. There are very few with the enlightened spirit required to walk among the stars, but their light is unmistakable. Most Celestial Masters show extraordinary skill long before displaying true Genius, and they are first brought out into the sky as cooks or deckhands. Someone has to mop the decks even when you're sailing the stars. Gazing into the void beyond and holding one's own sees a quick promotion. Anyone demonstrating true Genius is encouraged to make use of their skills for the benefit of the Order. Among the land-locked Masters, the process is very similar. Students of the empire's greatest research universities battle fiercely for fellowships in Enlightened research centers, even if they don't truly understand what such an appointment means. Once accepted as a research assistant, they either take the initiative and begin their own work, or they are reassigned to more mundane research.

Affinity Spheres: Spirit, Correspondence, Time.

Focus: Exploring the darkness beyond the horizon for generations has proven to most Celestial Masters that they live in *A World of Gods and Monsters*. For many of the land-locked Masters, they see the truth that without enforcing order on the universe *Everything is Chaos*. As the work on Tychoides' theorem advances, more Masters have come to understand that they live in *A Mechanistic Cosmos* and are learning to work the levers of the machine that defines all of reality. The Masters' practice is at a critical moment of transition as their oldest tech is rapidly replaced by the strange energy weapons and etheric engines of the Electrodyne Engineers. A shipman is as likely to draw an enhanced sword from its sheath as to wield tubes of captured lightning. Masters working on the ground focus on cataloging off-world threats and identifying when they have broken through the boundaries of the empire, often specializing in alien biology. These otherworldly entomologists often work with members of the Hippocratic Circle to track and eliminate the most dangerous Night Folk and bygones.

The Hippocratic Circle

The Hippocratic Circle does not 'play' God. The Circle *is* God's scalpel and magnifying lens, cleaving sickness from a patient, then analyzing both malady and health to better understand both. Given time, there is no illness that the Circle cannot heal. Here, in the 19th century, human health pivots — away from superstitious nonsense about miasmas, ill humors, and leeches — and towards the miracles of the Modern Age.

Of course, the Modern Age also has dangers of its own. Although Sleepers might be unaware of the impact that industrial smoke and dense city living have on their lives, the Circle knows with precise certainty the toll that industrialization is taking on human health. They're working to address the issues, but many of the solutions are better suited for the mechanically-minded. This is the unsung battle of the Circle. While the Circle's peers in the Order shower them with praise for successful surgeries and medical breakthroughs, none of them want to have a doctor tell them that their chimney needs a cleaning system.

As the Circle pushes the realms of scientific understanding of life into the 20th century, their gifts and discoveries filter into the general populace. Chief among these are vaccines, Dr. John Snow's germ theory, and its corresponding understanding of sanitary practices. With a simple infrastructure change — better separation of waste and drinking water — disease outbreaks drop to a fraction of what they were in the 18th century. The understanding that micro-organisms are to blame for many illnesses afflicting humanity gives rise to a new battleground for the Circle: the Microscopic Realm.

The new battleground in the fight for human well-being, the Microscopic Realm is filled with countless micro-organisms, many benign. Sorting the chaff from the wheat, the Circle must determine which of the Microscopic Realm's species might be helpful allies and which cause contagions and other maladies. However, this is only one front in the struggle for the future of medicine.

Dr. Charles Darwin's countless voyages painfully explained what the Circle has known for centuries: nothing God made was perfect. It was up to each generation of animals to improve upon the mistakes of the last. To evolve, striving for perfection. Humans are no different. This is why the Circle has devoted considerable energy toward planning the coming generations. "Physician, heal thyself," the Circle was directed. And they shall.

Organization: From its medical practitioners to its clerks, the Circle has a rigidly organized structure throughout each of its divisions. **The Æsculpian Order — informally known as the Medical Corps —** forms the core of the Circle, with a focus on both military and civilian medical practices. Nearly half of the Circle belongs to the Corps, locating those in need of aid, providing medical services, and facilitating the steps

in between. Corps members' titles range from Clerk, Researcher, and Doctor, all the way up to Director. Similarly, **the Guild of Apothecaries** is responsible for the safe and efficacious development and distribution of pharmaceutical remedies. Among the Apothecaries are the **Perfectionists**, who scientifically formulate regimens of diet and exercise to bring the human body to its natural peak performance. **The Phylaxoi** are a militant sect of the Circle, experts at treating *and inflicting* battlefield injuries. Despite their military bearing, the Phylaxoi are organized more like a constabulary than an army, with titles such as Constable, Inspector, Detective, and Chief. Regardless of what sort of armed group they take after, their discipline and utter indifference to all outside authorities certainly set them apart. **The Fellowship of Chirurgeons** devises and employs the latest surgical techniques to heal maladies, although there have long been rumors of decidedly unsavory experiments in the pursuit of human perfection and beyond.

Initiation: With a seemingly endless supply of revolutions and border conflicts, the Circle has more work than hands. The advances in repeating gunpowder weapons of the 19th century brought the rise of trench warfare in Europe, creating countless wounded and the corresponding need for field surgeons and nurses, making it easier than ever to locate people talented in the medical sciences. In this way, a large number of recruits are taken straight from the battlefield, although many of these simply join the Medical Corps without ever knowing that they're part of an organization much more complicated than the competing Red Cross.

Trauma, both physical and psychological, suffered by patients and staff alike are frequently daily experiences for members of the Circle, especially for the Corps and the Phylaxoi. Thus, "sink or swim" is the unofficial motto and method of progression. Promotions within the Circle are earned as much from survival as they are from seniority and skill.

Affinity Spheres: Life, Prime.

Focus: *Transcending all limitations*, the members of the Hippocratic Circle see the world as a series of problems to be overcome. Challenges come in all forms: bullet wounds, cholera, aging, and even the common cold. None of these stand up to a physician armed with the right treatment and attitude. Standard instruments include a deep knowledge of anatomy, biology, surgical practices, and other forms of life science, to say nothing of the myriad physical instruments, such as scalpels, magnifying lenses, aid bags, and sterling white medical clothing.

The Guild of Electrodyne Engineers

Explorers of the new Frontier Electric, the Electrodyne Engineers study all manner of energy. They have tamed lightning, harnessed the galvanic power of the human brain, and even grasped at the primal power of Ether. The Engineers have achieved things the likes of which Alessandro Volta and Luigi Galvani have only dreamed: portable flashlights, lightning guns, and even electricity-driven craft. With the sharp rise in un-Enlightened understanding of electricity, nothing seems beyond the reach of electrical power. The telegraph and telephone have shrunk the world, allowing people hundreds of leagues apart to communicate as easily as if they were in the same room, to say nothing of the communication methods the Engineers have at their disposal.

The Engineers, however, do not represent a united front. There is a growing division between the main body of the Electrodyne Engineers and those working within the barely understood — or believed — field of Ether. A secretive sect within the Engineers, the Etherites hold their cards close.

After all, only a few decades ago, the Inner Circle led the secular members of the Cabal of Pure Thought on a bloody crusade against their religious brethren. The Etherites fully recognize the parallel between the zealous Gabrielites and themselves. Both sects spend much of their energy working towards something that the other members of their order not only don't believe in but at which they scoff derisively. Knowing that there might come a time when the rest of the Engineers come for their heads, Etheric research is divided into two categories: fundamental theory, to prove the existence to their peers, and military applications, to defend themselves if the need ever arises (See Future Fates: Ether).

Chief among the Etherite Engineers, Andreas Vargo's theoretical and practical work laid the foundation for the construction of etherships, crafts capable of flight through the Etheric Sea, much as the Celestial Master's skyriggers traverse the sky. These etherships are one of the Etherites' last line of defense. Perhaps the only secret more closely held than the existence of the etherships is why the Guild's emblem has the same caliper and sacred geometry motifs as the supposedly-extinct Craftmasons.

Organization: Calling the Engineers organized would be an overstatement. Most Engineers would rather be working in their laboratories or workshops than pursuing alliances or organizing people. Nevertheless, they've managed to figure out something resembling a system that works for them. **The Voltarian Order,** representing roughly half of the Engineers, specialize in electrical pursuits: drawing energy out of things, putting it into other things, and arguing whether the name should instead be the Galvanic Order. Seeing themselves more as engineers than inventors per se, their titles are more at home on a factory floor than anywhere else: apprentice, journeyman, foreman, and master. For people studying an element that many refuse to acknowledge exists, **the Society of Ether** has a surprising number of members, which lends weight to the Society's claims. Despite collecting individuals from all walks of life, Etherites tend to see themselves as gentry, leading their titles to have a similar air: franklin, esquire, gentlefolk, and lord.

Initiation: The Electrodyne Engineers value practical application as much as they do theoretical work, drawing new members from both academia and backyard tinkerers. Tracking down promising candidates from scholarly circles is simple enough. Lurking in lecture halls and coffee shops, studying people's reactions to new information is often enough to locate minds that hunger for more than the physical world. Those on solitary paths are harder to find, although the Order's increasing control over smithies means that anyone purchasing significant conductive material may find themselves visited by the Engineers.

Once within the Convention, ascending the ranks is only achieved by those who advance the understanding of the Frontier Electric, by theory or by craft. Inventions must be bold, the soundness of theories unassailable. An aspiring scientist's work need not be perfect, but unless it outperforms the rest of the Engineers', what good is it?

To this end, symposiums and other festivals of knowledge are frequent and heavily attended, if only to promote one's own work. Typically, provincial symposiums start in spring, allowing the larger regional and national ones to take place throughout the summer, culminating in the annual Grand Symposium in the autumn, where honorees from around the world are called to present their latest findings.

While any Engineer can call and hold a provincial symposium, generally only honorees from the previous year organize the larger events. To the successful, the Electrodyne Engineers is a meritocracy where those consistently advancing the Convention rise to the top. For everyone else, the Engineers are an unruly mob, quick to lose interest in last year's best.

Affinity Spheres: Matter, Ether (Prime), Forces.

Focus: *Perfection is a process*. Only through the rigorous application and testing of hypotheses can science march forwards. A true scientist must be ready to be wrong and to learn from their mistakes. As applied scientists, the Electrodyne Engineers, work as much in the laboratory as they do in the field. *Every moment is an opportunity for experimentation*. Every thought is a chance for growth.

Engineers go nowhere without multiple tools and experimental devices. Scientific inspiration strikes everywhere and it would be buffoonery to be left unable to measure, analyze, and test in the field.

Void Seekers

Since the first humans crawled down from high branches to the wide-open savannah, the horizon has beckoned. Fools claim a need for food and resources motivated our first exploration, but the Void Seekers are living proof that the desperate need to know what hides beyond our visible boundary is infinitely more alluring than food or safety. Why else would the Seekers endure the brutality of stormy seas, blistering deserts, and nearly airless mountains in the name of pushing the borders of the map until the dragons fall off the edge?

Humanity has crossed every boundary laid in front of them, building great empires and nomadic traveling kingdoms out of curiosity and wanderlust. The greatest cities thrive by being ports of call to adventurers lured away by the inescapable song of the sea. The Void Seekers are driven by that song and have stretched an empire across the breadth of the world dancing to its tune. In the earliest days of the Order, pure unfettered discovery fueled the Void Seekers. They wandered the world, bringing the "light of humanity" to the most remote corners of existence until the world turned in on itself becoming a sphere. One day, a foolish wanderer could disappear into the spirit wilds, lured away by dragons and sirens stalking the edge of the map, then the next a lifetime of travel would only lead to a new pathway home.

This transformation of the world was no mistake. The Luminaries' greatest accomplishment was banishing the world's darkest horrors beyond a horizon the unenlightened could never reach. When the Void Seekers shut the lock on that prison, they also drew a boundary around their mission. They may be driven by the need to see what is unseen, but to thrive in the Order of Reason everyone must serve the timeline; so the Void Seekers have grown past the wonder of their early days. They are still sent out into the wilds to discover their genius, but their focus has shifted from simply mapping the world's darkest reaches to making the way ready for the rest of the empire. Wherever there is a venture expanding the boundaries of what the Order of Reason chooses to see as civilization — from the transcontinental railroad to the expanding borders of the Cape of Good Hope — the Void Seekers are hard at work.

Taming the frontier is not simple work; the imperial frontier is generally someone or something else's cherished home. Securing new territory for the empire may not be as alluring as the endless call of the horizon, but it is the foundation of the Order's work in the Victorian age. The Syndicate couldn't build their grand economy without a constant flow of resources from the colonies. The Constructors and Grand Faculty would have no workshops without steel and lumber in quantities grander than any European has ever dreamt. There can be no colonies without adventurers, soldiers, and hunters taming the world for Queen and country, so the Void Seekers have become the tip of the empire's great spear.

Most Luminaries still know the Void Seekers as free spirits, driven by dreams and possibilities. They don't consider what the Seekers have sacrificed in the name of the Order's expansion. While advancement within the Convention requires one to put away childish things, initiates begin their careers encouraged to explore the farthest reaches of the world and experience its wonders. The Convention leaders are old enough to remember the days before the empire, and they don't want to see it filled with soldiers that have never known the joy of true adventure. All too quickly, safaris and excavations give way to more disciplined ventures. Hunting a grand dragon stalking the Carpathian Mountains becomes stalking the dragon's hidden children night after night through newly founded towns, filled with simple villagers, unaware of just how dangerous the wilderness is around them.

The experience a Seeker midshipman develops during their daily hunts dwarfs the other Conventions' experience with the Night Folk. As the world grows smaller and maintaining the safety of the empire's existing territory outstrips the need for eternal expansion, a growing number of Seekers find themselves tethered to cross-Convention ventures, hunting Night Folk on the home front. Many Seekers are vocally frustrated with this state of affairs. No one has defected from the Order, but more than a few daring souls have signed commissions aboard the Celestial Master's skyships without so much as a backward glance at the mudball they're leaving behind.

Survival in the corners of the world the Seekers traverse requires uncompromising discipline and trust. The brutality they face and create daily keeps most Void Seekers isolated from the rest of the Order. They travel out into the darkness together; the solidarity of that experience builds deep and lasting bonds they just don't share with the other Luminaries. Though they respect and share a common drive with their fellow Explorators the Celestial Masters, most Void Seekers find interaction with the rest of the Order difficult. They have little in common with tinkerers and bankers content to stare at nothing but the walls of their enlightened workshops and board rooms.

Organization: A handful of free Void Seeker lodge ships still wander the open seas. These vessels operate as traveling centers of power for the Convention. They are commanded by the most prestigious Captains of the Void, rare Luminaries with the authority to demand these respected postings,

and the power to wrangle the other sea dogs drawn to these ships. Initiates are often assigned to lodge ships as a right of passage. The experience of serving on the free lodges is both harrowing and exhilarating. The rest of the Convention is divided into strictly commissioned crews devoted to furthering the Luminary agenda on the world's frontiers. These teams do everything from cataloging and hunting the few remaining bygones that refuse to disappear beyond the horizon to preparing new territories for colonization or development. Above the traveling lodges are a board of Lords coordinating the Convention's efforts and making sure each team of Seekers is deployed where they are most effective.

Initiation: The Void Seekers respect daring and independence above all else. Walking right off the map where other Luminaries fear to tread takes a very particular type of defiance. Void initiates must push the boundaries, even just a bit, to join the Convention. Each initiate travels out into the wilds of the world where no Luminary has ever walked before. No one returns from these treks unchanged, and those who discover the voice of their Genius in untamed places are welcomed into the Seeker's ranks. Those who do not find Enlightenment are still given an honored place on future expeditions. Anyone surviving such a trip is deserving of respect, and if they return without the benefit of Enlightenment, perhaps moreso. The fact that there are so few places left to send new initiates so they can complete this challenge is not often discussed, but it weighs heavily on the Convention's leadership.

Affinity Spheres: Spirit, Correspondence, Prime.

Focus: Every Seeker's first love is the sea, and so the tools of the mariner dominate their practice. A rare shipman is one not adept with the sword, cannon, and sextant. Even when landlocked, any Seeker worth their salt can find their way by the stars or smell ill fortune on the breeze. Especially around the rest of the Order, the Seekers maintain respectability to their work, but their time on the outskirts of reality gives many Seekers a 'flexible' outlook on Enlightenment. Many seamen have tattoos, but more often than not a Seeker's tattoos are wards against the horrors they hunt or reminders of what they've killed. What most others see as simple mariner superstition is often hard-earned knowledge, and in a tight spot, you use what you know to survive no matter where you learned it. After generations of expanding and fortifying the boundaries of the empire, they understand that *Might is Right*, so they use whatever tools they can to achieve that might. If they did anything else they would never survive in such *A World of Gods and Monsters* — an understanding only the Celestial Masters truly share.

Golden Guild

No prince tears down the society that ennobles him, and no peasant draws arms against a prince whom they believe they might someday be equal. This truth underlies the power of the industrial age. Not luxury nor industrial glory breathes fire into the hearts of the masses. The promise of social mobility stokes that flame; faith in a prosperous future for those brave enough to reach out and take it.

While titans of industry fill the halls of the Syndicate's lodges, they share space with clerks, merchants, and union bosses. The rest of the Bloc underestimates the power of the rising middle class, seeing them as no more than necessary labor to drive their mechanical wonders. Unlike their brethren, the Guild understands the power of sparking hope in the hopeless. Most of the enlightened, even among the Luminary Order, don't recognize that the rise of labor is central to the Guild's work. Belief in the worth of labor, and the value of exchanging that labor for a better life is far more important than maintaining power in the hands of those who have always held it. The engines of progress are more than strong enough to keep the newly affluent sated with game pie and jellied trifle, and the Guild has grown quite adept at managing any market adjustments that rise to threaten their growing paradigm.

The Golden Guild's roots run back through the High Guild to the merchant lords of medieval Europe. Originally, the financiers managed the wealth of Craftmason lodges, pulling strings from their reclusive offices, but rarely building empires of their own. The High Guild became a Convention at the Order of Reason's foundation in the early Renaissance. In the following centuries, the High Guild proliferated the magicks of trade and wealth until the rise of the industrial age. When the Albertan Reorganization began, the need for a new structure became clear. At the height of the 1851 Great Exhibition, the High Guild was reorganized and from it emerged the Golden Guild, refocused on the professional laborers the first guilds were originally founded to serve. They left the Exhibition with a clear mandate to build a place in their enlightened economy for every citizen of the empire, and they took that responsibility to heart.

The Exhibition was in many ways the ultimate work of the High Guild. While the technological wonders on display came from Constructor workshops, the High Guild understood more than any the impact of showing these wonders to the masses. They comprehended that belief would bow to desire when the citizens of the empire saw what the coming age offered. An understanding of the power of human desire underpins the Guild's greatest works. You don't have to convince someone to believe something is true when you can kindle a desperate desire for that truth in their hearts.

This intrinsic feel for human desire has given the Guild dominion over the far corners of the world for centuries. Wherever humanity believes they can carve worth out of their world and feels a deep hollow ache if they do not achieve the destiny they envision for themselves, the Guild gains power. In many ways, the Guild's strength in the world spreads more directly with the expansion of the empire's borders than any other Convention, though few see or understand this influence. Comprehending just how much power the patron of a carefully selected artist wields is difficult when you are fighting to feed your family and survive one more hard winter. While some Enlightened can see into the subversive nature of the Guild's power, very few outside of the Syndicate Bloc fully understand the role the Guild plays in furthering the Order's goals.

This lack of comprehension has allowed the Guild's influence to spread so far and wide. They control centers of power across the empire including the Victorian Trades Hall in Australia, the labor unions of the American mid-west, and the opium dens of London's Limehouse district. Most Luminaries find the Guild's investment in the opium trade deeply distasteful, but the oldest masters of *Ars Cupiditae* insist the need to escape the pains of the world is as unavoidable as the rising and setting of the sun. If that need is so unavoidable then the Luminaries must maintain control of where the dragon's tail leads. The profits these ventures turn are merely a matter of not wasting resources in the name of moral absolutism. The fundamental organization of the Syndicate Bloc grew from the Guild's investment in the opium trade and reveals how important controlling the flow of drugs through the world is to the Guild's power.

Organization: The proctor houses of the medieval world may be in decline, but the Golden Guild still clings to many of those old structures. Merit, dominion, and the approval of one's mentors and managers define rank within the Golden Guild. At the top of the Guild, the lords of the various divisions wield nearly unilateral power to define the structure and management of their houses. The organization of each house follows the traditions of the guilds from which they grew. The only consistency is the tradition of apprentice and master. To move up within the Guild, you must always have a mentor. If you cannot prove yourself to your boss or mentor then you have reached the pinnacle of your potential within the Guild. There is growing discontentment about the inconsistencies in division structure from members involved in the labor movement. Belief in the importance

of industry and the life it allows the masses to enjoy, spread by the Victorian labor movement, is already paying dividends. However, several more conservative guild masters find labor's influence within their lodges distasteful. Changing the structure of the old guilds would take a far more radical shift than the reorganization of the Great Exhibition.

Initiation: To be a member of the Golden Guild for years before hearing the Convention's name for the first time is quite common. Members rise from all walks of life while being mentored by Adepts and Masters, carefully vetting and shaping their view of the world. In much the same way as the Guild promotes strife between opposing forces within the market to maximize productivity, they often position potential members or even talented initiates against each other to see who shapes reality around them to their greatest advantage. Often, the Guild doesn't seek out the most successful businessmen or clerks but instead recruits the invisible and unfortunate, who refuse to buckle against the worst economic odds. This tenacity is what brought the first labor activists into the fold and reshaped organized labor from an activist uprising to something that looked surprisingly like medieval guilds.

Affinity Spheres: Entropy, Mind, and Prime.

Focus: Wealth is power, but without desire power is meaningless. *Ars Cupidae*, the Art of Desire, is the center of the Golden Guild's practice. Masters of *Ars Cupidae* understand their desire, and they discipline themselves to transform even personal indulgence into an act of will. The Luminaries believe that the brilliance of humanity will elevate the masses, but the Guild understands that desire motivates humanity to those heights. The foundation of all Guild practice is the tension between belief in the power of work and the lust driving that labor.

As an initiate rises within the guild ranks, they build vast networks of power and influence, but only true masters understand the importance of cultivating enemies along with business associates. If you understand what drives their desire, the difference between an enemy and an ally is at best pedantic. The Guild wields human effort the way an Artificer wields a forge or chasing hammer. Even masters are loath to dirty their hands with vulgar practice. They instead rely on the carefully crafted notes of a fine perfume, the gently redirected genius of a lover, or the promise of a hot meal to a street urchin who doesn't understand their own potential. The casual compliments of a Guild member can be far more deadly than the arcane chants of the most disciplined mystic. At the pinnacle of this Industrial revolution, the Guild knows to *Embrace the Threshold* and, when the Order's enlightened economy is realized, they will stand at its peak, proving for all to see that *Might is Right*.

Invisible Exchequers

The world does not simply move of its own accord. Engines of imagination and industry ever drive it forward. Far too many people believe these engines run on the spirit and drive of their founders, or the labor of the workers filling the world's cotton mills and steel foundries. Just as the Cosian's laws of inheritance have shown a world of allelomorphs exists, defining the life we observe all around us, so the laws of value, exchange, and money invisibly define the motion and power of the industrialized world.

The Invisible Exchequers have understood this power for hundreds of years, even if their charter was only approved at the Great Exhibition. They trace their roots back to the High Guild master, Luca Pacioli, who took the powerful numeric innovations of the Mokteshaf Al Nour and, with them, redefined merchant accounting. Since Pacioli's work, the Invisible Exchequers moved within the ranks of the High Guild before finally claiming the prize of forming their own Convention. Where their companions within the Syndicate, the Golden Guild, play the desires of their customers like fine lutes, the Exchequers are concerned with laying the financial foundation for the Order's greatest works. The Exchequers' many accomplishments include double-entry accounting, the first truly successful fractional reserve bank in Sweden, and wildly ambitious funding of the transcontinental railroad winding its way into the American West. The Lightkeepers often bristle when the Exchequers claim their due credit for railroad's expansion, insisting the financiers lacked the will to fully fund such a risky venture, no matter how critical to the Order's goals. After bearing this affront, several Exchequers argue any future collaboration with the political wing of the Order should be more carefully negotiated.

There are no Conventions within the Luminary Order that do not owe their livelihood to the Exchequer's work. Central banks drive the priorities and facilitate the genius of countless Enlightened ventures across the globe, and no other Convention understands how the work of the Order's many factions relate to and enhance each other with the clarity of the Exchequers. This perspective reinforces the Convention's tireless work analyzing funding requests and their impact on the Luminary's long-term goals. Their role as funding approval of all Order ventures lies at the heart of the Exchequer's power. While the masters of the other Conventions can sometimes see the truth behind the Exchequer's funding conditions, very few members of the Order understand the full extent of the power the Exchequers wield. More than a few Luminaries resent that their work depends on the approval of financiers who, to their eyes, produce nothing and add no meaningful value to the Order. The invisibility of the Exchequers' work is what allows them such extensive influence, even if they often confound Enlightened engineers and explorers in need of funding.

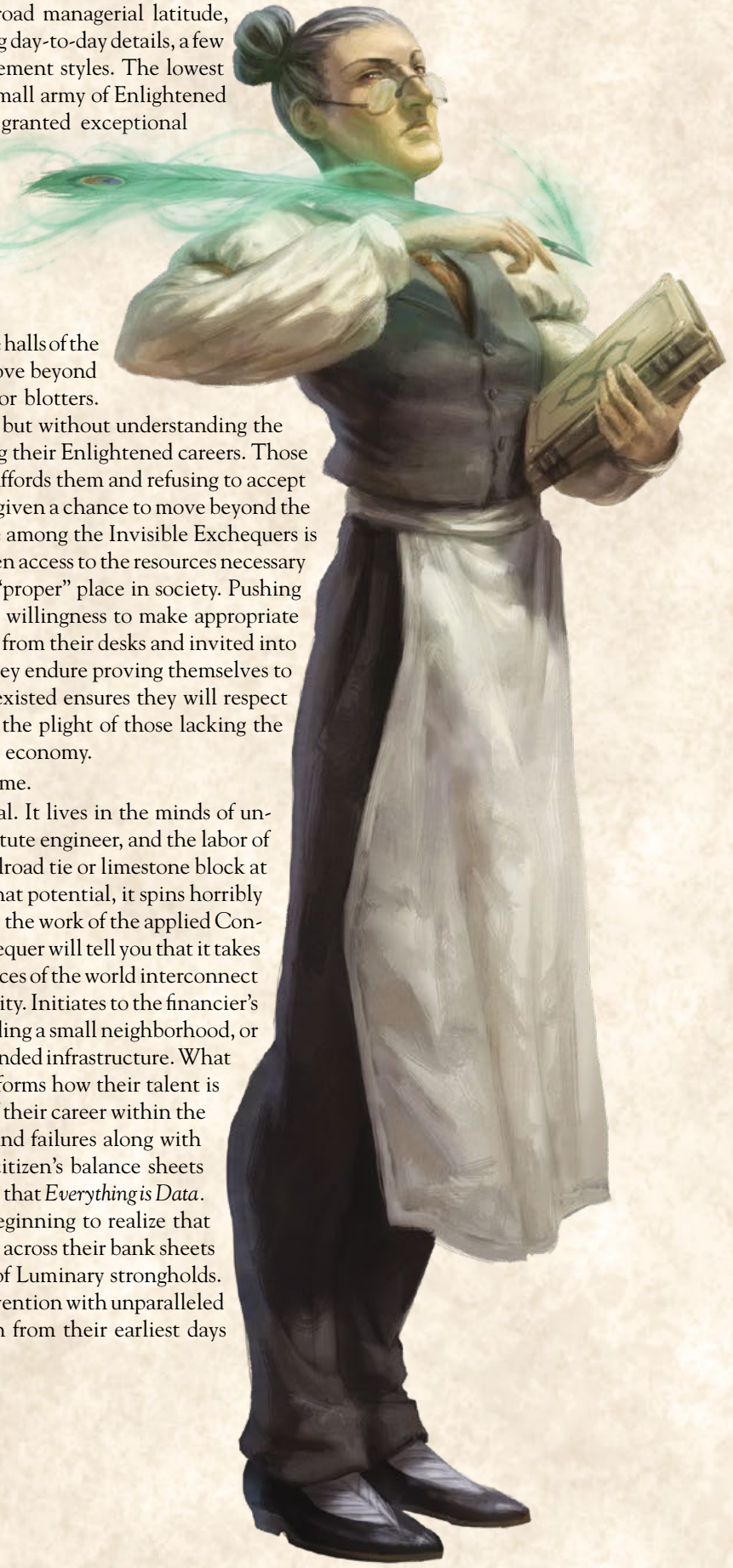
The elusive nature of their work defines the domains of Exchequer influence. While they are known to control the cathedrals of financial power, from Capel Court to Wall Street, their true might lies in the unseen networks of quintessence and influence stretching out across the known world through countless ventures they fund. The enlightened loan officers of the Exchequers don't simply fund the Order, they observe and choose which research reaches extraordinary heights and which Luminary's genius is left withering on the vine.

When an Exchequer saw a languishing proposal from a Celestial Master to institute defined zones of time across the globe, they understood how it would impact the basic negotiation of a "reasonable workday" within the Golden Guild's burgeoning labor movement, the reliability of the expanding railroad, and reset time across the world to move forward in perfect order. The protestations of those who do not appreciate the cadence of their lives being redefined by bankers a continent or more away don't even register to the Exchequers. That is a problem for the other Conventions to solve.

This elusiveness makes it very difficult to track the full extent of Exchequer influence, and few Luminaries collaborate with them directly. The Golden Guild is not as reticent to create cross Convention initiatives with the Exchequers as the members of the other blocs. Where the Exchequers build an economic machine at the heart of the empire, the Guild connects that machine to the broader world through trade agreements, treaties, and carefully crafted relationships. Despite the events of the original Opium War, the Exchequers are pushing the Guild to expand the opium trade through China. Several masters from other blocs within the Order feel their actions are reckless, but as they are learning, sometimes the Exchequers' plans are more complicated than they appear.

Organization: The Exchequers are organized under an incredibly strict hierarchical system. The conflicts between the financier's increasingly regimented practices and the more independent organization of guild masters were one of the primary reasons for the reorganization of the High Guild into the Golden Guild and the Exchequers at the Great Exhibition. The Exchequers are led by the Governor of the Central Fund and a board of 10 directors. Beneath the board, there are a series of regional Lords who oversee the Convention's interests in the various colonies and territories being developed with their funding. Each regional director controls all branches and funding within their territory. While

most directors give their subordinates broad managerial latitude, monitoring their productivity and avoiding day-to-day details, a few are known to have more invasive management styles. The lowest level of the Convention is made up of a small army of Enlightened clerks and loan officers. Each officer is granted exceptional autonomy to fund or squash any proposals they review, but the performance of their selections are closely reviewed and a loan officer making too many poor choices in a row ensures they are never granted a regional directorship.



Initiation: Most of the clerks filling the halls of the Exchequers' financial cathedrals never move beyond their simple ledgers and carefully cared-for blotters. They may live a stable and satisfying life, but without understanding the true meaning of the halls they grace during their Enlightened careers. Those unsatisfied with the life that simple work affords them and refusing to accept their lot in the world's hierarchy might be given a chance to move beyond the confines of their humility. Earning a place among the Invisible Exchequers is never an easy task. No citizen is simply given access to the resources necessary to truly elevate themselves beyond their "proper" place in society. Pushing themselves hard enough and displaying a willingness to make appropriate financial sacrifices might find one plucked from their desks and invited into the true halls of Victorian power. What they endure proving themselves to invisible masters they didn't even know existed ensures they will respect their position and won't be distracted by the plight of those lacking the strength to claim riches from the growing economy.

Affinity Spheres: Entropy, Time, Prime.

Focus: The world sings with potential. It lives in the minds of undiscovered genius, the blueprints of a destitute engineer, and the labor of untold millions building the world one railroad tie or limestone block at a time. Without someone to orchestrate that potential, it spins horribly out of control and comes to naught. While the work of the applied Conventions cannot be understated, any Exchequer will tell you that it takes someone with the vision to see how the pieces of the world interconnect and impact each other to truly reshape reality. Initiates to the financier's Convention are often put in charge of funding a small neighborhood, or if they are lucky, a ward designated for expanded infrastructure. What ventures these initiates choose to fund informs how their talent is nurtured or neglected for the remainder of their career within the Convention. Collecting these successes and failures along with the most intimate secrets recorded in a citizen's balance sheets reveal to the most experienced Exchequers that *Everything is Data*. A few within the Exchequers are even beginning to realize that the primal energy of reality flows as readily across their bank sheets as through the carefully configured halls of Luminary strongholds. This understanding has provided the Convention with unparalleled might in the modern world, though even from their earliest days they have understood that *Might is Right*.

The Lightkeepers

Consensus, by its very definition, aims to bring the Masses together under one single, perfected society. Prince Albert directed the Order of Reason to bring peace and stability to the world, and the Lightkeepers took up the charge. It is, after all, a continuation of the work they've been doing for centuries under another guise.

Until the early 1800s, the Cabal of Pure Thought aimed to unite the world under Christianity's banner. They operated under divine mandate, as dictated to their founder by the angel, Gabriel. As self-appointed agents of God, they brought the Church's message to far-flung corners of the known world, where they spread Christ's teachings and healed the sick in his name. The Gabrielites built libraries to preserve knowledge, even when western Europe suffered a decline after the fall of the Roman Empire. The cathedrals they raised still stand today — a testament to the Cabal's legacy.

When the cultures they ministered met them with resistance, the Gabrielites got the message across with fire and steel. The Cabal's Poenitenti spied on faithless clergy while its military arm, the Falcons of Gabriel, hunted enemies of the church. Heretics and Night-Folk fell to their purges, and the ground quaked when Gabrielite warrior-priests rode out on crusade.

Throughout the 18th century, the Age of Enlightenment saw secular values replace religious fervor. Today's empires are founded on political power and military might. Victory comes from commanding the superior army and controlling greater resources, not because God bestowed his favor on one general over another. Shortly before the Albertan Reformation, the Cabal's numbers thinned precipitously as the Convention underwent a purge. Its secular members rid themselves of superstitionists through a series of reforms and strategic assassinations. Declaring reason triumphant over religion, this new faction christened themselves the Lightkeepers. Though some members are still Christians, most see God primarily as a tool to control the Masses. The majority of the Lightkeepers keep their faith private, thankful for the gifts of deduction and reasoning their creator bestowed upon them.

Though the Lightkeepers have moved on from their predecessors' religious directives, they've adapted the Gabrielites' three-pronged strategy to these modern times. First, they aim to eliminate superstitionists, targeting Tradition magi and Convention members straying from the Union's approved Time Table. Second, they gather information, withholding anything they deem too dangerous to share with the Masses and disseminating knowledge to other Technocrats on a need-to-know basis. Third, they promote the idea of a safer world to the unEnlightened via speeches, newspaper articles, and other media. The Lightkeepers seize upon public concerns and paint a dire picture of a disorderly world, one only the Order of Reason can set straight. Fear is an excellent motivator, especially when it's directed against a perceived "other."

The Lightkeepers prefer to work behind the scenes. Let the Electrodyne Engineers astonish the unEnlightened with their electrical inventions. Let the Void Seekers fill the Masses' heads with thrilling stories of the American Wild West and British forays into African nations. Their showy exploits allow the Lightkeepers to work from the shadows, dealing in secrets and misdirections. Where they can, Lightkeepers prefer to act covertly. If the public knows they're there, something went dreadfully wrong.

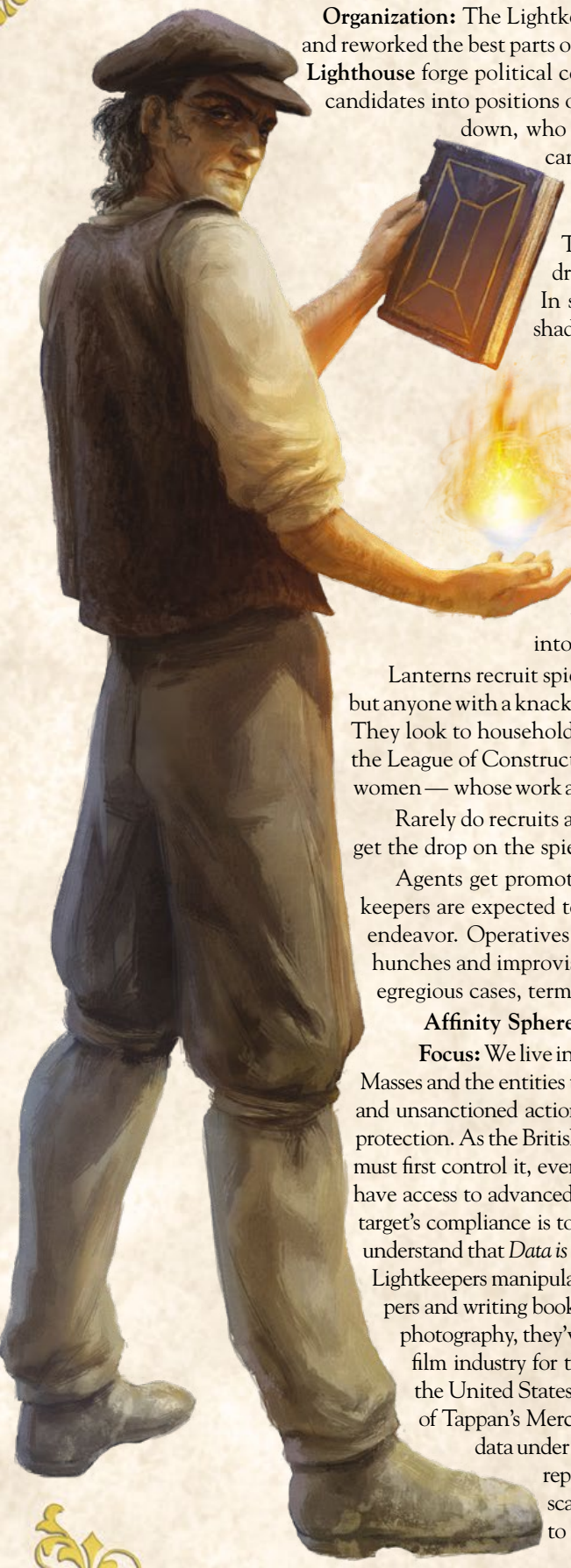
Other Conventions look upon the Lightkeepers warily. Though they've distanced themselves from the Cabal of Pure Thought at every opportunity, the purge was recent enough to remain a key event in other Technocrats' memories. Over the ensuing decades, the Lightkeepers alter or destroy records to bury this association as deep as possible. For now, however, they use the others' disquiet to their advantage: if the Lightkeepers were willing to clear their own ranks of those stepping out of line, what might they do to other Conventions given the chance? Their reputation for knowing about even the most classified projects fills other Enlightened with concern. Quite honestly, they make other Conventions more than a little uneasy.

But the Lightkeepers have never really cared about being liked.

They get along best with the Skeleton Keys, whose goals often dovetail with their own. Though the Skeleton Keys can, on occasion, be frustratingly unsubtle, they protect London from occultists and night-folk. Additionally, the Lightkeepers admire how the Invisible Exchequers exert control via financial might, even if they often disagree with how the Convention disburses its funds. The Guild of Analytical Reckoners and their predictive machines intrigue the Lightkeepers, especially those in the Lantern. The Lightkeepers' information networks give them a solid grasp on where and when trouble might boil over, but welcome any developments that keep them better informed.

Frivolous pursuits and projects that don't yield immediate earthly results vex the Lightkeepers. For most of the era, they *are* the Ivory Tower, and other Conventions have to work twice as hard to win their vote. They look askance at the Celestial Masters and those Electrodyne Engineers whose hypotheses are bigger than their results, certain those resources are better spent on tangible, attainable goals. The Carrington Event in September 1859 softens their stance somewhat. The powerful solar coronal mass ejection causes geomagnetic storms across the globe, disrupting telegraph

systems and leaving gaps of hours — and, in some cases, days — in the Lanterns' surveillance network. The Convention reluctantly admits the value in studying off-world phenomena.



Organization: The Lightkeepers' three-pronged strategy informs their Methodologies. They've retained and reworked the best parts of the Gabrielite structure, updating them for modern goals. The scholars in the **Lighthouse** forge political connections and identify opportunities to shape policy or maneuver approved candidates into positions of power. The **Lantern's** spies do the opposite, looking for who they can bring down, who poses a future threat, or who might prove to be a useful tool. The **Torches** carry on the Falcons' legacy — the world may question whether God exists, but there's no doubting that monsters are real.

Because the Lighthouse and the Lanterns operate behind the scenes, the Torches are as close to a public face as the Lightkeepers have. While their dark dress is impeccable, it's the Torches' stern, humorless demeanor people remember. In some quarters, others among the Enlightened wonder if remnants of another, shadowy Convention exist among the Lightkeepers' ranks. Those few having heard rumors of the Ksirifai know better than to voice their suspicions where Lightkeeper spies might hear — knowledge of the Razors has long been forbidden. Anyone spreading such falsehoods may well find a Torch at their door.

The three Methodologies report to **Overseers**, who coordinate to control the flow of information to the Masses. Together, they create an Order-approved narrative aimed at keeping the unEnlightened complacent.

Initiation: The Lightkeepers maintain extensive records of potential new members. Deans at approved academic institutions funnel promising students toward the Lighthouse's agents. Soldiers displaying superior discipline, tactical intuition, and excellence in the field find themselves shuffled into Torch-led covert operations.

Lanterns recruit spies from every walk of life: intelligence agents are the most obvious contenders, but anyone with a knack for going unobserved and overhearing confidential information can be trained. They look to household staff and telegraph operators. To the consternation of the Grand Faculty and the League of Constructors, they steal away research assistants and junior scientists — many of them women — whose work appears in academic journals, but whose credit goes to a handful of powerful men.

Rarely do recruits approach the Lightkeepers first, but doing so is especially impressive. If you can get the drop on the spies, you probably ought to be in their ranks.

Agents get promoted through a combination of competence, discipline, and obedience. Lightkeepers are expected to obey orders and to carry them out with precision. Going off-book is a risky endeavor. Operatives doing so successfully and respectfully rise through the ranks. Those whose hunches and improvisations fail are subjected to re-education, social conditioning, and in the most egregious cases, termination.

Affinity Spheres: Mind, Forces, Prime.

Focus: We live in *A World of Gods and Monsters*, and the Lightkeepers serve as a bulwark between the Masses and the entities that would bring them harm. They protect the unEnlightened from the dangerous and unsanctioned actions of the Traditions, and they regulate the flow of information for the Sleepers' protection. As the British Empire expands, they hold to the belief that *Might is Right*. To rule the world, you must first control it, even when that means disrupting and displacing other cultures. While Lightkeepers have access to advanced weaponry and crowd control apparatus, many times all they need to force their target's compliance is to arrive in their uniform, conveying authority with a badge. Especially now, they understand that *Data is Everything*, not only controlling what goes out but examining what comes in. The Lightkeepers manipulate information and public perception via the media, penning columns in newspapers and writing books intent on persuading readers that their way is the right one. With the advent of photography, they've capitalized on the power of a single still image, and look toward the burgeoning film industry for the next steps in winning over Sleeper hearts and (more importantly) minds. In the United States, commercial credit bureaus double as surveillance gatherers. The correspondents of Tappan's Mercantile Agency delve into applicants' lives, collecting extremely private personal data under the guise of determining their creditworthiness. Their extensive ledgers and coded reports closely match those tools used by the Lightkeepers, and their habit of using scandalous information for blackmail and coercion reflects the Lantern's approach to recalcitrant targets.

Brotherhood of Mechanicians

Humans have retold the story of the gods gifting fire to humanity for millennia. Only the Enlightened understand how useless fire is without stone, metal, glass, and the will to harness it. Founded to harness this truth, the Brotherhood of Mechanicians claims their lineage springs from the very first humans to seize the power of tools. Fire may have allowed humanity to tame the wilderness, but flint, iron, and wood made that work possible. While the Mechanician's tools are grander than the wonders crafted by the first artisans, the passion driving the Brotherhood of Mechanicians has not changed. They distilled the spark of Enlightenment into the plow and yolk, the printing press, and the steam engine. The original calling of the Order of Reason was to gift humanity with tools so they could elevate their condition, and no one is as committed to this sacred charge as the International Brotherhood of Mechanicians.

The Brotherhood values hard work above all else. They understand that the greatest contribution is gifting humanity with the means to harness the full potential of their labor. Only when the will of a great endeavor is paired with the proper machinery can true Enlightenment be achieved. In the earliest days of the Brotherhood's work, they were organized into guilds and held almost absolute control over their respective crafts. This control gave these early Daedaleans an unparalleled amount of power. No matter how many times others have tried to take that power from them, no one has succeeded. As trade extended across the known world, and the borders of that world expanded beyond imagination, the Artisans and Craftmasons who would become the Brotherhood developed deeper relationships with the High Guild and the Explorators than anyone else in the early Order. Those relationships have lost none of their strength. The Mechanicians are present wherever industry and trade dominate, and wherever railroads cut their way through the untamed wilderness standing in the way of the Order's progress. While others often take credit for funding or extending the Order's influence across the globe the Mechanicians understand their great works made the other Convention's achievements possible.

While most Mechanicians claim they are happy to labor in their workshops and craft wonders to elevate the work of others — after all, that is their great mission — the Mechanicians are increasingly focused on the labor movement growing in the heart of the empire. The first great work was labor and all Enlightenment springs from that fountain. That lesson is forgotten far too often and the Mechanicians are committed to ensuring the world remembers this first truth. The labor movement has other supporters within the Order, most prominently the Golden Guild. While the Guild is devoted to making sure all citizens see a place for themselves in the new industrial world and believe in the value they can contribute to creating that world, the Mechanicians see themselves as fighting alongside the citizens filling the union halls that are rising across the empire. They know that laborers understand their worth, and that worth must not be underestimated. Several Mechanicians find the Guild's manipulative workings distasteful, but they need allies to accomplish their goals, and the Golden Guild is a powerful ally.

Many among the Brotherhood fight because they see the funding the Exchequers devote to the creation of "thinking machines" and the even stranger endeavors of the Electrodyne Engineers as an attempt to invalidate the role of humanity in their own world. While many Brothers collaborate with the Guild of Analytical Reckoners and the Electrodyne Engineers, they are aware that their brethren within the League of Constructors have split alliances. The Brotherhood of Mechanicians is the only convention devoted entirely to the Constructor's mission, and when working with the other conventions in their Bloc that tension is ever present. Some Constructors are beginning to believe that the Order has lost sight of its original mission. Accomplishment is meaningless if it is divorced from the people it is meant to serve.

While many Luminaries think the Mechanicians are mired in the past and whisper about their increasing irrelevance, nothing could be further from the truth. The Constructors have a strong vision of a future, where their Genius can open the doors of human endeavor. Their work on the steam engine has opened frontiers to the empire that the Explorators of even a few generations ago could only barely imagine sharing with the unEnlightened. They are fueling a grand agricultural revolution with work in chemical fertilizers and intricate horticultural wonders. Of all their work, they are best known for their redesign of the English factory. Where once individual artisans labored to craft nail after nail or toiled day in and day out cleaning rooms of cotton, now those tasks can be done in what seems like a moment. The Brotherhood understands that these tools focus and enhance human endeavors. They strive for the unification of technology and human will, to realize a future where there is more food than all of humanity could ever eat, more tamed land than all of humanity could possibly occupy, and the most basic exertion of even unEnlightened will can change the world through their technological wonders. After millennia of fighting for a slice of painfully limited resources, the Brotherhood now works tirelessly to eliminate the need for such wasted strife.

Organization: The Brotherhood of Mechanicians is in the middle of massively restructuring its internal organization. While most Mechanicians still enter apprenticeships to develop their craft and work tirelessly to become journeymen and eventually masters, growing factions within the Convention are eschewing this path in favor of organizational structures that reflect the reality of the new industrial worker. Advancement in these corners of the Convention is driven by a devotion to efficiency and collaboration instead of proving mastery of a specific set of skills. This movement away from a guild of independent artisans striving for mastery of their craft and toward an interconnected machine makes several of the oldest masters incredibly uncomfortable, but it shows no signs of abating. The most progressive reformers within the Convention have pushed to join the chartism movement gaining strength among workers across the empire. This would change the structure of the Convention even more radically, and the Lords within the Ivory Tower who have taken notice of this development are not amused.

Initiation: Despite the changing nature of the Convention most Mechanicians still begin as apprentices. If they live up to the rigorous expectations of their Enlightened masters then their lessons slowly change, including Enlightened mathematics, remarkable materials, and the oldest principles of *Ars Praeclarus*. If the apprentice grasps even a small portion of the Enlightened work they are shown, they are initiated fully into the Brotherhood and bound in a formal contract of indenture. For centuries, apprentices within the Convention moved through the ranks of Journeyman and Master once fulfilling the indenture of their apprenticeship, but ever more Mechanicians are eschewing this path to devote themselves to the political arenas in which the Convention finds itself entangled.

Affinity Spheres: Matter, Forces, Time.

Focus: The oldest Masters of the Brotherhood still practice the refined art of *Ars Praeclarus*, believing that disciplined manipulation of the physical properties of the world always yields the greatest results. These practitioners wield the hammer and chisel to craft the materials and forces of the world into their most refined forms. No Mechanician would deny the importance of the classic arts, but the focus of the Convention's work has shifted in the last century. The Journeymen and Initiates making up the majority of the Convention believe that how the old arts are applied is as important as the precision of the artist. Increasingly, the Brotherhood is focusing on how their great wonders are used, and how it changes the laborers wielding them. A well-designed machine can focus and amplify the intention of the wielder, changing not only the world but the laborer themself. These Mechanicians have created elaborate prosthetic limbs of leather, wood, and catgut restoring, and in some extraordinary cases expanding, the function of the human form through mechanical wonder. The Mechanicians understand that whether with a prosthetic limb or a mechanical carriage, humans are part of the machines they build and this continuity reveals the nature of the *Mechanistic Cosmos*. While they face a world filled with problems from without and within their Order, they fundamentally believe that *Tech Holds all the Answers*.

The Skeleton Keys

Horrors stalk London's nocturnal streets; some otherworldly, many merely monstrous men. Imposters pose as psychics and drain the bereaved of their savings, pretending to deliver messages from the deceased. Meanwhile, true sorcerers twist reality to their whims with little regard for consequence. Abroad, there's a world of dangers to vanquish and secrets to uncover. A group of police officers, private investigators, and wealthy adventurer-scholars formed a secret society to explore these mysteries and combat threats to London and its outskirts. They dubbed themselves the Skeleton Keys.

Though they aren't formally welcomed into the Technocratic Union until 1894, the Skeleton Keys have been operating in and around London for several decades. Over the years, a squad of Lightkeepers would arrive at the scene of a suspected supernatural crime, only to learn other investigators had already come by asking similar questions or had solved the case entirely. Reports of strange beasts roaming the rooftops were dealt with swiftly, though not by any Convention. The Exchequers denied funding independent strike teams, and even more concerning, were aware of no major financial transactions that pointed to who else might have. Though the identities of these anonymous actors cause consternation within the Order of Reason, they neither appear to work against the Time Table nor do they employ uncanny or catastrophic magick to achieve their goals.

It's not until the final years of the century that Inspector Rathbone, an agent of Scotland Yard and head of the Skeleton Keys, meets with Reginald Proctor of the Exchequers, and the two discover their organizations can be of mutual benefit to one another. Queen Victoria herself has learned of Rathbone's impressive accomplishments, and with her approval (or, some say, by her direct order), the Skeleton Keys formally join the Technocratic Union.

Being among the newest of the Conventions doesn't prevent members of the Skeleton Keys from speaking up when they disagree with the other blocs' strategies. Even within the Ivory Tower, they occasionally question the Lightkeepers' recommendations. They bring a fresh perspective to the Order, without feeling beholden to centuries of tradition and rivalries. Some Enlightened chafe at their brashness, though keen observers note that the Skeleton Keys pick their battles wisely. They've certainly learned about the brutal culling their Ivory Tower counterparts performed within their own ranks. While they may disagree with the Lightkeepers, they don't actively attempt to provoke them.

The Skeleton Keys revel in the air of mystery and secrecy they've built around their organization. Admittance to one of their lodges is a puzzle itself: the member seeking entry must first ferret out the lodge's location. Furthermore, she must possess the actual, literal skeleton key to unlock the door. Once inside, Skeleton

Keys talk shop, sharing information and theories on London's occult activity. They swap tales of the horrors they've witnessed, or boast about perils they've survived in far-off lands.

While working-class police officers and private investigators comprise much of the Skeleton Keys' ranks, a number of the Convention's members are wealthy and well-educated, with the types of family names that garner respect in high society. They own country estates and homes in the city, and their families' fortunes finance their adventures and equipment. Their assets and social status grant them access that most Londoners could never imagine. Class disparity is an occasional source of friction within the Convention, but members attempt to confine such disputes to the privacy of the lodge.

The Skeleton Keys quickly expand beyond their London roots, soon forming several lodges in the United States. Frequently, their members work in tandem with the Pinkerton Detective Agency, a private law enforcement firm based in Chicago. While the agency earns a positive reputation for tracking down criminals and thwarting an attempt on Abraham Lincoln's life, businesses also hire Pinkerton agents to intimidate workers, infiltrate labor unions, and break strikes. Though the Order of Reason largely approves of the Skeleton Keys' attitudes in this regard, their siding with business owners over the working class causes friction with the Brotherhood of Mechanicians and some of the Electrodyne Engineers.

Most Conventions view the Skeleton Keys as enforcers of Consensus, doing the grunt work of rooting out occultists and funneling information to the Lightkeepers. Many see them mainly as bodyguards and scrappers, thanks to the wild tales their members like to spin. Celestial Masters and Void Seekers invite Skeleton Keys along on their voyages as muscle. The Golden Guild and the Invisible Exchequers put them on thieves' trails, or send them out to collect defaulted debts.

While they certainly find a good round of fisticuffs invigorating, the Skeleton Keys pride themselves on their less pugilistic pursuits. Their investigative skills often rival the Lightkeepers' Lanterns. Their badges and their family names grant them access to places other citizens can't go, but sometimes they need to go unnoticed. Masters of infiltration, they gain access to Tradition meeting places and sit in on assemblies of would-be rebels, memorizing faces and details of their plans. Some have garnered memberships in the newly-formed Society for Psychical Research, using the information they gather to expose false mediums and discover potential occult threats.

From the outside, the Skeleton Keys can seem like a boys' club. Other Conventions imagine lodges to be smoke-filled rooms, where Sherlock Holmes and Allan Quatermain types attempt to outdo one another with tales of ever-grander adventures. While this image is certainly evocative of many members, women make up a significant portion of the Skeleton Keys. They've joined expeditions as translators and trailblazers. They've chased monsters through London's alleyways and worn the watchful eye of the Pinkerton's badge.

Though they spin entertaining yarns after the fact, when the Skeleton Keys are engaged in a hunt, they're deadly serious. Their police training is paramount, and they know that letting their vigilance slip for even a moment can result in disaster — not only for themselves but for any innocent bystanders. Their impeccable clothing becomes a hallmark of the Convention. Police officers among their ranks wear their uniforms with pride. The rest dress smartly, in somber blacks and shades of gray.

After the Victorian Reformation, the Skeleton Keys and their Lightkeeper allies form the New World Order. That Convention's Operatives are the direct descendants of the Skeleton Keys, though, over just a few decades, their boisterous good humor disappears almost entirely, replaced by absolute dedication to the Union's goals.

Organization: The Skeleton Keys are divided into two main Methodologies. **Operatives** are active in the field, patrolling the streets and neutralizing threats to the unEnlightened. They police the Masses and accompany other Order members on dangerous missions. **Investigators** perform fieldwork as well, but they spend much of their time gathering intelligence on the Operatives' future targets. They are equally comfortable browsing the shelves of occult bookshops tucked at the end of dark, narrow streets as they are in the well-lit drawing rooms of the ruling class.

The division of ranks into Black Suits, Gray Suits, and White Suits has not yet been formalized, the way it will be once the Convention evolves into the New World Order. However, members do display those colors as an indicator of seniority and experience.

Inspector Rathbone currently leads the Skeleton Keys. He passes directives down through his most senior colleagues, but he still takes an active hand in the Convention's day-to-day operations.

Initiation: To join the Skeleton Keys, the Enlightened person must first prove their cleverness. Being an exceptional officer or a skilled detective isn't enough; the prospective member must be willing to chase down odd clues and decipher cryptic puzzles to discover the location of a lodge and its key. Investigators within the Convention's ranks watch for police officers who hunt down cults or encounter strange beasts. At society balls, they eavesdrop on conversations about recently returned expeditions to hear tales of bravery and cunning. Skeleton Keys leave clues for those they deem worthy, sometimes sending coded letters for their candidate to crack, or tailing the person and letting her catch sight of him to see if she gives chase.

Promotion within the Skeleton Keys depends not only on cleverness but on proving your dedication to protecting the Masses. Smart members soon learn that it's not about glory or bragging rights, but about facing the horrors that exist in the world and protecting the weak from those things. Those who don't learn that lesson often end up dead.

Affinity Spheres: Mind, Correspondence.

Focus: Skeleton Keys recognize that we live in *A World of Gods and Monsters*, and view it as their duty to stand between the darkness and the people they've sworn to protect. To that end, they believe that *Might is Right*, whether that takes the form of using force to destroy threats or using it against those who would disrupt the status quo and thus put others in danger. They often carry items that grant them access to specific places: badges that reinforce their authority, calling cards, or pamphlets. Employing the right weapon at the right time is essential. Sometimes it's a dagger in the boot or a set of brass knuckles in a pocket. Other times it's an icy smile and the certainty in one's voice that opens a door.

Chapter Four: The Crafts

"The passion with which native intellectuals defend the existence of their national culture may be a source of amazement; but those who condemn this exaggerated passion are strangely apt to forget that their own psyche and their own selves are conveniently sheltered behind a French or German culture which has given full proof of its existence and which is uncontested."

—Franz Fanon, The Wretched of the Earth

The eight Traditions and the Order of Reason's Conventions are far from the only magickal organizations that exist in this era. Indeed, there are dozens of Crafts. Many are small and highly localized, limited to a single polity, culture, or people. Others are relatively widespread, with influence and membership that stretches across many lands.

In this era, the difference between Traditions and the larger Crafts is sometimes arbitrary. The eight Traditions are all part of the misnamed Council of Nine, and the Crafts are not, but the Council of Nine is in disarray and several larger Crafts are at least as large and influential as some Traditions. In some regions, the influence of one or more Crafts is greater than that of any of the Traditions, while in others, like China, the degree of opposition or cooperation between Traditions and Crafts is crucial to that region's fate.

By the end of Victoria's reign, some smaller Crafts have died out, typically because of violence and disruptions caused through imperial conquest. Other small Crafts eventually join and become offshoots of a larger Craft or one of the eight Traditions. However, for most of the era, there is a vast diversity of magickal styles and practices.

The Great Crafts

Like the majority of the eight Traditions, most larger Crafts are geographically limited. Many only exist within a single nation or only influence a series of nearby nations that share a similar culture and history.

This section examines the Bata'a, the Hollow Ones, and the Wulong, the largest and most widely influential Crafts — each as powerful as a Tradition, each located in different regions of the globe. A notable exception to the usual geographic limits is the Bata'a, which has spread from Africa to all across the Caribbean and into North, Central, and South America. The Hollow Ones are almost exclusively a Western European Craft, while the Wulong solely exist in China and the Chinese diaspora.

The Bata'a are widespread, relatively well organized, and actively working to resist European oppression and conquest. In some ways, it is both better organized and more determined in this resistance than most Traditions. The Hollow Ones and the Wulong are both locally powerful within their own territories. However, there is no reason that a Storyteller needs to primarily focus on these three Craft to the exclusion of others. While many Crafts are smaller and their sphere of influence is more circumscribed, all are important in their regions. Also, unlike the modern day, where the Council of Nine has incorporated portions of various Crafts and presents a more or less well-organized opposition to the Technocracy, the situation in the Victorian era is in flux. Not only could any one of the three Crafts described below join the Council of Nine, any one of them could become a major force in opposition to both imperialism and the Order of Reason, rallying Traditions behind their banner and taking a leading role in the fight for both magickal and mundane freedom.

Crafts like the Wulong are the dominant magickal organization in their region. Although in the established history one or more Traditions eventually took a leading role in that region, there's no reason why a Storyteller needs to stick to that outcome. Perhaps the Wulong becomes better organized, and through a mixture of determination and luck ends up incorporating much of the Chinese Akashayana, or reaches a mutually beneficial power-sharing arrangement with them.

Most of the Traditions have at least some members from Europe, and three of the eight originated there. In contrast, except for the Hollow Ones and the Sisters of Hippolyta, none of the Crafts in this chapter come from Europe and most have very few European members. Although many Crafts are as old as the Traditions, most were considerably more isolated for most of their history. Where the various Traditions have been both at war and sharing ideas for thousands of years, the majority of Crafts interacted with at most a single other Craft or (in the case of the Wulong) a single Tradition. However, the changes occurring in this era have brought these Crafts into far greater contact with both the Order of Reason and each other. These same changes have given birth to new Crafts, like the Hollow Ones and some recent Crafts that practice technomancy.

Most of the Crafts mentioned in this chapter influence regions under threat from colonization and European imperial powers, and their membership is largely or entirely people of color. While most Hollow Ones are Europeans, they primarily recruit from the working and middle class. As a result, these Crafts are even more embattled than the eight Traditions. All of them lack the comparative luxury Traditions like the Order of Hermes and the Chorus Celestial possess from membership among educated European elites. Instead, many of the Crafts described below are at the forefront of the struggle between colonial aggression and local resistance.

The Bata'a

In West Africa, the Yoruba magick known as Bata'a is ancient and powerful, but it was also relatively localized until recently. Before the 18th century, the Bata'a were the premier magicians of the centuries-old West African kingdom of Benin, where they served as royal magicians, magical priests to the common people, and most of all, as intermediaries between Sleepers and the orishas. Their influence reached into the medieval kingdoms of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai. Bata'a scholars shared knowledge with magicians from across West Africa and the Muslim Caliphates in the vast West African trade cities of Timbuktu and Aoudaghost.

The vast increase in transatlantic slavery during the 18th century transformed both the Kingdom of Benin and the Bata'a. The kingdom shrank in power and influence as the demands of European slave traders caused increasing violence and disruption. The Craft maintained its position of power in the kingdom until it became a British protectorate in 1892. When the British formally conquered the kingdom of Benin in 1897, the Bata'a went underground, hiding in plain sight like so many other Crafts and Traditions in nations that fell to European imperialism.

However, the Bata'a were well prepared for hiding because members in the Americas had already learned to conceal their magicks and use them to aid with resistance against the slavers for centuries. Using spirits as messengers, Bata'a in the Americas and West Africa had kept in regular, if often sporadic, contact with one another, sharing information and means to continue to use their magick in places where the local paradigm was increasingly hostile. By the middle of the Victorian Age, the Bata'a in the Kingdom of Benin knew that their nation was likely to eventually fall to Britain's rapacious ambitions, and began preparing themselves for an existence not dissimilar to that of their fellows in the Americas.

While their efforts allowed Bata'a in the Kingdom of Benin to help this nation resist British imperialism, those in the new world had grander ambitions. Several decades before the dawn of the Victorian era, the Bata'a helped enslaved Sleepers win the Haitian Revolution of 1804, which freed the island from French control and its inhabitants from the lash and shackles of slavery. Flush with this victory, Bata'a in the new world sought to spread the flame of freedom and revolution across the Caribbean and

into the Americas, while also using their magick to maintain their ties to Bata'a in Africa. Although their reach exceeded their grasp, by the dawn of the Victorian Era, Haiti remained free. Their efforts also contributed to Great Britain, the United States, and eventually most other European nations banning the Atlantic slave trade. During the Victorian Era, Bata'a worked to end slavery all across the Americas and entirely shut down the now-illegal but still profitable African slave trade.

During the first decades of the 19th century, Bata'a in Africa sought to protect their homeland, while those in the new world spread rapidly across the entire African diaspora. By the dawn of the Victorian era, the Bata'a has members all across the Caribbean, but most remained in Africa. Using lessons learned from their experiences with imperialism, magi of this Craft seek to aid people of West African descent all across the world to resist slavery, conquest, and oppression. By the middle of the Victorian era, they have helped escaped miners in the Belgian Congo, contributed to protecting Haitian independence, and aided American slaves escaping along the Underground Railroad.

Most outsiders assume the Bata'a are limited to people of African descent. Although a few Bata'a regard members without any obvious African ancestry as impostors and potential infiltrators, this Craft is open to anyone who can walk the difficult path of gaining the orishas' acceptance and blessing. Some members are Christians, who found no contradiction in their belief in Christ and their belief in the orishas. Few have trouble working with Christians sharing their goals and ideals.

However, membership in the Bata'a means more than simply the acceptance of these powerful spirits. Unlike many Traditions and Crafts, both their style of magick and their mission of liberation and resistance define the Bata'a. Joining the Bata'a means understanding the horrors of imperialism and slavery, while also being willing to devote your magick and your life to ending it and other, more subtle but just as destructive, forms of oppression. As the Bata'a spread into Central and South America, and extend their influence across the rest of Africa, ending colonialism and aiding and protecting colonized peoples is just as important to their mission as ending slavery itself.

Many Bata'a are just as open advocating violence as a tool of liberation as they are a Craft wholeheartedly devoted to resistance. Despite their earlier victories, during the first half of the Victorian era, illegal slave traders still occasionally sail into ports all across the Americas, and slavery remains legal in many nations. Bata'a magi free slaves, transport them to places where slavery is illegal, and encourage both uprisings by slaves and protests by abolitionists. They also work to disrupt imperialist conquest and domination in Africa, by force where necessary.

Widespread prejudice and oppression continue. During the late Victorian rubber boom in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru, the wealthy and powerful in these nations enslaved countless native people to replace the now-free African slaves and their descendants. Some Bata'a regarded the enslavement of indigenous peoples with no African ancestry as someone else's problem; most consider all slavery to be a cancer they must carve out of the body of humanity as a whole.

By the late Victorian Era, the nature of their battles sometimes changes, but the Bata'a continue organizing. During this time, they work extensively with Sleepers to pressure, shame, and otherwise convince various governments to outlaw slavery and treat all peoples in a nation equally. However, the vast majority were rebels and magi before they were

diplomats and protesters. Some work to lead slave rebellions directly and kill particularly horrific slave owners in person. Others prefer quieter and more subtle tactics, using a multitude of types of magick to transport people from bondage to freedom. The stories that grow from Bata'a magic speak of slaves quite literally flying to freedom like birds, or falling asleep in captivity and waking in liberty in an entirely different land.

Many in the Craft are swift to point out their goals go well beyond freeing slaves and ending slavery. The orishas they revere call for not just freedom, but respect and dignity for all peoples — and the Bata'a heed this call. In the second half of the Victorian era, the Bata'a work with movements like Ethiopianism and Pan-Africanism to advance the rights of African and African-descended peoples in a political effort all across the Americas and in Africa.

Individuals join the Bata'a for many reasons. A few seek wisdom and solace in working with the orishas, but most have a burning desire to fight oppression and injustice. This feeling can come from a deep and rich compassion for all of humanity, a rock-solid determination that all people deserve equal rights and opportunities, or a glorious vision of what the world could be like if they can end slavery and similar forms of oppression. However, this drive can also come from a place of rage, hatred, or loss. The Bata'a's membership is too small and they battle opponents that are too powerful for them to turn away members filled with fury, but they also watch such magi carefully. Some eventually learn wisdom, and others find enduring strength in their anger. What matters is that they don't forget the reason they're fighting or disregard the cost to themselves and those around them. The Bata'a know that they must fight oppression in a way that avoids harming the very people they are sworn to protect.

Organization: Being equal parts magickal organization and resistance group willing to embrace violent revolution has made secrecy of paramount importance. As a result, most members are organized in a cell structure, where no more than one or two members of each cell contacts peers in other groups, thus limiting the damage that the Order of Reason or Sleepers can cause if they capture and interrogate members. However, the Bata'a also has a central council formulating their policies, along with smaller regional councils that govern their activities in the Caribbean, the United States, Central America, South American, and West Africa.

Initiation: While a small number of Bata'a have Awakened to the orishas' call with little or no prior aid or training, most serve some sort of apprenticeship. Members regularly work with Sleepers, including everyone from Yoruba priests and community organizers in Africa, to charismatic abolitionists, quietly dedicated individuals working on the Underground Railroad, and similar people in half a dozen nations. All Bata'a look for signs that someone they work with or are rescuing from slavery or oppression may Awaken. These individuals receive additional attention and training. Some Awaken, but those who don't often become community leaders and revolutionary organizers. Despite their lack of magick, these Sleepers are also considered members of the Bata'a.

Affinity Spheres: Spirit is the most common, but Forces and Life are also frequent.

Focus: A few believe *Creation's Divine and Alive*, or long to *Bring Back the Golden Age*, but most see *A World of Gods and Monsters* or *Everything is Chaos*, while the angriest believe *Might Is Right*. While Voudoun is their most common practice, Bata'a use whatever works, including options ranging from crazy wisdom to High Ritual Magick, or, for those studying Capoeira, martial arts.

The Hollow Ones

The Hollow Ones are a Western European Craft of disillusioned or disenfranchised magi. The Industrial Revolution's speed and scope is unprecedented. Many Europeans celebrate gas lights, improved medicine, and steam-powered trains that travel at the amazing speed of 60 miles per hour. However, as both factories and cities grow explosively, and increasing numbers of people move from agricultural work or skilled professions to factory labor, many see that much value in life has been lost.

Middle-class clerks and working-class factory workers are far less connected to the cycles of the land and the people around them than their parents and grandparents who grew up and often spent their entire lives in rural hamlets and market towns. Because of the many social and technological changes, a growing number feel lost and adrift — from this emptiness with which many members struggle, the Craft gets its name. Their world continues to change in drastic ways, but many find only lives of ceaseless, near-mindless toil in the grand, new world about which captains of industry love to talk. They see the grand spectacle of the lives of the wealthy become even more opulent, while their own seems naught but an empty shell.

Those few able to glimpse beyond the mortal worlds' surface notice the success of the Technocratic Union's efforts in banishing the numinous and the supernatural from everyday life. Before Awakening, these people know nothing of the Order of Reason or its motives, but they can sense how its endeavor slowly drains all meaning. Between this occult erosion, the alienation of workers from their labor, and the loss of traditional ways of life, many poor working-class and middle-class people feel increasingly dissatisfied.

Meanwhile, women, ethnic, and sexual minorities watch the rights of straight white men increase, while their own status gradually worsens. The shift from cottage industry to factory labor makes all but the wealthiest women more reliant on men for money, while authorities use "scientific racism" and new disciplines like anthropology to justify colonial oppression abroad and prejudice at home. Although gay men no longer face execution for having sex, the rise of indecency laws means that any actions that could be perceived as homosexual are now crimes.

Many begin seeking alternatives to the dominant ideologies of progress, capitalism, and tepid mainstream Christianity. Some look to spiritualism and the increasing flood of (more or often less accurate) information about the cultures and ritual practices of colonized peoples in South and East Asia to find new sources of wonder and meaning in their lives. From practicing yoga to attending séances, alternatives

to both science and conventional religion became increasingly popular all across Western Europe and North America.

During the last quarter of the 19th century, the Theosophical Society became the primary front for Hollow Ones seeking to unify what they perceive to be the exotic and wondrous mysticism of India and East Asia with both spiritualism and Western European folk magick. These Hollow Ones find thriving interest in spiritualism, spirit mediums, and the growing ranks of the Theosophical Society to be ideal places to recruit new members, while also an opportunity to discuss politics, mysticism, and esoteric philosophy with like-minded Sleepers. In addition, these Hollow Ones learn that many of these Sleepers are invaluable allies willing to work for political and social reforms, like advocating labor unions and women's suffrage.

Working-class magi also find a very different answer — the politics of revolution, and most especially, the writings of Karl Marx. These individuals work towards and dream of the inevitable triumph of workers over the capitalists, as the forces of historic inevitability, aided by their own efforts, bring about a new age of freedom where they will no longer be alienated from either the fruits of their labor or the meaning they so desperately seek. Although these Awakened Marxists used elements of technomancy in their magick and claim to be strict materialists, like the more mystically-inclined Hollow Ones, their magick is an informal bricolage of disparate ideas and practices.

Regardless of which faction they belong to, the Hollow Ones are primarily a Craft for the lower middle class, the working class, and the poor, as well as a Craft for homosexuals, women dissatisfied with the era's patriarchal attitudes, and a variety of ethnic minorities. However, because of this Craft's divided nature, it has two very different public presences. On one hand, there are popular mystics and spiritualists and, somewhat later in the era, the Theosophical Society, founded by the charismatic Sleeper, Helena Blavatsky. On the other hand, there are the Marxists, who seek to use lectures, labor movements, and philosophical discussions to bring about the inevitable collapse of European capitalism, and replace it with a new communist state where all are truly equal and free.

While many Hollow Ones understand that the Order of Hermes is not merely distinct from, but also largely opposed to the Order of Reason, most regard the members of both organizations as equally reactionary, narrow-minded, and potentially dangerous. The Hollow Ones see members of both groups as working to support the same entrenched power structures that they wish to reform or overthrow. Unfortunately, like far too many western Europeans of the era, the majority of Hollow Ones share at least some of the racism that is endemic among inhabitants of the region.

Hollow Ones with ties to Theosophism regularly discuss how some ethnic groups are inherently animalistic or "degenerate." They also see other ethnic groups, such as light-skinned Europeans, as more spiritually enlightened and closer to the wondrous Atlanteans that most Hollow Ones with an interest in Theosophy regard as the source of all magickal power. Helena Blavatsky's infamous quote that "mankind is 'of one blood,' but not of the same essence" is one that the vast majority of Hollow Ones believe.

Marxist Hollow Ones are often less overtly racist, but primarily concern themselves with the liberation of the European working classes. While many deplore the conquests and other atrocities committed by various imperialist powers, they also believe that capitalism is a precondition for Marxist

revolution, and so the imposition of a rapacious capitalist rule on colonized nations is both horrific and necessary.

Regardless of faction, almost all Hollow Ones believe western Europeans should aid and "civilize" ethnicities they regard as spiritually weaker or less economically evolved while claiming to oppose atrocities like those committed in Australia, Tasmania, the Belgian Congo, and many other cultures. Most Hollow Ones also oppose established European power structures. In addition to the interest in communism, utopian socialism, women's suffrage, and "free love" common among middle-class Hollow Ones, some are also vocal supporters of labor unions, using their voices, bodies, and magicks to protect striking workers from the upper class's retribution.

By the last days of Victoria's reign, many Hollow Ones begin to oppose the colonial rule of ethnic groups they regard as more "civilized," like the people of India or China. Some of them work with Indian nationalists to aid their quest for freedom and independence. From this, they gain more than a few recruits in India, typically among western-educated Indians chafing at the racism they face working alongside Europeans.

The two factions of the Hollow Ones often disagree strongly about both their goals and the nature of the world they hope to help create. However, both groups assemble their magickal practices from similar techniques and can easily work together to perform powerful acts. As a result, they regularly cooperate in attempts to change or overthrow the established order. However, they also argue vehemently with one another, and more sensible members frequently point out that the factions spend more time bickering than changing the world.

Organization: The Hollow Ones have small-scale organizations, but as a whole, they are characterized by factionalism and loud, sometimes bitter arguments, especially between the Theosophical and Marxist factions. However, their desire to bring harmony and wisdom to what they see as an increasingly bleak and unfriendly world draws members together. The result is that small groups of Hollow Ones work on a variety of projects, including advocating for women's suffrage, creating labor unions, working to create utopian socialist communities, striving for a proletarian revolution, or using their magick to help protect sexual minorities from arrest. Meanwhile, representatives from these disparate groups regularly gather in London, Paris, New York, and Chicago to discuss larger plans and goals. Although most concur about the problems they were facing and the changes they wish to accomplish, there is far less agreement about how to achieve these goals.

Initiation: Some Hollow Ones observe individuals attending séances, Theosophical lectures, popular lectures on Marxism, or meetings by advocates of socialism, labor unions, or women's suffrage. They contact and mentor any that show signs that they might Awaken. However, the majority are poor or working-class urbanites who spontaneously Awakened and were overlooked by the Traditions and Conventions due to sex, race, or lack of formal education. These individuals learn to use the rudiments of their magick on the streets until they attract the attention of a Hollow One offering them a place in this organization.

Affinity Spheres: Any.

Focus: The Hollow Ones lack unified beliefs or practices. A few seek to *Bring Back The Golden Age*, but *It's All Good* is a popular view, while the most gnostic-inclined understand that *Everything is An Illusion*. While some practice crazy wisdom, faith, or yoga, most Hollow Ones practice gutter magick.

The Wulong

The vast majority of the Wulong have little patience for personal enlightenment or hidden truths. They devote themselves to maintaining order based on strict adherence to Confucian principles and the vast power of precisely organized, carefully maintained magicks. For the Wulong, their magick, their organization, and China as a whole are one and the same. They draw power from dragon lines that crisscross the Middle Kingdom and direct it using the structures of their elaborate hierarchies. In the Wulong's eyes, every group and individual in China has its proper place and role, and the Craft seeks to amplify and reinforce these roles.

In the past, the Wulong maintained their power, despite dynastic struggles and foreign conquest by Mongols and Manchu, by seeking to influence any new rulers into conforming with their enduring Tianming ideology — the idea of a mandate of Heaven. However, the new threats to China are distant empires that see it as a resource to be plundered rather than a nation to be ruled, and the Wulong has so far failed to adapt. They fight a rearguard action; without a major change in their situation or a radical, new approach, the best they can hope for is losing control of China gradually rather than swiftly, and an attempt to minimize the damage done by colonizing forces and their allies in the Technocratic Union.

The other major problem facing the Wulong is internal. Corruption and internal division are rampant within the ranks. While some the Wulong is desperately trying to prevent or halt imperialist incursions, others care far more about humiliating their rivals within the Craft or using power and influence to better their own lives, with little concern for China or even the rest of their fellow Wulong.

Before Victoria's reign, the Wulong was secure in their positions of power and cared little about the lives of Sleepers and magi beyond China's borders, or the activities of European traders and missionaries visiting the region. Their concern was for China alone, and they remained certain that no outside barbarians could upset the power and grandeur of their nation. Instead, they continued their ancient tradition of working with the local Umbral hierarchy to oversee the spiritual affairs of China, while trusting that they could find all answers in their history and the writing of their founders. Among those worried about the opium trade, most were confident that laws, customs, and their magick could keep this problem from becoming too serious.

The First Opium War shattered their confidence. In 1839, the Chinese emperor rejects a British plan to legalize opium in China and decides to completely ban the opium trade. The British reaction is brutal, swift, and decisive. While Luminaries strike at Wulong magi, the navy destroys numerous

Qing warships and within three years British forces have won the war, secured numerous treaty ports where they can trade whatever they want to sell, and seized the island of Hong Kong. The opium trade in China grows faster than ever before, the Order of Reason's paradigm secures a strong foothold within China, and the Wulong realize that they now face a threat like none they have ever experienced.

Many Wulong panic in the wake of defeat at the hands of an enemy they had previously dismissed. Existing internal divisions grow far worse; previously cooperative factions now splinter over different solutions, and more than a few see the threat as an unparalleled opportunity for personal advancement. One faction puts aside their battles with Chinese Akashayana to work together with members of the Tradition and protect China from the magickal threat. Unfortunately, although willing to cooperate, the Wulong attitude of superiority has not changed. As a result, magi allied with the Wulong often find themselves treated as servants or inferiors. These attitudes persist until the Second Opium War (1856-1860), another swift and terrible British victory that further reduces China's ability to protect its borders, enforce its laws, or govern its citizens.

During both wars, the Wulong find that weapons and soldiers empowered by the Order of Reason's paradigm largely ignore the powerful magicks that have protected China for millennia. The power of the Wulong's dragon lines proves to be a poor match for rifles, cannon, and steam-powered gunboats. For most of the era, the Wulong grow increasingly desperate. The British and other European powers continue to gain greater political and economic control of China, and their paradigm spreads from their treaty ports to all large Chinese cities.

Eventually, the younger members of the Wulong reluctantly conclude that trusting China and its traditions to contain the answers and solutions to all worthwhile questions and problems has utterly failed. Instead, they begin seeking answers elsewhere. They strongly reject all advances by European and American Tradition magi, believing them little better than the Technocratic Union. Instead, they look to other Asian magi, abandoning the Crafts' previous attitude of superiority and disdain.

As the younger members gradually change their attitudes, they also begin coordinating efforts with all branches of the Akashayana, instead of merely those in China. However, even the most progressive

Wulong balk at working with magi unwilling to fit into the Craft's hierarchy of Heaven and Earth, which naturally places the Wulong in authority over other magi within China.

The Wulong seek a way to protect China from the Order of Reason's paradigm so it may exist within its own uniform and well-defended paradigm. The wiser and most progressive Wulong extend this idea to encompass a pan-Asian form of consensus, one that would free Vietnam and Burma from colonial rule and allow Siam to remain independent.

All but a handful of Wulong refuse to consider options like adapting to the changes already taking place in China, or even just retreating and gathering strength before returning to the attack. Most also reject reformers seeking to replace China's imperial hierarchy with more egalitarian structures, believing that such changes would destroy the very essence of both the Wulong and of China itself. Instead, the Wulong seek a way to assault westerners and the threat they represent. Some advocate the use of politics, magickally-enhanced diplomacy, blackmail, and assassination. Others see the solution as war, eagerly working with the Akashayana's warrior faction in the prelude to the Boxer Rebellion.

Before their defeat during the Boxer Rebellion, the Wulong remains a relatively large and exceedingly well-organized Craft, and it has the potential to become a true focus for Chinese or pan-Asian resistance. However, this change requires not merely creativity and flexibility, but also a greater willingness by the Wulong to listen to magi who are not members. If younger members of this Craft, or members of some other Asian Craft or Tradition, can find a way to convince the Wulong's leadership toward gathering a multitude of disparate allies, they have a chance to reshape the future of China and beyond. However, without such reform, the Wulong are doomed to stubbornly fight a losing battle.

Organization: The Wulong is intensely hierarchical. Members believe that everyone and everything has its proper place both in society and in the world as a whole. As a magickal reflection of China's government, an Emperor governs the Wulong. Beneath him are an Empress and a supreme General, who each stand at the peak of their own hierarchies. The best leaders actively solicit ideas from their underlings and carefully consider the well-being of China before making major decisions. However, many are ancient magi who have great difficulty accepting or even understanding the changes now occurring in their country.

The Wulong's leaders mostly isolate themselves from the world, living in the Forbidden City in Beijing where their access to Chinese royalty gives them an exceptional degree of political power and influence. However, the mid-to-lower-ranking members live in cities and towns all across China. The leaders assign these lower-ranking Wulong to cities and towns far from where they were born to avoid corruption and favoritism.

Initiation: Joining the Wulong is in many ways an adjunct to joining the Chinese imperial bureaucracy. The Wulong regularly oversees groups of young people taking the Chinese civil service examination. They make note of individuals demonstrating great knowledge of China's classics and traditions along with hints that the individual might Awaken. They provide these individuals with special training. Because law and custom only permit men to take this exam, the Wulong is overwhelmingly male. The only women who join either successfully disguise themselves as men and take the exam, or spontaneously Awaken and come to the notice of Wulong who believe that these women possess the proper respect for and devotion to China's traditions. However, only a handful of exceptionally fierce and determined women ever rise to positions of leadership in the patriarchal Craft.

Affinity Spheres: Spirit, Forces, Matter, or Life are the most common.

Focus: For most of the Victorian era, *Bring Back the Golden Age* is their predominant belief, but *Divine Order and Earthly Chaos* remains a close second. Alchemy and High Ritual Magick based on geomancy largely define Wulong practice.

Wardens of a World of Magick

There are more than a hundred separate and distinct Crafts active during Victoria's reign. Many of them consist of small local traditions of magick that have existed, in one form or another, for centuries. However, an increasing number are syncretic practices, blending different styles of magick thrown together by European imperialism or the slave trade. As magi have long known, while Crafts can continue largely unchanged for more than a thousand years, they only do so if the social and cultural conditions they exist in remain equally constant. When wars, paradigm shifts, and similar disruptions alter a society, by necessity the magick practiced in this society also changes, at least to the extent that the new magi recruited into the Craft are different people with different experiences, and possibly different cultures and native languages.

These changes become faster and more extreme as colonial armies slaughter opposition, and the Order of Reason's effort to place the entire world under a single uniform paradigm draws closer to success. In the face of these many disruptions, many Crafts attempt to hold onto their traditions and their past even as an entire culture changes around them, while others seek to adapt in a wide variety of ways. Some focus on martial magick to drive out colonial overlords while dreaming of returning their culture to former glories. More than a few Crafts are dying out entirely, as new magi join other organizations or overzealous imperial governments slaughter them.

A few Crafts incorporate bits of magick and culture from their colonizers, in the hope that doing so will allow them to retain more social and magickal power, or simply because of their desire to side with the victors. Others change as two or more colonized or enslaved peoples are thrown together, and magi seek to take the best or at least most useful elements of Crafts from each culture, creating a style of magick that is hopefully better suited for their new circumstances.

Most of the Crafts described below are as important on a local scale as the three Great Crafts discussed above, or in fact, as some of the Traditions. A chronicle can focus entirely around one of these smaller Crafts, and some are in a position to join the Council of Nine as its ninth member. Since some of these Crafts exist in regions where none of the Traditions are particularly important, they can become a locus for resistance against imperial conquest while the other Crafts and the Traditions play a secondary role, if any.

The Comanche Puha

From the late 17th to the late 19th century, the Comanche people controlled a large empire consisting of much of Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico. Known as Comancheria, the Comanche controlling it are horse nomads. The Comanche tradition of magick is intensely individualistic, with each magus or maga learning from a single teacher, one or more spirits, or entirely on their own. These magi are commonly called Puha, after the power or "medicine" they gathered. Some Puha use their power for healing, but most of them devote themselves and their magick to martial prowess. They enhance their bodies, horses, and weapons, terrify their enemies, and call weather to use to their advantage.

Many Puha know of one another, and the bond between teacher and student is especially strong because teachers often adopt students. However, there is no hierarchy or leadership among the Craft. The closest equivalent is that less experienced and less powerful Puha usually defer to the wishes of more experienced and powerful Puha, unless the less powerful individual believes they can defeat the other in a magickal contest. However, unlike their brutal treatment of outsiders, battles between Puha are seldom fatal and rarely result in serious injury.

The Puha are fearsome and deadly warriors against whom US and Mexican soldiers struggle to defeat or even survive an encounter. Like the rest of their people, the Puha are intensely isolationist and trust few outsiders. Both the Dream-Speakers and the Bata'a propose alliances with these Comanche magi. The Puha are happy to have such magi fight their enemies, but have no reason to trust them. In addition, many Puha are willing to demonstrate their magickal prowess by defeating foreign magi who do not promptly depart when informed that they are not interested in an alliance.

In the established timeline of history, the fate of the Puha and the Comanche as a whole is grim. They control Comancheria until the late 1860s, continue to launch raids into Mexico, and even establish a small colony there. However, eventually, their magicks can no longer resist the advance of European settlers and the associated spread of the Order of Reason's paradigm. Starting in the 1850s, drought, and epidemics of both smallpox and cholera kill two thirds of the Comanche, and in 1867, the Comanche agree to move to a reservation in Oklahoma. Even in defeat, the Puha work with Comanche leaders to ensure the survival of their people and their culture. The few surviving Craft members continue to launch periodic raids, but the Order of Reason's encroachment and white settlers and soldiers slaughtering bison further weakens them until they are reduced to a footnote in the Ascension War. Survivors continue to reject alliances with magi who are not Comanche.

Affinity Spheres: Life, Forces, or Spirit.

Focus: Puha magick is intensely personal, consisting of a combination of special talismans the Puha finds or creates, and demonstrations of athletic and martial prowess. Few follow anything other than *Might Is Right*, but eventually, some follow *Bring Back the Golden Age*. Most Puha practice is crazy wisdom, maleficia, or martial arts, but some practice medicine work or shamanism.

The Kopa Loei

For the Kopa Loei, the world and everything in it is alive. Every object or living thing is the descendant of one of a handful of closely-related deities, allowing the Kopa Loei to influence nature by calling upon their kinship with animals, rivers, mountains, and other features. Before the last decades of the 18th century, few Polynesian islands had any contact with outsiders. Then British and other European explorers, traders, and imperialists began visiting and then settling these islands.

By the first days of Victoria's reign, the impact of traders and colonizers remains limited. A few hundred European settlers live in New Zealand, while traders and missionaries visit Tahiti and other islands. While all are watchful and some are concerned, most Kopa Loei continue in their traditional role as healers, spirit talkers, and purveyors of fishing, farming, and weather magick.

However, European influence in the region increases through the era. Using Space and Spirit magicks, the Kopa Loei on different islands have always remained in loose contact with one another. As a result, they know when, in 1862, slavers kidnap half of Easter Island's population, and European diseases like smallpox devastate other islands. The Kopa Loei realize they need to organize and fight back against those stealing their land and conquering or enslaving their people.

In Hawai'i, white landowners annexing land and employing imported labor to grow sugar for export use their political connections to acquire even more land and eliminate local interference in their efforts. This is also the era of the New Zealand Wars, where British imperialists with the help of Maori allies battle the bulk of the Maori people, aided by only a small number of British settlers. British forces seek to defeat local efforts to establish a formal Maori government and protect their lands from annexation.

Currently, there is a major split among the Kopa Loei. Some, including most of the ali'i priests of the land, seek to drive off Europeans and restore the islands to their previous state. Others, including a substantial minority of the kahuna, believe that they cannot drive away all Europeans, and that their islands must change to accommodate new ways. However, they are seeking methods that preserve the heart of their culture and beliefs while safeguarding their people. Other kahuna ally with the ali'i, arming for a war to prevent the Order of Reason's paradigm from gaining a greater hold in the region. A significant number of the

wayfinders seek a third way around this problem by locating hidden ocean paths to new islands impossible to find on any European map. Other wayfinders attempt to bend currents, wind, and even light to prevent European ships from reaching their islands.

All of these efforts are hampered by the fact that no one island has more than, at most, a dozen Kopa Loei, and they are not used to intense cooperation. A growing number of younger Kopa Loei understand that their only path to victory, or even just successful accommodation with Europeans, is if magi from different islands all work together. Older Kopa Loei find this idea to be exceedingly foreign. While their magick is quite similar, most Craft members still regard themselves as Tahitian, Hawaiian, or Maori, and not as a member of any larger group.

Affinity Spheres: This varies by island and their duties.

Focus: Their magick focuses on their connection to their islands and the ocean that surrounds them. *Creation's Divine and Alive* is almost universal, and almost all consider any form of technomancy an alien notion. Craftwork, martial arts, and medicine work are all common practices.

The Ngoma

The Ngoma have long been Africa's premier magickal scholars. Ever since the ancient days of Great Zimbabwe, they have aided Sleepers as architects, healers, teachers, and advisors to kings, queens, and other rulers. In addition to drawing upon the power of ancestor spirits, they wield astrology and geomancy to learn the world's many secrets. They use this knowledge as a tool with which to shape the globe, drawing upon complex networks of correspondences between all of creation to enact their will and maintain harmony in the human, natural, and spirit worlds. Although they are most common in southern and eastern Africa, they can be found all across the continent.

The Ngoma are now fighting a losing battle for Africa, albeit with nobility and determination on their part. In the second half of the era, the horrors of the Belgian Congo show them the reality of industrial-scale murder and mutilation. Rather than falling into despair or striking out with uncontrolled rage, these atrocities cause the Ngoma to become ever more determined in their subtle but profound resistance.

For most of the Victorian era, the Ngoma are all too aware that they are losing and that every clever trick and brilliant strategy they devise does little more than delay the advance of slave traders and imperialist armies. While many among their number weep, they also rise every morning and work to protect as many of the Sleepers that they can, even knowing they cannot save everyone. With just as much urgency, they protect the wonders of African magick and the treasures of its cultures, such as the hundreds of scrolls and other mundane but priceless wonders from Timbuktu, Aoudaghost, and Meroe. The Ngoma hide these treasures to keep them safe from missionaries' torches, the greed of slavers and merchants, and conquerors who would steal them away as trophies for their museums.

By the second half of the Victorian Era, the Ngoma have also made an exceedingly loose alliance with the Bata'a. Most Ngoma believe that the Bata'a strategy of open resistance is doomed and that there's little or no possibility of victory by directly confronting colonial armies and governments. However, they provide the Bata'a with aid, because the Ngoma find them useful.

Ngoma elders know that the Order of Reason has a special contempt for African magi, and that the Conventions are well aware of the existence of such practitioners. Some Ngoma hide, preserving their knowledge and the cultural treasures of a dozen major African civilizations in realms they hope are well beyond the Order of Reason's reach. To help ensure the Order of Reason does not find them, the Ngoma encourage the Bata'a's violent tactics to confuse the Order of Reason and hide the Ngoma's activities. They hope that when the Order of Reason defeats the Bata'a, they will be certain that they have rid Africa of "superstition," letting the Ngoma wait in the shadows and plan for the future.

However, while the Ngoma become deeply pragmatic in the face of decades of horror, they do not give up. If someone presented them with a plan that looked like it might be able to actually defeat, drive back, or outwit the European invaders, they would listen carefully and consider it, especially if this plan does not come from some naïve European with dreams of "saving" Africa and its magi.

Affinity Spheres: Life and Spirit are the most common, but Forces, Mind, and Prime are also possible.

Focus: For the Ngoma, magick is a combination of wisdom and knowledge. Their understanding of many ancient records and secrets gives them much of their power. Most practice High Ritual Magick and are guided by the paradigm of *Divine Order and Earthly Chaos*, although a few have now embraced *Bring Back the Golden Age*.

The Sisters of Hippolyta

Although she died in 1797, the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, and especially her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), influence many educated Victorian women all across western Europe, despite the widespread disapproval of her life that occurred after her death. A few of these women are magae, and her writings served to draw them to this ancient Craft in unusually large numbers. The second half of the era is an important time for the Sisters of Hippolyta. Industrialization causes men to go to work in factories that did not accept female workers, leaving women increasingly dependent on them for money. In addition, the Order of Reason helps to actively promote the cult of domesticity — the idea that women are naturally purer, more virtuous, and more submissive than men, and that their rightful place is in the home. Both of these factors galvanize the Sisters of Hippolyta into action, while also firmly cementing their opposition to the Order of Reason.

They work closely with the women's suffrage movement which starts in the 1860s. They also both subtly and openly work to expand other rights for women, including the right for married women to own and control their property, and for divorced women to have access to their children. The Sisters

of Hippolyta dream of a world where women and men live as equals, both legally and socially. In addition to its primary goal of female emancipation, from its earliest days, they also strongly oppose all wars. Like the Hollow Ones, with whom they occasionally join forces, the Sisters of Hippolyta work closely with Sleepers. They have branches and subgroups consisting primarily of Sleepers helping the magi advance their agenda.

The Sisters of Hippolyta are primarily a European Craft, with members from all across Western Europe. However, it also has members in the Ottoman Empire, especially in Greece and Anatolia. Regardless of where they are from, almost all strongly oppose the wars of imperialist conquest, and they work to help resolve additional problems faced by poor and working-class women. While some members are also appalled by the treatment of people of color within Europe and the United States, few spend much time assisting any of these groups, seeing the liberation of women as the vital first step to the general emancipation of all humanity.

Affinity Spheres: Life or Mind.

Focus: Despite most members being at least ostensibly Christian, since the 18th century their magick has drawn heavily on Hellenistic Greek and Greco-Egyptian magic, although with a far greater emphasis on invoking female deities and legendary figures than the Order of Hermes. Members study Latin and Classical Greek, and more than a few are experts on the Greek magical papyri. *Creation's Divine and Alive* is the most popular belief, but *Bring Back the Golden Age* is common among those dreaming of ancient Amazons. Most practice High Ritual Magick, but the Art of Desire is also common, and some rely primarily on Faith.

The Taftâni

The Middle East is in flux. The Ottoman Empire struggles to reform and modernize in the face of both internal nationalist movements and external aggression by the imperialist powers of western Europe. Most of Egypt is under British control, and both Russia and Great Britain encroach on Persia. However, the Arabian Peninsula remains of little or no interest to the nations of Europe.

The Taftâni are divided both physically and ideologically. One faction works within the Ottoman Empire to help it resist dismemberment, while another retreats to the Arabian Peninsula. However, both have the same goal: to maintain a paradigm where magick and wonder are real and imminent and to repel the Order of Reason's rigid and increasingly materialistic Consensus.

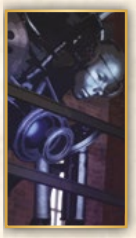
Within the Ottoman Empire, many Taftâni live in cities where they work as mystics and spiritual teachers, attempting to impart both wisdom and an understanding of the world's magickal nature to Sleepers. These efforts have reduced the influence of the Order of Reason's paradigm upon the Ottoman Empire, but the Taftâni in the Arabian Peninsula are even more successful. They can maintain this territory's existing paradigm for the entirety of Victoria's reign, in part because the miles of shifting sand and the blazing sun deters all but the most fanatically dedicated Europeans from intruding. Outsiders ascribe the fantastic tales of magick with which the persistent return to mirages, sunstroke, or drugs.

Both groups of Taftâni understand that unless they can find some way to change the situation, their efforts may be no more than a stopgap before Western imperialists and the magi aiding them fully turn their attention to the Middle East. Some younger Taftâni study martial magicks and prepare themselves for battle with the armies of the empires that they are certain will come. A growing number work to unify and organize their Craft in the face of the growing European threat. Others make contact with the Ahl-i-Batin, but so far few consider reaching out to other, more distant Traditions and Crafts.

Affinity Spheres: Forces, Matter, or Prime, but Spirit is also exceedingly common as djinn are more prevalent with the local Gauntlet remaining relatively thin.

Focus: Many preparing for the coming war believe that *Might Is Right*, while mystics who belong to this Craft see a world of *Divine Order and Earthly Chaos*. The most scholarly study and practice High Ritual Magick or alchemy, but most others use craftwork or crazy wisdom.

Independent Technomancers



The spread of the Order of Reason's paradigm produces anger and confusion among many magi across the globe. However, some find a way to adapt to the changing conditions and incorporate elements of the new paradigm and its associated technologies into their magick. They reject the Order of Reason's lies that the benefits of technomancy and advanced technology mandates accepting the yoke of imperial rule, and they forge their own future.

During Victoria's reign, there are dozens of these groups of independent technomancers. Most either splinter off from existing Traditions or Crafts or, in a few cases, like the Siamese Akashayana (p. 49), are an existing subgroup that incorporates some elements of technomancy into their practice. In addition, some Crafts like the Japanese Jidai actively reject the magickal organizations of the past, attempting to create an entirely new technological magick that works with their culture and traditions.

The Order of Reason's racism and elitism means that almost none of the Conventions aid or even acknowledge these Crafts. Instead, most independent technomancers are magi opposing both colonial armies and the Order to keep their homeland independent or to overthrow the local colonial government and restore freedom. Without access to the Order's knowledge of technomancy, these Crafts frequently lack the sheer breadth of Luminaries' magick. Instead, they create magicks uniquely adapted to their culture's paradigm and way of life, tailoring practices to the difficult and usually life-threatening work of resisting colonial oppression.

Some of these small, fledgling Crafts learn technomancy entirely on their own. They observe and study modern technologies, learn more about how and why the most advanced mundane devices like Maxim guns, telegraphs, and photographic cameras do not incur Paradox, then tailor their magick to make use of these same devices and coincidences. Others consist of magi who, having formally studied European science and technology, develop their ideas from there. A few members of these Crafts sometimes had limited contact with the Order of Reason outside of conflict and do their best to learn some of the Conventions' secrets. The following are only three of many such groups of magi; others rise in cultures all across the world.

The Dalou'laoshi

The Dalou'laoshi is an ancient order of Chinese artisan magi that influenced the development of both water clocks and gunpowder. For most of China's history, they have been loosely allied with the Wulong, but this alliance has often been somewhat strained. The Wulong value stability and tradition to a degree that puts them at odds with the Dalou'laoshi's desire to produce wondrous inventions and use technology to benefit the entire populace. The Wulong were overjoyed when the Dalou'laoshi developed improved crossbows, but dislike technology that might fundamentally disrupt the existing social order. The larger Craft used powerful magicks to subtly sabotage Dalou'laoshi alchemist Wan Hu's 16th-century attempt to fly into space using a rocket-powered throne, resulting in the loss of Wan Hu to the Deep Umbra.

When Jesuit missionaries began visiting China in the 16th century, they brought new types of firearms, mechanical clocks, and other wonders that many in the Dalou'laoshi admired. However, the Wulong forbade them from improving on these ideas. These edicts increased discontent among younger Dalou'laoshi, but the alliance persisted because the second cornerstone of their Craft is a belief in order. Although most members embrace the necessity of technological progress, they are equally convinced that this process must happen in a planned fashion, opposing anti-authoritarian groups like the Akashayana. Most Dalou'laoshi believe the alternative to order is lawless chaos.

Currently, there is much dissension among the Dalou'laoshi. Most are overjoyed at the wonders of modern technology, but they are horrified at the ongoing European dismemberment of China. As the Wulong become increasingly desperate, two factions emerge among the Dalou'laoshi. One argues that having rebuffed the Order of Reason in centuries past, they must now approach the Order and attempt to join it with the dual goals of gaining a voice in the ascent of the technological paradigm and convincing the Order of Reason to let them in remake China as a prosperous and independent industrial nation.

The second, more radical faction sees the horrors in Burma and Vietnam, and the increasing influence of European colonialists aided by representatives of the Order and believes that they must oppose and, if possible, destroy such forces. They make contact with Wulong and Akashayana members dedicated to opposing colonialism and the Order of Reason. In a pan-China alliance of magi, their aid with planning and executing the Boxer Rebellion could prove decisive.

Some Dalou'laoshi, interested in progress and reform, look favorably on the writings of Sleeper reformers like Sun Yat-sen, who advocates democracy and technological and social modernization as ways to free China from both internal corruption and external threats. Instead of allying with the Order of Reason or planning for war against them, these Dalou'laoshi hope instead to help Sleepers modernize China that it can oppose both imperialists and the Order of Reason on its own terms.

The most cautious of these Dalou'laoshi reformers are attempting to create a pan-Asian alliance of magi, including technomancers and others, who will work together to more subtly oppose European aggression by supporting the free nations of Asia in technological advancement. These magi have already made contact with the Akashayana working with King Mongkut in Siam to help protect that nation, and are attempting to recruit the Japanese Jidai into this enterprise. Both the Order of Reason and many Wulong oppose these efforts.

Affinity Spheres: Forces, Matter, and Time.

Focus: Traditionally, most members believe in *Divine Order and Earthly Chaos*, but some see *A Mechanistic Cosmos* or *Tech Holds All Answers*. Their older practices focus heavily on craftwork, or occasionally alchemy, but a growing number of Dalou'laoshi are also experimenting with hypertech, or occasionally, weird science.

Jidai (Next Era)

Many of the magi supporting Oba Nobunaga's reunification of Japan were interested in technomancy. After Japan closed itself off from the world in the 17th century, the more potent examples of technomancy often risked Paradox, and only a few Japanese magi continued experimenting with it during the 17th and 18th centuries. All this changed in the early Victorian era when, in 1853, US Admiral Perry sailed several steam-powered gunboats into Edo Bay and fired his cannon as a demonstration of US military might.

While there was panic and confusion in the Japanese court and among some Japanese magi, the existing technomancers saw an opportunity for change. They prospered even as other magi found that traditional magicks now risked Paradox when performing feats that machines built and operated by Sleepers could do without risk. By the time of the Meiji Restoration of 1868, the Jidai are thriving and they attract increasing numbers of practitioners seeking to adopt their ideas and magicks. As a result, a significant number of Japanese magi decide that their best path to maintaining Japanese independence and their own power is to wholeheartedly embrace technomancy.

The Meiji government imports western engineers and advisors, and sends Japanese observers to the United States and Western Europe to see their technologies in action; a handful of these individuals are Jidai technomancers. A few Jidai made contact with magi from the Order of Reason, and seek to trade information. However, the Order's leadership and most of its members regard technomancers from independent non-Western nations as either bizarre curiosities or tools to exploit to conquer their nation, and such interactions go poorly.

Although relatively new, the Jidai possess a strict hierarchy. Members of this Craft must share their discoveries with one another and obey their superiors. Their Craft has separate departments focused on different areas of study, with the two major divisions being industry and warfare. Most Jidai are interested in learning and creating magicks that can advance technology and industry in Japan. However, a sizable minority focus on creating both Coincidental and Vulgar weaponry. They hope to use these weapons to defend Japan from foreign aggression and to allow Japan to take its place as an imperialist power in its own right.

Affinity Spheres: Forces, Matter, or Prime.

Focus: Members of this Craft are split between believing in *A Mechanistic Cosmos*, *Divine Order and Earthly Chaos*, and *Tech Holds All Answers*. Some manage to believe two or more of these at once. Most of their practices are either craftwork or hypertech, but a few of the most creative and daring members dabble in weird science.

Zulu Mechanists

In 1838, during the first year of Queen Victoria's reign, Dutch-descended Boers slaughtered thousands of Zulu warriors in the South African Battle of Blood River. The Boer army eliminated the Zulu forces without suffering a single death. This event shocks and horrifies Zulu magi, and many abandon their previous styles of magick to develop their own version of technomancy to compete with the all-too-evident power of European technology.

Their efforts combine with the brilliant tactics of Zulu military commanders and contribute to the defeat of the British army in 1879 at the Battle of Isandlwana, despite the British being equipped with an abundance of deadly rifles and cannons. Ultimately, their best efforts fail before the British army's might. The British divide the Zulu kingdom into 13 chiefdoms under rulers willing to accept British rule. However, the Zulu mechanists continue their efforts, helping their people better survive imperial conquest.

These Zulu Mechanists develop their magick upon a foundation of studying western European technologies like mechanical clocks, firearms, and steam engines. Their efforts create a unique, hybrid practice that focuses on enhancing ordinary devices and, to a lesser extent, the people using them. Spears become preternaturally sharp, guns rarely miss, and plows increase the fertility and yield of soil they turn. With the ongoing threats they face from the Dutch and the British, most Zulu Mechanists focus on new military technologies.

The main division within the Zulu Mechanists is between members using their magick directly in battle, and the smiths and tinkerers constructing magickal wonders for warriors, healers, and farmers. The military faction of the Zulu Mechanists considers itself a semi-independent part of the Zulu military, following a strict hierarchy and possessing a strong sense of discipline. Although a few of these warrior-magi regard their way as superior, the majority respect Zulu magi dedicated to craftwork as vital peers in the resistance effort. Some magickal smiths and tinkerers work closely with the military, but most live and work in Sleeper villages where they serve as blacksmiths and healers while creating a variety of increasingly strange and powerful devices.

Although their magick is new and somewhat limited in what it can accomplish, most of its uses are also Coincidental under the Order of Reason's paradigm. This fact allows the Zulu mechanists to use their magick directly in fighting the Boers and the British while they outfit their Zulu warriors with magickal weapons, all without risking anything more than minor Paradox.

Affinity Spheres: Forces, Matter, or Life.

Focus: Many members believe some combination of A *Divine Order and Earthly Chaos* and *Tech Holds all Answers*, but a belief that *Might Is Right* is widespread among magi who are also fearsome warriors. The core of their practice is craftwork, but medicine work is popular among members focusing more on healing, martial arts is popular among warriors, and many of the more daring members have embraced weird science.

Chapter Five: Dramatis Personæ

"I don't know what effect these men will have upon the enemy, but, by God, they frighten me."
—Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington

You are empowered. Magi are never helpless. They persevere and bring human understanding to the Ascension War. In **Victorian Mage**, they explore and shape a world mired in oppression. Player characters don't just incorporate this human element; they celebrate the many cultures of a rapidly shrinking world. They fight for survival, they protect their communities, and they all envision a future where their people flourish.

In too many ways, people of the era perpetuate closed-minded philosophies disguised as social progress. Racism boils up from the pits of greed and power. Gender-based discrimination emboldens men who fear losing control. The Awakened are human, but they have seen behind the curtains of reality. Your characters witness the truths of the world beyond such petty thinking. They can (and should) cast off any culturally imposed bigotry. Such base and destructive desires do not control them. Your characters should be better than that.

Break boundaries with your characters. Annihilate notions about the past that endure through perverted narratives. Are the Kroomen part of a matriarchal society woefully underestimated by the captains employing them? Do descendants of the Marajoara culture spread gender fluidity to surviving post-colonial Amazonian tribes? How deeply does one Maharaja inspire his subjects by openly loving his ally's adult son? Magi are brave and groundbreaking, so don't feel as if your character's concept can be marginalized because of their identity.

We cannot blindly assume anything about the people and cultures of the world — not even heavily-documented civilizations. Limiting our characters to moralities and racial stereotypes perpetuated by the powerful minority of history's authors is antithetical to breathing life into inspiring characters. Change the world and its future!

Lighting the Shadows

Especially when playing games within a historical setting, we research our potential settings, events, and characters. Some put more time into plotting specific timelines of historical events, and others immerse themselves into the literature and artistic works of the era. Other players ready themselves for the mechanics of the game, already armed with the accumulated knowledge of books and movies previously absorbed. There is no standard, nor any expectation for any player or Storyteller to be a scholar of these subjects. However, we urge you to consider three points as you prepare for your **Victorian Mage** games.

In far too many cases, popular culture and historical records portray the world through a lens provided by dominant social or political forces. We learn half-truths about history and its people, if not outright distortions of reality. The imperialist tourists of the era subject other cultures to demeaning, abusive, and bigoted assumptions. Look beyond superficial generalizations. Leave assumptions behind and remember that every culture, society, and civilization was a unique construct of people learning about the world and teaching the next generation.

Don't make the mistake of perceiving a culture or group as primitive or unsophisticated. Those comparisons immediately assume another group of people *is* superior for one reason or another. The simple lack of industrialization is not a sign of a culture less valid than another. Indeed, especially in the context of magi and brewing conflicts of ideology, there is not a single country, city, or tribe that would not have equal chances of producing the next great Awakened leader. Wisdom is everywhere, and every group of people brings a unique point of view to the Traditions, the Order of Reason, and the Crafts.

Finally, when creating characters and bringing them to life, be bold! In many cases, whether your character is from a thoroughly documented society or a culture whose origins continue to evade scholars, there will be varying aspects of life that you cannot verify through research. You may even find stories work better when applying some creative license with accepted historical accounts. This is a game using a historical setting, *not* an exercise in re-creating an exact time and place. Change a detail or fill in an unknown quality as you choose. The future is not written, and the past might not be remembered correctly. Seize this chance to tell the stories that the conquering dictators of history want others to forget.

A Shrinking World

Marvelous inventions and technological developments draw even the most distant points of the world into more casual contact. Industrialization and colonization consume civilizations for fortune and glory. Nomadic tribes and oppressed classes refuse to sacrifice their identity to self-proclaimed lords. Culture, language, and religion intersect at a grand scale. Regardless of affiliation, magi find themselves at the center of all these conflicts.

European imperialism is a powerful juggernaut leaving its mark upon the world, but other cultures around the globe also create their own places in history. They are developing, innovating, and advancing. Each city and country hosts its own web of Awakened magi, luminaries, and more. Some of these groups are independent Crafts, developing from the area's unique culture and history. In other cases, Traditions and Conventions expand relations and welcome new factions contributing fresh ideas.

Your characters may come from nearly anywhere on the globe and have equally valid reasons for being part of a chosen Tradition or Convention. Swahili culture develops as a multi-ethnic people, adapting and mixing local and external customs. The Qing Dynasty endures an extremely tumultuous period as it struggles to keep up with the changing world. Even before Japan's Edo period ends, its leaders demonstrate considerable awareness of other nations' accomplishments and advancements.

Without omitting discussion about people and culture outside of industrialized nations, there are certainly fascinating aspects of playing games set in more commonly recognized settings. These areas provide the ability to tell stories about issues at the era's heart. The Ascension War in this era rages amid the rampant expansion of empires through the spread of technological advancement, but it need not be a game simply about that facet of the conflict. Imperialism versus independence, especially depicted from the perspective of history's victors, provides a platform from which we can all discuss the impact societies have upon other cultures. We urge you to do so responsibly and respectfully.

Player Questions

The following section presents several questions to help prepare you for creating your character. Consider these topics in a general sense. They serve to help you place those initial dots and narrow the choices of concept down to the most compelling possibilities. Discussing these topics with the Storyteller and the other players is certainly appropriate. Open, honest, and respectful dialogue never derails or spoils a game.

Examine your choice of characters with respect. Consider who your characters are based upon and whether those ideas are founded on insensitive stereotypes. There is nothing inherently wrong with wanting to play an English noble employed by the East India Trading Company, but think about what playing that character spotlights. Even if you intend to portray a "responsible" socialite using his wealth and status to simply broaden the membership of the Order of Hermes, other players may (and likely will) associate your character with subjugation and appropriation of Indian cultures. However, if the same Englishman secretly supports the growing Hermetic Order amid the northern Princely States, diverts money and influence out of the Company, and resists the Golden Guild infesting the Company, the concept might be more palatable.

What Intrigues You About the Era?

The Victorian Era is rife with possibilities to join occult societies, investigate crimes by using little more than your wits, and evoke corset-bursting gasps with shocking clashes of culture. The dark alleys of London, the glamorous lives of the wealthy, and exploring as-yet "undiscovered" lands are concepts we have always envisioned when someone says "Victorian." But those ideas are superficial if we run with just such simple concepts. Secret societies, morbid crimes, and the looming presence of the masters of wealth absolutely belong in the era, but the world gives us so much more.

Explore a few books, websites, art galleries, or any other records of history and culture. Reach down and find something that fascinates you and presents a challenge: *What if this happened with magick behind the scenes?* While the United States endures civil war and ends slavery in its part of the world, China suffers under the bloodiest internal conflict in the 19th century. Cultures, such as the Sao in Africa's Chadian Basin, erroneously dismissed as "primitive" thrive without modern European technologies and have just as many independent innovations, allowing for cities of tens of thousands to develop. Swahili cities in eastern Africa are melting pots of culture. Arab, Indian, and Bantu influences combine into primarily urban societies that still exist in modern times. Which culture do you want to breathe life into, and why? How does it apply to the Ascension War or other mystical pursuits?

What Kind of Character Intrigues You?

More than simply questions about whether you want to play an Ottoman magus from the Verbenae or a Brazilian initiate of the Society of Celestial Masters, consider what you want from the experience of playing a given character. Are you looking for the satisfaction of solving troubling dilemmas, the eerie trappings and questionable morality of cults beneath the streets of Paris, the thrill of being a spy in America's western reaches, or working with powerful totems and fighting the encroachment of industrialization?

How do *you* want to take part in these kinds of stories and how do you enjoy contributing to them? Every character presents their own method for helping a story progress. While we generally do not play direct reflections of ourselves, there is nothing wrong with playing a character with whom you have something in common. Such comfort can make stepping into such a character from another period easier and more enjoyable.

Just as some characters are more concerned with magick and the Convention or Tradition they have joined, some players prefer to focus on fantastic adventures, conflict with diametrically opposed enemies, or the weirdness of what lurks just outside of view. After all, this period hosts tremendous amounts of change, and **Victorian Mage** is presented to you without an ending. Who knows how the Traditions or the proto-Technocracy will look after your troupe leaves their mark on the era? There is no right or wrong way to play the game. Playing **Mage** so that you can imagine the experience of channeling raw quintessence into elaborate rituals is an absolutely valid reason to take part. Always be honest with yourself and keep asking, "if I want to play a certain way, does this character fit well with that style?"

How Would You Like to See Your Character Grow?

When we create characters for these games, we often look ahead and wonder what the character will be like once she has the experience of conflict and advancement. The stories our characters drive also direct them in ways we don't anticipate. Indeed, we generally create these characters so that we can see and experience their growth into something *more*.

What do you want to accomplish with your character? We all want to do different things. Some enjoy creating flawed characters, challenging themselves to overcome their difficulties. Some players create characters they hope to guide into positions of leadership within the game. Others enjoy the immersion of discovering their characters' potential instead of planning out future stages of development.

Discuss this point with the Storyteller and other players. Everyone has their style of play, but many are willing to adapt and try new things. They might even inspire excitement to do something you had not considered. However you and your fellow players decide to do it, agreeing upon a general goal or kind of group dynamic can be one step towards establishing trust, comfort, and respect at the table. This is especially true if you are handling sensitive subject matters with which the people from the Victorian Era struggled.

Creating your Character

Creating characters for **Victorian Mage** follows the same five-step process as described in **M20**, pages 248-253. Immerse yourself in a tumultuous era of change and mystery.

Step One: Concept and Identity

Questions about your character's basic identity gather the essence of your character. Begin with the most personal aspect of who you envision as your character; strip away expectations of society and cast aside the mysteries of the Ascension War. Who is she? Where is your character from, and what does she do?

How has Awakening changed your character? The many leagues and affiliations to which a magus may claim membership are certainly more tolerant and accepting of people stepping outside of "typical" cultural norms. How does this freedom change your character? Does she rebel against the culture she was born into or decide to lead them into a new tomorrow? How does your character's new awareness affect her perceptions of society and its constructed values?

Most importantly, what are your character's goals? These goals may certainly change through stories and chronicles, but what future does she envision for herself initially? The fates of the characters and the world they live in are not preordained. Give your character the freedom to pursue grand passions and topple insurmountable obstacles.

Concept

Every magus spends the formative years of her life as a normal human. Even after embarking on the journey into mystery and enlightenment, she continues to function within society. Your character's native culture and religion may form the basis of her magickal focus and choice of affiliation. Wisdom imparted by a magus from another part of the world may have inspired her. How has your character incorporated her spiritual awakening into an identity she will use for changing her future?

Your character may come from any part of the world and is not hampered by cultural origin. Any person's Avatar may challenge her, urging her to find meaningful answers. An orphan from the streets of London, a Sepoy questioning his loyalty to the British East India Company, and an artistic mother leading her stalwart family in Kenya all redefine the consequences of their decisions. People from every culture and of every social or economic group Awaken to new ideas, passions, and possibilities. Don't restrict character concepts because of the story's location. So many reasons exist for people from one part of the world to be visiting or moving to another region, and magi are even more likely to be reaching out to others.

We bear a specific obligation while creating these characters, the positive effect of which enriches the stories we share. Every person from any industrialized metropolis, nomadic family, or conquered land equally possesses the chance to Awaken and shape the world. Magick is freedom and hope. Ideas such as usurpation in the guise of progress or cultural genocide are the real antagonists of our tales. Embrace this obligation to create wonderfully complex and thought-provoking characters.

Affiliation

During the Victorian Era, knowledge and strife explode around the world. Ideas are shared, conflicts flare, and people struggle to help their cultures endure. Unique paradigms and cultural intersections combine into many different factions of magi. Some groups within the Order of Reason or the Council of Mystic Traditions are well established and claim members in many parts of the world. Other groups might only develop because of specific social circumstances.

When deciding to whom your character is affiliated, think of their choice in a social context — not simply as a group sharing the same paradigm or Awakened practices. As people interact with each other, whether individually or as societies, they share ideas and learn from each other. Communities of magi and luminaries of science are no different. Your character's background and beliefs certainly play a role in developing elements of her Focus, but they do not necessarily restrict the choice of affiliation to a Convention, Craft, or Tradition.

Essence

The four types of Avatars' Essences are no different for **Victorian Mage** characters. Luminaries of the Conventions may refer to the phenomenon as classifications of Eidolon if they publicly give it any weight at all. Magi from some Traditions and the many Crafts likely have more unique names and theories for what Avatars may be and how Essence is significant.

While using different names or terminology for these concepts does not change their function, it may certainly help develop how you describe and identify with your character. Furthermore, an amount of such customization could help to flesh out Crafts and magickal societies of your own design. Example inspiration could include using the four elements, religious classifications, or cultural divisions.

Archetypes: Nature and Demeanor

The archetypes function just as they do in modern **Mage** games. Some of the actual names do not necessarily evoke the mystery or wonder of the era, but they are still conceptually valid. The Hacker, for example, is not dependent upon computers, electronics, and programs; but the spirit of renegade troubleshooting and maverick improvisation certainly belongs in an era of competing technological advancements. Additional archetypes may be found in **M20 The Book of Secrets**, p. 14.

Step Two: Attributes

Allocation of dots for Attributes follows the procedure described in **M20**, p. 255.

Step Three: Abilities

This step is also identical to the process described in **M20**, also p. 255.

When selecting your character's Abilities, consider the time and place from which your character developed. Formal education certainly existed, but it wasn't a universally available resource. In larger cities, several programs educated younger children in a relatively informal manner. Literacy and basic mathematical skills sharply rose during this era, but universities and higher education were reserved for the wealthy and influential. Give your character whatever Abilities you see fit; use it as an opportunity to create a great story about her background and from where she learned such things.

People from primarily agrarian regions are as intelligent and skilled as the rest of the world. They focus upon different aptitudes more appropriate to their needs and may excel in areas that industrialized societies discard. Additionally, different cultures approach education with their own methods and philosophy. Some incorporate influences left by visitors, while some are true innovators. Japan experiences major change as policies allow contact with the rest of the world, while China leads with the concept of standardized testing as the qualification for civil service. Some societies depend upon verbal tradition more than recording values in written form, yet they produce minds as brilliant and expressive as any other culture. Castes, strata, and social classes impact populations' access to formal education and apprenticeships, but individuals persevere and grow beyond limitations imposed by circumstances of birth.

Attention should be given to a few Abilities and Secondary Abilities, given the era's cultures, access to types of consumer goods, and for the practicalities of survival.

- **Academics:** Literacy is not a universal constant during this time. Literate characters should have at least one dot in this Knowledge to represent schooling or time spent learning how to read and write in their native language. Characters with one or more dots in Academics who also have the Language Merit are also literate in that language.
- **Blatancy:** This Talent's use is highly subjective during this era. Some regions treat certain paradigms and effects as merely Uncanny, yet the same magickal feats may be Elegant a hundred miles away (or less). The magus using this Talent needs to know not only the dominant paradigm of the area or her audience. She also needs to understand how to effectively deceive witnesses of her magick. Depending on her knowledge of the audience and the area's dominant paradigm, the difficulty of the Manipulation + Blatancy roll can be as much as +/–2 difficulty. If she does not share the same (or approximate) paradigm as her audience, the dice pool for the roll should be limited to Manipulation + an Ability that is appropriate for her "explanation."
- **Computer:** Computers are inapplicable for characters in **Victorian Mage**. Brilliant Luminaries develop wondrous early computing devices, but even they would be mechanical devices, outside the purview of the Knowledge's traditional use.
- **Crafts:** Most people outside the social strata of the wealthy elite or other privileged class need to be skilled enough to produce tangible results. Whether they earn a living with their skill or live in an unindustrialized culture, producing goods is a universally valuable asset. Everything from being a cook to a painter to a tailor is of enough value to earn a basic living. Living in unindustrialized areas virtually demands at least a modicum of ability to maintain one's own home or means to produce for her family.
- **Drive:** Automobiles and similar ideas appear in the latter portion of the era, but other methods of transportation involve the use of this Skill. Wagons, carriages, and similar wheeled machines are controlled in similar ways.

The Well-Skilled Craftsman

Education of the era does not benefit from government standardization, the Internet, or other mass communications. As such, greater time and resources are required for a "well-rounded" education. The optional rule for Well-Skilled Craftsmen (**M20**, p.279) is not suggested for characters in this era. Such comprehensive training does not accurately portray the extensive effort required in accumulating aptitude in the many applications of Abilities referred to in the optional rule. There are always exceptions, however, and we should have the freedom to explore those possibilities. The following Merit provides one method:

- **Well-Rounded (1 pt. Mental Merit)**

You were trained or educated especially well in a generalized field. You can apply basic concepts to even distantly-related uses of your training. In time, your application of basic skills allows for marvelous flexibility in your chosen field of expertise.

Choose a single Talent, Skill, or Knowledge referenced in the Well-Skilled Craftsman optional rule. Your character needs to purchase that Ability only once to benefit from the rule and may purchase additional specialties at the appropriate time. This Merit may be purchased more than once; each time it is purchased, select another Ability.

- **Finance:** Taking the place of Computers, Finance (**M20**, p. 299) is worthy of being an Ability on its own. Stock markets, commerce, and trade develop to a level of complexity that those embarking on such pursuits require specific education and training. Without the advantages of mass media or other electronic communications, financial matters become the purview of true experts. As such, Finance is a Knowledge instead of a Secondary Knowledge or specialty of Academics.
- **High Ritual:** This Talent need not be altered for characters in the Victorian era, but there is an additional application for its use. Should a magus use this Talent in conjunction with a magickal effect during a ritual or gathering of a secret society she is a part of, she can make any effect Elegant as long as said effect conforms with the accepted paradigm and purpose of the gathering. For example, a magus from the Order of Hermes and a Luminary from the Syndicate are both members and participants of an evocation inviting a haunting spirit into a corpse. Regardless of the focus and paradigms of either the magus, the Luminary, or any cultists present, a successful High Ritual roll allows the effect to be Elegant in the eyes of all involved.
- **Medicine:** Medical techniques advanced rapidly during the Victorian era. During the early portion of the era, even the most advanced hospitals and learned physicians lacked basic knowledge about sterilization and disease transmission. Depending on when your stories take place and the amount of detail your Storyteller wishes to explore, difficulties to use this Knowledge for treating injuries and illness could be significantly higher. For example, recovering from lethal damage normally simply requires attention from someone with two or more dots in Medicine (**M20**, p. 408). However, treating lethal damage inflicted by a dirty knife might require a successful Intelligence + Medicine roll (difficulty 8). Botches result in additional damage suffered by the character due to infection or imperfect practices. Even the most well-educated physicians and nurses sometimes inadvertently worsen their patients' conditions.
- **Science:** Some fields of study are inappropriate for the era. This Knowledge should be used to represent understanding commonly accepted subjects. The Order of Reason might be ahead of Sleepers' capability, but those efforts and advancements are technically magickal effects in scientific trappings.
- **Survival:** Unless someone is truly wealthy and never leaves the comfort of their posh coach, or they live in a cramped city, basic knowledge of nature is a necessity. This Skill is vital for life outside industrialized regions. People must hunt for food, know how to find materials for home repair, and raise families in every known climate.
- **Technology:** As with Science, this Skill demonstrates the ability to use and repair mundane tools and devices of the era. This Skill readily applies to modern advances, such as locomotives, telegraphs, and plumbing. However, a variety of innovations may more accurately fall under the purview of Hypertech. The area's predominant paradigm could further shift this distinction one way or the other. Examples include certain applications of electricity or power generation, radio-wave technology, and internal combustion engines.

Technomagick

Other Abilities are either of limited use or wholly inappropriate for games that take place during this era. Energy Weapons and Jetpack skills would not apply to even the most sophisticated efforts of the Order of Reason. The Biotech and Hypertech Skills could conceivably find some use during this era, but most applications outside the Order's secured laboratories invite cataclysmic disaster.

Science and the Esoteric

During the Victorian era, humanity matures with significant advances — which people in later decades take for granted as basic facts. Antiseptics, anesthesia, and evolution enter wider public awareness for the first time. The locomotive, light bulb, and hand-held camera revolutionize societies. However, scientific discoveries and untested theories constantly barrage people with wondrous promises of better lives. Many evaluate such modern concepts as they would weigh distant relatives' superstitions or myths popularized through whispered gossip.

Science commonly intersects with faith, mythology, and esoteric pursuits. Even accomplished scholars misinterpret ideas from one of those categories as issues from another. Do not feel obligated to select traits that perfectly align with scientific facts. People of the era commonly accept esoteric parallels as readily as they trust alleged modern advancements. Such a choice in Abilities more accurately portrays your character's root culture and paradigm. For example, a doctor in London employing her Herbalism specialty of the Esoterica Knowledge cannot cure a disease with a plaster created to draw "humors" from the patient when applied. However, using a skill in such a way is absolutely valid as part of a magus' Focus for healing a patient by using Life magick.

The same conceit may be applied to other scientific approaches from the era. Phrenology theorizes that the shape of one's head and its imperfections indicate aspects of the subject's personality and mental well-being. Controversy and biased opinion plague the ill-theorized practice, yet phrenologists occasionally snake their way into acceptance. While not widely attempted, optography experiments implied the retinas of a dead person would keep an impression of the image the person saw at the time of death. Luminaries and mystics alike explore the possibilities of the art. The Brotherhood of Mechanicians uses the technique in conjunction with top-secret "cathode ray tube" research, while some mediums from the Hermetic Order claim to use optography as the first step in calling the spirits of murder victims.

In other cases, crafty criminals dupe the desperate into buying tonics, products, and treatments propped up by

showmanship and fancy sales pitches. Where science and esoterica create possible solutions, these charlatans promise immediate answers and permanent results. Not all of the "charlatans," however, intend to simply swindle money from eager consumers. Some truly believe in the junk science of the era and constantly innovate on unfortunately faulty premises. The Kellogg Brothers in Battle Creek, Michigan, open an exclusive sanitarium for the wealthy in 1894, unaware of how they will stumble into becoming a breakfast cereal empire.

Step Four: Advantages

Choose your character's Backgrounds and describe her Focus. General discussions about Focus for characters in this era can be found in Chapter Six, and more specific ideas are suggested within the descriptions of the Traditions, Conventions, and Crafts.

Victorian-Era Backgrounds

Most Backgrounds can apply to games played in this era. When considering your choice of Backgrounds, your character's origin, and the context of the story, you may discover some Backgrounds make perfect sense for your character yet cannot have any impact on the game. For example, a well-connected (Allies and Contacts) officer of the Union Army (Rank) cannot access or benefit from certain Backgrounds if the stories take place in Bombay. Develop your character as you see fit; purchase dots for Backgrounds that will affect the game and describe your character without being shackled to purchasing Backgrounds you can never use.

Similarly, the rules regarding Background ratings over five dots and pooling Backgrounds function in the normal manner. Players should consider the era's limitations regarding transportation and communication. Pooling and borrowing Backgrounds could very well require additional time and logistics to accomplish. Cultural and linguistic differences may initially present challenges. On the other hand, characters combining assets in such a way contribute to the story and potentially inspire secondary storylines exploring intrigue, uniting different groups of people, or even instigating rebellion.

Suggested changes or conditions apply for the following Backgrounds:

- **Enhancements:** An entire chapter or book could be dedicated to technology devised by the Luminaries within the Order of Reason. Replacement limbs composed of gears and pistons powered by dangerous electro-biological connections are possible through enlightened experimentation. Scientists explore fantastic ideas in laboratories and controlled environments. Similarly, questionable experiments quite likely force human subjects to accept decidedly inhuman surgical modifications. Should any of these procedures or experiments be subjected to public scrutiny — even in cities such as London or New York — the subjects would likely encounter cataclysmic failure, and exposing the programs' unethical policies would invite numerous social consequences.
- Should a Storyteller decide to allow characters with the Enhancements Background, increase the amount of Surgical Side-Effects (Genetic flaws) or persistent entanglement with the Straits (permanent Paradox points). Such technology is far from reliable and is not nearly as refined as future efforts will be.
- **Requisitions:** Depending on when and where a story takes place, this Background could take significant amounts of time to use. Shipping a borrowed Library or mustering foreign soldiers for Backup are not immediately resolved actions. Additionally, the Order of Reason is experiencing internal tumult and change in this era. One request might be fulfilled, only to be canceled as politics shift. Late in the era, for instance, some Guilds within the Order question the Electrodyne Engineers' science and practices. Politics within the other Guilds turn the Engineers' funding into favors or incentives for unrelated policy changes. Players should keep an open mind regarding the potential issues or difficulties with using this Background.
- **Resources:** This Background represents purchasing ability within industrialized societies. It may, but does not always, represent standards of living as identified in future eras. If your stories all take place within large cities of industrialized nations, characters manage

Resources

The following guidelines apply to stories taking place in industrialized areas. Some cultures might resist or punish individuals whose success exceeds their caste or accepted social status. Similarly, people with significant means may have financial or social obligations imposed upon them by local customs or governments. Wealth always comes at a price.

X **Poor**. You live a hand-to-mouth existence and reside in squalid conditions.

• **Working Class**. You have a basic job and can feed your family.

•• **Established.** You have a respectable occupation and can afford a modest home.

••• **Professional**. You can afford a few luxuries; perhaps employ one or two personal assistants (cook, nanny, etc.).

•••• **Wealthy**. Whether from family influence or personal accomplishment, you have amassed considerable wealth. A large estate, an ample staff, and significant luxury are all readily accessible.

••••• **Opulence**. Your fortune is unimaginable to the common person. Multiple estates are at your disposal, luxury is commonplace, and innumerable people are paid to maintain your lifestyle.

Resources in a very traditional manner. However, when introducing characters or locations that have vastly different economies and definitions of wealth, the effect of this Background may radically change. Express this Background in terms relevant to the story, as opposed to measuring cultural differences in terms of finances.

- **Secret Weapons:** The use of this Background should be handled with the same care as Enhancements and Requisitions. Advanced technology might attract cataclysmic consequences if used at the wrong time. Shifting loyalties and organizational changes may affect access to equipment, and problems with transporting some devices are all drawbacks to be considered. Given the fluid and sometimes sudden changes in local paradigms in this era, taking advantage of this Background can be dangerous.

Secret Societies

Chapter One discussed the prevalence of various insular groups devoted to unique causes or functions. These societies and fraternities shape and change the directions of everyone involved and may even alter the futures of Traditions and Conventions. One Merit proposed a possible method of associating with these groups. However, the scope, function, and a character's involvement with these groups will differ significantly from one case to the next. As such, it is worth examining the topic during character creation.

You may use nearly any Background to mechanically represent your character's involvement in a secret society, and perhaps even define her role within the organization in terms of those Backgrounds. A spiritual leader might have the Cult and Backup Backgrounds to indicate a handful of loyal disciples. Duplicitous schemers might use the Allies, Alternate Identity, and Spies Backgrounds to monitor an opposing magus from within his own brotherhood.

The rules for pooling Backgrounds apply to characters belonging to the same secretive organization. Shared backgrounds between certain types of characters, including Storyteller characters, could be the basis for stories about espionage, questioned loyalties, and even large-scale defection. Complex webs involving multiple hidden motives sometimes trip even the most seasoned Storytellers, but using relatively tangible Backgrounds as markers for stories provides a measure of visibility.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

M20 details the systems for allocating points to Arete, Spheres, and Willpower on p.257. Select your character's first dot of Spheres from one of her Affinity Spheres.

Characters receive the usual 15 freebie points for further development, and traits cost the same amounts as shown in **M20**, p.253.

Merits and Flaws

Most of the Merits and Flaws (**M20**, p. 642) apply to characters in this era, but a few warrant special consideration:

- **Construct** (Social Flaw): As the Order of Reason has not yet advanced technology to genetic engineering or cloning, players selecting this Flaw to create artificial "people" such as clockwork automatons or other technological creations should discuss the implications with their Storyteller. Permanent entanglement with the Straits likely accompanies this Flaw. Awakened golems, reanimated corpses, and other mystical creations risk the same danger.
- **Enemy** (Social Flaw): This Flaw should *not* be used for describing a rift or conflict between a race, culture, or other groups of people based solely upon their identity.
- **Language** (Mental Merit): The ability to efficiently communicate with people from different countries or cultures is vital, especially if your character travels during a story or has left her homeland to join the cabal. This Merit should not be overlooked.
- **Stormwarden** (Supernatural Merit): Given the time in which these stories take place, this Merit is an irrelevant concept.

Spark of Life

Thus far, you have given basic form to your character with chosen traits and an essential concept. In the next step, remove the mystery of who your character is by pulling her from the shadows. Ready her for enduring tales and heroic deeds.

Avatar/Genius

Your character's Avatar helps guide and urge her according to its Essence. Dynamic Avatars push for changing the current order or solving mysteries by trying something new, while a Static Avatar seeks stability, order, and carefully structured approaches to reaching solutions. How you define and describe your character's Avatar is a mostly personal matter, but with those choices, your Storyteller may introduce story elements through very unique perspectives. Is her Avatar an aspect of her culture or a herald of changes to come? Is it a personal fragment of her past to be identified or reconcile? The Avatar is the mystical aspect of your character's soul or being, connecting her to the greater world beyond mundane perceptions. It is the most fundamental reason your character treads the path into the stories in which she takes part.

Culture and Origin

The culture from which your character originates forms one of the most fundamental portions of her identity. She is not completely defined by her origins; express her upbringing in terms to which your character would relate. Where is your character from? What sort of social structure does that culture espouse, and does your character support it or resist it? Are people bound by caste systems or other social constraints, and where does your character fit in that scheme? Nearly every nation and people of the world experience significant change during this period; how does your character handle

the changes? If the chronicle takes place in a foreign land, how does your character feel about the place she is visiting?

Your choice of origins for the character does not limit you in terms of character concept. If you want to play a character flaunting social norms, do it! Magi care little for artificially limiting constructs of social tradition unless it is a tool to be exploited or dismantled.

Presentation and Appearance

Clothing, facial hair, and trends during the Victorian Era convey more than simple fashion preferences. Nearly every culture develops its own visual identity, each further separated into expressions of social or economic status. Men living in 19th-century England commonly keep facial hair, Japanese men and women usually wear kimonos, and the peoples native to North America craft some of their clothing from agave and trees' inner bark fibers. Referring to a given society's customs and respectfully carrying them over to your character celebrates their culture. Garments and accessories do not reach people by way of mass production and retail empires; your character's wardrobe becomes an expression of her instead of simply "what she looks like."

Build the Façade

Even the most accomplished magi still relate to mundane society on some level. Characters just beginning their journey into mystery likely have greater dependence on or interaction with the mundane world. Your character might have a family, an important occupation, or even a special recognition within society. Think of what your character would need for either supporting her mystical pursuits or distracting others from her secret agendas. Perhaps the character's concept simply calls for responsibility for a particular mundane life. A magus is more than just a cloistered mystic battling arcane enemies; she is a complex person with personal interests.

Personal Effects

Complete inventories of your character's possessions are not necessary, but it is a good idea to list important items your character carries most of the time. Weapons, occupation-related tools, and magickal instruments are prime examples. Including the right items could support a disguise or contribute to maintaining your character's role in society. Sentimental possessions, cultural accouterments, and other aesthetics similarly breathe life into your character's description.

Raison d'Être

What drives your character into the shadows and mysteries? This era provides ample opportunity for exploring wondrous places and uncovering dark secrets. Imperialism oppresses cultures and classes, and many

of the world's largest civilizations endure cultural shifts and bloody civil wars. Does your character fight for her homeland? Does she leave her mundane life behind and champion her fellow magi? Goals and ambitions may evolve during play, so start with a set of objectives and desires. Reach for the small initial steps first; save the grand schemes as something to plan and hope for in the long term. The world of this era is anything but stable; your character has the chance to shape its future. Where would you like to start?

The Prelude

A street urchin from London's forgotten alleys endures years of servitude, earning her apprenticeship within the Hermetic Order.

A magus' village lies in ruins and its residents toil for their conqueror; ancestral tradition guides his quest to find allies and free his people.

The young scholar garners a reputation for comprehending mathematics on an intuitive level as mysterious clues lead to secret meetings beneath the university's observatory.

Burst into the story with your new character and show the Storyteller you are ready to dive onto the stage she sets. A short prelude scene acquaints you with the Storyteller's methods and allows the two of you to understand what the other hopes to enjoy in the games ahead. In addition to building a rapport between the player and Storyteller, running a prelude provides everyone with opportunities to get comfortable, welcoming players to the table, banishing nervousness, and establishing trust.

A prelude provides a player with the opportunity to learn a bit more about her character. Playing out a short conversation or an event (even if just through casual chatter with the Storyteller) might even bring details to light that a player hadn't considered. This could be especially true for characters from cultures different from that of the players. It almost always applies to characters belonging to a different era entirely.

Events surrounding the character's Awakening introduce you to the Storyteller's vision of the surreal and supernatural. This period of a character's life is especially interesting for **Victorian Mage**, as each player becomes directly immersed into her character's perspective on the period's mysticism and trappings. Allow your imagination to lead you through dank catacombs into an underground chamber lit by a thousand candles. Smell the pungent incense camouflaging the sweat of two dozen cultists. Through your character's ears, listen to chants and invocations necessary to initiate your character into their ancient order. It is a full dress rehearsal for your character as an enlightened magician. Explore how she reacts to meeting her Avatar or feeling it push her over the precipice and out of the safe, mundane world.

An introduction to the Storyteller's vision of the setting establishes several things for everyone involved. Each prelude provides the player with the Storyteller's style and methods. Where does the story unfold? How does the Storyteller present the story? Are there specific themes on which the Storyteller chooses to focus? Does each character begin her involvement with the story prepared or suddenly confronted by mystery?

Perhaps the prelude to a story involves the basic act of getting your characters from their usual haunts to where the story compels their involvement. This helps the Storyteller organically set the stage, directly inviting a character into the story. Players feel more welcome, and their contributions are immediately valued. Questions and clarifications during this process complete the mutual understanding players and Storytellers share for each other and the coming story.

Character Questions

Having completed your character (and perhaps some time with the Storyteller for a Prelude scene), you have a basic idea of how she presents herself. Take another moment to explore your character's past and figure out how your character reached this point. Assume the role of your character and find these answers. By considering questions from your character's point of view, you gain a more intimate knowledge of who she is and react to events in stories as your character would. Creating your character is a fluid process. Don't be surprised by (or afraid of) the urge to alter your character or move a few dots around while answering these questions. You will very likely learn more about your character in terms of the era than you anticipate. The following topics assist in readying your character for the 19th century.

Where Were You Raised?

The culture you grew up in certainly shapes everything from loyalties to opinions to hopes and dreams. More than just a matter of choosing a country of origin, what sort of community did you call home while you were growing up? What sort of people surrounded you? How would you complete the picture and describe where your childhood home was located? Was your family part of an agrarian society that lived peacefully on the savanna? Did you grow up in a village shattered by a foreign invader? Were the streets of a huge city your home, a few city blocks providing everything you needed, turning everything outside your neighborhood into sources of mystery and adventure?

What Was Your Childhood Like?

People are commonly raised by others who try to pass various beliefs or philosophies into the next generation. Religion, sexuality, and local customs are the most commonly conveyed concepts. What did the adults in your life believe, and how much did they expect you to feel the same? Did you agree or rebel against them, and how did that affect your relationships? Were you inspired to think for yourself or was such a concept taboo? How did it shape who you became?

Almost every place in the world experienced significant change during the era. Technological advances rapidly changed the standards of living for industrialized nations. Civil wars exploded across the globe. Imperialist powers displaced families and interrupted the lives of millions. What was happening to or around your home as you grew up? Was there turmoil exploding around you or were you the beneficiary of luxury gained from elsewhere? Was your family or community involved in changes happening to your environment? How deeply were you involved or directly connected to changes in your home? How did that turn you into the person you are now?

You can also ask yourself about some of the more indirect details that shape a person as they grow. Were there events playing out just outside of your perception, and how much do you remember the hints of strange experiences? What do you remember as your earliest memories from childhood? Are those events important, and did they foreshadow beneficent events to come? Perhaps they are memories that might guide you on your journey through the current mystery.

Introduction to the Mysteries...

You were likely no stranger to strangeness, prophesy, or natural wisdom while you were growing up. How did your connections to the unknown start to manifest? Was it a frightful experience or did you even understand what was happening? Do specific events stand out and did they shape who you eventually became? Did the phenomena resonate with the beliefs you learned while growing up or did the experience steer you away from a specific ideology?

Many mystic factions and secret societies benefit from identifying and inducting potential magi before they Awaken. The Order of Reason infiltrates universities through secretive fraternities, cults follow duplicitous tyrants addicted to adoration, and faithful congregations guide aspirants by pairing enlightenment with their morality. While intentions vary, these groups usually assimilate candidates to gain an advantage over rival factions. If you had joined a group before you Awakened, are you still a member? Did you join voluntarily, or were you forced or tricked into serving the group? How would you describe the group and your time with them?

In some cases, enlightenment may be an accepted family tradition, even if the majority involved are not Awakened. Perhaps you were conceived during an elaborate ritual with wicked expectations. Maybe your ancestors had foreseen the impact you will make on your community. Your metaphysical connections could be very deliberately arranged; ancestors may have been following an ancient course of mating under specific circumstances. Has magick or mysticism been a part of your life all along? If so, in what form did it take, or who introduced you to it? Is it part of your culture or related to an aspect of your people? Are powerful places or established legends tied to your Awakening? If so, how does that affect your relationship with your community, home, and those who may have visited?

...Of Awakening and Yourself

Every magus experiences a unique and personal event when she Awakens. Every Avatar presents itself differently, and the relationship it offers the magus becomes an enduring bond. Every magus spends years building a complete understanding of their Avatar and the implications of Awakening, but how did *your* journey begin? What happened when your Avatar made itself known and opened your eyes? Was it a traumatic experience, an exciting adventure, or a moment of self-realization? Did it really happen or was it an epiphany you took part in while in a meditative or dream state?

Avatars are as unique as magi's initial confrontation with the hidden mysteries. Not only does each magus perceive their Avatar differently, but some Avatars have a more direct influence than others. A magus can misinterpret an Avatar's presence, filtering its image and intentions through the magus' expectations or past trauma. In such cases, the magus embarks on a personal journey to deal with her demons before she can allow herself true enlightenment. How does your Avatar present itself to you? Is it an abstract force or thought, an entity you interact with, or something in between? Do you recognize the Avatar as a person from your past, a revered ancestor, one of your culture's totem animals, or something else entirely?

Perhaps you have developed a relationship with your Avatar. Does it inspire you in positive ways, or are you subjected to stern discipline and critical judgment? How would you describe your interactions? Akin to a parent, teacher, or elder? Or is your Avatar more aloof, ephemeral, and cryptic? Are you able to communicate with it, or do you have no control over contact at all? Nearly every relationship evolves, and likely changes the person; how has your relationship with your Avatar influenced your decisions and perception of the world?

What *Do* You Believe?

Your early life and external influences certainly contributed to what you believe. To degrees you have likely already considered, you accepted or rejected others' religions and philosophies. Especially since you Awakened, you have had some years to incorporate your own experiences into your view of the world. Even magi may revere ancestors, worship deities, or pay homage to prophets of wisdom; it is not universally considered part of the lie that magi look past.

What is your core philosophy or morality? Are you religious, adhering to established customs you hold sacred? Have you adapted your earlier beliefs into something that incorporates the hidden worlds? Has your Awakening profoundly changed your philosophy, compared to what you accepted as truth beforehand? Perhaps you were influenced by people you have met as a result of associating with other magi. If so, were you influenced by certain individuals' wisdom, or did you find yourself identifying with a new group's traditions? Have your beliefs become muddled over the years? Do you currently doubt previously accepted doctrines? If so, what led you to such an internal conflict?

A magus directs her will through methods she understands, techniques with which she intimately identifies. Your paradigm is where limited human understanding intersects with the ability to change the world around you. A magus might theoretically be able to do anything, but her human intellect dictates the terms in which she understands *how* to do it. How have your beliefs, philosophy, or religion shaped your ability to invoke your enlightened will or create magickal effects? What elements of your paradigm or technique are directly inspired by your core belief? Where did other influences come from, helping you realize you have such control over your will? How much inspiration have you drawn from secret orders you have joined or from specific people you consider to be mentors?

How Did You Become Involved?

Nearly every magus joins an order, society, or much larger community sharing similar philosophies regarding magick or advanced sciences. The most immediate danger an unaffiliated magus faces is herself; uncontrolled magick without tempering skill through proper wisdom. The basic need for understanding herself and her place in the world commonly attracts initiates to like-minded groups. For some, groups find and delicately guide magi into joining. Others give little choice, tricking or coercing magi into handing over one's freedom.

Describe your first contact with other magi. Was it a natural process, part of your culture and society, or even a foreseen moment of destiny? Did you have to work hard to find others, experimenting with occult societies or secret fraternal orders? Or did a group of people you never imagined existing approach and offer chances to learn about the magickal world? Perhaps you see a destructive community as an accepted way of life; did a disarming charlatan manipulate you and your peers into joining and remaining with a cult?

Anytime we join others, become part of a larger idea, or contribute to a project, we experience changes within ourselves. We may encounter growth, companionship, conflict, or doubt. What were your first experiences as part of the groups you joined? Did you feel as if you became little more than a single cog amidst an enormous machine, or were you welcomed in as family? Were you admitted as a student and then forged your path, or has a single mentor shown support and guidance? How have your experiences within your chosen affiliation inspired you, and how do you plan to incorporate the group into your personal goals?

What Has Your Life Become?

You have lived through your life of changes, strange phenomena, and wildly different associates. People who meet you likely have no idea about the things that you have experienced. They might revere you as a child of royalty, feel they are superior because of their years of experience in a mundane occupation, or completely dismiss you as shadow and chill breezes.

What is your life like when you are not pursuing mysteries with your cabal or fellow luminaries? Do you have an occupation that demands your time? Are there plans to raise a family, or do you already involve yourself with loved ones? Politics and social movements require time and passion; has a cause, revolt, or impending change captured your attention?

We all struggle to find meaning and give our lives purpose. Part of that meaning and purpose is certainly tied into the hidden world that you are now a part of, but that portion of you that has always existed before your Awakening is still very applicable. Balancing your dual nature has rewards of its own. How do you split your time and efforts between the two, and how separate are your "identities?" What lessons from one aspect of your life have value to the rest of your endeavors? How do you plan to apply knowledge from the hidden worlds to your mundane experiences? Does it inspire altruistic behavior in your community or allow for grand philanthropic contributions?

Perhaps enlightened pursuits truly consume your life. Even if you may not always be warding off strange spirits or experimenting with dangerous new procedures, you might still fill your days with activity directly related to your metaphysical ideals. The esteemed Order hosts dinner parties on a schedule dictated by astrological convergence, you might be visiting a city far from your sacred temple, and the eclectic Celebration of Hidden Communion only gathers when you find the subtle code within peddled handbills.

What is next? What are your goals and aspirations, so important to which you firmly devote your life? What created such passion or single-mindedness? How will it conflict with or complement time spent assisting other magi or luminaries? If you have no immediate goals, why not? What will inspire you?

Progress and Development

Character development through the use of experience points functions the same as the methods in **M20**, p.335. Guidelines and suggestions for using experience to purchase traits do not change, but playing in the Victorian era presents a few new challenges and possibilities.

Shifting Alliances

The 19th century sees and foreshadows major changes in the societies of magi. The Traditions are on the brink of collapse and the Order of Reason innovates faster than it can effectively plan its future movements. Crafts rise in influence while Conventions frantically adapt to fluid socio-political movements. Indeed, no group is safe from another faction hungry to assimilate them and expand influence. Individual magi struggle over the issues of rapidly industrializing nations and imperialist policies. Nearly everywhere, mentors and cabals justifiably question their loyalties.

Characters may shift loyalty or carry the banner for widespread changes. The rules for changing allegiance and focus (**M20**, p.339) apply to characters making dramatic decisions, such as a Verbena joining the Hippocratic Circle. However, should your chronicle include one group joining another and becoming part of a larger Tradition or Convention, the rules for changing paradigm and technique should not necessarily apply. In that sort of situation, none of the members of the assimilated Craft adopt new ways of thinking, as they almost certainly share portions of their core philosophies already. They become a new faction of the established Tradition or Convention. In time, future apprentices and students adopt Affinity Spheres and focus that demonstrate a convergence of philosophies. Complex developments like that simply take time, rather than requiring rules mechanics.

Raising and Learning New Traits

Language barriers, cultural differences, and the relative inaccessibility of professional instruction in this era are all possible reasons players might find resistance when they want to purchase a trait for their characters. Don't stifle opportunities for character development when each player's desire presents another way of interacting with more of the story. Instead of treating the third dot of Science as a lofty fantasy for a character without access to university classes, use the opportunity to introduce a new ally or hint at a suspicious member of the Skeleton Keys lurking about. Too many story arcs supporting every little purchase would drown a story in confusing distractions, but a few reactions and red herrings directly related to character development create memorable stories.

Secret Societies and Apprenticeship

With such diversity in culture and the sheer number of Traditions, Conventions, and Crafts, effectively learning magickal secrets from cabal mates might be challenging. Differences in paradigm or practice do not prevent magi from sharing knowledge, but conflicting belief systems can hinder the process. Characters may have the ability to contact a mentor or use laboratory facilities, but such a resource might not always be assured or readily accessible. Distance can be a factor, and questionable political changes may draw undue attention to a magus seeking certain kinds of training.

The development of Spheres with an instructor whose focus differs from a magi's own can either multiply the amount of time it takes to learn or even make it impossible. However, the pursuit of common interests might provide enough common understanding to facilitate the process. This is one of the primary reasons magi join the many secret occult societies. Ritual, tradition, and dogma unite all the participants during the rites and observances these groups conduct. Much like a magus' focus, these activities become a bridge for understanding and relating magickal concepts. When a player wants to spend experience for a dot in a Sphere and the character is instructed by another magus who is a member of the same Secret Society, the process is no more difficult or time-consuming than if the character learned from a member of her own Convention, Craft, or Tradition.

This presents ample opportunity for Storytellers to add story arcs, secondary characters, and role-playing opportunities. Magi claiming allegiance to opposing factions may well be subject to significant punishment for working together and sharing secrets. Membership in one of these societies provides the ability and facilities to make such a relationship feasible, while never truly removing the risk involved. This could — if the Storyteller desires — extend to helping other magi understand and use Wonders, Devices, and Fetishes normally understood by certain factions or characters with specific paradigms.

Chapter Six: Spells & Steel: Victorian Magicks

"Chaos was the law of nature; order was the dream of man."
—Henry Adams

Cotton gins and cannon fire. Secret fellowships with esoteric aims. The 19th century vibrates with tensions between tradition and innovation. Magick, and the people who practice such Arts, are not immune to this tension. Indeed, practitioners of Enlightened Arts and Sciences feel the tension of this era more than most people do. As cities rise and cultures fall, the tide of unseen influence assumes new and potent forms. Though dragons and witchcraft seem dreadfully passé, there's a strong current of possibility running beneath the surging factory grind. And magic — in word and deed — is very much a part of it.

A Study in Contrasts

For those who understand the hidden struggles of the Gaslit Mystery era, this age holds a Jekyll and Hyde mystique. One face bears the majestic countenance of industrial progress and scientific rationalism, while the other reflects ancient wisdom and metaphysical understanding.

Which is Jekyll, and which is Hyde?

That, dear reader, depends upon whose approach you sympathize with most.

Regardless of personal preference, the dual nature of this era presents a metaphysical paradox. In an age when factories, mass production, and precision engineering allow advanced technology to overrun a world full of ancient traditions, people also flock to religious revivals, secret societies, occult artistry, and other bastions of mystic thought. The Victorian era posits the idea that scientific rationalism beats mystic superstition — and yet, many of those same scientists practice occult disciplines and hold deep religious convictions, too. In **Mage**'s war between materialist tech and magickal Arts, the 1800s epitomize a tipping point where one might — or might not — slide into the other.

Thus, in this age, magick and its consequences assume slightly different forms than the ones we know from the **Mage** books of the 20th and 21st centuries. Although the core rules remain the same, certain details differ. This chapter reveals how and where such differences take shape.

Magick Rules for Victorian Mage

In most regards, **Victorian Mage**'s magick rules follow the systems detailed in the **M20** rulebook, Chapter Ten. The differences are as follows, and are detailed below:

- **Victorian Mage** uses *elegant magick*, *uncanny magick*, and *catastrophic magick* in place of *coincidental magick*, *vulgar magick without witnesses*, and *vulgar magick with witnesses*.

  Elegant: Difficulty = highest Sphere + 3

  Uncanny: Difficulty = highest Sphere + 4

  Catastrophic: Difficulty = highest Sphere + 5
- **Victorian Mage** uses *the Straits* in place of Paradox.
- *Reality Zones* (**M20**, pp. 611-617) are referred to as *Territories*, and they determine the sorts of magick that are, and are not, *elegant* in a particular region. There is no worldwide consensus regarding magick and reality.
- The *Data* optional Sphere has not yet been innovated in **Victorian Mage**.
- The *Dimensional Science* optional Sphere is known as *Cosmologia*.
- The *Primal Utility* optional Sphere is known as *Economic Essentialism*, or simply *Essentia*.
- Unless the Storyteller determines otherwise, **Victorian Mage** employs the charts and tables given in **M20**, pp. 501-510.
- All other rules, options, and related systems and discussions presented in **M20**, Chapters Nine and Ten, remain unchanged in **Victorian Mage**.

Elegance, Catastrophe, and the Uncanny Middle

In many regards, the Gaslit Mystery era is still very much an age of magic. Despite academic efforts to downplay "superstitions," beliefs about gods, spirits, and the Unseen World dominate. Thus, the 20th-century contention that "there's no such thing as magic" does not suit the **Victorian Mage** period. Instead, this setting uses three distinctions to mark the challenges and difficulties involved in using Sphere magick during this era.

Elegant Magick

Evoking the Victorian emphasis on propriety, *elegant magick* refers to castings that display grace, subtlety, and cleverness. The polar opposite of vulgar boorishness, elegant magick fits in with its surroundings, suiting the occasion (and the localized reality) perfectly. Such spells and technologies make as little fuss as possible and do not draw attention to themselves either through scope and scale or through brash violations of what is considered possible.

Elegant magick favors small and subtle things: a whispered prayer for healing, a well-timed punch that cracks a ruffian's jaw, the soft scraping of the planchette of a spirit board, and so forth. The literal meaning of *occult* — "hidden" — suits this sort of magick. Although elegant magick may work miracles, such miracles fit the prevailing beliefs of the region. A medicine man calling upon the spirits of his ancestors to bless his warriors with bullet-proof skin is using elegant magick; the Luminary stomping on those warriors with a steam-powered automaton is not.

In game terms, elegant magick is the easiest form to cast, and the approach that's least likely to invoke the dreaded *Straits*. The player describes what her character is doing to employ their magick, and the Storyteller determines whether or not that spell is elegant.

Characteristics of Elegant Magick

- Quiet, subtle, and easily unnoticed.
- Fits in with the cultural beliefs of the region.
- Employs Effects that remain invisible (mental influence, probability, enhanced perceptions, etc.); manipulate forces and phenomena in ways that seem perfectly natural (in modern terms, *coincidental*); work with unseen forces and entities (such as unmanifested spirits, heat, gravity, momentum, etc.); and/or invoke small yet miraculous things (simple healings, enhanced Traits, appearing unexpectedly "as if from nowhere," whistling up a wind, etc.) that fit into localized beliefs, as mentioned above.

As mentioned above, *elegant magick* castings use the highest Sphere Rank + 3 as the difficulty for that roll.

A successful *elegant magick* roll does not invoke the Straits, but a botched roll inflicts one point of *Straits* energy upon the caster.

Uncanny Magick

Most often, perceptible magick in this era is *uncanny*; strange enough to be remarkable to the average human observer, yet not brash and disruptive enough to seem *catastrophic*. Uncanny magick is the sort of thing people usually think of when they speak of "magic": calling up a visible ghost or spirit, a human transforming into an animalistic shape, whipping back the covers to reveal a man stitched together from the bodies of the dead — such things *do* seem possible but leave un-Awakened people feeling spooked.

It's worth mentioning that most people feel uneasy around magic even when they come from cultures where magic is part of the landscape. A yogi laying on a bed of nails seems eerie to people who can't do that sort of thing themselves. Shamans, seers, medicine workers, and mad scientists send shivers up the average person's spine. There are reasons why people burn witches, persecute monks, and drive mad scientists away with torch-wielding mobs. The fact that such magic seems *possible* does not make it *desirable*. Although the local voodoo priestess has people asking her for favors after the sun goes down, the same folk who beg her *gris-gris* today might be burning her house down next week.

Uncanny magick feels "wrong" even though it's not blatantly disruptive. This is the kind people notice, and while they might accept its reality they shy away from its presence.

This category also covers magick that steps beyond long-held local beliefs but does so in subtle ways. Colt revolvers and Gatling guns are uncanny when they first appear in the Wild West, where their effects escalate familiar things to uncanny levels, especially if they're used by Luminaries and other magi before such guns appear in the "official" historical record. (See "Common Victorian Weaponry," p. 179.)

Uncanny magick reflects the metaphysical battlefield of **Victorian Mage**, where traditional beliefs face increasing and perhaps overwhelming challenges from new impressions about "reality." Paradigms and technologies intended to supplant the "primitive superstitions" of traditional belief struggle through this contested territory. In the **Mage** of later years, they eventually win, but in **Victorian Mage**, that dim future might never come to pass.

Unlike the *vulgar without witnesses* category in modern-era editions of **Mage**, uncanny magick isn't determined by whether or not someone saw the character cast the spell. When a hostile reality intrudes upon a long-established metaphysical territory, the ripples disturb the fabric of the Tapestry even if no human observers see it happen.

Systems-wise, *uncanny magick* is harder to cast than *elegant magick*, and invokes Straits energy even when it's successful. Again, the player describes what their character is doing, and the Storyteller decides whether or not such castings are uncanny by the standards of the people and cultures of the region.

Characteristics of Uncanny Magick

- Is obvious and noticeable even if it's not "witnessed" by an un-Awakened person.
- Violates the localized beliefs and/or conforms to the local beliefs in ways that un-Awakened people find alarming.
- Employs Effects that clearly exceed what "normal" people can do (heal severed limbs within seconds, shrug off gunfire, turn into a bird, etc.); manipulate natural forces in ways that seem unnatural (calling lightning down from the clouds, making water flow backward, transforming lead into gold, and so forth); work with clearly Otherworldly forces (invoking a Loa, conjuring visible ghosts or spirits, glowing with the powers of God, and similar phenomena); and/or employ small yet obvious feats of what the local culture would consider "magic" (instant hypnosis, stopping arrows in mid-flight, conjuring fire in the palm of one's hand, etc.).

Uncanny magick castings use the highest Sphere Rank + 3 as the difficulty for that roll.

A successful act of uncanny magick earns the caster one point of Straits, and a botched roll earns one point + one point for each dot in the highest Sphere involved in that Effect.

An *optional rule* addressed in the nearby sidebar substitutes a dot in Resonance for a point of Straits if the uncanny Effect was successful.

Catastrophic Magick

Catastrophe means "to overturn," and so *catastrophic* magick overturns reality in frightening and destructive ways. *Uncanny magick* reflects supernatural feats that appear eerie yet relatively small, but *catastrophic magick* reflects drastic feats of paranormal might. Summoning a storm from clear skies, transforming into an elephant, turning a person into a mouse, aging someone within seconds with a wave of your hand — such deeds are not only magickal but disruptive enough to shake Reality itself.

Although acts of such magick may be part of the local folklore, they're clearly "powers beyond the rightful place of man." Un-Awakened people fear folk who command such powers, and they're not wrong to do so. While *uncanny magick* inspires discomfort, *catastrophic magick* inspires terror even when the caster is "one of our own." Spells of this magnitude violate the rules of nature, God, and humanity. In an earlier age, these magicks would be considered blasphemously vain. In the Gaslit Mystery era, they mark the caster as dangerous — perhaps too dangerous to live.

As with *uncanny magick*, *catastrophic magick* remains catastrophic regardless of whether or not it's witnessed by un-Awakened folk. The forces involved rattle the pillars of heaven, and the people possessing them are often punished for daring too much, too fast, with too little finesse.

In terms of game systems, *catastrophic magick* is the riskiest and most difficult form to cast. Based on how the player describes the character's activities and their results, the Storyteller decides whether or not a given feat is catastrophic in scale.

Characteristics of Catastrophic Magick

- Large, obvious, and clearly unnatural.
- Creates radical, large-scale, often devastating phenomena.
- Employs Effects that vastly exceed things people should be able to do (return clearly dead people to life, grow six arms, turn skin to steel, punch a locomotive, etc.); wrench natural forces in unnatural ways (throw lightning bolts, conjure instant floods, turn crop fields to dust, and so forth); invoke sudden, massive destruction (make people explode, turn horses to stone, shatter a wagon by snapping your fingers, and similar acts); and do things that should, by all rights, remain impossible (wind time back or forward, step from England into France, bring people into the spirit world) and/or unholy (conjuring a demon, crafting a mechanical or skeletal army, opening gates to hell, etc.).

Catastrophic magick castings use the highest Sphere Rank + 5 as the difficulty for that roll, and they invoke Straits energies even when successful.

A successful *catastrophic magick* roll earns the caster two points of Straits; a botched roll earns two points + two points in the highest Sphere involved in that Effect.

The Straits: Ties That Bind Reality

Creation is flexible yet strict. Flexing one's powers is met with the constraints of nature's limitations. In prior years, such constraints would be regarded as *Backlash*, the result of performing magick poorly, and later as an external force, the *Scourge of God*. The future defines them as the result of a *Paradox*, conflicting realities occupying the same space. In the Gaslit Mystery period, as fear of gods gives way to inquiries about nature, magi and Luminaries alike often refer to metaphysical constraints upon their Arts as *the Straits*.

Literally speaking, *strait* means "strict" or "pulled tight." The Latin root inspires English words like *string*, *strength*, and *strain*. For magi, the "strings" of nature constrain the magickal efforts of man. By inference, those Straits are like a straitjacket binding the magus' limbs, or like the narrow straits through which a ship must navigate or be destroyed. Although magi of later eras will often blame such phenomena on one another, a certain degree of constraint has always been present in earthly reality. Without such forces binding it together, Creation itself would fly apart.

The Straits could be viewed as threads in the cosmic Tapestry, or perhaps as the tension holding them in place. A magus might pluck at such strings, but if she wishes to disturb the Grand Design then she must be careful how she pulls them or where they go. If one pulls carelessly — or worse, takes a pair of scissors to the Tapestry — then the design is ruined and chaos results.

Different cultures, of course, view such phenomena differently. A musical mystic from China, India, or Greece might view the Straits as the dissonance that results when someone violates the divine harmonies. A clockwork artisan could perceive them as flaws in the pattern of the Grand Design, while a Buddhist monk notes the imperfections of attachment and the vast illusion we perceive as "real." Whether it's from bad medicine, infernal influence, or the dire vanities of man, magick that goes too far must be punished — and magi who do so, likewise. The Straits, under whichever name seems most appropriate, reflect the boundaries of reality and the punishments for pushing them too far.

Game Systems for the Straits

The rules governing the Straits resemble the rules provided within the "Paradox Effect" entry in **Mage 20** (pp. 547-553). The differences are as follows:

- As noted above, the Straits and their related backlashes do not depend upon un-Awakened witnesses. Instead, they're based on the degree to which the character messes with the Territory governing the local reality.
- In contrast to the gods-driven nature of the Scourge or the existential terrors of Paradox, the Straits tend to manifest as elemental phenomena, sickness of mind and body, or violent forces acting to crush a foreign incursion. For details, see "Straits Backlash Manifestations," below.
- *Unbelief* (**M20**, p. 553) is not nearly as strong throughout most of the world during the 1800s as it will be in the 20th and 21st centuries. Although the idea of a dragon manifesting in downtown London still seems ludicrous to the average Englishman, the growing awareness about dinosaurs (first noted by Western science in the early 1800s), coupled with pervasive curiosity about "strange and distant lands" and the people and beasts that populate them, keep people's minds open to such things even in the most supposedly sophisticated regions. Despite Luminaries who hunt and classify them out of existence, "mythic" Bygones remain easy to find in places where those hunters have not yet established what is and is not "real."

For simplicity's sake, assume that all rules regarding Paradox (points, backlashes, the Paradox Wheel, etc.) apply to the Straits unless noted otherwise.

Straits Backlash Manifestations

Because the Straits constrain the effects (and Effects) of magick, Straits backlashes tend to rein in the rather theatrical expressions of metaphysical disruptions. In contrast to the wild paranormal fits associated with modern Paradox, **Victorian Mage** backlashes favor elemental punishments, uncanny phenomena, metaphysical derangement, and "agents of order" chastising mortals that unseat traditions with their pride. The Straits enforce the prevailing reality within a given territory; when backlashes occur, they suit the beliefs and temperament of the land and its people.

As noted above, the rules governing Straits backlashes follow the rules given for Paradox in **M20** (p.548). The shape those backlashes assume, however, tends to fall into the following categories:

Environmental Backlashes

In the most common sort of Victorian-era backlash, an errant magus suffers a sudden misfortune. The environment itself punishes that magus: exploding guns, clouds of scalding steam, malfunctioning machinery, sudden storms, bolts of lightning, swarms of hungry insects, chemical fires, electrical discharges, bison stampedes, and other forms of massive injury dog practitioners of the arcane and Luminary Arts. Mechanized Luminaries and reckless alchemists have long traditions of expiring in burning windmills or exploding laboratories, while devilish wizards have been known to

Optional Rules: Victorian Resonance

"Keeping up appearances" is vital to the Victorian-era mindset. The phrase itself is thought to have originated in Victorian London, but the sentiment behind it — presenting an image of stability and prosperity even in the face of disaster — is common across the globe. And so, for magi of this period, *Resonance* — the metaphysical echo of an Awakened person's deeds — is both potent and potentially ruinous. It's much harder, after all, to deceive people when Creation itself reveals the truth about you. For a careless character, that truth could soon become embarrassing at best, and more often hazardous to her life and reputation.

Groups favoring the *optional rules* for *Resonance* (detailed in **The Book of Secrets**, pp. 128-138), may assume that Resonance in the **Victorian Mage** setting manifests in especially bold *signatures* (see pp. 137-138); a *Revolutionary* Ecstatic magus seems to crackle with reformist zeal, whereas a *Stormy* Luminary appears windblown even in still weather. Perhaps because so many people pay attention to outward appearances during this era, Resonance signatures in the Gaslit Mystery era may always count as having at least two dots ("Discernable Flavor") if the character has any Resonance dots at all.

As detailed on p. 135 of **The Book of Secrets**, Resonance may be "cloaked" by efforts of will. In a dramatic sense, such cloaking mirrors the constant attention a Victorian person must pay to her behavior and the impression she makes upon her world. Magi of all sorts make especially vivid impressions, and so the effort of "keeping up appearances" becomes even more important to them.

Uncanny Resonance

As an additional *optional rule*, the Storyteller may decide to give a character a dot in Resonance, instead of a point in the Straits, whenever that character successfully employs *uncanny* or *catastrophic magick*. Thus, Reality's constraints begin to make the magus stand out in strange ways. These dots in Resonance "bleed off" within a day or so, but a magus who throws his Arts around too casually soon makes a spectacle of himself. In this setting, such spectacles often have unfortunate results.

fall into flaming cracks within the earth that open up and swallow such magi whole.

Rules-wise, environmental backlashes function like the explosive physical backlashes detailed in **M20**, at the top of p. 552, right beneath the sidebar "Why Paradox?" Depending on the form of backlash, the associated damage could be lethal (falling rocks, blizzards, insect swarms) or aggravated (boiling steam, lightning bolts, fiery explosions). Every character within a few yards of the magus suffers that damage, though characters who are *not* the magus provoking backlash can try to soak the damage if they can.

Unlike the physical Paradox "Burn," the effects of an environmental backlash continue for several turns, inflicting a certain number of dice in damage each turn until they end. The specifics of that time and damage depend upon the Storyteller's wishes, and the backlash itself depends upon what the magus in question was doing at the time. A Luminary riding around in a steam-powered contraption might get scalded by escaping steam, whereas an unfortunate shaman finds herself fleeing from a storm of angry wasps.

For details about dangerous situations, see "Environmental Hazards" in **M20** (pp. 435-441 and 454-455); for animal attacks, see the "Packs and Swarms" entry in **Gods & Monsters** (p. 104).

Metaphysical Madness

Detailed in the entry for "Quiet," below.

Mysterious Disappearances

In the Gaslit Mystery era, many people simply vanish and are never heard or seen again. Given that this world is filled with unmapped regions and hostile enemies, such disappearances could be considered an occupational hazard of the Enlightened Arts. An unlucky adventurer might disappear even in the company of her fellow magi; one moment, she's there — and the next moment, she's gone.

In game terms, such disappearances involve *Paradox Realms*, as detailed in **M20** (pp. 553-554). An especially large Straits backlash could trap several characters in a strange Realm like Mount Qaf or the Hollow Earth (**M20**, pp. 102-103) or some similar dimension, while smaller ones leave a character stranded in a solitary pocket Realm. As far as the mortal world is concerned, however, these people have disappeared — and in this era, that fate's extraordinarily common, even for folks who don't use magickal Arts.

Physical Backlashes

Building up within a character's metaphysical Pattern and then either squeezing it tight or ripping it apart, Straits energies often manifest during this era as crippling aches, searing pain, eventual injury, and possibly a very gruesome death. Story-wise, such backlashes might appear to be the ravages of disease or exposure, punishment from hostile spirits, crushing pressures, or (to people who find the victim after the backlash occurs) attacks from wild animals. The fate of that legendary steel-driver, John Henry, could be the result of an internal Straits backlash when he boosts his strength and endurance past human limitations to beat a steam-driven machine. Accounts of magi fainting during rituals, perishing from chronic illnesses, collapsing from internal injuries, or getting torn to pieces by unseen forces could all be regarded as the aftermath of physical Straits backlashes.

In game terms, a physical Straits backlash functions like the Paradox "Burn" backlash detailed in **M20** (pp. 551-552). From a narrative and roleplaying standpoint, however, Straits backlashes of this sort often feel like an invisible "squeeze" instead of like an incendiary burn — as if Reality pulled a giant, invisible corset too tightly around the magus.

Resonance (Optional Rule)

As noted in the nearby sidebar, an *optional rule* allows the Storyteller to replace points of Straits energy with dots in an appropriate sort of Resonance, if the magus in question used successful magick of an uncanny or catastrophic sort. This option applies *only* to successful Effects, not to botched casting rolls, and it manifests largely as narrative and roleplaying elements rather than as points that add up and eventually lead to backlashes.

Botched casting rolls accumulate Straits points as usual.

Straits Apparitions

The most dangerous backlashes invoke strange entities arriving to put things back in order. Known in the modern world as *Paradox Spirits*, such entities deliver poetic justice to magi disrupting reality and threatening the people depending upon that reality's coherence.

Although some of these apparitions seem stranger than the magick that summons them, most Victorian-era Straits apparitions manifest as people or phenomena that fit into the local environment, strike fear into the targeted magi, or (most likely) both. Demons or angels, furious beasts, vengeful spirits, and raging forces of nature appear most often in Territories where magic remains a part of cultural belief, while terrifying gunmen, "evil twins," malignant devices, and malfunctioning machines tend to manifest in regions where industrial technology shapes the dominant beliefs. Obviously, infamous Paradox Spirits like Old Man Wrinkle can appear in **Victorian Mage**; the shifting sense of possibility in this setting, though, favors apparitions whose concept suits the themes and cultures of this era.

Game-wise, Straits apparitions use the same systems as the Paradox Spirits detailed in **M20** (p. 552). For potential apparitions, see the entry of that name in this book (pp. 205-208) and the Paradox Spirits presented in **Gods & Monsters** (pp. 145-150).

Quiet: The Brink of Madness

The metaphysical dementia known as "Wizard's Twilight" has been recorded since at least the European Dark Ages. In the Gaslit Mystery era, however, such madness seems closer to the surface than usual, perhaps because this era is obsessed with madness and propriety (see below.) The chances that an Awakened soul might suffer temporary or permanent dementia of a metaphysical nature are quite high in **Victorian Mage**. Thus, when the Straits tighten around a character in this setting, their effects often manifest as Quiet: the metaphysical derangement that can draw a magus into himself or afflict his surroundings with the consequences of insanity.

Game Systems for Quiet

From a game perspective, the rules for Quiet are identical to those given in **M20** (pp. 554-561), with the following exceptions:

- Quiet can manifest when a Straits backlash involves *seven points* or more, instead of the 10 points or more referred to in **M20** (pp. 549 and 555). Thus, a **Victorian Mage** character remains frighteningly close to madness unless he's very careful with his Arts. This does not, of course, mean a character *will* go mad if he assumes seven points or more in Straits energy; the odds of doing so, however, are higher than they would be in the modern age.
- Points of Resonance given instead of Straits points (as detailed in the Resonance sidebar) *do not* count toward a potential Quiet.
- When a Straits backlash occurs, we advise the Storyteller to favor encroaching Quiet over huge bursts of explosive energy. A creeping sense of unease suits the tone of this era.

Of "Madness" in a "Rational" World

Sanity, to the Victorian mindset, exists in tension between sublime reason and gibbering irrationality. The emerging science of *psychoanalysis* **(see p. 147)** strives to bridge that abyss, yet all too often seems to fail. For the civilized Victorian, few things hold as much terror as a shattered mind. Ironically, however, the Victorian world seems designed to drive one mad.

The "madness" depicted in 19th-century literature and lore has little to do with mental illness as we understand it today. It's more of an existential *horror* of madness, coupled with the abuses inflicted upon people who are considered "mad." The atrocities perpetrated against folks falling short of the Victorian ideal — uppity servants, gender rebels, free spirits, war veterans and refugees, immigrants surrounded by societies that hate them, laborers and outright slaves who are literally worked beyond the breaking point, people with chronic health conditions, folks too poor to buy their way out of the abyss, etc., etc., etc.. Such people are pitied, shunned, despised, and shoved — body, mind, and soul — into the trash heap of Victorian propriety. That situation would drive *anybody* crazy, and so (by 21st century standards) large portions of the world are suffering from what we now call PTSD.

From a modern perspective, much of the stereotypical madness associated with the horror tales of H.P. Lovecraft and Edgar Allen Poe comes from the contrast between the impossible standards of Victorian ideals and the unspeakable pollution of the world those ideals create. That view of madness comes less from actual mental illness in a medical sense than from the paralyzing fear of plunging into a primal chasm of irrational instinct. It comes also from the appalling fate that Victorian authorities impose upon people who — for whatever reason — cannot measure up to the impossible standards demanded of their world. Such people get locked in filthy asylums, abused by their jailers, experimented upon by "doctors," shuttered away from "normal people," and generally treated more like garbage than like human beings. Although kindly souls attempt, at least in theory, to "heal the troubled mind," more often than not the people who have "lost their grip on sanity" are, in the 1800s, confined, molested, tortured, infected, and, whenever possible, simply forgotten.

The concept of infection, too, is ironically associated with insanity in the Victorian mindset. Ironically, because Victorian beliefs contend that madness is contagious (and thus, the mad must be removed from human company), but Victorian "civilization" is *itself* literally infectious. Industrial pollutants, gas fumes, coal dust, lightless rooms, toxic air, biological waste, omnipresent parasites, factory chemicals, "medicine" and cosmetics comprised of hallucinogens and other poisons, war trauma, genocide, bigotries of a thousand different kinds, and other extremities of social and physical injury seem designed to break the human spirit, sicken the human body, and destroy the human mind. In short, the Victorian world demands perfection whilst drowning every living thing in a cesspit of its own filth. And so, between the ideals demanded of Victorian society, and the realities inflicted by Victorian surroundings, everyone's a little mad, no one dares to show it, and thus the terrors of insanity assume the most horrific forms imaginable.

By modern standards, the Victorian image of insanity is insensitive at best, and very often cruel. It's not terribly accurate, either. The bug-eating antics of Renfield or the murderous tendencies of Poe's narrators have little connection to actual mental illness. Although certain people in the Victorian world *do* get pushed toward (or open themselves to) theatrical extremes of deranged behavior, the stereotypical madman of the era is a fearsome caricature, not a person with treatable and understandable medical conditions.

And so, if you choose to employ "mad" people in a **Victorian Mage** game, please remember that melodramatic depictions of madness are:

A) potentially offensive to people with real medical conditions;

B) inaccurate travesties shaped by Victorian terrors; and…

C) often the results of traumas and toxins inflicted upon real people who were perfectly "sane" before they caught syphilis, inhaled too much poisonous gas, were violated by relatives or caregivers, got locked up in a madhouse by someone who wanted them out of the way, had everyone they loved slaughtered by "civilized people" who did such things "for their own good," or were otherwise damaged to the point where "insanity" was the only sane recourse.

For more guidelines about extravagant portrayals of insanity vs. the respectful handling of mental illness, see the **M20** entries for "The Tragedy of Madness" (p. 237), "Running Wyld" (p. 240), "Triggers, Limits, and Boundaries" (p. 345), "Things Man Was Not Meant to Know" (p. 407), and "PTSD" and "Derangements" (pp. 647-650), as well as the sidebar "Roleplaying the Mad" in **The Book of Secrets** (p. 244). For the magi known as Marauders, see the entry "Bedlam Bound" in Chapter Eight, **(pp. 185-188)**.

Manifestations of Quiet

Despite its name, Quiet assumes various forms, ranging from comatose withdrawal to raving violence. The tone of those forms, as detailed in **M20**, generally falls into three overall temperaments: *Denial*, *Madness*, and *Morbidity*. All three temperaments can be found in magi of the Gaslit Mystery era. Certain manifestations, however, are more suited to the setting, dramatically speaking, than others are:

Dementia

Also known simply as *Madness*, Dementia Quiet inspires irrational delusions. The deeper the Quiet, the more convincing and harrowing those delusions become. The most obvious form of Quiet, Dementia makes a magus into the proverbial "danger to himself and others." At extreme forms, this temperament is most closely associated with monstrous Bedlamites like Auld Muddy and Razor Jake (see Chapter Eight), whose Dementia has warped their bodies as well as their Arts and sanity. War, disease, torture, and the endless atrocities of this age can inspire Dementia Quiet, and so it's especially appropriate for magi of any kind who've been involved, on one side or the other, in such terrible affairs.

Denial

The Victorian era is constructed upon denial and delusion. Britannia, after all, is considered to be the epitome of civilized refinement even though its capital city seethes with figurative and literal sewage. Metaphysical Denial in this era, then, asserts itself in stubborn convictions that remain blind to things everybody else can see. No, the Thames is *not* filled with human filth, that's just "bad air" exuded by those layabout servants! No, magick does *not* exist, it's simply the claptrap of superstitious minds! *Any* person can become rich if he just puts his back into it, poor people simply lack the will to pursue hard work! Denial Quiet, then, is the hallmark of civilized folk refusing to recognize the cracked and bloody pillars their ideals are based upon — a prime instigator in the atrocities of Empire and the foundation of the emerging Technocratic Union.

(The irony that the modern Technocracy might be founded upon Marauder delusions would explain a *lot* about the 20th century and the excesses of its Ascension War.)

Although it's most common among upper-crust Luminaries, this Quiet temperament also manifests among people whose cultures are crumbling from internal decay and external assault. Many Wulung courtiers, for example, might be wrapped in Denial about China's plunging fortunes during the 19th century. A Lakota medicine worker could refuse to believe that the bison herds are dying off, and she expects to see the spirits rise soon and burn away the iron pollution of the white men. A Zulu *sangoma* laughs at the chatter of Martini-Henry rifles because he knows such toys cannot prevail against *impis* tactics and supremacy. Such madness, then, is dangerously tragic. So blinded, a magus cannot see what's truly going on, and thus cannot respond appropriately.

Although Carl Jung's observations about the *shadow* — the repressed aspects of one's self that undermine a person's ideal identity — are decades in the future, the concept itself (detailed in **The Book of the Fallen**, pp. 96-97) comes up from the ugly undercurrents of Victorian society. Thus, as noted in **M20**, Denial Quiet also manifests as "shadow behavior": acting out repressed desires in shameful and destructive ways. The Straits apparition known as a *doppelgänger* ***(see p. 206)*** *could be regarded as a hobgoblin arising out of Denial Quiet madness, rather than as an independent spirit formed by the essence of the Straits.*

Morbidity

Epitomized in the tales by Edgar Allen Poe, Morbidity Quiet distills a fascination with death and suffering into a potent, perhaps murderous, sort of madness. Gripped by such obsessions, a magus slides into a black well of grotesquerie. This Quiet temperament seems especially fitting for Enlightened artists and occultists of the Romantic, Decadent, Nihilist, and Symbolist subcultures, where outlaw dissipation and extreme behavior become status symbols, not social catastrophes. Sade, Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Jack the Ripper, Madame LaLaurie — such real-life figures personify Morbidity in this age. Extremities of science, too, breed such insanity. Doctors Moreau, Griffin, and Frankenstein show what can happen when "men of science" go morbidly insane. A magus or Luminary afflicted with such poisons of the mind and soul becomes a veritable monster, acting out — secretly or otherwise — the vilest moral perversions in awful and often bloody ways.

Territories: Victorian Reality Zones

The concept that "no one believes in magic" is a 20th-century conceit. Although materialistic rationalism begins to spread in the Victorian age, the idea is by no means universal. Throughout the Gaslit Mystery era, even in the hearts of industrialized empires, belief in "magical" things remains strong. The Order of Reason, however, is forging a global paradigm based upon its wishes — and part of that effort involves purging its religious roots in favor of mechanized authority. Thus, the **Victorian Mage** setting is hotly contested ground with regards to magick of all kinds. Certain forms fit the metaphysical landscape, others clash with it, and although hyperscience is shaping the road toward a Technocratic future, that road is rough and uncertain terrain.

In future days, this period will be (in)famous for "charting the unknown" and "settling the wild spaces" in favor of so-called civilization. For the people who have been living in those "unknown wilds" for centuries, however, this campaign of "civilization" means conquest and destruction. Understandably, many of those people fight back. In **Mage: The Ascension**, that fight goes poorly. In **Victorian Mage**, things may take an entirely different path. Gun-toting technomancers can find themselves mauled by spirit bears, or see their bullets bounce off the chests of charging Zulu warriors. The primary struggle in **Victorian Mage** involves conquering or preserving the metaphysical landscape of *Territories*: reality zones that accept certain forms of magick while rejecting others.

Game Systems for Territories

As **M20** explains (see pp. 611-617), reality zones determine the difficulties and potential Paradox for magickal Effects cast within a given zone. Magick that suits the reality zone is considered *coincidental*, while magick that goes against it is considered *vulgar*. In **Victorian Mage**, a capital-T Territory represents a reality zone appropriate to this setting. Within a Territory, suitable magicks are *elegant* or perhaps *uncanny*, while others become *catastrophic*.

The rules presented in **M20** (p. 611 and pp. 615-616) apply to Territories, with the following alterations:

- Instead of being *coincidental* or *vulgar*, castings are *elegant*, *uncanny*, or *catastrophic*.
- A Territory can be "converted" by either winning people over to a new way of thinking, or else by wiping out enough people (especially magi) within that Territory to allow the metaphysical landscape to be altered in a new direction. See below for details.
- Once a Territory has been converted, another group of magi needs to convert it back if they wish to restore it to its previous "setting."
- If a Territory winds up completely uninhabited (or uninhabitable), it eventually reverts to an *Earthly Foundations* zone.

Territory Zones

The variable nature of Reality and Consensus in this era is a major aspect of **Victorian Mage**. Depending on where and when a given tale takes place, the characters could conjure storm spirits in a desert wilderness, trade enhanced fisticuffs in the London fog, or employ ancient Egyptian rites to awaken long-dead guardians or suffer curses from millennia ago.

The general sorts of Territories within the Gaslit Mystery setting are as follows:

The Heartland of Empire

All seems "right and proper," as the saying goes, within the heartlands of this era's great empires. Theatrical acts of magickal power are *uncanny* at best, and far more often *catastrophic*. Although occult societies proliferate through any empire of this age, their Arts remain confined to *elegant* subtlety. Industrialized technology, however, is often the pride of such empires. Extravagant acts of mechanized power (clockwork robots, for instance, or death-ray cannons) remain *catastrophic*, but simpler things (motorized carriages, airships, and the like) are *uncanny* at worst and quite often *elegant*. Historically speaking, motorcars, locomotives, dirigibles, photography, telephones, electric light, machine guns, and so forth all enter the un-Enlightened Consensus during the 1800s. Although such innovations seem peculiar when they first appear, the human imagination seems willing to accept them as part of a brave and wondrous new age.

"Empire" Territories, of course, are not specifically or exclusively European. Firearms and artillery, after all, originated in China centuries before the age of Napoleon, and they had been used by Japanese forces as far back as the mid-1500s. Apache, Lakota, and Comanche riflemen are every bit as skillful as their White American counterparts, and the first mechanized modern war begins in 1904, three years after Queen Victoria's death, and results in Imperial Japan's victory over Imperial Russia. Heartland of Empire Territories, then, favor subtle magicks and technology, not industrialized Arts over mystical ones. Tech holds an edge over "supernatural" spellcraft, but even advanced technology seems *uncanny* in such Territories.

Rules-wise, Heartland of Empire zones reflect the prominent cities and industrial centers of a given empire. Although modern technology seems more acceptable than overt magick, subtle forms of magick remain *uncanny* — not *catastrophic* — within Heartland Territories. Occult practitioners still conduct rituals after sundown, with séances being a popular activity even in the most industrialized metropolis.

That said, such magicks are best concealed by darkness and secrecy. Although Straits points and backlashes for uncanny mystic Effects remain consistent (that is, *uncanny* not *catastrophic*), the casting difficulty for "superstitious" activities is one level higher (highest Sphere + 5) in sunlight and open view within a Heartland of Empire Territory.

The Occult Underworld

Even in modern cities, the Gaslit Mystery era accommodates hidden magick. Nighttime shadows and hidden spaces harbor séances and alchemy, mystic arts, and other secrets. Decadent parlors, vast cathedrals, catacombs, and forbidden groves — such areas allow mystic practitioners to use magick with relative freedom and reduced consequences. Enlightened technology, too, works better in concealment. Mad scientists pursue abominable experiments even in the Heartland of Empire; they must simply be clever and cautious while doing so.

As noted above, *uncanny magick* is easier to cast in an Occult Underworld Territory; that is, in some location that favors eerie secrets and overt miracles. While such Arts must suit the nature of the Territory (a séance works better in a Pre-Raphaelite studio than it would in a steampunk laboratory), it's relatively easy for a magus of the appropriate kind to cast *uncanny magick* amidst favorable surroundings. Game-wise, the usual difficulty (highest Sphere + 4) applies to uncanny workings in a suitable Occult Underworld. That setting need not be *literally* underground, of course. Chinese "boxers" can perform incredible martial feats in and around a Buddhist temple, even by daylight. Still, those feats must fit into the local culture's idea of possibility. An Akashic practitioner may find himself at a disadvantage if he attempts to catch bullets in broad daylight whilst standing in Piccadilly Circus.

The Edges of Dominion

Empire exerts its influence only so far. In the rural areas of industrial nations, old-time beliefs still hold sway. Witches fly on broomsticks across the moors of Victoria's Great Britain. Medicine-men bless their warriors with bullet-proof skin in the so-called "Wild West." A Roman Catholic priest casts out demons in rural Tuscany, while a Shaolin boxer cracks stone pillars with a single blow. In Edges of Dominion Territories, the Old Ways hold an edge over industrial technology. Although extravagant acts of magick remain *catastrophic* (that medicine-man, for example, would be daring too much if he conjured a tornado from a clear sky), impressive feats of mystic Arts remain *uncanny*, possibly even *elegant*, if such feats are part of the ancestral culture of that Territory. Enlightened technologies, meanwhile, seem *uncanny* if not *catastrophic*. The Luminary steering his giant clockwork spider into the Dakota Badlands is inviting a painful lesson from the Fates.

Game-wise, an Edges of Dominion Territory favors the traditional magicks of its home culture. In **M20** terms, the Edges of Dominion resemble the entries for "Rural Areas," "Regions of Faith," and "Mystic Regions" (**M20**, pp. 614-615), depending on the cultures and beliefs of the people populating those areas. In **Victorian Mage**, this is the default state for much of the world beyond the most populated industrial areas.

Enlightened technology and alien magicks are both out-of-place in such Territories — *uncanny* at best, *catastrophic* if they're too overt. That British witch would be *uncanny* if she flew her broom across her moors, but such feats are *catastrophic* in Ethiopia, where such magicks seem unreal. A gunslinging Luminary dares catastrophe if he hauls out a Gatling gun in a Louisiana swamp during the 1800s; such machines may capture the Consensus someday, but on the Edges of Dominion this era is not that day.

The specific boundaries surrounding what *is* and *is not* acceptable in an Edges of Dominion Territory depend upon the traditional beliefs of its resident culture. Such beliefs, on a global scale, are too extensive to explore in this chapter, but the following guidelines may prove helpful:

- If the character is native to the regional culture, and practices Arts that hail from the local culture and its beliefs, then her subtle spells are *elegant*, her obvious spells are *uncanny*, and her extreme spells are *catastrophic*.
- If the character comes from a distant culture, and/or employs Arts that are radically different than those accepted for generations by local cultures, then all of his obvious spellcraft and/or Enlightened technology is *uncanny* at best and often *catastrophic*.

The metaphysical struggles between Luminaries and mystics play out in such regions. Under **Mage: The Ascension** chronology, this era ends with the majority of the world under Technocratic dominion. In **Victorian Mage**, however, things could turn out differently.

Flux States

In the most contested metaphysical battlegrounds, Consensus Reality is so fluid that spells or technologies that are *uncanny* one day might seem *elegant* or *catastrophic* the next. These "flux states" are risky places for any form of Awakened/Enlightened Arts. Nothing is truly certain in such areas, and so all forms of magick (by whatever name) are dangerous to the caster and anyone else nearby.

Flux states are essentially metaphysical rapids: currents of Reality toss and splash and flow around unexpected obstacles, and so anyone who wishes to "ride" those rapids must contend with their uncertain state. The Straits present a hazard to magi of any kind, and backlashes associated with them attain frightening power.

Flux-state locations mark places where rival magi strive to control the Territory, converting the people to radically different beliefs and often tossing *catastrophic* Arts around too freely. Sites of genocidal massacres, huge battles between traditional and industrial forces, mass conversions or upheavals of faith, slave plantations, desecrated sacred sites (like the Dakota Black Hills or the Forbidden City complex within Beijing), and other such areas feel uncomfortable and precarious to people that can perceive metaphysical

energies. In time, those upheavals may produce Nodes and Wellsprings. For now, their tempestuous nature extends into the Penumbra, shimmers with unnerving Resonance, and disrupts all forms of magick.

In game-system terms, a flux state doubles the Straits points gained by all characters employing Sphere Effects within the area. Also, the types of magick that are considered "acceptable" within the Territory change unpredictably and without warning. The Storyteller may secretly decide what types of magick the flux state accepts and rejects, or he may simply roll a die each time a new scene begins within a flux-state Territory, as per the ***Flux State Reality chart***.

Flux State Reality

Roll	Effects
1-3	As per Edges of Dominion.
4-6	As per Heartland of Empire.
7-10	As per Wild Lands.

The Wild Lands

Although the fabled "wild frontiers" of this era have been exaggerated by folks who didn't consider "primitive tribesmen" to be actual people, the Gaslit Mystery era still teems with *wild lands*: Territories where few people have settled and few cultures, if any, have dominated Reality. In such places — deep jungles, vast plains, distant mountain peaks, and so forth — Enlightened technology and complex mysticism both remain affronts to Nature.

Such Territories retain the Primal Reality essence detailed in the entry of that name (**M20**, p. 615), especially the state of nature detailed under the header "Deep Wilderness." Enlightened hypertech is *catastrophic* by default unless it's quite subtle (like a compass instead of a cannon), and the elaborate mystic rituals of distant courts and empires are likewise. The Straits, when they appear, manifest as environmental upheavals: dust storms, earthquakes, tornados, blizzards, and the like. Advanced technology malfunctions or explodes, and occult rituals tend to go poorly, perhaps with literally devilish results.

Converting Territories

Changing the nature of reality — an essential element of **Mage** — becomes especially vital in the Gaslit Mystery setting. For while the Technocratic paradigm exerts a heavy (though not inescapable) influence on the **Ascension** era, **Victorian Mage** presents a tipping point wherein that industrialized future may or may not occur. How *does* the Technocratic Union impose its vision upon the world? And how might other magi resist that imposition while there's still time to change that fate?

Historically speaking, the Technocratic Union establishes global dominion through a brutally efficient combination of genocide, relocation, conversion, indoctrination, and conformity. Established both at home and abroad, this program begins by killing off rival sects and their adherents (quite often their families and, perhaps, whole communities), and then relocates the survivors to reservations, ghettos, plantations, and the like. Mass conversion to new belief systems (like those enforced by Queen Isabella and her Inquisition several centuries earlier) implant new paradigms through coercion and force, while milder (but more pervasive) forms of indoctrination shift beliefs toward the new paradigm, especially among younger people. Finally, instituted conformity presents "right and proper" modes of behavior and social roles by way of schools, religious and civil authorities, factories and offices, advertising and consumerism, popular media, and peer pressure. These techniques are millennia old, but the ruthless drive and global reach of the Technocratic program — worked through the tools of Empire — achieves unprecedented (though not total) success by the early 1900s. When the Order of Reason completes its metamorphosis into the Technocratic Union, those tools have driven the Traditions and Crafts to the margins of the modern world, indoctrinated large segments of the human population, purged the religious and egalitarian elements of the old Order, and wrestled a previously unimaginable degree of control over the limits of possibility.

Within the **Victorian Mage** period, there's still time to stop this process.

How?

The obvious answer, for magi opposing the imperial Technocratic agenda, is to block the forces of Empire. Much of the damage has already been done by 1800, but change remains possible. Akashics and Wulung can overcome their differences and drive out the British East India Company and its opium trade. Magi in the United States can end the slave-based economy, prevent the Westward Expansion, or unite Indigenous American nations against further incursions. Hermetics might encourage Electrodyne Engineers

Of Atrocities and "Progress"

Note that helping European empires commit genocide is a *really* shitty thing to do. Troupes that favor a Luminary chronicle have their work cut out for them if they want to remain good guys during this period. Slavery, racist institutions, and cultural extermination are the historical tactics of this era's empires, and those methods enable the Technocracy's domination in the following centuries. Players wishing to remain on the better side of history would benefit more from moderating their Order's extremities than from battling "hostile natives" in the name of a Technocratic future. Intriguing moral questions can arise from the latter sort of chronicle, of course, but it's worth remembering that "the white man's burden" has an appalling human cost to the people on the receiving side of it.

to quit the budding Technocracy before the die is cast, or Luminaries could undercut the most extreme elements of that Technocracy before it fulfills its genocidal destiny. Time magick might give glimpses of an awful future, spurring magi of the 1800s to prevent the coming horrorshow. If your characters wish to alter or preserve the metaphysical landscape of **Victorian Mage** then they must act to save (or, if they're imperial Technocrats, to destroy) the cultures that preserve traditional ways and paradigms.

Sacrifices of Money, Blood, and Steel

Reality is a harsh mistress. To win her favor, human beings must sacrifice vast amounts of time, effort, belief, treasure, and — quite often — lives. Even then, the results remain uncertain. Although core elements of earthly reality are determined by nature (see "Earthly Foundations" in **M20**, pp. 612-613), the power of human belief can shift metaphysical possibilities — but not easily, and rarely without cost. "Winning a place" over to a particular vision of reality usually involves massive sacrifices made to the idea of what is "real" in that place. A steam locomotive running through the Great Plains, for example, demands titanic investments of money, resources, and especially lives. From the men with the ideas to those mining and driving the steel to those killing the bison herds and exterminating the people calling that region "home" for centuries, the reality behind that steam locomotive's ability to cross those Plains involves human exertions and material expenditures.

Magi can change reality more easily than other mortals can, but such changes still demand a cost.

As detailed in the **M20** entry "Shifting the Zone" (pp. 615-617), player characters can use numerous tactics to adjust the realm of possibility within a Territory: winning people over to your beliefs, driving out people holding the old beliefs, improving or ruining lives, crafting wondrous new things or preserving wondrous old ones, presenting new ways of thinking and living, or else showing why the old ways really *are* best — such activities help Awakened people (and un-Awakened people, too) change human ideas about what is and is not possible. In **Mage**, that sense of possibility determines the parameters of a given Territory. Altering or protecting it involves work on the part of the characters — work, and a sort of sacrifice.

The word *sacrifice* literally means "to make sacred." In metaphysical traditions, that process involves devoting and surrendering something precious to bring about a desirable change. The greater the change, the greater the sacrifice. From a metaphysical perspective, the enormous costs in lives and treasure expended in technological innovations or wars of conquest could be regarded as sacrifices toward a greater

end. Magi of all kinds certainly see it that way, and so, from a **Mage** perspective, things like the extermination of the bison herds or the destruction of Beijing's fortifications aren't just random acts of human violence — they're sacrifices made to bring about a certain vision of the future.

In your **Victorian Mage** chronicle, Territories can be altered or preserved by characters sacrificing time, work, energy, materials, and perhaps lives toward their desired paradigm. Such efforts won't be quick, or easy, or without significant cost. The Awakened One wishing to preserve her ancestral lands might devote her life toward diplomacy and war, uniting her people and their longtime rivals against the forces that would destroy them all and remake their world in someone else's image. The Luminary aspiring to conquer the wilds in the name of her scientific vision must strive in the laboratory, field, and meeting-room before that vision can overcome the challenges involved. Even then, such efforts might fail. Converting Territories in **Victorian Mage** is a long-term process — a foundation for stories or perhaps an entire chronicle. The results, for better and worse, guides the potential of future generations and reshapes the possibilities of Reality itself.

Culture, Context, and the Arts

To accurately understand the nature and context of Victorian magick (and, by extension, the modern concept of "magic" itself), certain cultural elements of that era, its media, and its approach to magic(k) should be addressed:

Of Mass Media and the Shaping of Paradigms

Until the mid-1700s, literacy was largely reserved for people with the luxury to enjoy it. Books were expensive, often difficult to obtain, forbidden to certain classes of people, and impossible to understand without proper schooling. By the Victorian age, however, innovations in printing, papermaking, book binding, education, and distribution have made books and other reading materials more accessible and affordable than ever before. Earlier taxes on such materials are lowered and sometimes abolished, and so international publishing houses begin to distribute literature and information on a global scale. This, in turn, ignites revolutions of thinking — and those revolutions, in turn, ignite revolutions of a bloodier kind. Pens and swords are a potent combination, and when you add printing presses, affordable paper, and universal access to such media, that combination transforms the world.

By the mid-to-late-1800s, other technologies arrive, such as photographs, telegraphs and telephones, electric power, and recorded sound. Combined, these innovations allow people all over the world to experience things that would have been impossible to imagine a few decades earlier. It's easy to take mass media for granted by the 21st century, but in the 1800s such media is magic(k)al in all senses of that word. It bridges time and space, seeding new ideas and enforcing old prejudices. A malcontent in Austria can inspire revolts in China. A reader in Paris can see a corpse at Gettysburg. "Now," as Thomas Edison remarks about his phonograph, "we can hear the voices of the dead." Mass media transforms human perceptions of our world, and the Victorian era marks the beginning of that change.

Magazines, newspapers, and popular novels (including Gothic "penny dreadfuls" and Wild West "dime novels") comprise the most common sorts of this era's mass media. Such media inspires new Mythic Threads and iconic figures, especially when seeding mythologies about the American West and "the mysterious East." Jack the Ripper is a human killer given mythic status by London newspapers, while class etiquette, reflexive consumerism, and the social anxieties behind modern advertising are strictly enforced by periodicals proclaiming what "all the *right* people are doing these days." Scientific journals and occultist pamphlets spread certain theories and practices while condemning others. The Etherite digest, *Paradigma*, is a fictional example of what such publications do in real life. Successful authors like Charles Dickens, Lewis Carroll, Mark Twain, Hans Christian Anderson, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle lay the groundwork for new mythologies. Mystics, too, employ such tools. Éliphas Lévi's infamous "Sabbatic Goat" Baphomet first appears in *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* (1864-65), and H. Rider Haggard's prosperity with popular fiction funds the archetypal Tarot deck he helps publish in 1910. Joined by lithographs, photographs, "magic lantern shows," gramophones, and — by century's end — motion pictures, such media generate myths, spread paradigms, and allow a canny willworker to influence thousands, perhaps millions, of people who, a century earlier, would never have known that person existed.

Of Orientalism and the Noble Savage

Orientalism, according to Palestinian-American professor, Edward W. Said, involves separating "the rational West" from "the mysterious East." Such separation diminishes the humanity and significance of the latter while exalting the accomplishments (real and imaginary) of the former.

That seemingly benign form of Victorian racism fetishizes foreign cultures, especially the "noble savages" of the Americas and Oceania, the "inscrutable Orientals" of Asia and India, and the familiar yet supposedly "exotic" people of the Middle East, North Africa, and the Ottoman Empire. While many Victorian-era Europeans strive to conquer those foreign lands, rebellious bohemians embrace and romanticize the "simple ways" of "those mysterious noble savages." Both viewpoints, of course, involve plundering goods and customs from different cultures and then either bringing them home as trophies to display or else "going native — back to the land" by way of

cultural tourism and appropriation. For the people on the receiving end of such attentions, the results are usually the same.

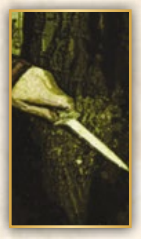
Despite its cost to the people and cultures in question, the Victorian fascination with foreign goods and traditions fills the era's studies, drawing rooms, and clubs with Persian rugs, Indian artwork, Japanese paper products (gift-wrapping, according to many sources, originates in Japan), clothing and wallpapers patterned with Asian and Indian designs, "wooden Indians," foreign weapons and armor, translations of foreign books, dead-animal trophies, and all the bric-a-brac a Victorian home can hold. For some adventurous souls, this may also include an array of "exotic skills" like yoga, Chinese fighting arts, and woodcraft learned (respectfully or otherwise) from Native American guides.

Many occult practices of the Victorian era combine European magical traditions (many of which have Middle Eastern origins anyway) with disciplines and concepts learned, bought, or outright stolen from Asian, African, and American cultures. "Magical tourism" is a popular pastime among moneyed occultists of this era, with Madame Blavatsky and Aleister Crowley being especially influential participants. Egyptophilia becomes an especially lucrative — and culturally destructive — industry during the 1800s, with portions of Egypt being figuratively and literally sold off to European fashionistas — much to the annoyance of the people who don't profit from the selling of their past.

Meanwhile, artists, philosophers, anthropologists, and romantic rebels flock to the "unspoiled" lands and peoples of Oceania, Africa, and South America, hoping to cleanse their European souls of the toxins of an industrial age. What this looks like in reality involves some rich man assembling an array of "mistresses" (often underage), setting himself up as a low-grade plantation master, and typically drinking himself to death, dying of disease, returning to his homeland vastly richer or poorer, or winding up on the receiving end of "hostiles" who become, shall we say, *disenchanted* with his appreciation of their ways and women. Some "simple-life" devotees do actually integrate respectfully into the cultures they admire, but the majority remain tourists in someone else's home.

Even in the 21st century, orientalist Victorian stereotypes dominate politics and popular entertainment. While such tropes are authentically "traditional" to Victorian-era narratives, your **Victorian Mage** adventures would be served better by flipping those tropes on their heads, emphasizing humanity over stereotypes and cultural respect over imperial delusions.

Enlightened Arts: Focus in the Victorian Era



Despite its industrial tenor, the 19th century is the cornerstone of modern occultism. Much of what popular culture calls "western magic" is rooted in the practices of Victorian artists, magicians, and sundry malcontents whose antics fuel the imaginations of later mystic practitioners. Most everyday modern technology, too, comes from the same age and the energies that drive it. Electric light and Pagan Wicca originate in this era, and so **Victorian Mage** characters have a broad yet familiar range of paradigms, practices, and instruments.

As detailed in the **M20** section "Focus and the Arts" (pp. 565-600), and its **Book of Secrets** supplementary chapter "Matters of Focus" (pp. 167-209), **Mage** characters focus their Sphere Effects through a combination of belief, activities, and tools. (Paradigm + practice + instruments = focus) **Victorian Mage** employs the same rules, with many of the same paradigms, practices, and instruments intact. That said, certain creeds and practices are especially relevant in the Gaslit Mystery setting, while others differ from their presentations in **M20** and its sourcebooks. The details can be found in the following entries. For more information about focus elements, see the **M20** rulebook (pp. 568-600), **The Book of Secrets** (pp. 188-209), and **The Book of the Fallen** (pp. 127-151).

The Heart of Victorian Metaphysical Arts

Understanding Victorian magick in its various forms also requires an understanding of the primary tension in this era: innovation versus tradition. At the one extreme, new technologies and nations create unprecedented possibilities; on the other extreme, those possibilities threaten, transform, and destroy the world as people have known it before. That tension between creation and destruction isn't new, but the *extremity* of it is. In the Victorian age, that extremity inspires and informs how people pursue magic, technology, and the places where one becomes the other. For **Victorian Mage** players, that tension shapes the way your characters pursue their Arts.

Enlightened Technologies

If the 20th century is driven by the urge to *understand*, the 19th century is driven by an urge to *accomplish*. From the scientific method to the automobile, much of the groundwork for future centuries is laid by the accomplishments of the 1880s. For technomancers of all kinds in **Mage**, the beliefs, activities, and tools of this era attain amazing urgency. In both the Awakened world and the world of the Masses, technological innovations leap forward in ways humanity has never seen before.

As the Industrial Revolution takes shape in the late 1700s and propels the following centuries, people devoted to innovation create technological miracles — the *craftwork*, *weird science*, and *hypertech* of this era — and, occasionally, the *infernal sciences* of it, too. Inquiries into mental states and powers spark a craze for *psionic* Arts and novel forms of *psychotherapy* (see p. 147). Modern medical advances, meanwhile, reflect a new approach to the *medicine-work* practice. In real life, much of what we consider "western

Common Victorian–Era Focus Elements

M20 = **Mage 20th Anniversary Edition**
BoS = **The Book of Secrets**
BoF = **The Book of the Fallen**

Common Victorian Paradigms

A Mechanistic Cosmos	M20
A World of Gods and Monsters	M20
All Power Comes from God(s)	M20
Ancient Wisdom is the Key	BoS
Ancestor Veneration	BoS
Barbarism is the Truest State of Man	BoF
Bring Back the Golden Age!	M20
Creation's Divine and Alive	M20
Divine Order and Earthly Chaos	M20
Everyone's Against Me	BoF
Existence is Unknowable, Irrational, and Sublime	BoF
Forbidden Wisdom is the Truest Source of Power	BoF
I'm a Predator, the World is Prey	BoF
Indulgence is Nature's Only Law	BoF
Might is Right	M20
Only the Strongest Deserve to Survive	BoF
Rebellion is the Road to Transcendence	BoF
Transcend Your Limits	BoS
We are Meant to be Wild	BoS

Common Victorian Practices

Alchemy	M20
Animalism	BoS
Art of Desire	M20
Craftwork	M20
Crazy Wisdom	M20
Demonism	BoF
Dominion	M20
Faith	M20
Feralism	BoS
Goetia	BoF
God-Bonding	BoS
High Ritual Magick	M20
Infernal Sciences	BoF
Invigoration	BoS
Maleficia	M20
Martial Arts	M20
Medicine-Work	M20
Mediumship	BoS
Psionics	BoS
Shamanism	M20
Tantra	BoF
Vamamarga	BoF
Voudoun	M20
Weird Science	M20
Witchcraft	M20
Yoga	M20

Common Victorian Instruments

Armor	M20
Atrocity	BoF
Body Modification	BoS
Bodywork	M20
Blessings and Curses	M20
Bones and Remains	M20
Books and Periodicals	M20
Brews and Concoctions	M20
Cannibalism	BoS
Cards and Instruments of Chance	M20
Celestial Alignments	M20
Circles and Designs	M20
Crossroads and Crossing-Days	M20
Cups and Vessels	M20
Dances and Movement	M20
Devices and Machines	M20
Drugs and Poisons	M20
Elements	M20
Energy	M20
Eye Contact	M20
Fashion	M20
Food and Drink	M20
Formulae and Math	M20
Gadgets and Inventions	M20
Group Rites	M20
Herbs and Plants	M20
Household Tools	M20
Knots and Ropes	M20
Labs and Gear	M20
Languages	M20
Mass Media	M20
Medical Procedures	BoS
Meditation	M20
Money and Wealth	M20
Music	M20
Mutilation	BoF
Numbers and Numerology	M20
Offerings and Sacrifices	M20
Ordeals and Exertions	M20
Prayers and Invocations	M20
Sacred Iconography	M20
Sex and Sexuality	M20
Symbols	M20
Torment	BoF
Transgression	BoS
True Names	M20
Vehicles	M20
Voice and Vocalizations	M20
Wands and Staves	M20
Weapons	M20
Writings, Inscriptions, and Runes	M20

medicine" originates with the advances of this era. On the uglier side of that coin, mad fictional doctors like Moreau and Frankenstein channel those innovations toward horrifying extremes, reflecting real-world medical monstrosities like racial science, eugenics, patent medicines (and their addictive properties), and the surgical torments inflicted on slaves, convicts, and other "lesser peoples" in the name of scientific inquiry.

The mentality behind those extremities — the idea that superior people and cultures have an innate right, even a duty, to exploit and transform "inferior" species — inspires not only science but occultism in this era. The writings of Charles Darwin (often taken out of context even today) enhance the imperial philosophy that *might is right* and so *only the strongest deserve to survive*. After all, such paradigms assert, in the proverbial dog-eat-dog world (another Victorian expression), survival depends upon the strength to do what must be done. Those lacking that strength rightfully wind up at the bottom of the heap, and so the superior person wastes no tears on the suffering of lesser beings. This idea isn't exactly *new* in the Victorian era, but that philosophy underscores the paradigms of Luminaries and mystics alike.

Where man once bent his knee at the altars of gods, this era sees man exalt himself — and yes, historically speaking, other genders get excluded from that process, although **Mage**'s Awakened people can enforce a change of heart. Practices like *dominion* and *invigoration* attain scientific respectability in the Gaslit Mystery era, inspiring a trend toward physical fitness even among the intellectual and monied classes. Instruments like *fashion*, *money*, and other forms of social influence, join a new and incredibly potent tool of transformation: *mass media*. Technological refinement and global trade enhance the potency and possibilities of *brews and concoctions*, *food and drink*, and *drugs and poisons* — just ask Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde! Meanwhile, advancements in engineering and materials craft *weapons* and *vehicles* like nothing ever seen before. Such creations might have been Daedalean Wonders in previous centuries, but revolver pistols, cartridge ammunition, steamships, and locomotives transform the world of common men as well. By the century's end, historically speaking, the old world has surrendered to the new.

Traditional Disciplines

The old world, however, is not going down without a fight. Where Luminaries seek innovation, mystics embrace tradition with righteous fervor. The religious fundamentalist movements that wrack the 20th and 21st centuries ignite in the Victorian age, kindled by the rational tide of industrial technology. Medievalism, Neo-Paganism, and other "traditionalist" movements rise in European nations while other cultures struggle to preserve their heritage from the crush of those same nations. "False Face" mystics protect the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) alliance, while *inyangas* heal wounds and guide the future. Meiji Japan, Manchu China, Ethiopia and Zululand, India under the Raj, and Russia under the modernizing czars Catharine and Peter all attempt a precarious balance of innovation and tradition, catching their rulers between technological transformation and mystic conservatism. "The sorcery of their evil religion" guides British cannon bombarding Canton, and so groups like the White Lotus Society hold tighter to their ancestral Arts. From the bloody cliffs of Madagascar to the tent revivals of the American South, tradition forms a bulwark against invasive change.

Traditional mystics assert that the old ways are best, seeking to *bring back the Golden Age* in *a world of gods and monsters*. *Ancient wisdom is the key* to returning things to the way they should have been, and so *ancestor veneration*, *divine order*, and perhaps even *barbarism* provide a nobler road to power than the awful products of progress gone berserk.

That last idea — the concept that *we are meant to be wild* — is a common paradigm among European and Euro-American magi disgusted with the march of industrial civilization. Embracing the (quaintly racist) archetype of the Noble Savage, these rebel children of Empire look back toward a mythic "simpler age." Adapting the (literally Romanticized) impression of Pagan Celts or Native Americans, they prefer archaic practices and tools over modern technologies. Combined with mass media, this urge inspires potent mythic archetypes like the Alien Princess, the Mountain Man, and a certain Lord of the Apes.

Tradition-minded magi practice thousands of cultural variations on *alchemy*, *faith*, *medicine-work*, *shamanism*, *witchcraft*, *High Ritual Magick*, *animalism*, *god-bonding*, *demonism* and *Goetia*, *martial arts*, *yoga*, and even — in extreme cases — *feralism*. Depending upon their culture and heritage, such magi could be Shaolin monks, Hindu *siddhi*, Jewish rabbis, Catholic priests, Nordic rune-workers, Lakota medicine-men, Southern American Pentecostals, Sami shamans, Hawai'ian *kuhunas*, Bedouin *imans*, Zulu *inyanga*, or any sort of magic-worker embracing a pre-industrial tradition. Such practitioners shun modern trespassers and protect their ancestral ways from adoption and extermination. A few, like Swami Vivekananda, may choose to share those practices with outsiders, especially if it involves money, friendship, and alliances. As various empires grind those cultures down, however, most traditionalists dig in deeper and become — when need be — more militant, if only for survival's sake.

Syncretism and the Rebel Arts

Between those two extremes, most practitioners of occult Arts favor a syncretic approach melding tradition with innovation. While this isn't exactly a novel approach (magicians have combined Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, and Northern European practices since the Classical era, if not earlier), the global reach of Empire introduces Chinese, Tibetan, Indian, West African, and Indigenous American elements to the older practices. Napoleon's conquest of Egypt at the cusp of the 1800s inspires a craze in Egyptian *High Ritual Magick*, while Romantic and Pre-Raphaelite rebels explore the Pagan heritage of Greek, Roman, British, Slavic, German, and Scandinavian *witchcraft*. Decadent malcontents dredge through their Christian heritage for heretical doctrines and

outright *demonism*, sprinkling them with handfuls of "exotic" seasoning from Asian, Turkish, and Middle Eastern ritual Arts. The new *mediumships* of *Theosophy* (see **The Book of Secrets**, p. 205) and the *séance* (p. 149) sweep through Northern and Eastern Europe throughout the century, along with a craze for stage magic that reaches a peak in the early 1900s. Popular *Orientalism* (see the entry of that name, p. 141) excites interest in mythic Arabia and Persia, and a fascination with "strange secrets of the East." While much of the resulting occultism could fairly be called *cultural appropriation* (see **The Book of Secrets**, pp. 290-291, "Taking Other People's Stuff?"), that synthesis of traditions provides a foundation for mystic practices throughout the next two centuries and inspires a *bardic* sort of *decadentism* (below).

That fascination is often mutual, especially in Asia, where Korea, China, India, and especially Japan embrace and integrate many European ideas and technologies. Although Christian *faith* has a rough history in Asia (except in Korea, where it takes hold), the *craftwork* of industrial Europe melds with Asian physical and metaphysical technologies — so much so that Japan becomes a fully modern military power by 1900. *Martial artists* trade techniques between East and West, creating an array of new practices in addition to much older forms. *Yoga* — an Indian practice with ancient roots but disputed historicity — becomes a common element of metaphysical disciplines by the end of this period, in part because Hindu practitioners tour the globe introducing yoga to new devotees while synergizing other practices with yoga along the way. Although Europeans exploit their global "possessions" for all they're worth, a certain degree of cultural and occult influence runs both ways.

Across Africa and the Middle East, the longtime fusion of Islam and pre-Islamic science and mysticism produces elaborate disciplines of *alchemy* (an Arabic word), *faith*, *craftwork*, and *High Ritual Magick*, sometimes interwoven with Christian and Jewish influences. Further south, the Bantu culture retains its ancient traditions of *mediumship*, *ancestor veneration* (see **The Book of Secrets**, p. 193), *faith* in a Creator with numerous spirit-servants, *umuthi omhlope* (*medicine-work*), and its sinister counterpart *umuthi omnyama* (*witchcraft*). European Christians strive to gain a metaphysical foothold in the lands of Shaka Zulu, but they won't succeed until the 20th century — if they ever succeed at all.

Meanwhile, West African survivors of the slave trade's Middle Passage create potent new spiritual paths from the conflux of Yoruba, French and Iberian Catholic, and the Indigenous Caribbean and South American people and traditions. Under a variety of names, these "voodoo" practices provide strength, community, comfort, and power for people who must create new cultures under the worst imaginable circumstances. (For details, see p. 150, as well as the entries for Voudoun in **M20**, p. 583, and the Loa in **Gods & Monsters**, pp. 169-179.) Further north, many Indigenous American people — notably those from the Cherokee, Apache, and Comanche cultures, the Great Sioux Nation, and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy — adopt technologies and creeds from the European invaders, integrate those elements with their ancestral cultures, and create syncretic practices that will (for better and worse) inspire the popular image of Indian warriors and the *medicine-work* of "Native American magic." The cultural crossroads of Mexico inspires a vibrant *faith* of its own, with other distinct synergies developing in Brazil, the Caribbean, Colombia, and elsewhere. By the 1800s, hundreds of new and diverse practices range across the American continents.

Within **Victorian Mage**, syncretic practices feature almost any paradigm imaginable. Religious practices credit their miracles to divine providence (*all power comes from god(s)*, *Creation's divine and alive*, *divine order and earthly chaos*, etc.), while those influenced by Buddhist philosophy and Hindu metaphysics often look beyond gods for ultimate transcendence (*everything's an illusion*, *existence is unknowable, irrational, and sublime*). Rationalist practices employ materialist paradigms (*a mechanistic cosmos*, *indulgence is nature's only law*, *turning the keys to reality*), occasionally looking to superhuman forces that are not "gods" per se (*aliens make us what we are*, *ancient wisdom is the key*, *we are NOT men*). Although truly existential paradigms (*I am All*), or those based in complex technology (*everything is data*) are rare in this period, they *do* exist within certain practices. By the century's end, the foundations are laid for future generations and the magicks they pursue.

Noted Innovations of Victorian Occultism

Metaphysical practitioners of the 19th century enjoy a seemingly bottomless bag of tricks. While many of those beliefs, practices, and tools have been around for centuries, if not millennia, Victorian occultism features several important innovations — movements and disciplines that attain great significance during the 1800s even if they have far older origins. The vast majority of the people and groups involved in these movements do not have a magickal bone in their bodies. Each movement, though, attracts Awakened practitioners and sects, provides focus for Awakened Arts, and spreads — if only through the cracks of mainstream society — the idea that there's more to life than the industrial grind.

Among the most notable of those innovations, we find:

Decadentism

Named for the louche behavior and dissipated impression of its devotees, the *Decadent* art movement prizes crime, transgression, intoxication, blasphemy, "the derangement of the senses," and the self-destructive pursuit of sublime revelations through profane activities. The movement kicks off with the Romantics of the late 1700s, then deepens in intensity until the early 1900s, when the *Fin de siècle* ("End of the Age") frenzy surrenders to the 20th century. Epitomized by the saying, "Live fast, die young, and leave a beautiful corpse," the Decadent lifestyle buggers propriety for the sheer hell of it. Beneath that hedonism, though, runs a rich metaphysical undercurrent. Ghosts, dreams, metaphors, spir-

itual hunger, and willfully outrageous fashion and behavior drive Decadent philosophies, art, and magic. The latter is an obsession among Romantics, Decadents, and the capital-B Bohemians of Russia, who often view themselves as fallen angels reflecting a broken world.

In **Mage** terms, Decadent occultism is a sort of *bardic gutter magick* laced with *crazy wisdom*, *witchcraft*, and often *demonism*. The later trinity of sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll is presaged by Decadent occultism's favorite tools: *sex and sensuality*, *drugs*, *artwork*, and *music*. The Hollow One sect originates within this movement, and the Ecstatic Tradition is balls-deep in it. Nephandi, of course, employ Decadent philosophies in the mode of the Marquis de Sade, and handfuls of Verbenae, Hermetics, and perhaps even Etherites can be found downing a few pints while arguing drunkenly with artists, poets, muses, and cads. *Chaos magick* swirls up from the Decadent underground, with future icons like Aleister Crowley, "Pixie" Colman-Smith, and Austin Osman Spare emerging from the later era of Decadent occultism to lay the path toward modern magick.

Demi-Hermetic Societies and Their Secret Masters

Victorian gentlemen love secret societies. Despite heretical trappings and ominous initiation rites (or, more likely, *because* of those things), European cellars, drawing-rooms, lodges, and groves host thousands of demi-Hermetic occult societies. A handful of such sects appear in North America, India, North Africa, and other places where Empire rests its head, but although secret societies are common worldwide, the wave of European occult fraternities that greets "the Age of Reason" casts a heavy shadow on global politics — especially when the Awakened are involved.

In later years, conspiracy theories whisper about groups like the Bavarian Illuminati, the Hell-Fire Club, the Theosophical Society, the Kabbalistic Order of the Rose + Cross, the Hermetic Brotherhood of Luxor, the Ancient Order of the Aeon Rites, the Enlightened Society of the Weeping Moon, the Skull and Bones Society and, of course, the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Connected by a common thread of alchemical symbols and quasi-Egyptian rituals filtered through Catholic and Jewish ceremonial mysticism, these societies supposedly plot world domination and govern the tides of commerce and politics. A few, notably the Theosophical Society, speak of benevolent *Secret Masters* whose mystic enlightenment grants them inhuman powers and global influence. On a darker variation of that theme, antisemitic blood libels spawn rumors of malign Jewish sorcerers seeking global domination through forbidden magicks. Composer Richard Wagner (himself a Christo-Pagan mystic) propagates these rumors, which combine — by the 1930s — with a late-Victorian Czarist Russian forgery called *The Protocols of the Meetings of the Learned Elders of Zion*. The results of that unholy synthesis include Nazism, the Holocaust, and anti-Jewish conspiracy theories which persist to this day.

For the most part, these Demi-Hermetic groups are drinking societies with pretensions of importance. A few of them feature sincere metaphysical pursuits, and many of them plot altruistic social reforms. Most of them exclude women, though a few — notably the Theosophical Society, the Hellfire Club, and the Golden Dawn — accept, welcome, or are founded outright by "the fairer sex." The modern Western occult ceremonial tradition is constructed through concepts and rites credited to (or blamed upon) Rosicrucians, Freemasons, Illuminati, Templars, and so forth, with their influence discernible in the American and French Revolutions, the Unification of Germany, and the eventual emergence of fascist and Nazi ideologies. In the Victorian era, any White European gentleman of means belongs to at least one of these societies. Most have nothing whatsoever to do with True Magick.

But a handful of them do.

Which groups, *what* Awakened factions, and *how much* influence they exert upon those secret societies is a matter for the **Victorian Mage** Storyteller. The Order of Hermes is certainly involved and employs such societies as vessels for training, recruiting, and weeding out potential allies and magi while propagating dangerous ideas in willing minds. Every Luminary Lodge has its fingers in the local occult orders, of course, if only to keep track of who's saying what about whom. The Craftmasons practically built this network during the High Middle Ages, and their decline seems especially tragic in light of the prevalence of occult societies. Though few occultist "Templars" hold any connection to the true Knights, a few Enlightened warriors of Christ still watch from the back of the room in the orders that bear their name. Batini and Ecstatics, Solificati and Etherites, Fallen corruptors and the occasional Bedlamite — the demi-Hermetic underworld shelters them all. Each True Magus or Luminary involved nudges their fellowship a bit closer toward the Awakened group's agenda. It's a treacherous dance with occasionally fatal missteps. Meanwhile, these clandestine fellowships gather, most members unaware that True Magick sits right next to them, often plotting greater things than these robed pretenders could possibly imagine…

Focus-wise, these societies favor *alchemy*, *High Ritual Magick*, occasionally *maleficia*, sometimes *sex and sensuality*, and quite often the *Art of Desire*. Their tools are legion, but they favor the trappings of Greek, Egyptian, Orientalist, and Kabbalistic traditions as viewed by European gentiles who seldom understand them at all. For more information about Theosophy, occult fascism, and Ascended Masters, see **The Book of Secrets**, Chapters Three and Five (pp. 205 and 289). Regarding the influence of Awakened sects among the Masses, see the same book, Chapter Four (pp. 219-222, 230-233, 237-240, and 242-243).

Invention, Hypertech, and Weird Science

This is the age of wild science; technologies of earlier eras combine with industrial production, the budding scientific method, and an anything-goes approach that's brilliantly

bizarre. Historically speaking, innovations of this century provide the best and worst elements of the coming ones. From a **Mage** perspective, the Victorian heyday of weird inventions might be the last time science allows for such radical extremes. The Technocratic Consensus of the 20th century has not yet ossified, and so technomancers of all kinds — most especially the Etherites — can unleash their strangest theories and machines.

Depending on the Storyteller's wishes, this aspect of **Victorian Mage** could involve exaggerations of mundane technology appearing a decade or so earlier than they do historically — Gatling guns, for example, mowing down the Light Brigade, or Mississippi riverboats with electric power. Alternately, your chronicle could veer into outright steampunk on a scale too vast to address in this book: dirigible gunships, lightning-powered HIT Mark prototypes, the works. Shelly, Wells, Verne, and Burroughs might reflect the reality of hypertech in a **Victorian Mage** game in which subtle occultism gives way to steampunk technomagick.

Focus-wise, Victorian hypertech essentially *is* weird science and vice versa. *Cybernetics* are rare but possible, and *body modification* is frighteningly common. Modern *hyper-economics* originate in the Gilded Age, and *craftwork* of all kinds achieves spectacular results. Although specifics depend upon the Storyteller's plans, technological constructs and reanimates (detailed in **Gods & Monsters**, pp. 85-91 and 184-186) fit perfectly into Victorian fiction tropes. Depending on the Territory (detailed earlier in this chapter), wild technology might be *uncanny*, *catastrophic*, or perhaps — in a steampunk-flavor chronicle — even *elegant*.

Hypnosis, Mesmerism, and Psychotherapy

Occupying the hazy space between rational science and metaphysical speculation, psychotherapy focuses on the workings of human consciousness and the healing of its injuries. Various forms of psychotherapy have existed since antiquity, with significant disciplines including the medieval Islamic practice of *tibb al-qalb* ("healing the mind"), the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, and the Ayahuasca sacraments of Peruvian medicine-folk. Modern psychotherapy disciplines, however, germinate in the "moral treatment" movement of 18th century Europe, where healers sought humane treatments for mental illness. By the late Victorian period, Wilhelm Wundt, Sigmund Freud, and Carl Jung have honed the hypnotic techniques of Franz Mesmer into a synthesis of scientific methods and philosophical reflection. Freud-style rationalism dominates later approaches to psychology, but Jung's mysticism (which appears, at least for now, to have had the last laugh) more accurately reflects the state of

Victorian psychotherapy — an approach favored by certain magi of the era.

From a **Mage** perspective, the various forms of psychotherapy focus Mind and Life Effects (possibly high-level Entropy, too) through *eye contact*, *drugs*, *meditation*, *social domination*, and occasional *devices*, *machines*, *gadgets*, and *inventions*. Associated practices include *dominion*, *invigoration*, *crazy wisdom*, *medicine-work*, *weird science*, and, of course, *psionics*. Akashayana and the Skeleton Keys excel at such Arts, but any magus or Luminary of suitable inclinations can pursue them. The growing popularity of such treatments and techniques makes such therapy a very potent tool (and weapon) of this era.

For a wide range of Effects that may be associated with this approach, see **How Do You DO That?** entries for "Energy-Work" (pp. 42-51) and "Uncanny Influence" (pp. 114-136).

Martial Arts

The intense, often combative, and occasionally collaborative intersections of culture and violence in the Victorian era result in an unprecedented wave of martial-arts techniques spreading across the world. Though many of those disciplines come from China and Japan (and often travel westward by way of being used against British, French, and American trespassers), other martial arts from this age hail from Africa, the Americas, India, and even Europe itself. Immigrants bring their traditional fighting styles with them, and soldiers shipped overseas do likewise. In the process, whole new forms — including capoeira, *Bartitsu*, *savate du rue*, and modern boxing — either originate or advance during the 1800s. Often considered magical by folks who've never seen them before, such esoteric disciplines let practitioners do seemingly superhuman things. As magi know, the deeper levels of martial arts do involve magic(k), and such "ancient secrets of the mysterious Orient" facilitate uncanny feats of might, stealth, and mental acumen.

A detailed treatment of Victorian martial arts exceeds the limitations of this book. In **Mage**-system terms, an Enlightened practitioner can use the martial arts practice to focus a wide range of feats that are detailed in the **M20** rulebook (pp. 423-430 and 448-449), **The Book of Secrets** (pp. 102-111 and 186-187), and **How Do You DO That?** (pp. 57-69). Many martial arts techniques remain elegant in most Territories; the most awesome stunts (chi-flight, bullet-catching, and so forth), however, are uncanny at best and often catastrophic except in Territories guided by kung fu legendry.

Medievalism and Neo-Paganism

While many Victorians look forward, some look back. The *medievalist* and *Neo-Pagan* movements so familiar by the late 1900s originated in the late 1700s, born from revulsion against the Industrial Revolution and a yearning for a literally Romantic past. Inflamed by the poetry of Shelly, the imagery of Blake, the Masonic allure of Mozart, Scott's best-selling novel *Ivanhoe* (1819), and the republication of Malory's venerable *Le Morte d'Arthur*, Romantic rebels embraced a glorious vision of medieval times, far removed from the dour realities of that age. Knights and castles, dragons and maidens fair become staples of European art and poetry by the time Victoria ascends the throne. From the Brothers Grimm to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and its associated women, medievalism and Neo-Paganism (both terms of which originate in this period) carve poetic impressions in Victorian popular culture and magick. Though largely innocuous, this bygone fascination inspires not only Wicca, modern Druidism, Wagner's operas, and *The Lord of the Rings*, but also German nationalism, militant occult societies like the Fenian Brotherhood, the Germanenorden, and the Thule-Gesellscahaft and — in its disastrous extreme — Nazism and certain aspects of the neo-Fascist anarcho-primitivist revival.

Naturally, Victorian magi are up to their necks in these movements.

In some ways, the entire Mythic Ages concept championed by the Nine Traditions is rooted in Victorian medievalism. The Verbenae, Ecstatics, and Hermetics are its most ardent proponents, but by the late 20th century, the idea becomes a rallying banner for the entire Council.

Of the Thuggee

A fixture of Victorian horror stories, lurid news accounts, and the pulp yarns of a later era, the heretical Kali cult, known in English as *Thuggee,* becomes a thorn in the side of British authorities during the Gaslit Mystery era. The true extent of the cult has been exaggerated in real life, and it may not have existed at all, but a **Victorian Mage** game set in or around India might cross paths with those labeled as Thuggee — often by reputation, perhaps in person.

Stories of the Thuggee involve a secret society (or, more likely, several different societies) of bandits who befriend travelers, assassinate them, take their belongings, and then ritually mutilate their bodies in the name of Bhowanee, a destroyer aspect of Kali. During the British occupation, the name also gets applied to anti-colonial revolutionaries who may or may not worship Kali, or who betray their traveling companions. Although it's often associated with yoga and Tantra of the Left-Hand Path, Thuggee is more of a martial cult than a mystic one. It's also — thanks to racist folklore — a potentially offensive trope, so although Thuggee cultists are authentically Victorian in feel, a Storyteller may well decide to limit these villains to rumor and threat.

For more about Thuggee from a **Mage** perspective, see that entry in the heresies section of **The Book of the Fallen** (p. 131).

In the Gaslit Mystery era, those three Traditions grasp the poetic implications of medievalist fascination; they nurture it, spread it, and may even have seeded the concept in the first place. Outside the Council ranks, some Hollow magi, Hippolytoi, and (naturally) Templars participate as well, their small numbers increased by the romantic figures they cast within such groups. The concept makes its way to the Americas, too, mostly by way of Scottish, Irish, German, French, and English immigrants during the 1800s. The later immigration of Italians, Greeks, Spaniards, and Sicilians brings along a Mediterranean sort of medievalism, too; and with them, a tiny yet significant number of Awakened mystics favoring the Old Ways.

Although traditionalist Verbenae and Dream-Speakers can honestly claim an ancient pedigree, medievalists and Neo-Pagans employ a synthesis of modern and pre-Christian practices (see "Syncretism and the Rebel Arts," above). Their "old ways" draw from slivers of pre-Christian European rites and mythology, filtered through Christian mysticism, witch-craze folklore, and *High Ritual* occultism. As the century progresses, some practitioners include elements of Hindu and Indigenous American metaphysics into the stew, occasionally adding bits of voodoo (below) as well. Inspired by fanciful art and literature, their practices — mostly *bardism*, *witchcraft*, and *invigoration*, with elements of *shamanism*, *High Ritual*, Indigenous *medicine-work*, and sometimes *feralism* — medievalist and Neo-Pagan practitioners employ *herbs*, *group rites*, *armor and weapons*, *artwork* and *music*, *wands and staves*, and other trappings of bygone romance. *Sex and sensuality* draw many practitioners to this approach; especially in the stifled air of Victorian propriety, the allure of nude paintings and dancing naked in the woods is too much for some folks to resist!

For the most part, medievalism favors a Christian Romantic philosophy, while Neo-Paganism favors the wild Old Gods instead. The core of both approaches can be summed up as *bringing back the Golden Age* because, of course, *ancient wisdom is the key*. Sinister elements of these subcultures favor *indulgence* and *forbidden wisdom*, insisting that *might is right*, and *I am a predator and the world is my prey*.

Spiritualism and the Séance

Every dead person leaves living folks behind. In the shadow of loss, those people might be willing to do *anything* to contact their loved ones again. As wars and sickness ravage continents, the Spiritualism movement arises. Oddly enough, it begins in a quiet, rural slice of upstate New York. By the century's end, however, Spiritualism claims over eight million devotees worldwide, most of them in North America and Western Europe. Germinating from the Second Great Awakening (an American Christian revivalist movement tied to the Romantic movement) in the late 1700s, Spiritualism asserts that dead souls continue to exist and "live" in an Otherworld parallel to our own. In the World of Darkness, that contention isn't wrong, although the Spiritualist view of ghosts as essentially benevolent "evolved beings" on a higher plane certainly *is*.

As a metaphysical path, Spiritualism blends *mediumship*, *faith*, and *psionics* with tinges of human-spirit *shamanism*. Devotees contact "spirit guides" among the Restless Dead, commune with them through trances, psychic contact, and physical codes like knocking on tables and other surfaces, and then talk to them, put them in contact with grieving family members, ask them for favors or advice, and sometimes perform uncanny feats like levitation, ectoplasmic manifestations, and other ghostly phenomena. In **Wraith:**

The Oblivion terms, Spiritualist mediums offer themselves as fetters and channels for allied wraiths. Anyone familiar with **Wraith** and its Shadowlands knows why this is a terrible idea. To its detractors (and it has many), Spiritualism is a form of witchcraft. Some critics even blame the Civil War on Spiritualist activities. In the Gaslit Mystery era, those critics might be somewhat right.

Despite their preoccupation with the dead, Spiritualist practitioners seem to be optimistic, even naïve, in their paradigms. *It's all good — have faith!* is a common assertion among such people, though the degree to which they believe that is open to debate. A ghostly variation of the idea that *aliens make us what we are* perhaps speaks more accurately for the beliefs of Spiritualism practitioners, though the idea that ghostly contact helps mortals to *turn the keys to reality* might be a paradigm, as well. Spiritualists tend to have a spirit guide or two (in **Mage** terms, the Merit: *Spirit Mentor*), and an Awakened medium might employ sophisticated necromancy, too (as detailed in **How Do You DO That?** pp. 84-89). Because there's no prohibition about making money with Spiritualist talents, skilled mediums tend to become quite rich. The *séance* (from an Old French word for "sitting") is a popular pastime in the Victorian era, and that ritual's participants often pay handsomely for contact with a loved one's ghost or an exciting experience with phantasmal displays. Beneath a Spiritualist's kindly demeanor might lurk Nephandic tempters or High Guild profiteers. Especially given the bitter nature of the Restless Dead, Spiritualism (much like the related Ouija spirit-board, which historically appears in 1890 and turns séances into a parlor game) could be potentially more dangerous than it appears.

Stage Magic

A thrilling meld of technology and showmanship, stage magic achieves unprecedented popularity in the 1800s. Perhaps it's the sense of wonder people seek in this newly industrialized world; or the ability to perform miracles openly without fear of being burnt for witchcraft; or the refinement of material and physical disciplines that take old tricks to new heights. Whatever the reason, escapists, acrobats, stage magicians, and similar performers do seemingly impossible things while assuring their audiences that it's simply an illusion.

Such performers hype their artistry with mystic trappings: exotic names and costumes, extravagant claims with racist connotations, baroque theatricality mixed with the morbid allure of seeing something go horribly wrong. These now-familiar carnival tropes are essential elements of Victorian stage magic. Such magicians walk the proverbial (sometimes literal) tightrope between supernatural suggestion and rational explanations. Their audiences come to be dazzled, and leave assured that nothing *truly* threatening was going on — or *was* it?

Mage-wise, Victorian stage magic employs *bardism* and the *Art of Desire* with a *High Ritual* and sometimes a *shamanic* or *feral* mystique. Behind the scenes, Awakened practitioners use their Arts (and often technological *craftwork*) through practices like *invigoration*, *dominion*, *psionics*, *mediumship*, *animalism*, and perhaps *weird science*. Philosophically, stage magic helps break down the rationalist worldview without attracting the wrong sort of attention. Oh, and it can make a lot of money, too, especially if that "fake" magician can do things no skeptic can debunk.

In game terms, the secondary Talent: *Blatancy* helps make *uncanny* or *catastrophic* Effects seem *elegant* through the use of stage magic. Although the feat must *seem* as though it could be a clever trick, the popularity of stage magic in the Victorian era makes it much easier to perform such tricks within an accommodating Territory.

Vision–Dance Prophecy

Popularly known as the *Ghost Dance* (which was one of several vision-dance movements), vision-dancing involves a prophetic spiritual drive to eliminate the white presence in Indigenous American lands. Inspired by visions from the Paiute prophet, Wovoka, in the late 1800s, the movement emphasizes a return to ancestral tradition and personal virtue, a purge of European influence, and a spiritual revival that would sweep away the invaders and restore harmony and prosperity to the People of the Land. Whether that purge-and-sweep revival would be peaceful or not depends on who you ask. White authorities decide it's not, and their historical crackdowns on the vision-dance movements culminate in the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee.

For practitioners of the vision-dance, the movement unites Native American peoples, forgives old rivalries, involves deep prayer and spiritual purification, seeks prophetic visions, and employs large communal round-dances set to resonant beats, chants, and music. **Mage**-wise, vision-dance ceremonies combine *faith*, *High Ritual*, traditional Indigenous *medicine-work*, *mediumship*, *invigoration*, and *ancestor veneration* to enact spiritual and elemental feats of protection, influence, and prophecy. Tools-wise, vision-dance devotees tend to employ *prayers and invocations*, *herbs and plants* (especially sage and tobacco), *ordeals and exertions* (including sweats and the Lakota Sun Dance), *knots and ropes*, *group rites*, *meditation*, *circles and designs*, the *elements*, ritual dress and masks (*fashion*), and, of course, *music*, *dance*, and *movement*. Around a core philosophy of *bringing back the Golden Age*, vision-dances *embrace the threshold* of a new beginning beyond the white incursions, *have faith*, and maintain that *all power comes from god(s)* and *ancient wisdom is the key*.

Metaphysically speaking, the movement heals physical and spiritual wounds of the land and its people. According to legend, the dance and its prophets can control the weather, scare off white folks, and protect devotees from physical and metaphysical harm. Historically, the movement ends with tragedy; in **Mage**, it might well succeed.

Voodoo

Addressed above, and detailed further in the **M20** entry for the Voudoun practice (p. 583) and the Loa entry in **Gods & Monsters** (pp. 169-179), the syncretic practices, known collectively as *voodoo* range from Brazil to New York City, empower people enslaved in foreign lands, and scare the hell out of white people. Forbidden by slave-owning masters, these practices grow and spread as slave states are overthrown in Haiti (1804), Santo Domingo (1822), Brazil (1888), and most notably New Orleans (1865). Although it begins as a faith among slaves, voodoo religions are practiced by free Black people, *mestizos* and *mestiços*, some Indigenous Americans (especially in the Caribbean and South America), and perhaps a small handful of whites by the Victorian period. Throughout that period, however, such devotions remain closely guarded secrets. The punishments inflicted upon practitioners by the authorities are atrocious even by the standards of American slavery.

Voodoo's sinister reputation comes largely from white folklore; any tool of empowerment is a threat to Empire. Even so, voodoo practices *are* revolutionary, and few revolutions succeed without bloodshed. Like any form of magick, a voodoo-style practice reflects the person using it. For a healer or guardian, these Arts provide comfort, strength, and nurturing. In the hands of someone with murderous intentions, they can be dangerous indeed. The legend of Marie Laveau, "the Voodoo Queen of New Orleans," dominates the American occult scene throughout the 1800s even though the legendary Laveau is actually two different people: the original Marie and her namesake daughter, both of whom remain famous for their devotion to the Arts.

In **Victorian Mage**, the Bata'a dominate the various forms of voodoo. Although some Verbenae, Ecstatics, and a handful of Dream-Speakers and Thanatoics pursue this practice too, the Awakened side of voodoo culture belongs firmly to this Craft. As a result, the distinction between Awakened and un-Awakened practitioners remains unimportant. Although a voodoo-devotee character must be Awakened before she can use Sphere magick, there's no in-setting status distinction between a devotee who can use them and a devotee who cannot. Technomancers, particularly white ones, fear the mystique of voodoo, especially because it's unnervingly effective in Territories like Haiti and Louisiana, where it becomes — despite persecutions — the dominant metaphysical Art.

Yoga

Another diverse and often contentious collection of practices united under a single name, yoga features disciplines from throughout Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and possibly the Middle East and Eastern Europe, as well. By the Victorian period, yoga practices and the seemingly inhuman *siddhis* ("perfections," "attainments") they provide have drawn European occultists to those disciplines.

In **Mage**, the Akashayana, Ecstatics, and Thanatoics have practiced yoga for millennia, occasionally introducing those techniques to their fellow Tradition magi. Historically speaking, yoga enters the Western occult tradition during the late 1800s, and spreads worldwide thanks to cultural tourism and the efforts of Swami Vivekanada, who teaches yoga internationally, founds yoga schools, and translates Sanskrit sutras into English. Earlier in the Gaslit Mystery era, these Arts remain fascinating and often *uncanny* outside of their ancestral cultures. Practiced by Tradition magi, certain Nephandi, and many other mystics (Awakened and otherwise) from East Asian cultures, this practice and its associated Arts are rare and precious secrets, shared with outsiders only when such people have earned a practitioner's trust.

The **M20** entry for the yoga practice (pp. 585-586) presents a general overview of yoga as a focus for magick. **The Book of the Fallen** also features entries for Tantra and Vamamarga (pp. 145-146), which expand upon the initial entry and explore yoga's more supposedly disreputable aspects — aspects that appeal to European occultists in general and a certain Great Beast in particular.

HYDROGRAPHIC

Chapter Seven: Storytelling Gaslit Mystery

"We stopped looking for monsters under our bed when we realized that they were inside us."

—Charles Darwin

Mage is a game of the impossible made possible, where only the imagination of the participants limits the rules, setting, and story. From urban magick to high fantasy drama, Storytellers can tailor the world of **M20** to almost any genre. **Victorian Mage** invites players to explore historical fiction through the lens of the Victorian Age, but the basic tenets of storytelling remain the same. This chapter provides a brief rundown on how to tell a story, an overview of the nineteenth century, and ideas for how to spin the Victorian era into genre gold.

ABCs of Storytelling

Victorian Mage remains a cooperative game negotiated between Storytellers and players, in which the Storyteller is responsible for shaping the experience. A Storyteller is accountable for the game sessions, builds the story the characters explore, and ensures a collaborative atmosphere.

Accountability

The Storyteller sets up game sessions by ensuring a play space has everything the group needs to participate. This includes making sure the session happens in a safe place and all relevant **Mage** books and character sheets are available. Storytellers may want to bring physical dice or have players download a dice app for mechanics rolls. They should be prepared to answer any questions players might have about the game and the tone of the session. This doesn't mean Storytellers have to know every single rule, but they should be familiar enough with the material that they can find answers or point players in the direction to find answers on their own.

Building the Story

The setting of **Victorian Mage** provides myriad jumping-off points for almost any kind of story a Storyteller wants to tell. From the magus living off the dark and dirty streets of Istanbul to the one attending a grand ball in Paris, action-adventure, war, horror, mystery, and more are available avenues of exploration for stories set in the Victorian Age. The Storyteller, in collaboration with the players, should determine what kind of game everyone wants to play.

Once a Storyteller has a basic idea of what everyone is interested in, it's a good idea to create a primer or storybook that acts as a single go-to resource for the chronicle. This can include plotlines the players may uncover, setting and character descriptions, and any character sheets or mechanical

notes to resolve challenges. A Storyteller can build in more immersion with era-appropriate props like letters, fictional news, and physical objects or sound effects like atmospheric music and recordings.

Whether a single "one-shot" event or a lengthier campaign meant for multiple game sessions, the more a Storyteller prepares before starting, the better the outcome.

Collaborative Atmosphere

Beyond preparation and execution, another task of the Storyteller is to provide a fun, collaborative experience. When a game is so difficult that the players have trouble achieving anything, it can become frustrating for everyone involved. Players who enjoy character agency might find the experience discouraging if a Storyteller is too rigid or protective of their plot lines. By contrast, character growth often comes from personal loss and defeat, and the Storyteller should probably avoid a story so straightforward that it bores the players. The goal is to reach a balance where the game is both challenging and rewarding.

It's also important to remember that everyone involved is a person first — not a character. Participants, whether a Storyteller or player, can sometimes act inappropriately through their characters with the excuse that this is what their character would do. While it is entirely viable for players to use their characters to explore darker aspects of humanity, a Storyteller should make sure it's not at the expense of other people.

If someone is portraying their character in a way that makes others uncomfortable or derails the objectives of the game session, the Storyteller should talk with that player privately. Explain without criticizing that no character goal or intention is more important than the safety and trust of the other participants.

Conversely, just as it is the Storyteller's responsibility to create a safe playing environment, players should also do the same. If a player has an issue with a particular plot, they should be proactive in speaking up. They should feel free to take the Storyteller aside and express their concerns. Storytellers are people too, after all, and may not be aware of how their story is affecting their players. Keep these conversations respectful, and try to listen to each other more than debate. Maybe there is a way to compromise for everyone's comfort levels.

A Victorian Checklist

When a Storyteller designs a chronicle set in the Victorian Era, they must ask and answer some broad questions, which helps add specificity to the game. The ten questions below provide a framework on which to build a chronicle and might inspire new ideas. Storytellers can answer these alone or in collaboration with the players.

- If the Victorian era is the setting, what is the flavor (*From Hell*, *Oliver Twist*, steampunk, etc.)?
- In what exact year does the chronicle take place?
- What is the primary location of the chronicle (London, Calcutta, the *Nautilus*, etc.)?
- Who is the primary authority figure in the story (Constable, Mayor, Queen, Primus, etc.)?
- Is this a street-level game, a single-city game, or does it take place all over the world?
- On a scale of 0 to 5, how much does this story focus on exploring the nineteenth century?
- On a scale of 0 to 5, how much does this story focus on action and adventure?
- On a scale of 0 to 5, how much does this story focus on horror and gore?
- On a scale of 0 to 5, how much does this story focus on relationships and romance?
- On a scale of 0 to 5, how much does this story focus on politics and drama?

Example of Play: *Jocelyn is building a Victorian chronicle for her players. She knows she wants to play with a Pax Britannica flavor, setting the game in Sevastopol during the Crimean War, 1854. Jocelyn has four dedicated players who want to play low-ranking soldiers during the Siege of Sevastopol. One of them has a degree in history, so Jocelyn wants to highlight the historical setting, allowing her to explore the nineteenth century with a scale of 4. The chronicle takes place during a famous siege, so the action and adventure is set at a 5. But her players are also a little squeamish, so despite the bloodshed, she's going to dial back on the horror and gore, scaling it to a 1. Another player is a big William Makepeace Thackeray fan, so Jocelyn decides to throw in a bit of romance. With a scale of 2, she designs a handsome lieutenant to help further the story along. Finally, Jocelyn sets her politics scale at a 3, using two competing Awakened Storyteller characters to drive the players toward competing interests.*

The World of the Victorian Era

The reign of Queen Victoria defines the Victorian era. She ascended the British throne in 1837 and ruled until her death in 1901. The end of some antiquated ideas and the adoption of more modern precepts dominated this seminal period in world history. America experienced a civil war, ending with almost a million dead and the abolition of slavery. Rebellions and reformations cascaded across Asia, and in Western Europe, imperialism reigned. During Victoria's lifetime, the Second Industrial Revolution brought advances in profit, productivity, and urbanization, and saw the likes of Charles Darwin and Vincent Van Gogh, Karl Marx and Emily Dickinson, Oscar Wilde and Mark Twain, and the combined might of Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla. Over a mere hundred years, the face of the world changed forever.

While Chapter Nine involves a more in-depth view of specific historical events, this section presents a birds-eye view of the world, and specifically, how the Storyteller can illustrate that world. It presents guidance on what makes a chronicle set in the Victorian Age distinct, with themes and inspirations far removed from the fast-paced, social-media-driven existence of today.

Capitalism vs. Socialism

Vast transformations in industry and urbanization took place in the nineteenth century. Spearheaded by tycoons such as Andrew Carnegie, John D. Rockefeller, and Jay Gould, cities grew and expanded around factories. Workers in the factories labored long hours, endured strict discipline, and earned low wages. Women worked equally long hours in domestic services as household staff, catering to upper-class ladies and cleaning up after families. Others became prostitutes. Although a prevalent business, this hard life cut most young women's lives short through violence, addiction, or untreated sexually transmitted diseases.

Children fared no better. Some served as messengers and dustmen, disposing of dust and refuse from wealthier households. Other children served as chimney sweeps, crawling up narrow chimneys to clean out an average of forty gallons of soot per year. Rat catcher was another job performed by young boys; using arsenic to poison the rats or terriers to kill them, rat catchers found no end of employment within European cities. London children not surviving through pickpocketing or petty crime sometimes worked as mudlarks, wading into the Thames at low tide to scrounge for bits of rope, bone, copper, and coal.

These terrible conditions lead to the birth of socialism and the demand for new remedies. Workers organized, went on strike, and bucked a system that often replaced them with desperate people or beat them down with police. Both Europe and the United States suffered prolonged resistance to unionization. This factor, coupled with political criticism, lead key intellectuals to lay down principles to replace capitalism with something to share wealth equally within a given society; among them the German philosopher, Karl Marx.

Marxism came to be a kind of religious faith for many people. They took up the inspiring myth of the French tradition of popular revolution. The urbanization of the west, coupled with its inevitable backlash, set the stage for further revolution, and by the dawn of the twentieth century, countries such as Russia were poised for overthrow. These events, matched with the struggles of what would be the First World War, lead to the bloody birth of the Soviet Union in 1917.

A wealth divide between rich and poor is nothing new to modern audiences, but in the Victorian Era, this disparity was even more extreme. A Storyteller should, therefore, emphasize the harshness of the times. By present standards, laborers worked longer hours under conditions that are more brutal and for less pay. Unless they were lucky enough to be born into the top one percent, chances are high that player characters grew up in grim circumstances. Storytellers can emphasize the mood with long bread lines, clashes between workers and police, and endless stacks of chimneys spewing smoke twenty-four hours a day.

For magi who can literally create gold out of thin air, these societal conditions become somewhat complicated. Just as there are those Ascended that might extend a hand toward the working class, so too are those using their magick to consolidate wealth and power. Greed corrupts mortal robber barons, the Order of Reason, and the Traditions alike. Wealth still moves the world, and it is the greatest tool for lifting someone out of poverty.

The Napoleonic Wars and the Wars that Followed

The Napoleonic Wars gave birth to the Victorian Era. From 1803 to 1815, Europe was embroiled in a series of battles, pitting the French and allies against the Coalition Powers led and financed in a large part by the United Kingdom. The outcome saw Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte's exile to the island of Elba and the ascension of Great Britain as the world's first superpower. A series of bloody conflicts, strengthened imperialistic tendencies, rising populations, and breakthroughs in technological warfare also followed. The list below provides the most brutal wars of the nineteenth century in terms of casualties, listed in chronological order.

- The Napoleonic Wars, 1803-1815, 3,500,000-7,000,000 killed.
- The Spanish American Wars of Independence, 1808-1833, 600,000 killed.
- The Mfecane of Southern Africa, 1815-1840, 1,500,000-2,000,000 killed.
- The Taiping Rebellion, 1850-1864, 20,000,000-100,000,000 killed.
- The Crimean War, 1853-1856, 356,000-410,000 killed.
- The Panthay Rebellion, 1856-1873, 890,000-1,000,000 killed.
- The Indian Rebellion of 1857, 1857-1858, 800,000-10,000,000 killed.
- The American Civil War, 1861-1865, 650,000-1,000,000 killed.
- The Dungan Revolt, 1862-1877, 8,000,000-12,000,000 killed.
- The Paraguayan War, 1864-1870, 300,000-1,200,000 killed.

These worldwide displays of carnage, not to mention the dozens of smaller wars and skirmishes that speckle the nineteenth century, create a grim backdrop for any chronicle. No matter what year a Storyteller chooses to set their game in, chances are that a giant war is happening somewhere. How a given population feels about that war is important. If a city is very patriotic, they tend to frown on anyone who doesn't toe the party line. If conflict ravages their particular region, they may grow rebellious against authority.

Furthermore, a nation enduring endless wars tends to develop a generational understanding of loss and sacrifice. A given character, either in the hands of the player or the Storyteller, is likely the product of that understanding. Did their father serve in the Napoleonic Wars? Did they lose any brothers during the Crimean War? Did they, themselves, fight on behalf of a particular King, President, or Emperor? Every character has a distinct opinion about the world as it relates to war because it has been a part of their life for generations.

Their opinions can vacillate between the fanatic and the despondent, but they should never be ambivalent.

Science and Technology

Sometimes referred to as the Age of Science, optimism for change thrived in many places, leading to numerous discoveries. Science and technology became mainstream, uplifting entire societies and filling the young with a sense of wonder. For the first time in history, the power surrounding science competed with world religions. Facts found themselves on an equal playing field with dogma. By the end of Queen Victoria's reign, steam ships populated the oceans, electricity slowly worked its way into urban environments, and railways crisscrossed entire continents.

In 1859, Charles Darwin published *The Origin of Species*, transforming the world's view of nature and forcing individuals to question their origins. Louis Pasteur proved microscopic organisms caused disease and later developed a cure for rabies. In 1865, Joseph Lister discovered antiseptic surgery — sterilizing hands and equipment before operations and preventing the spread of infection. This, in turn, increased overall life expectancy with an average of 45 years for men by 1900 and 50 years for women respectively. In the world of astronomy, Giuseppe Piazzi discovered the first asteroid, Ceres, and Johann Galle discovered the cold planet of Neptune.

Expeditions set out for the north and south poles, though none reached them until the early twentieth century. In 1897, Joseph Thomson uncovered the electron and John Dalton published his atomic theory, advocating for a world built on indivisible and infinitesimal particles. Michael Faraday invented the mechanical generator. German physicist, Hermann von Helmholtz, formulated the Law of Conservation of Energy. And in 1876, Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone.

Who is responsible for these grand advancements in science and technology? That depends on the imagination of the Storyteller. A chronicle highlighting the war between the Order of Reason and the Traditions might fully invest itself into the Age of Science. With each discovery, the Order's grip on society tightens casting the Traditions into the role of rebels, pitted not only against the Order but against a world rapidly falling under their sway.

Another view might highlight the Age of Science with the death of mythology, placing spiritualists, such as the Chorus Celestial or the Dream-Speakers, at a disadvantage. A story focused on them might place blame not only on the Order of Reason but on other Traditions, all of whom helped shape the nineteenth century. A final thought might place magi at the heart of these seismic shifts, casting Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla as dual Awakened in a war for dominance. Perhaps Florence Nightingale is a powerful Verbena or Michael Faraday an Electrodyne Engineer. This would allow players a real taste of history, and raise the question — just because a magus can influence history, does that mean they should?

Women's Suffrage

By the 1890s, several industrial countries had universal male suffrage, but very few allowed women to vote. National and international organizations formed, coordinating their efforts to gain equal rights at the ballot, but most of those efforts did not bear fruit until the early twentieth century.

In the United States, women such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton organized campaigns for equal rights. In Great Britain, there was a divide over the question of suffrage. However, during the second half of the 19th century, several campaign groups for women's suffrage formed in an attempt to lobby Members of Parliament. In 1897, seventeen of these groups came together to form the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), which held public meetings, wrote letters to politicians, and published various pamphlets. In 1907, the NUWSS organized its first large march, known as the Mud March. Over three thousand women paraded through the streets of London from Hyde Park to Exeter Hall.

If a Storyteller chooses to highlight the women's suffrage movement in their chronicle there are many subtle ways to go about it. Perhaps a daylight chase scene through the streets of London collides with a parade of suffragettes. If the Storyteller needs to bring in a British member of parliament for a given scene, perhaps they might choose John Stuart Mill, elected in 1865 on a platform that included granting women the right to vote. Another idea is to place a female witness, needed by the characters to investigate some crime, under the protection of the Kensington Society, which was a women's discussion group during the 1860s.

Genre, Setting, and Flavor

Setting is the backdrop of a plot and helps provide mood. It adds a layer of expected tropes, and incorporating them into the story helps increase the immersive quality of the experience. It's a short-hand way of letting the troupe know what will and will not appear in the play session. By using the Victorian area as the setting, **Mage 20** shifts toward genres like Historical Fiction, Historical Fantasy, Steampunk, or Costume Drama.

But even within the broad historical setting of "Victorian," there are flavors that further define what to expect. The Victorian Era is one of *extremes*. On one end of the social class spectrum, there are grand balls with opulent dresses, wealth, decorum, and royalty. On the other end are the working poor, soot-filled streets, and child labor in dark factories. Urban sprawl gives way to open frontiers. Governments battle for land with blasts of gunpowder weaponry while indigenous peoples fight to keep what is theirs. A steam-engine locomotive's whistle and chug contrast with a first-class passenger's enjoyment of a good book or a railcar packed with impoverished immigrants expected to build the tracks.

Without a sense of history, it can be challenging to puzzle together these pieces in a way that makes sense and feels credibly immersive even for a game of epic magick and the

wildly fantastical. Using such flavors helps the world come alive in a player's imagination.

Alternate History

Various films and books have envisioned a world slightly different than our own. From Alan Moore's *Watchmen* to Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*, there are many Alternate History examples to go to for inspiration.

Playing an alternate history is largely a game of "what if." What if Alexander the Great had succeeded in building an empire stretching from Macedonia to India? Would there have been the subsequent Roman Republic or even a Roman Empire? What if the Umayyad Caliphate had won the battle of Tours and transformed the Mediterranean into an Islamic lake? Might Islam have become the dominant world religion? What if Giuseppe Zangara had succeeded in assassinating then-President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1933? With President John Nance Garner, who was ideologically opposed to the New Deal, would the United States have survived the Great Depression? After a few rounds, endless possibilities take shape, allowing a creative Storyteller to build any intriguing world.

The lens of western Europe has dominated the view through which media portrays the Victorian era. It chronicles history, literature, and culture resulting in a picture that is both very white and very patriarchal. Using the Alternate History flavor is a simple way of rewriting history into something that resembles modern-day sensibilities and allows players to tell more diverse stories.

In July 1807, amid the Napoleonic Wars, Napoleon Bonaparte signed a pair of peace treaties. The first was with Emperor Alexander I of Russia. They met on a raft in the middle of the Neman River to sign it. A second treaty with King Frederick William III of Prussia claimed the Kingdom of Westphalia, the Duchy of Warsaw, and the Free City of Danzig as French territories. These gave Napoleon complete control over central Europe with only Great Britain and Sweden to contend with as enemies.

Had Napoleon focused his attentions squarely on Great Britain and Sweden, he might have ultimately succeeded in his quest for dominance. However, Napoleon made two critical mistakes. The first was with the Peninsula War against Spain and Portugal. The second was a failed invasion of Russia.

But what if Napoleon had not invaded Spain and Portugal? What if he had honored his treaty with Russia? Given the naval dominance of Great Britain, the two powers might have battled for decades leaving both severely weakened as they entered the late nineteenth century. Had this been the case, neither would have had the money, means, or manpower to expand globally.

This might have allowed nation-states in Africa and Asia to grow and prosper, free of European rule and firmly able to dictate their own destiny. Imagine an eastern Asia dominated by the Qing dynasty entering the early twentieth century as an economic superpower. Consider a gathering in 1877, wherein a collection of African states form a federation, building on the American model and creating a single country stretching from Liberia to Nairobi.

Envision an India free of the British East India Company and able to focus its efforts on combating the famines killing millions of citizens during the nineteenth century. Another potential scenario takes place across the Atlantic wherein the United States Civil War lasts an additional five years and claims another hundred million lives. The Union might still claim victory, but it would present a further challenge as the nation expanded west. With depleted US forces, the Apache Wars might have proved more costly and allowed Geronimo and his compatriots to sue for peace claiming entire sections of the Arizona and New Mexico territories for their own. These are but a few possibilities wherein a Storyteller can craft a world less European, and in some ways far more interesting.

If the notion of extrapolating how a change in the outcome of a single event could ripple through the future is too daunting for a quick game session, nothing stops the troupe from crafting alternative universes whole cloth.

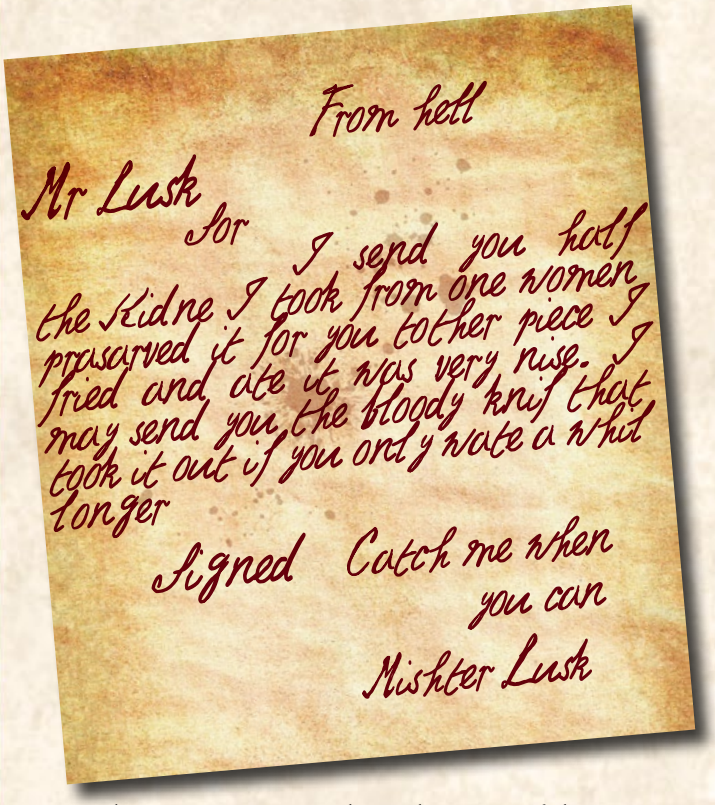
Story Hooks:

- **Fall of the Order:** What if Queen Victoria had not married Albert of Saxe-Coburg, but instead she wed a different cousin, like Prince George, Duke of Cambridge? Without Albert, there would have been no Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations in 1851. Without the exhibition, the Order of Reason never reorganized. In such a scenario, the Traditions have finally gotten the upper hand and won crucial victories in the Ascension War. From Britain, the Council rules the western world. But the Order is far from beaten, preparing to turn the streets of major cities like London into a warzone.
- **Door Number Three:** In the Ascension War between the Traditions and the Order, several factions changed sides or stayed out of the conflict altogether. But what if those disenfranchised groups banded together to form something new? A third faction devoted to freedom, peace, and balance? Might elements of the Chorus Celestial and the Dream-Speakers have joined forces with the Electrodyne Engineers and Bata'a to create the Grey Tower? In this scenario, the characters represent key diplomats for this new organization and attempt to bring all sides of the conflict to the proverbial table.
- **The Enemy of my Enemy:** If the Order of Hermes had gained dominance over the Traditions, might they have become just as tyrannical as the Order of Reason? In this scenario, the Hermetics rule the world with the Order of Reason nearly annihilated and the other Traditions nothing short of bound in slavery. Here, the Ahl-i-Batin, Chakravanti, and Verbenae cooperate with the Explorators, Mechanicians, and Lightkeepers to overthrow the Hermetics. With a tyrannical Great Britain girded with occult power, worldwide civil unrest, and a shadow war underfoot, this scenario attempts to turn the entire Ascension War on its head.

- **Mirror Mirror:** What if the Meeting of Dragons takes place much earlier in the era, and the Order of Reason's efforts in Asia are met and halted by the combined might of the organized, revitalized Five Elemental Dragons? While the forces of imperialism may roll forward elsewhere, in China and South-East Asia they stumble to a halt, changing the fate of nations. Does this become a clash of magickal titans, as the Order of Reason and its closest mirror struggle with each other and give the Council of Nine an opportunity for a resurgence? Or does the Technocratic Union itself emerge earlier, and firmly rooted in the methodologies of the Elemental Dragons rather than the European mindset of the Order of Reason? Players might become embroiled in diplomatic efforts between the Order and the Dragons, whether as ambassadors, spies, or saboteurs.

From Hell

In 1888, during his London killing spree, Jack the Ripper supposedly sent a letter to George Lusk, chairman of the Whitechapel Vigilance Committee. A preserved section of a human kidney accompanied it. The letter read:



Debates continue over the authenticity of the "From Hell" letter, also known as the "Lusk Letter." Some note the poor grammar and spelling of the letter as proof of its inauthenticity. Others point out one of the Ripper victims, Catherine Eddowes, had her kidneys removed and the kidney fragment delivered to Lusk belonged to a sickly, alcoholic woman who had died within the past three weeks (which Eddowes had).

Regardless, the "From Hell" letter encapsulates the horror of the Victorian Age. Spearheaded by the works of Edgar Allan Poe and Charles Dickens as well as examples like Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Gothic horror involves gloomy and decaying settings, such as crumbling churches, insane asylums, and dark alleyways. It often involves villains or supernatural beings, such as ghosts and monsters, hungry for helpless victims and hell-bent on destroying potential heroes. Gothic horror also delves into madness, encapsulated by the narrator in Poe's *The Tell-Tale Heart*, or in the form of R.M. Renfield from *Dracula*.

A From Hell story centers on imperfect heroes persevering in an imperfect world. The setting is as dark and harsh as its characters. Fear, blood, and horror are part of the thematic pallet, discovered in tiny strokes until the final reveal. Add in some mystery and romance, and even Mary Shelley might smile at the attempt.

Story Hooks:

- **Dinner Guests:** The party arrives at an isolated, starving outpost in the middle of the wilderness. Perhaps they arrive by chance or maybe they have heard rumors of dead livestock and missing peasants. From his crumbling mansion, the local governor asks the characters to investigate — offering them room and board for the duration. The lodgings are damp, but the cooking is divine. Under a thick and heavy fog, more people go missing. The story turns when the characters discover the governor is an insane Marauder and the local council a pack of ravenous cannibals.
- **The Zoophagous:** Taken from Doctor John Seward's diagnosis of R.M. Renfield, this story focuses on monsters and madness. Under a dark and stormy night, the party travels by train to an isolated asylum wherein they interview one of the few surviving witnesses from a horrific attack. With their mind shattered, the patient describes a monstrous beast that dwells in the sewers beneath the city. The characters must hunt down the abomination and discover who holds its leash. To make matters worse, by the time they return to the sanatorium, they discover something dark has taken over the madhouse and the minds of its patients.
- **Undying:** Faced with the horrific depredations of an imperial overseer and his brutal exploitation of the local population, a cabal of native Craft or Tradition magi decide to bring about justice themselves and kill the Sleeper. Yet it turns out he's not as mundane as they thought; whether through the work of his spite-filled, vengeful ghost, the influence of some dark power, or grotesque secrets of sorcery practiced in his imperial homeland, the overseer rises again. The magi face a seemingly immortal murderer whose every death simply sharpens his thirst for tormenting and killing their country-folk.

Optional Rule: Alienism

People of the nineteenth century referred to early psychiatrists and psychologists as alienists. The word comes from the French *aliéniste*, meaning 'insane,' and from the Latin *alienatus*, meaning 'to estrange.' Victorian Age psychology was a new profession still struggling in the dark to understand the human psyche and devoid of anything resembling *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*.

While the notion of psychological profiles would not emerge until the 1960s, alienists and the search for understanding the criminal mind take center stage in a From Hell flavor of the Victorian world.

Creating a psychological profile requires a standard Perception + Investigation roll aided by a specialization in Criminal Psychology. However, with a specialization in Alienism, each success grants the player one yes or no question (with specific regard to the perpetrator of the crime) they may ask the Storyteller. This allows characters to gain deeper insight into the nature of their criminal adversary.

High Society

A strict class system ruled Victorian Britain, parts of Europe, and eventually many of the lands subjugated under the yoke of imperialism. The nobility and gentry served at the top of the proverbial food chain, trailed by the middle class, the working class, and the slum-bound poor. Wealthy families served as the linchpins of the Victorian economy. The aristocratic families of the nineteenth century generally owned the land the farmers worked and the factories the poor maintained. The philosophy of the time was *noblesse oblige*, taken from the French, and it referred to the ethical obligation the rich had to act generously toward others. A rough modern approximation would be the idea of trickle-down economics.

While the destitute died in gutters and colonized peoples toiled at the bottom of this stratified pyramid, the upper class maintained their status through numerous cultural divisions. One of these was the function etiquette played in keeping everyone in their proper place. There were different rules for men and women. Aristocratic men knew how to bow, how to tip their hat, where to sit and next to whom, how to properly address those of standing, and even when it was acceptable to smoke or drink. For women, rules and protocols dictated what kind of jewelry they could wear, who they could talk to, and with whom they could dance. While the upper class benefited from their abundant wealth, they lived in golden prisons.

From how people dressed to how they ate and to whom they spoke, etiquette created a sort of cage of civility barring any sort of social mobility between the classes, while also denying foreigners and colonized peoples on the outside. The highest echelons of social class feared a scandal would ruin them. They were terrified of coming across as vulgar or gaining an unsavory reputation among their fellow elite. There was no better place to witness the spectacle of wealth than at grand parties, dances, and balls.

These events were commonplace for the nobility and offered them the chance to mingle with others of similar background and status. The hosts would show off their prosperity and excellently run household while the affluent guests attending would display their fineries — dresses, jewelry, etc. Oftentimes, more politics took place at these events than in the halls of government. Networking, glad-handing, nepotism, and negotiating mutually beneficial marriages all took place at these events. A bevy of servants did all the heavy lifting to make sure a party unfolded beautifully and without incident.

Running a house in the nineteenth century was nearly impossible without at least one servant, though most wealthy families had more than one. A small household might only be able to afford a single maid-of-all-work — a girl who cooked, cleaned, mended, and looked after the children. A more affluent household might have a cook, a housemaid, a nurse, and a small army of servants. While a housekeeper presided over the female staff, a butler was in charge of the male staff, which consisted of footmen, grooms, and gamekeepers.

A great house divided servants into two groups: indoor and outdoor. The outdoor servants included the coachman, groom, gardener, and gamekeeper. The coachman maintained and drove the coach, the groom looked after the horses, the gardener maintained the property, and the gamekeeper was responsible for raising wild game hunted for sport. Indoor servants consisted of a butler, housekeeper, maids, and footmen. The butler supervised the footmen, maintained the wine cellar, and announced potential visitors. The housekeeper supervised the maids, served tea and coffee, and was responsible for the linen. Maids and footmen washed dishes and clothes, and otherwise cleaned the house.

A story set among the high society subtlety hides behind the facades of etiquette and honor. It's built more on intrigue, scandal, and diplomacy than anything else. Either as an upstairs lord or a downstairs servant, there are rules at play and protocols one must follow. However, threatening these rules can make the game interesting. Forbidden love affairs, removals from station, and the day-to-day events of courtly life surrounding the ruler are what drive a high society story. Different factions surround the nobility. Each has different agendas, and when those agendas collide, they create drama. A Storyteller in search of inspiration need look no further than an episode of *Downton Abbey*, *Victoria*, *Versailles*, or movies like *Anna Karenina*, *Pride & Prejudice*, and *Vanity Fair*.

Story Hooks:

- **The Outsider:** In the vein of *The Elephant Man* or *Carnival Row*, an outsider stands in the ranks of the elite and meets public resistance. Perhaps they are a wealthy foreigner or a woman who has managed to carve out a place for herself in this man's world. Player characters can choose to embrace the new arrival or decline to defend them. But what happens when the visitor is also a Dream-Speaker or a Subtle One? What happens when other Awakened shun the foreign magus? Do the characters stand with their respective Legacies or do they risk their positions by standing with the newcomer? What about if the newcomer *is* one of the player characters?
- **Pistols at Dawn:** In a world of class and status, the slightest wrong word or gesture can offend the pompous and the arrogant. At a social club, a stray bump from a player character offends a British lord, who also happens to be a Lieutenant Colonel in the 13th Light Dragoons and a powerful member of a Tradition. The lord demands satisfaction, taken in the form of a formal duel and fully intending to exploit his magick. If the lord loses the contest, he claims the player character cheated, threatening their social standing if they can't somehow explain the rather uncanny success they managed. If the lord wins, he gloats and ridicules the losing player character at all the grand events they attend. This cycle can continue until the players deal with the highborn magus through shame, violence, or magick, or manage to elevate themselves beyond his reach. In an age of Victorian bullying, what choices does a modern player make?
- **Vanity Fair:** Another Awakened has fallen for one of the player characters. They are from meager beginnings with no fame or fortune. Their love, however, is honest and genuine. Unfortunately other members of the Chantry, mostly belonging to highly conservative groups, such as House Bonisagus and House Janissary of the Order of Hermes, do not approve of the match. They actively thwart the pairing, taking steps to ensure "lesser people" do not influence the Chantry. If the player characters fight for love, how far are they willing to take it? And are they willing to risk their positions to do it?

League of Extraordinary Magicians

In the vein of Alan Moore's *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* or Showtime's *Penny Dreadful*, this particular flavor follows a group of adventurers trying to save nothing less than the fate of the world. Gifted beyond measure, a group of Awakened combat forces and conspiracies seeking global domination. This is a game of action with chase scenes, gun battles, and explosions that would make Jerry Bruckheimer proud. Villains beat the heroes into the pavement only to have them get back up and take on overwhelming odds with a pair of pistols and endless ammunition. The heroes must wade through minions, deal with lieutenants, and eventually stop the evil mastermind behind the curtain.

A typical story might revolve around a true villain, accompanied by a handful of trusted lieutenants, an army of expendable thugs, and an organization whose name spells out a menacing acronym. The villain makes some grand move, claiming ownership over a small country or holding a Prime Minister for ransom. Regardless of the motivation, the villain's actions are usually very public. With a populace unable to combat this threat, a trusted few must save the day.

Perhaps these heroes have worked together before, having formed a team or league and have dedicated their lives to honor, loyalty, and the Victorian way (or a philosophy entirely *opposed* to that of Victorian society). Perhaps circumstance brings them together. Cautious of each other's motives, but willing to put those reservations aside to achieve their particular ends, this team of heroes learns to trust one another in the face of impossible odds.

Telling an action story involves more than just throwing stuff at the player characters to shoot. Character goals drive the story, which the antagonists should attempt to thwart at every turn. Character actions, both successful and not, should set off chains of cause and effect, making it personal for those involved. If the heroes one-up the villain, the villain can choose to retaliate by kidnapping a family member. If the heroes duke it out with criminals in front of Buckingham Palace, they might quickly become enemies of the Crown. Heroes may feel invulnerable but they are not, and it is in overcoming their wounds, psychological or otherwise, that makes this type of story compelling.

Story Hooks:

- **To Save the Day:** Willworkers turn up dead across major imperial cities, their occult texts and magickal secrets stolen. In colonized lands, someone hunts down indigenous magi to torture them for the location of Nodes and other eldritch places of power. Investigation suggests a grand network of Nephandi, ultimately leading to a remote island where the Fallen sorcerers prepare for an act of utter blasphemy. Using their stolen knowledge, they intend to tap into untold corrupted Nodes and focus it on their hidden lair, harvesting enormous amounts of tass to fuel a weapon of mass magickal destruction. The heroes are on a countdown and face overwhelming odds, but if they cannot defeat the Nephandus mastermind then the consequences may be apocalyptic.
- **A Royal Ransom:** A cadre of Willworkers kidnaps the child of one of the great empires, such as Victoria's son, Prince Edward, and holds them to ransom. The situation rapidly escalates as the great magickal factions and any number of opportunists, magickal and mundane, scramble to take advantage of the situation. What are the kidnappers' demands? What of the Luminaries who were *supposed* to make sure nothing like this ever happened? Who will end up with their hands on such a useful pawn in the great game of nations, and what impact will it have on the young, royal Sleeper who has become the hot potato in this scenario?

- **The Guns of August:** A massive, mechanized army storms across the region, toppling governments left and right. In their wake, a new imperialist regime emerges, led by a very public magus and backed by elements of the Order of Reason. With world domination on the line, existing imperial powers and still-independent nations alike grab for new alliances to halt the tide. As an alternate version of the Great War plays out, the heroes undertake a secret mission. Sneaking past enemy lines, they work their way into the enemy stronghold to deal directly with this tyrant magus who would be a new emperor.

Optional Rule: Teamwork 2.0

On a standard teamwork roll, each player rolls for the same task, combining their successes to achieve a given result. Each player makes a separate roll that is then pooled. If a player rolls a 1, they earn a botch and ruin the collective attempt. So, even if four players gain successes, if the fifth player rolls a 1, catastrophe ensues. Assuming the League of Extraordinary Magicians knows how to work well together, as an alternative, they can apply Teamwork 2.0. With it, they can cancel each botch by sacrificing two successes. If, in the end, at least one success remains, they succeed in their action. If the players roll a 1 but don't have two successes to sacrifice, the botch takes full effect, though the player who rolled the 1 has the option of taking the failure on themselves.

Example of Play: Yolanda, Patrick, and Jon are trying to defuse a bomb rapidly running out of time. Using Teamwork 2.0, they want to pool their successes to deactivate the explosive. Yolanda rolls two successes, Patrick rolls two successes, and Jon rolls a single 1. With four successes and a botch, two of the successes cancel out the 1, leaving two successes at the end. The players manage to deactivate the bomb in the nick of time.

Oliver Twist

When people think of the Victorian era, they often envision grand balls, decadent royalty, and grand armies fighting across vast battlefields. To play a game of Oliver Twist, however, is to essentially play a street-level game filled with realistic interpretations of life in the nineteenth century. Characters walk the streets of urban centers in mud-caked shoes, surrounded by starving masses surviving rough lives. *Oliver Twist* encapsulates the World of Darkness with characters struggling to survive on a nightly basis. Stories revolve around dark streets, criminal gangs, corrupt police, and tyrannical politicians. The BBC drama *Taboo*, Martin Scorsese's *Gangs of New York*, and obviously Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* are excellent examples.

A street-level game, Oliver Twist plays on the dark underbelly of society, where individuals lead harsh, painful, and short lives. Criminality is the driving force fueled by the desperate and the depraved. While this kind of game can dovetail smoothly into mystery or horror, a strict crime story has shorter action sequences and a lot more blood and grime. Unsavory characters live in alleyways and bars, pointing the heroes in the right (or wrong) direction. A group of thugs can rob a character at any moment, and the police are likely as corrupt as the criminals. Idealism and sentiment have little room to thrive in a world where everyone has a reason to lie.

For this type of game, a Storyteller needs the right incentive. Player characters are carving out a sliver of hope in a hopeless slum, soothed only by a stiff cigar and one-too-many drinks. These are not wealthy heroes patrolling the streets in anthropomorphic costumes. These are anti-heroes, struggling to survive in terrible circumstances while keeping their humanity. Perhaps a crime boss holds a crushing debt over their heads. Maybe vengeance drives the protagonist for some past wrong. Regardless, Oliver Twist stories are not polite and noble. Player characters move because they have to and by choices that don't feel like choices at all.

Story Hooks:

- **The Crackdown:** A mysterious figure steals the crown jewels from the Tower of London. To locate them, the infamous Inspector Rathbone and the Skeleton Keys begin a massive crackdown on the poor neighborhoods of London. The Keys arrest petty thieves and magi in criminal syndicates alike as the local player characters simply try to survive the night. They fight off overzealous police, hide in crowded orphanages, and make deals with powerful occult interests for protection. With the walls closing in, their only option may be to find the real culprit and steal the jewels for themselves.
- **Gangs of the Crossing:** Packed into row houses in a neighborhood of eight square blocks are thousands of struggling citizens. Linking the streets in the center is the Crossing, the epicenter of neighborhood trade. For decades, two gangs have fought over who controls the Crossing; a feud fueled by their two masters, each a powerful magus. Control has exchanged hands over the years, but now each is gearing up to take over the whole neighborhood once and for all. With the two sides now killing each other in the streets, the player characters find themselves on both sides of the divide. Another possibility has them being hired as muscle for one of the factions. In either case, the characters must choose wisely or be drawn into a conflict not of their choosing.
- **Melting Pit:** Whether by the yoke of imperialism or in flight from it, dozens of different cultures converge in one of the era's melting pots; alongside the humans lurk the occult shadows. In this urban squalor, the player characters' gutter magi rub shoulders with down-and-out nightmares from several continents and peoples.

Vampires desperate to make it through another night without being noticed, shape-shifters uprooted from their traditional sacred places and now bereft of purpose, and petty sorcerers of a dozen stripes all jostling for control of the scant few eldritch resources. The supernatural powers-that-be tolerate this pit of Night Folk as long as trouble doesn't spill out of the slum. The player characters are tangled up in the web of favors and debts that tie the fragile ecology together, and so they're the ones caught at the center of the action when it all starts to unravel and the simmering discontent boils over into occult insurrection.

Pax Britannica

At its height, the British Empire encompassed ten million square miles of territory and roughly four hundred million citizens with direct control over ninety percent of the countries of the world. The Empire was also engaged in twenty-five different declared conflicts. These took place, primarily, in Afghanistan, China, India, New Zealand, Persia, South Africa, and modern-day Turkey. The British Army fought these battles, while the British Royal Navy fought pirates, hunted down slave ships, and bombarded fixed positions.

Starting in the 1860s, the British Royal Navy deployed ironclads, steam-propelled warships with iron plating and heavy guns. Battleships included the HMS *Dreadnought*, which hosted 10 twelve-inch guns and a top speed of 21.5 knots.

Meanwhile, British army soldiers served for 10 or 12 years, and with high bounties for re-enlistment, had the long-term effect of creating veteran regiments. They earned roughly one shilling per day and suffered under a strict, discipline-enforcing system. The army was broken into standard infantry regiments, cavalry units for shock effect, artillery units wielding cannons and siege mortars, commissariats handling logistics, and colonial units specifically stationed on foreign soil.

Another potential aspect of Pax Britannica is the portrayal of an outsider. A soldier, stationed in unfamiliar territory, might come to see the actions of her government through different eyes. In the depths of the Congo or on some expedition into the far north, a newly posted recruit might witness anew how human greed matched with a sense of moral superiority and blatant racial discrimination exploits and brutalizes the local population. If that soldier were to Awaken, they might take a stand against the terrifying might of imperialism — or break entirely before its seemingly inexorable advance.

At its essence, Pax Britannica is a war story under a nineteenth-century backdrop. Deployed across Asia and Africa, the British fought war after war to maintain their imperialism, subjugating the local masses and constantly stamping out rebellions. But just as there were Awakened serving in the British Army, there were also Awakened living in and defending cities, such as Burma, Delhi, Kambula, and Guangzhou. Pax Britannica explores the chaos of war, the direct effect of imperialism, and the fatigue and cost of prolonged combat. Storytellers in search of inspiration can watch such films as *Khartoum*, *The Ghost and the Darkness*, *The Four Feathers*, and *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*.

Story Hooks:

- **The Siege of Paris:** In the fall of 1870, the Prussian army sieges Paris. With two hundred thousand soldiers on both sides of the battle and a city of almost two million, the heroes undertake a special mission on behalf of the Council. They must infiltrate the city, secure several powerful talismans from the local Chantry, and make it back home safe and sound. With starving Parisians, massive artillery fire, dozens of Marauders seeking to capitalize on the situation, and a brigade of hostile Luminaries on the prowl, the player characters have their work cut out for them.
- **The Real Horror:** Magickal war rages through an area already claimed by colonial powers. The player characters are dispatched by their superiors to tip the balance in favor of their side. Once there, they witness the real atrocities that fuel the conflict — massacres, mutilations, or enslavement of the local population. The cabal's duties don't include dealing with the Sleeper soldiers who are enacting this brutal oppression, only quelling the rival magi. Will they keep within the lines of their task and focus on their hidden war, or try and do something about the real, down-to-earth suffering of the Sleeper victims all around?
- **The Outpost:** At the far edge of the empire, the magi and Sleeper soldiers they accompany arrive at a remote military fort low on supplies and low on morale, pursued by either imperial or rebel forces intent on their defeat. They have some brief breathing room in this isolated place — but then the outpost faces a series of nightly attacks by hungry vampires thirsting for blood. The player characters have a limited amount of time before the pursuing forces arrive. They must prepare for the resulting battle, hold out until relief forces arrive, make good their escape, or finish whatever occult purpose brought them here. At the same time, as casualties mount and panicked soldiers begin to desert, the magi need to solve the mystery of the ravenous Night-Folk. Have they riled some local clan of bloodthirsty horrors, or are these the outriders of the dark forces that pursue them? Can they defeat the vampires, or is there some way to appease them and return them to slumber?

Optional Rule: Military Tactics

Perhaps a player chooses to portray an officer in the British army under the command of Field Marshal Arthur Wellesley, the Duke of Wellington, at his decisive victory at Waterloo. Or perhaps a character served alongside Ntshingwayo Khoza at the Battle of Isandlwana during the first Anglo-Zulu War. Regardless, the character understands the nature of war and the tactics required to win it. Whether under the broad term of simply 'military' or broken into specific spheres such as naval, cavalry, guerrilla, etc, the player may make a Wits + Academics roll aided by a tactics specialization. Each success grants the player one free movement action to move their party (or regiment, as the case may be) into a more optimal position. Take note this only permits movement actions and cannot be used to make free attacks on potential enemies.

Steampunk

A unique style of science fiction, the Steampunk flavor incorporates aesthetic designs inspired by nineteenth-century machinery. Science fiction author, K. W. Jeter, coined the term in 1987, who sought an umbrella term for the works of Tim Powers, James Blaylock, and Michael Moorcock. Over the past twenty years, with the assistance of Scott Westerfeld, Cassandra Claire, Gail Carriger, and many others, Steampunk has grown into its own literary genre.

In this kind of alternate history, steam power is maintained and mainstreamed, never to be replaced by electric motors or internal combustion engines. Like those found in H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine*, Barry Sonnenfeld's *Wild, Wild, West*, or Philip Reeves' *Mortal Engines*, retro-futuristic inventions are the hallmark of Steampunk, including Charles Babbage's analytical engine, steam cannons, and lighter-than-air airships. Giant robots, tanks with twenty-inch guns, mobile cities, mechanical steam-powered cars — all are commonplace gears within the Steampunk machine.

A Steampunk story is a kind of alternate history, but one that deviates wildly from historical or scientific fact. The Awakened can play a vital role in this world and be the root cause for reality-defying technologies. Perhaps the Awakened work in the open, powering and operating airships for the Royal Air Navy. Or perhaps in this world, everyone is Awakened to some extent and able to bend or craft materials to serve their everyday needs. Imagine a world with sky pirates, underwater cartographers, colonies on the North Pole, armies of automatons, and the city of New Atlantis, literally floating over the Atlantic Ocean. In short, to play a Steampunk game is to play in a world vastly different than our own with nations, characters, and technologies that don't require reasonable explanations.

Story Hooks:

- **And the World of Tomorrow:** Aboard a brass dirigible, player characters operate a rescue vessel for the Sky Council. Traveling throughout the British Empire, they handle jobs the rest of the Air Navy can't or won't. When the Voltarian Order kidnaps a wealthy baroness, the heroes are the only ones who can save the day. With a ratchet in one hand and a flintlock in the other, the group must navigate the Blighted Skies of the Nephandi, infiltrate the subterranean city of Argos, and ultimately defeat the evil Baron Von Vordenbruggen.
- **Clockwork City:** Residents of New Carbon, player characters navigate a city four miles wide and ten miles high. Built from turning gears and sliding cogs, it's a self-sustaining urban playground. Down on their luck and low on funds, characters take on a high-risk, high-reward, and under-the-table mission on behalf of the governor. They must rescue his husband from the corrupt and ruthless Chakravanti holding the 13th floor in an iron grip. To win the day, the party must make deals with crooked district officials, fight off elements of the tyrannical Order of Hermes, and survive roving gangs of wild automatons.
- **Wizard War III:** In a game without Sleepers, the Order of Reason and the Council of Nine war in the open. Each rules over vast nations, using giant robots or armies of spirits in an attempt to destroy their enemies and reign victorious. Humankind suffers against both, and refugees pour into the neutral city of Horizon. Residents of the city, the party tends to the needy and the wounded. But with both armies ready to turn Horizon into a battlefield, player characters must either choose a side or make a stand of their own.

Optional Rule: Victorian Craft

Not to be confused with those allied magi refusing to join the Traditions, Technocracy, Marauders, or Nephandi, Victorian Craft is the art of creative manufacturing. Where someone sees a pile of scrap and junk, a crafter finds an opportunity for expression. From a small timepiece to a ten-story mechanical spider, the ability to build and shape a thing — and the ability to do so with alacrity — is the cornerstone of Steampunk.

A standard craftwork attempt requires a successful Dexterity + Crafts roll with each roll representing a day, week, or month depending on the task. With Victorian Craft, provided an Awakened has access to the proper materials, a character can craft something in a fraction of the time.

Target equipment or vehicles use Durability multiplied by Structure to ascertain the number of successes required with each success equaling one hour. A light motorcycle with a Durability of 2 and a Structure of 3 would require 6 successes and 6 hours to build. Meanwhile, a steam-powered riot tank with a Durability of 10 and a Structure of 15 would require 150 successes and 150 hours to build (or almost one week).

Optional Rule: Submarine Warfare

Mage 20 does not focus its attentions on naval warfare, let alone sub-aquatic warfare. There are no gridded maps with detailed units reenacting the Battle of Leyte Gulf. Such is slightly irrelevant when you have characters that can literally bend space and time to their will. But if a game is going to be spending most of its time beneath the sea, then some basic mechanics might prove necessary.

For comparison, the British Royal Navy commissioned five Holland-class submarines from 1901 to 1903, with a displacement of 110 long tons, a length of 19.5 meters, a top speed of 8 knots, and a crew complement of eight. By further comparison, the modern Trafalgar-class submarine from the 1970s has a displacement of 4,700 long tons, a length of 85.4 meters, a top speed of over 30 knots, and a crew complement of 130. By further comparison, according to Captain Nemo himself, the fabled *Nautilus* had a displacement of 1,476.5 long tons, a length of 70 meters, and a top speed of 50 knots.

Using the vehicles listed in **Mage 20** as a guide, this means that a given submarine in a Twenty Thousand Leagues story has a maximum speed between 8 and 50 knots, a Maneuver between 1 and 2, a Crew of 8 to 150, a Durability of roughly 20, and a Structure of 15. As for weapons, a direct hit from a torpedo is likely to sink almost anything, so imagine a Difficulty 8, a Damage of 30, and a turn needed to reload every torpedo tube.

Twenty Thousand Leagues

When Jules Verne wrote *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea: A Tour of the Underwater World* in 1870, he imagined an aquatic universe populated by sunken ships, giant sea monsters, and vast maelstroms. Although British mathematician, William Bourne, designed the first submarine in 1578, and even though a few emerged during the nineteenth century, it wasn't until the invention of diesel-electric propulsion in the early twentieth century that mass production of submarines began.

These vessels navigate the oceans of the world, which are dived into various zones. The euphotic zone is the uppermost two hundred meters getting the most amount of sunlight and contains the vast majority of commercial fisheries. Below the euphotic zone is the dysphotic zone, which ranges from 200 to 1000 meters. This 'twilight' zone receives so little light,

photosynthesis is impossible. Finally, below the dysphotic zone, is the aphotic or 'midnight' zone, which never sees sunlight. The midnight zone ranges from zero to six degrees Celsius and includes such sea creatures as the gulper eel, the giant squid, the vampire squid, and the anglerfish.

A game set in the world created by Jules Verne is one of darkness and unexplored depths. It's a game of discovery and mankind versus nature. A modern submarine has a crush depth of 400 meters, which isn't very much when you consider the Mariana Trench has a maximum depth of 11,000 meters. But in a world where Awakened can bend time and space, these realms are well within reach.

Imagine a world with underwater cities, fleets of submarines, and schools of giant kraken. Consider a group of adventurers dedicated to locating the lost city of Atlantis beneath the waves, combating pirates, the elements, and the unknown along the way. Consider a Victorian World with pirates underneath the polar ice caps, Rokea colonies along the Laurentian Abyss, and flotillas of refugees on the surface. In this game, the depths of the sea are only equal to the depth of the Storyteller's imagination.

Story Hooks:

- **From Hell's Heart I Stab at Thee:** After joining the Navy, player characters present themselves to the newly commissioned *Pequod*, a new class of submarine. Under the command of a mad Chakravanti, the vessel is supposed to conduct testing drills along the Kuril-Kamchatka Trench. But instead, the captain orders the vessel into the deep, searching for a great white kraken. For vengeance and glory, the Chakravanti puts the entire ship at risk, and soon the characters must decide if they are going to participate in this grand hunt or mutiny against their commander.
- **Raise the Black Sail:** Pirates on the open sea, player characters reside in the neutral city of Nassau. Their vessel, a steel submersible, isn't the largest submarine nor is it the fastest. But it has saved their lives on more than one occasion. On a routine scavenger hunt along the South Sandwich Trench, the party locates a sunken treasure ship and takes on enough gold to make them all rich as kings. Now all they have to do is make it back to Nassau or some other port-of-call while fending off sea serpents, rival pirates, and the Imperial Navy of New Atlantis.
- **Into the Frozen North:** Commissioned by the Royal Navy, a submarine seeks the Northwest Passage, which is a sea route through the Arctic Ocean via the waterways of the Canadian Arctic Archipelago. With the player characters aboard, the vessel must contend with abominable snow creatures, negotiate with native people, and survive the brutal elements. Within a few months, they may find themselves trapped above or below the ice, low on food, and on the verge of insanity.

The Importance of Being Honest

One of the most important decisions in a **Victorian Mage** game is exactly how much realism the troupe wants when it comes to portraying the era. This can be a complicated

question, which is further addressed below, but much of the time it boils down to whether the group prefers a setting that *feels* right to one that is historically accurate.

The Victorian era lends itself to both ends of the spectrum. The era has enjoyed steady popularity in film, television, literature, and graphic novels, so it's relatively easy to find inspirational material. However, the historical accuracy of these sources varies wildly, with the result that many things people commonly consider Victorian are misconceptions repeated so often they appear to be fact. Accurate depictions do exist, but it may require careful examination if the goal is presenting only genuine Victoriana.

The easiest way to handle it is to simply ask everyone whether they are more interested in feel and tone or accuracy, and use that as a baseline. Players may also be more interested in accuracy related to a personal field of interest, such as if they are a Victorian costuming enthusiast or a student of military history, while they are less concerned about it outside of that area. That's fine too! A player with expertise like that can be very helpful in creating the right atmosphere for the game and contributing details that make an era really come alive.

The costume historian, for example, can help everyone design a look for their character that expresses them perfectly in the fashion of the time, helping the rest of the troupe bring their characters vividly to life. The armchair general, on the other hand, could be invaluable in creating backstories for military characters, providing updates on the conflicts of the day, or providing war stories a retired colonel might tell in a parlor. It's not only fine to give a little narrative control to such players when their area comes up, it's actively advisable. Doing so will make the game better for everyone and make them feel included and their expertise noted, not to mention they help carry a bit of your descriptive load too!

Even if the troupe is determined to err on the side of historical accuracy, it's worth noting that unless a lapse is absolutely impossible to overlook, or will present a real timeline problem in the future, it's usually best to let small details go. Sure, you can gently remind a player that his character couldn't have commanded a tank brigade in the Crimean War — at least not in a mundane army — and if the villain's scheme seems to hinge on an event being imminent that didn't actually happen for another six years in our world that might benefit from a little revising too. But ultimately this is a game where reality is a lot more fluid than it is in our world, and thus the timeline too, so does it really matter that a certain style of hat wouldn't be invented for another five years? If a player thinks it makes her character look like he's a total badass, don't bicker about it in the name of accuracy. Just let him have the hat!

A Night to Remember

When it comes to telling stories in a different era, the question naturally arises as to whether players should be expected to research for the game. If so, how much? And if not, how to handle the gaps in their understanding of the setting when it arises. Some players relish the chance to dive into history, of course, but others may resist the idea of doing "homework" for a game. At the same time, if players cannot easily picture the characters or the setting it can detrimentally impact their ability to enjoy the game.

One excellent way to tackle this question is to come together as a group and set up an inspiration night, where you encourage everyone to bring anything that comes to mind when they think of the game setting. Don't judge it on accuracy, at least not right away; just have everyone bring whatever inspirational material they want to the group — movies, pictures, literature, television, anything that conjures the right flavor for their character or the setting. Lay it all out where everyone can examine it, and even before anyone speaks you may have a good idea of what sort of game and environment the troupe is interested in creating.

The Question of Prejudice

In the course of discussing truth versus accuracy, troupes may want to address the matter of Victorian prejudices. Though many of its great artists and thinkers considered themselves highly progressive, and the characters are by definition exceptional individuals who need not mirror the worst of their era, the time was still rife with racism, sexism, homophobia, jingoism, classism, and other entrenched prejudices. While at first blush it might seem an easy decision to cut much of this material, even if a group decides to play a "soft" game where those prejudices are dialed back or nonexistent it's still best to do so as an informed choice.

It's also worth noting constructing characters and stories that engage with the prejudices of the time provides a platform to explore them in meaningful and cathartic ways. After all, leaving out these darker aspects of history may smack of revisionist whitewashing to some players, who'd rather see the era warts and all. However, the idea of taking on these heavy topics may make some players deeply uncomfortable in ways that are not conducive to collaborative roleplaying. It's best to have a frank troupe discussion about what kind of limits the group wants on this sort of deeply personal roleplay and go with what everyone is comfortable handling.

At the end of the day, it's important to remember this is still a game and no one at the table should be forced to endure something they don't want to deal with at the table just for the sake of "realism" in a fantasy setting. It doesn't matter if sexist comments were normal during the time; nobody should have to put up with them if they don't want to just because "everybody said that stuff back then." Be bold in your storytelling, but be kind to your troupe as well.

Going around the group, let each person explain what they brought and why they brought it, what they consider cool or appealing or interesting about it. This explanation doesn't have to be wordy or complex — a simple "*Murdoch Mysteries* is really cool" or "I just want to play a character like Vanessa from *Penny Dreadful*" is as valid as someone who wants to expound on the subtle merits of their favorite piece of Victorian literature. Let people be excited, and see what can be done to share that excitement. Even if certain elements aren't going to be part of the game, such as one player wanting to play a Western story while everyone else wants a gritty London drama, there might still be room for compromise. Perhaps the Western fan can portray a transplanted American shootist traveling abroad with a Wild West show, for example.

Once everyone's had a chance to share, it should be possible to sit down and talk about incorporating the things people like, as well as discussing levels of realism and accuracy and other elements of historical roleplaying. Just remember to try to work in something for everyone; nobody wants to be the person whose ideas are all discarded while everyone else gets theirs validated and incorporated into play.

Genre Variants

The Victorian era saw a boom in literary invention, from the development of the novel in its current form to the explosion of serialized fiction, as well as the birth of modern science fiction. While **Victorian Mage** entertains a certain "default" setting and accompanying tropes, there are several period-appropriate variant genres and story tropes that deserve special mention. From consulting detectives to villainous masterminds, what follows is a brief exploration of several different ways to approach crafting a **Victorian Mage** chronicle.

Consulting Detectives

At first blush, the consulting detective genre may seem a rough fit for **Victorian Mage**. It tends to spotlight a single exceptional character, namely the central detective figure, which can be difficult to translate to group-friendly tabletop play. It also features mysteries that are difficult for the technology and techniques of the era, but that could often be solved with a few basic magickal rotes. However, with a few easy tweaks, the genre can work and even be a fascinating way to re-interpret the setting through the eyes of those battling many of its worst aspects. After all, at its heart, the consulting detective genre is about going outside the ordinary to find solutions for the impossible, which sounds like a job perfectly tailored for the Awakened!

For a bit of broad historical context, the idea of a "consulting detective" — otherwise known as an amateur crimefighter sometimes employed by the police — has always been more fiction than fact, but it does have some roots in the often haphazard policing practices of the era. While several major cities like London employed regulated, standardized, fully professional police departments, quite a few smaller cities and most ex-urban areas still relied on irregular forms of policing, whether it was sheriffs or magistrates who deputized personnel as needed, to ad hoc citizen posses and "vigilance committees" that assembled to apprehend or even pass sentence on criminals. Even in "professional" police departments, the main qualifications for the job were often raw physical ability and loyalty to the department; any "detective" skills were a nice plus but strictly optional. Local challenges shape police organizations as well, such as the Water Police branch that battled piracy in the busy port of Hong Kong.

Of course, a different sort of justice was available for those who could afford to hire specialists, and private investigative firms fill that niche nicely. The Pinkerton Detective Agency is perhaps the best known of these companies — so much so that the term "Pinkerton" became slang for any sort of privately hired detective or security operative — but others exist, offering their clients everything from investigative talent to simple muscle. Indeed, some became quite infamous for their underhanded or outright vicious tactics, leading at times to considerable ill will between police departments and private agencies. Even reputable operators could find themselves at odds with local police resentful of outside intrusion in local affairs.

The consulting detective, therefore, fills a need of the time by providing expertise that even well-funded police departments rarely possessed, while not being restricted to working solely for the wealthy and powerful as most private detective agencies did. Indeed, the ability of the consulting detective to take time and carefully consider every fact of the case and element of the crime could mean the difference between a victim getting justice and a case being buried at the bottom of the pile and forgotten, especially when it comes to the sort of confounding mysteries that the police can't solve with routine procedures.

In a time when both forensic science and criminal psychology are in their infancy, catching criminals was a very different pursuit than it is today. Local knowledge and networks of well-placed informants were essential tools of the trade; solving many ordinary crimes is less about diligent handling of evidence and more a function of noting where the act took place and comparing that against criminals known to operate in the area. Physical evidence never hurts, of course, but is typically extremely crude by modern standards, often a matter of guesswork and eyeball comparisons as opposed to rigorous scientific testing. For example, while chemical forensic evidence helped secure the conviction of infamous American serial killer, Herman Mudgett — better known as H.H. Holmes — it's worth noting that despite committing crimes around the United States and Canada, Holmes was only initially held on an old horse theft warrant and ultimately

only convicted of a single killing. Many of his crimes would not even be verified as such until after his death.

Of course abusing, harassing, or even torturing witnesses and suspects are all practices considered legal in the era — or at least given a blind eye — when it comes to gathering information or eliciting confessions. This is especially true if the pressure is on to solve a heinous crime. Oftentimes, the only thing that protected a person from these sorts of abuses was social standing; a beloved parish priest, frail old woman, or the privileged son of a wealthy alderman was unlikely to be worked over, while a poor immigrant could expect brutal treatment if suspected for a serious crime. Naturally, whether the characters can live with themselves after using such brutal practices is another matter, but even if they do not subscribe to such methods it's still likely they've known the police and private detective agencies to use them in the past.

The Game's Afoot!

Adapting consulting detective stories to suit a **Victorian Mage** group generally requires a few specific changes and additions regarding some of the core tropes of the genre.

Specialize: Instead of a single central detective character who excels at almost everything needed to solve crimes, spread the necessary talents among the characters. Perhaps one character is a scientific prodigy who uses their knowledge and magical ability to achieve results on par with modern forensics, while another is an ex-Royal Marine and keen hunter whose tracking and hand-to-hand skills are needed to actually clap irons on a blackguard, and a third is a former urchin who knows all the back alleys and their inhabitants and has a web of contacts in the underworld. Everyone has a role to play in closing the case and bringing the perpetrators to justice.

Mundane Crimes: Even a relatively inexperienced magus has tools that can quickly unravel many mundane mysteries, but it's important to remember that knowing what happened is often only part of solving the case, especially when it comes to bringing a criminal to justice. While it may be possible for the characters to rather quickly ascertain who committed the crime, proving it to the satisfaction of the law is another matter entirely. While the characters may be able to pass off some of their insights as "the latest scientific techniques" or "advances in alienist understanding of the criminal mind," that's no guarantee the courts will permit them as formal evidence. Indeed, even fingerprinting as a form of identification and evidence gathering was dismissed by the London police when it was first proposed to them in the 1880s!

Magical Crimes: The introduction of magic and supernatural beings opens the doors to many wonderful twists and possibilities to the consulting detective genre, and the Storyteller should feel free to create crimes only magi can solve: time loops, mirror realities, shapeshifting killers, etc. One way to do this is to take a classic crime trope, such as a locked room murder mystery or the parlor scene setup, and imagine how it might play out differently with access to magic. What if the locked room was "locked" in a dimensional bubble as opposed to simply barred from the inside? Or the crime began with the parlor scene confrontation, only for the outcome to start shifting as someone messes dangerously with the timeline?

Mystery Styles

Devising intriguing and perplexing mysteries is a challenge even for seasoned crime writers, so it's no surprise that Storytellers may struggle to tell such stories for a group of creative and determined players whose characters possess magical powers! With that in mind, here are three different approaches troupes can consider when determining what sort of mystery stories they want to tell together.

Signed, Sealed, Delivered: In this more traditional style, the Storyteller works out all the details of the crime in advance; the job of the players is to uncover these facts during play. This is ideal for groups that enjoy traditional mystery stories, where the thrill of the experience comes from deciphering the clues presented and figuring out the author's solution. To add a little drama to the experience, it's recommended that the Storyteller have several smaller envelopes, each labeled with an important element of the crime: Culprit, Means, Motive, Opportunity, and so on. There may be more than one of some of these envelopes, depending on the crime — Culprit #1, Culprit #2, etc. There is also one large envelope marked "Solved!" that can hold the other envelopes, and which contains a sheet of paper with the correct answers for later verification.

As the story goes on, the players place index cards or pieces of paper with their guesses inside each small envelope. At any time, they may ask the Storyteller to verify whether their guess is correct, stating yes or no based on what's inside. If more than one guess has been placed in the envelope, the Storyteller need only say that "the correct answer is inside" if that's the case and the players must figure out a way to determine which one it is. The players must unanimously agree to have a guess verified. The goal is to have correct answers in all the envelopes. When the Solved! envelope is full of envelopes with correct guesses, the mystery is solved (though that doesn't mean the culprit has necessarily been apprehended).

As a means to encourage clever guessing rather than brute force trial and error, each envelope carries a certain prize amount that is awarded only for a correct guess, and which is reduced for each incorrect guess until it runs out. An extra experience point may be a suitable reward, a temporary Background, a bit of reward money, a narrative advantage, or so on. There is no further penalty for incorrect guesses, simply no extra reward. In addition, the Solved! envelope should offer rewards based on how many overall incorrect guesses there were before the case was solved.

Open-Ended: This mystery style goes to the other end of the spectrum, and allows the players to decide on the truth about the major elements of the crime as they go along. Aside from some initial details provided by the Storyteller, the players get to determine what is true based on the rolls they make and the fiction they decide is most compelling. In

this style the Storyteller serves mostly to adjudicate the rules and make sure the story keeps moving along if it appears to be stalling. Her input is certainly still welcome, but she's not the absolute arbiter of the fiction she normally is in other styles. It's a style well suited to groups that are less concerned with figuring out a static puzzle than they are with creating a compelling narrative around one.

At first, this might seem like it would make the crimes too quick and easy to solve. In theory, the players could simply declare that the killer is standing in the room and apprehend them immediately. While that might be possible, in practice troupes that decide on this style of play enjoy complicating the matter with all manner of self-inflicted reversals, crises, and other obstacles. Knowing that the story is largely theirs to control lets them be bold in making assertions and putting important elements at risk — indeed, they often create plot twists far more fearsome than the Storyteller would have dared to inflict on them!

The trickiest part of this mystery style, therefore, is not keeping the mystery from being solved too quickly, but rather making sure every player feels their input is respected as the mystery is fleshed out. One way to do this is to allow the player whose character has the most relevant expertise to have the final say on what's true related to that expertise. Failing that, a simple voting or rotation system can also work, with everyone enjoying a chance to steer the fiction. Any method is fine, so long as everyone feels they can participate in the narrative and enjoy themselves.

Shared Narrative: In this middle ground style between the two previous ones, the Storyteller works out some of the major details of the crime in advance, but leaves others open to player input and interpretation. Essentially the Storyteller develops an outline of the crime and some likely possibilities but then sees where the players are taking the provided information and alters the structure accordingly. This approach works well for troupes that enjoy the idea of figuring out a mystery with some definite answers but also likes to have room to follow some tangents or explore some unexpected theories without being told "sorry, dead end" just because it's not what the Storyteller imagined.

Dusty Trails

Although it can be difficult to imagine the rough and tumble American Wild West and the prim British Victorian era coexisted, they did in fact overlap. Thanks to some traveling shows and particular command performances by Buffalo Bill's famed troupe at the 1887 American Exhibition in London, a mythologized — and heavily sanitized — vision of frontier life enjoyed a period of popularity in Great Britain among the upper and lower class alike. It might not have been sufficient to turn the West End into the Wild West, exactly, but it certainly sparked interest as well as a few frontier-inspired fads. The success of the show on continental Europe only fanned the flames more, and for a time the West was definitely in vogue.

It's very important to remember that while not the colonial wilderness it once had been, America was still far from the major global power it would become in the 20th century. Many Europeans still held a stereotypical view of Americans as charmingly provincial and hardworking at best or downright backward and uncouth at worst — rather like cousins from a pleasant, if somewhat dull, backwater town. As far as they were concerned, culture and innovation flowed from Europe to America, and only rarely did progress go the other way. For their part, many Americans viewed Europeans as more stylish and educated on average, if sometimes high-handed or conservative in their thinking.

Nevertheless, the appeal of new lives in a new land and the depredations of imperialism on subject populations, like the Irish, drew a vast multitude of European immigrants to America during the 19th century, not to mention canny entrepreneurs eager to seek their fortune in a wide-open new territory. European characters from all walks of life could find themselves on the American frontier, whether as laborers or settlers toiling to wrest a living from the land or as business owners and aristocratic adventurers seeking fortune and exploration at the edge of the civilized world.

A group that wants to venture into the Wild West should take a few important factors into account, as by and large Western stories have very different fictional elements than urban Victorian stories set in Europe or the big cities of the American east coast. For one, troupes should decide whether they want a more romanticized version of the West, with gunfights at high noon and perilous Pony Express rides and gentleman outlaws robbing trains, or a more realistic vision that deals more with the harsh living conditions, lonely lives, and brutal warfare between the expanding American states and the indigenous peoples they displace and eradicate along the way. Just as a group must decide how much they want to balance accurate versus thematic Victoriana, they should reach a consensus on how true to life they want their frontier tales.

Western stories also tend to explore different tropes and themes than other Victorian stories. Classic cowboy stories feature rugged, individualistic heroes pitted against the larger forces such as the environment, encroaching big business interests, the depredations of ruthless bandits or "savage" natives, or some combination of all of the above. Likewise, outlaw stories feature stylish gamblers, clever prostitutes, and deadly yet honorable gunfighters always one step ahead of corrupt authorities or ruthless gangs of villains, and lean heavily on the distinction that following the law and finding justice aren't always one and the same. No matter what form they take, Western tales tend to celebrate larger-than-life characters making their way in the world and standing up for themselves and the interests of individuals or small groups as opposed to larger, often faceless, enemy forces bent on crushing their freedom. A Western story arc can also make for an excellent change of pace from the hustle and bustle of the standard Victorian setting, even if it's not so much an idyllic wilderness retreat as it is trading one set of hazards for another.

Even though the periods overlap, it's worth doing some specialized research before embarking on a Western adventure. Fortunately, a wealth of research resources are available for troupes wishing to take their game from the banks of the Thames to the dusty streets of Tombstone, so it shouldn't be too hard to transition between the two with a slight shift in focus.

Optional System: It's High Noon

Perhaps the most popular element of the classic Western is the quickdraw showdown, where two or more gunfighters face off in a battle of steely resolve and lightning reflexes. To preserve the high stakes, high-speed nature of the gunfight, this optional system breaks it down into three rapid-fire phases consisting of simple rolls and swift mechanics: terms, staredown, and quickdraw.

It should be noted that if one or both sides intend to influence the gunfight with magick, or attempt to subvert it with other sneaky means (like hidden body armor or snipers firing from afar), these optional rules should either not be used, or these influences should be worked into the fiction surrounding the rolls involved in the duel but otherwise have no mechanical impact on the outcome. Essentially, these rules are an agreement to settle things with a single, simple, fast-paced exchange in the spirit of a classic Western gunfight. If the players or the Storyteller want to make things more complicated, that's fine, but that is best done outside these rules.

Terms: Although duels to the death certainly occurred, the terms of a duel were often to "first blood" to skirt murder charges, with the loser being the first to yield due to injury. Of course, the natural assumption was that anyone willing to engage in a shootout accepted death could be an outcome. Despite folklore and cinematic convention, dueling was generally illegal due to the high fatality rate and potential hazard to bystanders, though in practice authorities often turned a blind eye so long as both parties entered it willingly, any terms they agreed upon were honored, and no one else got hurt.

While the characters may agree to anything they prefer in the fiction, during the *terms phase* the player and the Storyteller explicitly agree on what the stakes of the duel will be in terms of game mechanics. Specifically, they decide whether the duel will be instantly fatal (first shot to land kills the target), crippling (first shot to land immediately drops the foe and leaves a lasting consequence), or "sporting" (first shot to land ends the duel with a nasty but not life-threatening wound for the loser). **If no agreement can be reached, these optional rules cannot be used, and regular combat mechanics should be used instead.** Only informed and enthusiastic agreement suffices for these rules; the stakes are simply too high for people to be forced to use these rules grudgingly.

Staredown: When gunfighters face off, there's a crucial battle of wills that takes place before anyone slaps leather and starts shooting. This is the *staredown phase*. During this phase, the combatants test each other's resolve, baiting each other to see whose nerve breaks first and causes them to go for their gun. It determines who has the steadier hands and, more importantly, the greater will with the winner having a significant advantage in the ensuing exchange. Although it may seem mere moments to onlookers, it can feel like hours to those involved, and the Storyteller should feel free to play up the tiny details that jump to the forefront as these moments drag by.

The staredown phase is an extended, resisted challenge where each combatant rolls their Willpower rating against a difficulty of their opponent's Willpower rating. The staredown continues until one character accumulates successes equal to his opponent's Willpower rating, which signals victory for the staredown. (If more than two combatants are involved, each must declare one person the focus of their staredown.) If both combatants reach their target number of successes in the same turn, the staredown is a draw and neither character receives a benefit in the next phase. Regardless of the outcome of the subsequent quickdraw exchange, onlookers can clearly tell who won this battle of wills, which can sometimes lead to "winners" being heckled for their poor nerves even if they were saved by their quick hands.

The winner of the staredown phase adds their opponent's Willpower rating to their Initiative for the next phase, giving them a substantial — though not impossible — edge in the ensuing exchange.

Quickdraw: Once the staredown ends, the gunfighters draw and the bullets start flying. This is known as the *quickdraw phase*. Both combatants roll one die and add it to their Initiative rating, with the winner of the staredown phase also adding her opponent's Willpower rating to this total. The character with the highest total shoots first. If a tie results, the shots are simultaneous. It was not unheard of for a shootout to result in both parties ending up on the ground — or under it!

Optional Rule: True Grit

If the troupe wants gunfights to potentially become longer, bloodier affairs, the characters may spend Willpower points equal to the number of successes on the Dexterity + Firearms roll to return fire despite being gravely wounded. They then resolve their own Dexterity + Firearms roll. Both sides continue in this fashion until one side is unwilling or unable to spend Willpower.

At that point, all successes they've paid off are suffered as lethal damage, bypassing all soak or defense. They also suffer additional lethal damage equal to Willpower points spent, which also cannot be reduced with soak or defenses, and may result in dropping dead after that last heroic display of resolve.

Shooting consists of a standard Dexterity + Firearms roll. However, there are no damage or soak rolls, or any other combat maneuvers or complications. Just one roll, and if it succeeds, the opponent is immediately either killed or wounded to the point of being left helpless on the ground and unable to continue, as determined by the nature of the shootout agreement between the player and the Storyteller before the showdown began. If multiple combatants are involved in the showdown, shots are resolved until one "side" is defeated or there is only one combatant left standing, whichever makes sense for the situation.

These special shooting and wounding rules apply only until one combatant falls (or both, in the case of simultaneous injuries). Any subsequent combat or shooting should follow the normal combat rules, including standard Initiative, attack, and defense rolls. Also, unless the duel was explicitly agreed upon as being to the death, firing on an injured opponent was considered the same as cold-blooded murder. The only exception was if the injured party refused to yield and was attempting to continue the duel, as they still constituted a threat. If a combatant required or requested to be put out of their misery, the task typically fell to a friend or neutral party, not their opponent, to avoid accusations of murder.

Variant Rule: Alternative Showdowns

Although designed with gunfights in mind, these optional showdown rules could easily be adapted for other, similar contests as well, from sword duels to spellslinging faceoffs. The only mechanical change required is to the dice pool during the *quickdraw phase*, which shifts from Dexterity + Firearms to whatever dice pool is normally used for the type of action in question. In narrative terms, the possible outcomes may be different as well — in a magic duel the losing party might end up mind-controlled or turned into a tree, just for starters — but all outcomes must be negotiated in advance as usual. Breaking the terms of the duel and going for a different outcome causes the scene to revert to normal rules as usual.

Purloined Letters: The Epistolary Chronicle

An epistolary novel is defined as a story told through a series of documents, most commonly in the form of letters but sometimes with other papers from diary entries to shipping manifests to police reports and more. This popular literary device from the Regency era and well into the Victorian period takes a bit of adjustment to suit tabletop roleplaying but can make for a surprisingly effective way to tell a Victorian-era story. Documents can be used to enhance downtime between sessions, provide a means for absent players to stay connected to the story, or even as the structure for an entire chronicle from the start. For simplicity's sake, in this section "letter" will be used as a blanket term for all types of documents.

Incorporating epistolary interludes into a standard chronicle is a good way to pass the time between sessions, particularly if the break is going to be longer than normal and the group wants to continue roleplaying and character development. Such interludes often don't require much in the way of rules — typically the Storyteller announces any updates to the story or timeline as needed, and then allows players to exchange correspondence in reaction to these changes. Done right, epistolary interludes can help maintain interest when it's hard for players to meet regularly for games, as well as smoothly transition between periods or locations.

A full epistolary chronicle is played more or less like a play-by-post game, a turn-based style of play where the Storyteller sets a scene and describes the actions of any relevant characters under her control. A turn then begins where the players respond to the Storyteller's prompt by submitting one or more letters or other documents detailing how their characters respond to the situation and each other. The Storyteller adjudicates any necessary rules questions, moves the scenario forward in response to the actions taken, and describes the updated situation to the players. The players take another turn, and play continues in this vein until the situation is resolved and the next situation presents itself.

Writer's Block

Epistolary chronicles can seem intimidating even to players who enjoy writing, so it's generally a good idea to put a hard upper limit on how long letters can be, as well as how many can be sent per turn. Troupes are advised to start at the low end here, with a maximum of 250 to 500 words per letter and no more than a couple of letters per turn (if not just one). Having a relatively low cap keeps players from burning out trying to write immense multi-page letters every turn, and makes sure players who are more prolific and/or have more free time don't take over the game by sheer volume of output. If these limits feel too constricting they can always be raised later, but it's better to start small and build up if necessary rather than begin with an unrestrained free-for-all and leave some players behind.

It's important to understand that the idea of "turns" here is far broader and more generalized than something as fast-paced as combat turns. Most of the time, turns for an epistolary chronicle are going to be a matter of days at least, if not weeks or longer. Magi may have the means to communicate much more quickly than normal humans, but composing documents to respond to events changing every few moments doesn't really fit the epistolary format and can quickly tire out even the most prolific players.

Instead of trying to accelerate the epistolary format, lean into its strengths and tell stories that encompass long-term goals and sweeping periods of time. In an epistolary chronicle the characters can be easily scattered all over the world. Add some magic to the mix and the characters may even be communicating across times and dimensions as well! With no pressing need to address minute-by-minute matters, Storytellers should embrace the idea of the story sprawling, and encourage plots that take months or years to bring to fruition. Ambitious troupes can even tell generational tales over the course of the chronicle, with players taking on the role of the apprentices or children of previous characters as the years go on.

The Rules of the Page

Game mechanics in an epistolary chronicle are naturally handled a bit differently than normal, to avoid constant delays while awaiting adjudication for one ruling or another and allow players to write freely as often as possible. Keeping updated copies of each player's sheet is recommended for the Storyteller not only as a reference but also as an archive of all correspondence so that there's no question about previous messages. The troupe should decide whether or not this archive should be private (Storyteller only), semi-private (players can see messages of which their character is aware), or public (players see all messages, even if characters are not aware of them). Seeing the big picture can make for an interesting meta-narrative, though other groups may prefer the secrecy of only knowing what they've sent and received directly.

Experience points are still awarded to reflect the evolution of the characters over time, though Storytellers should consider adjusting rewards to reflect longer periods of play as turns go on — a large block of time should also reward a significant amount of experience points.

Critical Tasks: Troupes that want to incorporate more chance into their epistolary narratives can utilize a special rule called Critical Tasks. After the Storyteller describes the situation, but before the players write their letters, the players send the Storyteller a summary of the actions their characters intend to take. The Storyteller declares what sorts of dice pools are necessary and makes the relevant rolls, then informs the player of the results. The player must then incorporate these results into the descriptions in their letter, for better or worse. This keeps character sheets relevant and adds an

element of chance, while not drowning a more narrative game in lots of dice rolling.

As a rule of thumb, there should be no more than one or two Critical Tasks for every 250 words or so, or the letter simply becomes too crowded, and important results may not get the description they deserve. If some Critical Tasks are contingent — that is, failing one may preclude another roll, or at least force a significant change in strategy — the Storyteller may go back and forth with the player as needed to determine actions and results, provided it doesn't hold up the turn for everyone else.

Proper Villains: The Gothic Antagonist

A great villain is an agreement between author and audience to celebrate evil for a time so that its defeat has even more savor — or its triumph even greater horror. One of the most beloved tropes of the Victorian era is that of the Gothic antagonist: the stylish arch-villain that the audience loves to hate and whose schemes keep even the most dedicated heroes scrambling to avoid disaster. This section contains advice and optional systems that can help any Storyteller design the elegant Gothic villains of their dreams.

It's important to understand what defines a proper Gothic antagonist, especially in contrast to other villains. One of the most prominent traits of these villains is the emotional tone, which tends toward brooding or melancholy, interrupted by bursts of passion (and often violence). These antagonists skew introspective and are often deeply conflicted about their actions, and may even inflict some form of punishment on themselves to atone for their sins. Those that are free of the burden of conscience still reflect on their deeds at length, though whether for sadistic pleasure or simply as part of planning the next stage of their master plan depends on the villain in question.

Gothic antagonists are also frequently representations of the class struggle; many are aristocrats or otherwise part of the upper crust, and use their wealth and privilege to advance their schemes as well as shield themselves from consequences. The weight of a family name and the need to keep up appearances are powerful motivating factors as well, and many of the most savage outbursts of these antagonists are directed at those threatening their standing in society. Although less common, some Gothic antagonists are drawn from the lower class, and often bear a burning resentment towards those who laid them low (if they once held a higher station) or hold them down (if not).

Malicious Intent

Before anything else, you should get to the heart of what the villain *needs* — what is their ultimate goal? If no one stopped them and they could have everything they ever wanted, what would that look like? A villain motivated by twisted love is likely to behave differently than one driven to push the boundaries of science, ethics be damned, and both are quite distinct from a villain consumed by thoughts of vengeance. Take a moment and try to envision this villain's perfect world, the outcome that they see in front of them as they take all these heinous and horrible actions.

What limits, if any, does the villain place on herself? Are there any lines she will not cross? Bear in mind that it's rare for someone to have absolutely no reservations about any course of action, especially right from the very beginning — after all, if you start at that point, there's nowhere to escalate to down the line. With that consideration, does she have a soft spot for farmers out of fondness for her idyllic country childhood? Interesting limits can also make for curious role-play. A villain who refuses to take a life may actually occupy the moral high ground at times compared to a trigger-happy group, for example. Needless to say, most villains keep their limits well-hidden to avoid having them used against them, but clever and determined heroes can often puzzle out these behavioral quirks and make use of them.

Gothic antagonists sometimes initially appear to be anti-heroes — that is, characters with villainous traits but heroic motivations, especially if their central passion is righting a (perceived) wrong or battling a scourge on society. However, in time it should become clear that they are definitely not heroic characters — a crime-fighter may cripple or even kill criminals rather than simply bringing them to justice, and an avenging villain goes beyond balancing the scales and torments their target far past what the original offense merited.

Although villains should have plausible motivations for their actions, note that it is a common trope that Gothic antagonists are aware of their villainous nature and even revel in it. While some may make apologies for — or rationalize — their actions, some are perfectly content with their blackhearted schemes and enjoy flouting both the law and conventional morality while they pursue their goals. With that in mind, don't be afraid to put an exclamation point on their villainy and let them own it — there's no need for modern psychology here if you prefer simple, straightforward malice, avarice, and general, antisocial behavior.

Modus Operandi

Once you have an idea of what the villain wants, the next step is to decide what methods they most commonly employ to get what they want. While a good villain mixes things up now and then to keep the heroes guessing, at their core they most likely have certain methods they prefer and fall back on when under pressure. A villain's preferred approach also says a lot about them personally, as it tends to not only play to their strengths but also offers insight into their worldview and what their ultimate goals might be.

What follows are three basic villainous archetypes that roughly correspond to Social, Mental, and Physical villains. However, it's important to understand that these are not absolutes, and mixing them up can make for interesting and unpredictable villains. A meticulous assassin might be better described as a mastermind than a monster, for example — while her end result is a physical act of violence, her careful planning and misdirection are much more of a

mental exercise. Likewise, a bullying politician who models himself as a "man of the people" and excels at whipping his followers into rioting and assault might be more of a monster than a corrupter, as even though his primary strengths are social, the brute force nature of his actions is raw and confrontational in style.

Corrupter: People are playthings, and those who know how to court their desires can rule with little more than a whispered suggestion or a seductive pose. A corrupter uses a combination of charm, sex appeal, clever wordplay, and ruthless social manipulation to get what he wants. A corrupter often employs willing accomplices to keep his own hands clean, making it very hard to pin any wrongdoing on him directly even if everyone knows who's truly to blame.

Mastermind: Everything is a chess game, and this villain is always thinking three moves ahead. Masterminds usually have several plans, contingency plans, and escape routes all mapped out in advance, and delight in forcing the heroes to take part in schemes against their will. Masterminds excel at misdirection and often keep their true intentions secret as long as possible, though their tendency to gloat means it's impossible to resist revealing them eventually.

Monster: Take what you want and destroy anything that gets in your way. The least subtle but often most immediately fearsome sort of villain, a monster takes the most direct path to their goal, terrifying and brutalizing as needed and leaving a trail of destruction in their wake. This does not necessarily mean physical violence, though it certainly can, only that those who oppose this sort of villain soon find themselves locked in a grim struggle for survival — literal or metaphorical.

Signature Style

With motivation in mind and methodology at the ready, it's time to give the villain a signature style. Gothic antagonists are flamboyant by modern standards, frequently adopting evocative names or titles as well as distinctive costumes or other flourishes. If this seems over the top, don't worry! There is a direct line from the outlandish characters of the penny dreadfuls of the time to the larger-than-life world of comic book heroes and villains, so don't be afraid to pull out the stops in making the antagonist memorable and fearsome.

Many Gothic villains lean toward ornate names and titles, the better to convey a sense of menace as well as a certain class or style — after all, Count Dracula's noble status is one reason some of his "eccentricities" are tolerated. If the villain isn't a member of the aristocracy, the name should still be distinctive, perhaps elevated by a nickname or a self-styled title, such as Black Joe Tanner or Patchwork Evie. The villain might even hide behind a persona or nickname given to her by the press, such as the Red Ripper or the Countess of Shadows, especially if she tries to be more unassuming in her daily life.

In the most immediate sense, this means giving your antagonist a signature descriptive element of some kind. This can be as obvious as the Red Ripper's head-to-toe bloodstained butcher's outfit or as subtle as the scent of orchids and jasmine that lingers in the wake of the nameless corrupter the characters always seem to be one step behind. Even if the villain prefers to work in the comfort of anonymity, they should always have a calling card of some kind, something that lets the characters know when the villain's schemes are afoot. After all, while Gothic antagonists aren't eager to be thwarted, it's a conceit of the genre that they want the heroes to know exactly who is vexing them!

One excellent way to underscore the villain's style is to bring a signature prop to the table, and take it out whenever the villain rears his head. A cane, mask, ring, or other distinctive object can simply but effectively evoke the presence of the arch-nemesis. Choosing a particular tune or piece of music can be effective too, as can lighting a scented candle. What matters is that the players come to associate the item with the villain. Encourage them to take it seriously as well — while the occasional joke or bit of bravado is fine and in character, having them treat the presence of their nemesis seriously will naturally lend more drama to the scene.

Gothic Antagonist Systems

Simulating a proper Gothic antagonist can seem like a lot of juggling to do, but fortunately there are a few mechanics that can help ease the load a little bit and allow the Storyteller to focus more on bringing the villain to life.

Master Plans

Unless you are a Gothic villain yourself, it might seem intimidating to come up with the sort of ornate schemes and devilish twists that are their signature. Throw in a group of unpredictable players and their characters, and even the best-laid plans have a way of going up in smoke. So while it's a good idea to sit down and plot out the villain's schemes as best you can, you may inevitably find it necessary to improvise — but make it seem like the villain planned it all along.

The Master Plan is a new game trait, a pool of up to 10 points that the Storyteller can spend to introduce surprising and unexpected story elements that favor the villain, while also representing that the villain somehow — however, improbably — had planned this all along. The Master Plan pool should be readily visible to the players during play. Part of the reason it exists is to show upfront that these story elements are used to reflect Gothic villain stories of the era when antagonists routinely managed to set up incredibly unlikely events or convoluted schemes seemingly out of nowhere.

Think of the Master Plan pool as a sort of coincidental magic, but one accessible to the Storyteller rather than a character, allowing her to insert outlandish villainous plot twists on the fly, but presenting them as something the villain had put in motion all along.

1 point — Twisting. The Storyteller takes an existing element in the scene and reveals something wicked about it. For example, a police officer waiting at the scene turns out to be corrupt and on the villain's payroll, or the hotel where the heroes are staying is actually one of the villain's lairs. The characters may or may not be aware of this fact.

2 points — Escalating. The Storyteller takes an existing element in the scene and, directly and dramatically, turns it

against the characters. The corrupt police officer cries out "there's the killer, boys!" and points at a character when his backup arrives, or the hotel manager at the villain's lair sets a fire that threatens the burn up the characters' possessions.

3 points — Conjuring. The Storyteller introduces a brand new element that was not previously introduced in the scene — but could *plausibly* arrive — and that element is pitted against the characters from the start. A pack of trained killers could not normally materialize from thin air in an empty ballroom, unless the villain has access to invisibility or teleportation, though they could emerge from hidden doors in the walls or crash through false panels in the ceiling.

Example of Play: *Pete is running* ***Victorian Mage****, and the characters have cornered the villain in a bar down by the docks. He thought the villain would be able to escape earlier, but the characters were clever and cut him off, forcing him into the crowded tavern. As the characters approach, however, the villain laughs. "Fools!" he chuckles. "Did you think I came here by mistake? Or were you so eager you didn't notice you've wandered into a den of the Alabaster Serpent cult?" Pete pushes forward a Master Plan point and narrates how, on closer inspection, these "sailors" and "dock workers" all seem to have snake tattoos visible on their arms. This is Twisting — the sailors aren't actually attacking (yet), but all of a sudden this situation is a lot tenser, and to the characters, it appears like it might have been the villain's plan to lure them here all along (even if the players know better). If Pete had wanted to force an immediate confrontation, he could have spent two points to begin Escalating and have the sailors not just be cultists but launch right into the fray. However, he wants to see how the group will handle it, and so he waits as the players weigh their options and the characters weigh their odds…*

Master Plan points should be counted out at the beginning of the session, and adjusted to suit the villain in question — as a rule of thumb, Master Plan points are best used for more intellectual and meticulous villains, tempered by how dangerous a villain is with all of their plots stripped away. For example, a powerful sorceress may not need as many Master Plan points as a mortal politician, since she is an extremely capable opponent in her own right while the politician relies almost entirely on his clout and social leverage.

The Storyteller refreshes Master Plan points each session, and once spent they are gone for the rest of the session; any left unspent are wasted. Though nothing bars the Storyteller from granting more Master Plan points during a session, these points are quite potent, and feeling as though the villain has an endless supply of them can be frustrating for the players. It's generally best connected to something suitably impressive — the villain achieving exceptional success on an important roll, for example — or by allowing a player to turn a botch into a regular failure in return for granting the villain a point or two.

Master Plan points are not there to "screw over" the players or excuse endless, implausible plot twists, but to help the Storyteller simulate the ornate schemes and melodramatic plot twists that are part of Gothic fiction and the very essence of Gothic villains. With that in mind, players are encouraged to take them in the spirit in which they are intended and to go along with their dramatic potential rather than quibble over what they can or cannot do. For their part, Storytellers should respect the tone of Master Plan points and use them to increase tension and drama rather than for countering player agency.

Reversals

Another element of the Gothic antagonist that might seem difficult to simulate in tabletop play is the ability of these antagonists to frustrate repeated attempts to capture, corner, or otherwise vanquish them. Just when the heroes seem to have the villain on the ropes, events conspire to let them wriggle free — a hidden trapdoor, a crooked jailer, a faked death, a bribed eyewitness, etc. While this works fine in fiction, where the readers often celebrate the notion of a good villain who keeps returning to plague the heroes, in a game environment such escapes can make the players feel frustrated as no amount of good rolling or clever planning seems able to bring the villain down.

Perhaps the best way to handle this, then, is to simply be upfront about it and assign a Gothic antagonist a new optional trait: Reversals. This trait is rated between 1 and 7, with a higher value indicating a more elusive villain who is likely to plague the heroes for a longer time. The way this trait is used is simple — any time the heroes come too close to unmasking, capturing, or otherwise taking the Gothic villain out of play, the Storyteller may reduce the Reversal trait by one to fabricate a suitably wicked and flamboyant means to escape the situation. Only when the Reversal trait is fully exhausted can the heroes feel confident a confrontation will "stick" and the villain finally be captured, killed, or otherwise taken out of the story.

As with the Master Plan trait, Reversals are a story device, pure and simple. This trait does not follow the normal rules for the game, and by its very nature, it creates melodramatic over-the-top moments. Rather than fight with it and nitpick over how a particular escape is unfair, players are encouraged

Right Where I Want You!

Sometimes things fall apart for the heroes — a few bad rolls, some bad decisions, or both can put heroes at the mercy of the villain to a greater degree than even the Storyteller expected. And yet for all their wickedness, Gothic antagonists rarely finish off the opposition out of hand, even when it would be easy to do so. (Where's the glory in overcoming easy opposition?) Storytellers may also not want to let one bad scene put an end to beloved characters or even a chronicle, and one way to reflect this trope of drawing out the rivalry is to give the heroes an unexpected reprieve — and raise the Reversal trait by one. Turnabout is fair play, after all.

to lean into it and help the Storyteller come up with clever ruses and impossible escapes for their arch-rival. As strange as it sounds, knowing upfront that the villain won't be ultimately defeated for some time — while also having a tangible way of influencing that timeline by reducing the Reversal trait — can be very liberating, encouraging players to play up the scenes for dramatic effect rather than focusing on game mechanics alone as they attempt to defeat the villain.

Bear in mind that when the Reversal trait is used, this signals the end of the villain for that scene, if not the session. If the villain is not physically removed from the area as part of the Reversal, she is somehow rendered unable to take any significant action or coordinate her plans for the time being (and likely slinks away at the first opportunity). Don't have the villain burn Reversal only to pop back in and cause more mischief a few moments later! After all, even though this trait gives the villain an escape hatch of sorts, it also is an admission that the heroes have carried the day, and it's important to let players have a victory when they've earned it.

As with the Master Plan trait, the Reversal trait's rating should be visible to the players, so that they are aware of how close they are to a final confrontation. With that in mind, make sure to nurse grudges, leave scars, twist the knife, and otherwise fan the flames of the rivalry whenever possible — that way when the ultimate confrontation begins, everyone has a serious score to settle and it will feel suitably momentous to finally come to grips once and for all.

If the Reversal rating is still proving too intimidating for the players, the Storyteller may introduce other ways to lower it than simply cornering or defeating the villain — for example, he may declare that imprisoning the villain's right-hand henchman also lowers the Reversal trait. Declaring such rewards ahead of time is recommended as a great way to fire up the players, reminding them that the Reversal trait is something within their power. The Storyteller may also declare that the players receive an extra experience point or two every time the Reversal rating is lowered, to reflect the lessons learned from the villain slipping through their grasp.

Only Mostly Dead

Although the Reversal trait is a narrative device and not bound by normal game mechanics, sometimes it can be hard to explain how even a well-prepared villain can escape a particular circumstance. If a magus rolls spectacularly well and delivers a consuming fireball right to the villain's face, for instance, it can seem farfetched for the villain to survive, much less escape to plague the heroes another day. Though having the villain return, bitter and horribly disfigured, is definitely in keeping with Gothic tradition. Sometimes, however, even a supernatural villain seems to be so outmaneuvered and/or the players so lucky that it just stretches the story too far to keep them in play.

If it seems truly impossible to have the villain return, if even a faked death feels implausible, a few genre-appropriate options still exist to carry the villain's schemes forward: a lover, relative, or henchman takes up the villain's mantle (with the added impetus of revenge); the villain is revealed to be the pawn of an even more dastardly individual pulling the strings; two words: hello necromancy; it was actually a body double switched at the last moment; two more words: time magic; and, of course, the villain could be a possessing spirit or similar entity that goes in search of a new body. These are just a few examples, but should hopefully provide the sort of necessary inspiration for bringing back a villain potentially lost before their time.

Chapter Eight: Dangerous to Know

"How is it that the very sunlight does not turn to blackness before this thing, the hard earth melt and boil beneath such a burden?"

— Arthur Machen, *The Great God Pan*

In an age of steam and steel, enemies of all kinds are close at hand. Scourges range from desperate urchins to blood-hungry immortals to the addictions of one's own body, mind, and soul. As night descends and the gaslights glow amid heavy clouds of fog, be sure to take stock of resources, friends, and weaponry. Whomever you might be, you'll surely need whatever advantages might be mustered in your defense.

Common Victorian Weaponry

The 1800s begin with muskets and end with machine guns. Within roughly 100 years, the face of weapons and warfare radically transform. Although firearms and artillery go back to late-medieval times, the speed and scope of carnage in the Victorian era is unlike anything humanity has experienced before. By the century's end, humanity's capacity to kill vast numbers of living things at long range within a short time foretells the mechanized slaughter of the coming decades.

The incredible imbalance between emerging modern weaponry and traditional fighting arts plays a major role in the spread of Empire. Although future accounts put too much emphasis on weapons and not enough emphasis on germs, the speed at which European powers overcome cultures more seasoned than themselves is a fiendish dark miracle. Japan adopts these new technologies quickly and efficiently enough to become a formidable empire by the turn of the 20th century, but few cultures have that level of success. Despite skilled warriors and often-superior tactics, cultures like the Zulu and Comanche fall before the speed and accuracy of Colt revolvers and Martini-Henry rifles. Though magick provides a potent, perhaps decisive, advantage, the technocratic Art of mass production turns the old order upside down.

The wide range of potential weaponry from this era is too broad to address in **Victorian Mage**; even so, the nearby charts provide some common tools for violent encounters. Many suitable hand-held implements for the era (including bullwhips, tomahawks, katanas, katars, stilettos, brass knuckles, broken bottles, and similar tools of injury) can be found in the **Mage 20** rulebook (pp. 450-451). Bows and hand-thrown weapons can be found in the same book (pp. 452-453). Although most Victorian firearms (the Gatling gun excepted) cannot perform the maneuvers associated with automatic gunfire, the special moves and stunts provided for hand-held weapons in **Mage 20** and **The Book of Secrets** can be used with any suitable implement of destruction.

Victorian-Era Firearms

Type	Damage	Range	Rate	Ammunition	Conceal	Year	Notes
Firearms							
Gatling Gun	8	9	225	.50 (belt-fed)	N	1862	Machine gun; can use automatic-fire combat maneuvers; M
Gun-Cane	6	5	1	1	G	1800s	One shot – cannot reload during combat; sometimes added to *sword-cane* melee weapon.
Key Gun	4	2	1	1	P	1700s	One-shot flintlock disguised as a large key.
Pistols							
Apache Revolver	4	3	1	6	P	1860s	Actually French, not Apache; a fold-up weapon comprised of a snub-barreled gun, brass knuckles, and a short knife blade; latter two weapons inflict Strength L / difficulty 6 (brass knuckles) and Strength + 1 L / difficulty 5 (knife).
Budding Percussion Pepperbox	4	5	1	5	J	1820s	Small five-barreled pistol; similar pepperboxes hold between 3 and 18 shots; all shots may be fire at once, but the gun demands several minutes to reload; X
Collier Flintlock Revolver	5	10	2	7	J	1818	Earliest true revolver.
Derringer	4	4 (6)	1 (2)	1-4	P	1852	Original *Philadelphia Deringer* is an inaccurate one-shot pistol; *Remington Derringer* (1866) is more accurate and has two barrels and two shots; *Sharps Derringer* (1859) is likewise accurate, four-barrel revolver design.
Flintlock Pistol *Wogdon & Barton Dueling Pistol*	5	8	1/3	1	J	1740s	X
Lever-Action Repeating Pistol *Volcanic Pistol*	5	15	1	10	J	1850s	Can fire 10 shots before reloading; M
Revolver, Light *Webley British Bulldog*	5	12	3	6	P	1850s	
Revolver, Heavy Ball *Colt Walker*	6	15	1	6	G	1840s	Large, heavy, prone to malfunctions; M
Revolver, Heavy *Colt .45 "Peacemaker"*	6	30	2	6	G	1870s	Large, heavy, far more reliable than earlier revolvers.
Howdah Pistol *Lancaster Pistol*	7	20	2	2 or 4	G	1860s	Two-or-four-barreled heavy pistol, often firing heavy rifle rounds; holds one shot per barrel.

Type	Damage	Range	Rate	Ammunition	Conceal	Year	Notes
Automatic Pistol *Luger Modell 1900 Parabellum*	4	15	3	8/32	P	1900	Lugers feature an optional snap-on 32-round ammunition drum; M
Muskets and Rifles							
Musket *"Brown Bess" Long Land Pattern*	6	120	1/4	1	N	1720s	Usually fitted with a bayonet; used worldwide into the early 1900s; M
Flintlock Rifle *Baker Rifle*	7	160	1/3	1	N	1790s	Sometimes modified to mount bayonet; M
Single-Shot Cartridge Rifle *Martini-Henry Mark II*	8	180	1	1	n	1860s	Requires a turn to reload after each shot.
Lever-Action Repeating Rifle *Winchester Model 1873*	8	200	2	15	N	1860s	Can fire 15 shots before reloading.
"Elephant Gun" *Sharps-Borchardt Model 1878*	9	200	1	1	N	1870s	Requires a turn to reload after each shot.
Shotguns							
Blunderbuss	7	10	1/4	1		N	1750s
Coach Gun	6	8	1/3	1	G	1750s	Short blunderbuss; X
Double-Barreled Shotgun	8	20	1	2	G	1870s	"Break-open" breech allows a character to reload both barrels in one turn.
Single-Shot Shotgun *1878 Hartford Coach Gun*	8	18	1/3	1	G	1780s	Shotgun shells, invented in 1860s, increase Rate to 1 shot/turn.
Lever-Action Repeating Shotgun *Winchester Model 1887*	8	20	1	6	N	1880s	

Notes

Range: Within listed range (in yards/meters), the difficulty is 6; at twice the listed range, the difficulty becomes 8; within two yards/meters, the difficulty is 4.

Rate: Maximum number of shots per turn. Before the invention of cartridge ammunition in 1847, normal (non-magickal) guns require at least two turns to prepare, load, and fire, and have Rate 1/2, 1/3, or 1/4: one shot every two, three, or four turns.

Ammunition: The number of shots the gun can hold without reloading.

Conceal: P = Pocket J = Jacket or Robe G = Greatcoat, Duster or Cloak N = Cannot be concealed.

Year: Approximate debut of production. Prototypes and Enlightened tech creations may appear earlier, but such weapons are subject to Straits backlashes.

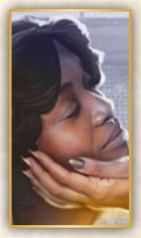
M = *Malfunction*; botched rolls or Straits backlashes render the gun unusable until it can be repaired.

X= *Explodes* in user's hands or face for 5 dice (L) when a botch or Straits Backlash is rolled.

Melee Weapons

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage/Type	Conceal	Notes
Assegai/Spear	6	Strength + 2/L	N	Can be thrown; typically used one-handed; + 1 die of damage if used two-handed.
Barstool	6	Strength + 3/B		Can be thrown.
Bayonet (mounted)	7	Strength + 2/L		When mounted on rife, thrust penetrates up to three points of armor; slash inflicts damage as normal.
Bowie Knife	4	Strength + 2/L	J	
Cavalry Lance/Spear		Strength + 3/L	N	Can be used one-handed; if used from horseback, add two dice damage, and thrust penetrates up to three points of armor.
Cavalry Sabre	6	Strength + 4/L	N	
Épée/Smallsword	5	Strength + 2/L	G	Thrust penetrates up to two points of armor; epée slash inflicts bashing damage only.
Fighting Cane	6	Strength + 1/B		
Garrote		Strength + 1/L	P	Per turn, assuming the attacker can strange their opponent; see "Grapple," **Mage 20**, p. 421.
Hatpin	4	Strength + 1/L	P	Concealed in hats or hairstyles, sewn into special pockets, or both; can penetrate one point of armor.
Hook (gaffer)	7	Strength + 1/L	N	Can penetrate one point of armor.
Hook (hand)	6	Strength + 1/L	J	Can penetrate one point of armor.
Kpinga/Hunga-Munga	6	Strength + 2/L	G	Multibladed heavy-knife; can be thrown.
Knobkerry/Rungu/ War-Club	6	Strength + 2 /L	T	
Kris	5	Strength + 2 /L	J	
Naginata	7	Strength + 3/L	N	Polearm; typically used two-handed; can block hand-to-hand attacks.
Nightstick	5	Strength + 1/B	J	
Pitchfork	7	Strength + 2/L	N	Farm implement; can penetrate three points of armor; botched roll breaks weapon.
Shield (Hide)	6	Strength + 2/B	N	Used by many African and some Indigenous American warriors; can bash-attack, or defend as per *Wooden Shield*, **Mage 20**, 447
Sickle	7	Strength + 1/L	J	Farm implement; botched roll breaks weapon.
Scythe	8	Strength + 2/L	N	Large and awkward farm implement; requires open space; botched roll breaks weapon, hits allied character, or both.
Shotel ("Sickle Sword")	6	Strength + 2/L		+ 2 to attack dice pool when disarming or snagging opponent.
Straight Razor	6	Strength /L	P	Wounds run deep; bleed one bashing level per turn until treated or healed.
Sword-Cane	7	Strength + 2/L	G	Blade concealed inside walking-stick; thrust can penetrate one point of armor.
Tessen (Iron Fan)	7	Strength + 1/L	J	Appears innocuous until employed; features sharp blades and an iron frame that can block attacks and disarm opponents.
Torch	6	Strength + /L	N	*Fire!* See **Mage 20**, pp. 436 and 454.
Walking-Stick	5	Strength + 1/L G		Hardwood cane with a metal head, often rounded into a hard ball or shaped like a blunt hook, an animal head, or other design.

Absinthe, Opium, and Other Concoctions



Not all adversaries can be fought with fisticuffs. Beneath its prim façade, the Victorian age seethes with chemical diversions, and their effects cause considerable adversity for the people who consume them, whoever happens to be nearby, and often whoever lives near the places where such concoctions are produced or consumed.

Alcohol and Caffeine

In this era, *everyone* drinks alcohol… even to some degree, the children. The results can be seen in bruised faces, common brawls, and inebriated bodies everywhere. Although most often regarded as a scourge among the lower classes, drunkenness and alcoholism are common among every social class. Laborers, soldiers, artists, prostitutes, and rake-hells are the most obvious drinkers, in large part because alcohol numbs the pain of their existence while lowering inhibitions just enough to make them seem like jolly company. The quietest alcoholics, though, are often the most desperate, and many a social butterfly has had her wings sodden by strong drink.

Caffeine is a treasured fact of Victorian life. Tea is valued not merely for its taste and social lubricant, but its value as a stimulant and (especially among laborers) an appetite suppressant. Strong coffee, too, is essential for those who can obtain it, with Victorian English enthusiasts drinking more coffee than tea until the 1840s. American cowboys and cavalrymen rely upon coffee to get them through long days and cold nights, although the substances they employ can be rather unorthodox: powdered dried fruit or cactus, ground trail beans instead of coffee beans, even — at times — actual dirt.

Tobacco is practically essential for any Victorian gentleman, though ladies must, of course, abstain (in public, anyway). Pipe smoke and cigar fumes fill the air of any respectable men's club, while lower-caste laborers, cowboys, and military men make do with cigarettes — often hand-rolled and possessed of a cheaper grade of tobacco.

Aside from alcohol, however, the true addictions in Victorian times (in a chemical sense, at least) are opiates and, eventually, cocaine.

Opiates, Laudanum, and Absinthe

Harvested from the opium poppy, medicines and recreational substances have employed opium resin since antiquity. During the 1500s, Paracelsus employed it in a compound he called *laudanum* ("worthy of praise"), which he recommended for bodily ailments and elevated spirits. By the late 1600s, slightly different formulations of laudanum were common treatments for pain. By the late 1700s, opiates in general, and laudanum in particular, had become the standard treatment for all manner of physical and psychological maladies.

In addition to common laudanum, *absinthe* — dubbed "the green fairy" for its reputed hallucinogenic effects — becomes an infamous tipple for the decadent set. Although most (though not all) formulations of absinthe lack opioids or cannabis, the drink's reputation gives it devastating allure. Artists and mystics cannot get enough of the bitter drink, and though its primary component is a staggering amount of alcohol, absinthe provides an invaluable tool for "the derangement of the senses."

The great colonial wars, the Napoleonic Wars, and the later American Civil War demand vast quantities of opium, and the veterans of those wars nurse habits that often last their remaining lives. By 1780, the British East India Trade Company begins meeting (and, in many regards, feeding) the swelling global market for opium, growing it in the Middle East and India, and then shipping it to China, where it is, at that time, forbidden. The resulting "situation" raises a tide of worldwide addiction to opiates — an addiction that fills British coffers and keeps British rifles busy for over a century.

Given the dismal living conditions of the era, especially in the polluted cities and packed-slum "rookeries" of Europe and North America, opiate concoctions like morphine (distilled around 1804) and laudanum are in high demand. Although opium-smoking is regarded as *déclassé* among all proper Victorians (many of whom smoke it anyway), patent medicines (which, despite their name, are not controlled or standardized until the early 1900s) are filled with opium, cannabis distillates, or both. Administered to children as well as taken by adults, opiate concoctions are the Victorian cure-all. In less-savory applications, like the eating or smoking of opium resin and occasionally the poppies themselves, opium is the drug of choice among poets, artists, occultists, bohemians, prostitutes, and rake-hells eager for *verboten* thrills.

Heroin and Cocaine

Heroin (initially concocted as an opium-based medicine by C.R. Alder Wright in 1874) is eventually marketed by Bayer Pharmaceuticals in the 1890s. Trade-named for its ability to make one feel "heroic," and sold as a theoretically non-addictive alternative to opioids, Heroin (at that time, capitalized) soon becomes one of the most addictive drugs of the late Victorian era.

Around the middle of the century, cocaine enters the mix. Isolated from the coca plant by a German chemist, Friedrich Gaedcke, cocaine quickly becomes a common ingredient in medicines, drinks (like the original Coca-Cola), and even toothpaste. In contrast to opium's soporific effects, cocaine quickens the body and stimulates the senses. Sherlock Holmes himself employs cocaine to sharpen his mental faculties — a common practice in this era — and many addicts of one substance turn to the other for relief.

Thus, throughout the Victorian period, almost everyone is addicted to *something*, whether they realize it or not. Until the early 1900s, drugs that will later be illegal are so common they can be purchased from the local shopkeeper. Overindulgence is frowned upon, of course, but "temperance" is more slogan than reality in this era. Much of the wild art and eccentric

behavior of the 19th century can be traced, in later ages, to the psychoactive substances that rule the Victorian world.

Game Systems

The rules for drugs and their effects can be found in **M20** (pp. 441-444 and 456), along with dramatic systems for the toxins and diseases that likewise fill the Gaslit Mystery era. Ecstatic magi, Hollow Ones, certain shamans, occasional mad scientists, and other psychoactive occultists also use such substances to focus their Arts; for the particulars, see the **M20** entries for "Crazy Wisdom" (p. 576), "Brews, Potions, Powders, and Other Concoctions" (p. 589), and "Drugs and Poisons" (p. 591). Rules for addiction, meanwhile, can be found under the **M20** entry for the Flaw entry of that name (p. 646).

"The Theatre of My Miseries"

Empire presents a glamorous façade. Behind its grand balls and pounding machinery, however, lies what a traveling tin-merchant called "*the theatre of all my miseries to come*." The sprawling, smog-coated urban mass of London and other Victorian cities, brimming with wonders and flooded with human wreckage. For London and Paris in particular, that wreckage is often literal: crippled veterans; plague-raddled children; sewers, rivers, and air befouled by the excremental waste of over a million residents apiece. For better and worse (often worse), this era midwifes the modern metropolis where towering constructions hide broken humanity from the sun. The countrysides are cleaner but poorer by comparison; their fields and estates are still near-medieval with endlessly toiling workers and handfuls of spoiled aristocrats. This is, as ever, an era of extremes, but the contrast between gaslit parlors and flea-infested rookeries seems more extreme than ever before.

For magi of this era, adversity is always close at hand. From slinking Un-Dead to cowering urchins with hidden shivs, the face of an enemy is as near as one's reflection in a glass. The following templates, characters, and notes provide but a brief glimpse at prospective rivals and enemies of this world. As a **Victorian Mage** Storyteller, you can dress these concepts up in garb that fits your chronicle best.

The various adversaries featured below use **M20** systems and story elements to approximate the wide array of powers they possess.

Of Beasts, Wild and Otherwise

Animals are an inescapable part of the Victorian world. Whether a particular beast is an elephant bearing a rajah, an adorable monkey, a faithful steed, an angry bull, or a raven tap-tap-tapping at one's chamber door, no one in this Gaslit Mystery era (or in the eras before it, for that matter) goes through life without dealing with animals to an intimate degree. Some beasts are companions, others pests, and a rare few wrap their tentacles around your masts and draw your ship beneath the waves. In **Victorian Mage**, *everyone* deals with animals.

Where, then, can they be found?

Appendix I of the **M20** rulebook (pp. 618-620) features an array of common animals, including horses, dogs, and the inevitable alley cat. Totem spirit-beasts can be found in the same section (pp. 632-634). **Gods & Monsters** features a veritable menagerie (see pp. 104-107), plus rules and guidelines for non-human characters (pp. 182-219). The latter book also features game systems for automatons, spirits, and other creatures that might cross a Victorian wizard's path. Thus, the wild heart — whether incarnated in a true beast, embodied in a spirit, or manifesting through the magickal Arts — is always close at hand.

Bedlam Bound: Mad Marauders

When civilization crashes into elemental chaos, the result can drive one mad. Thus, the deranged wizards known in earlier ages as *Marauds* and in later decades as *Marauders* seem frightfully common in the Gaslit Mystery era. To Luminaries and Traditionalists from European cultures, such Mad Ones are sometimes called *Bedlamites*, after the infamous English madhouse named *Bethlehem Royal Hospital* but more commonly referred to as *Bedlam*. Although few asylums could hold such avatars of chaos, the Bedlamite label sticks to the Mad magi of this era.

From the Gothic and Romantic literature of the late 1700s onward, and the pulp horrors of popular media, gibbering mad folk are common antagonists in Victoriana settings. The Mad Hatter, the Red Queen, Renfield, Bertha Mason, Miss Havisham, the oft-nameless obsessives of Edgar Allen Poe, and the coldly rational mad Doctors Jekyll, Moreau, and Frankenstein. Such creatures haunt the popular imagination even though they display little kinship to people with real mental illness. Their outsized insanity reflects the terror of losing one's faculties in an era where improprieties are punished as harshly as society allows. Although this era sees a growing trend toward "moral management" and eventual psychotherapy, insanity exerts a fascinated horror upon the Victorian mind. Thus, in certain regards, Marauder magi make perfect antagonists for **Victorian Mage**.

And yet…

Real-life mental illness isn't as adorably monstrous as it appears in fiction. It's sad and scary and unfortunately common, especially among sensitive and creative people (like gamers) who have a hard time fitting in with whatever society considers "acceptable" behavior (as do gamers) during an era that seems tailor-made to drive us all over the edge. Marauders, then, are perfectly Victorian adversaries who also have the real-life potential to hurt and offend the people in your gaming group. It's vital, therefore, to distinguish the metaphysical derangement of Awakened Marauders from the awful realities of mental illness, to treat the subject of insanity with respect and gravitas, to check in with fellow players regarding the subject matter in general, and to provide a relatable and possibly sympathetic dimension to Marauders despite the frightful madness they personify. Within each Mad One, after all, there was once a person who might still be screaming in the back of that deranged magus' shattered mind.

Within the grip of Awakened madness, magick becomes a howling force of nature. Though the tempest might seem quiet on the outside — so quiet that many of the Bedlam Bound slip through the cracks of Victorian society — their dementia untethers reality in their wake. Marauder magicks are not subject to the Straits (in modern parlance, Paradox); in fact, they appear — in an ironic travesty of a madman trapped in a straitjacket — to shrug off such constraints through the sheer force of their madness.

For the Mad Ones, "sanity" is a delusionary state, blinkering the awful scope of the cosmos and the fearsome truths unveiled when one breaks through the walls of rational fallacies. The well-ordered Victorian ideal is a rickety sham constructed over gaping eternity, and the power of Bedlamite Arts flows from the Mad One's ability to shake such delusions apart. The few authorities that have studied the Marauder state of being and emerged with their sanities intact, report that the Mad Ones channel raw elemental chaos. Where most Awakened folk in the Gaslit Mystery world attempt to harness their Enlightenment toward reasonable ends (even if those ends seem like superstition from a rational perspective), the Mad slash the reins, crack the axles, slap Enlightenment on the rump, and send the metaphysical carriage careening toward the nearest cliffside, laughing all the way to hell.

Oh, they *do* appear infernal, these Bedlamite sorcerers! But whereas the hell-enraptured Nephandi seek global damnation and personal Descent, the Mad embody something far more terrible: the implacable unreason of a demented cosmos. The

Victorian ideal postulates civilized order, while Marauders represent the *antithesis* of order and the *absence* of civility. Even deviltry is, for them, confining. Not merely do they see beyond the confines of a clockwork reality, they — simply by existing — rust that clockwork into ruin.

Given the psychic fallout of genocidal colonialism and the ruin inflicted upon invaded and subjugated cultures, Marauderdom can also erupt in regions and cultures where European colonizers tear apart the ancestral ways. For the same reason, colonial soldiers might also find themselves "gone a'Bedlam" from that pressure, too. After all, strapping a man across the mouth of a cannon and then blowing him to bits is not something most people can do without going more than a little bit mad.

Among the common tactics of this era's Bedlamites, *sanity sinks*, *zooterrorism*, and *reality vortices* (see **M20**, pp. 238-242) are perhaps the most devastating and effective methods. Solitary madness can seep through the fog and bush, but those greater assaults undermine the very fabric of rational Consensus. Lewis Carroll's famous creations could be regarded as a sanity sink, although that situation raises the question: *Is the Mad One Alice, the Dormouse, the Hatter, or Lewis Carroll himself?* Peter Pan, too, would make a fine Marauder, especially since his unexpurgated adventures find him killing off Lost Boys who outgrow their capacity for childhood wonder. The fog-choked streets of London, the mazes beneath Paris, the forests of Germany, and the ageless sands of Cairo all shelter little bits of madness. Especially in places where rationality slides into shadows, Bedlamites are all too happy to share their chaos with anyone nearby.

In terms of game systems and other particulars, Marauder characters in **Victorian Mage** use the same rules and characteristics as the Marauders featured in the **M20** rulebook (pp. 234-243) and **The Book of Secrets** (pp. 243-251). Although *Negation Men* (detailed in **The Book of Secrets**, p. 248-249) are exceedingly rare in the Gaslit Mystery world, a handful of such "clockwork people" can probably be found in London, Paris, Frankfurt or Berlin, and other outposts of supreme rationality, insisting — despite all evidence to the contrary — that theirs is "the best possible of all worlds."

Auld Muddy

Living in the sewers beneath a Victorian metropolis is enough to make anyone mad. Auld Muddy, though, is said to have been Bedlam-bound long before that poor soul took up the dredger's trade as a tosher. Like all toshers, Auld Muddy was, according to rumor, once a shit-sifter plumbing a hard life in the city's sewer system. Plucking out coins, bones, and other goodies from the rancid swill, the dredgers pull meager wealth from London's rank intestines. To them, Auld Muddy is one of their own, now transformed into a reeking angel by the grace of God and what some dredgers call *the Dissolute Mystery*. According to the Children of Rat (an occult fellowship among London's poorest people), the Dissolute Mystery is an alchemical process that breaks down the Vain Crown of the upper world and turns it into shit. From that shit, Rat's chosen shall create a new and better world, and so Rat gospel and the tosher legends assert that Auld Muddy is living proof of that Mystery process.

No one's quite certain if Auld Muddy was once a man or a woman or something else again. Certain rumors claim Muddy was once a young lad named Billy Bell, who was beaten and broken and tossed in the sewers to die. Others assert Muddy began as a flower-girl named Jessie Petals, horribly used by so-called "gentlemen" before meeting the same awful fate as Billy Bell. Yet other legends maintain that Muddy had been a right good tosher until a rising tide drowned them in the city's shit. Some folk say that Auld Muddy might never have been human-like at all — that Muddy sprang full-formed from the rats, corpses, and awful runoff that fill the city's filthy caverns. Whatever the truth might be, Auld Muddy now resembles a vaguely human doll with its limbs twisted in appalling directions, caked in rancid excrement, glowing like luminescent mold, and moaning in an eerie burbling voice.

Despite its foul appearance, Auld Muddy protects the lowest of the low. The entity has saved toshers from drowning, rescued stranded children during storms, and restored crumbling tunnels and buildings that were collapsing upon the people living there. Best of all, Auld Muddy punishes rich people who abuse the poor, smothers criminals who prey upon the innocent, and humbles constables of the law by showering them with vomitous filth. Thus, as disgusting as Auld Muddy can be, the city's most desperate denizens have made a sort of vile saint from this grotesque morass. While Auld Muddy is not a fetching dinner guest, this poor, mad, broken thing embodies alchemical truths: from gross putrefaction, wonders grow.

Nature: Monster

Demeanor: Martyr

Essence: Primordial

Affiliation: Marauders

Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4, Charisma 0, Manipulation 4, Appearance 0, Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 5

Abilities: Alertness 2, Area Knowledge (the undercity) 4, Awareness 4, Brawl 4, Empathy 4, Esoterica (alchemy) 2, Intimidation 4, Occult 3, Stealth 3, Streetwise 3, Survival 3

Backgrounds: Arcane 5, Avatar 5, Cult 3, Dream 4, Node 3, Sanctum 3, Spies 3

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 3 (six soak dice, total)

Arete: 4

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 4, Forces 3, Life 4, Matter 4, Mind 2, Prime 4, Spirit 3

Image: As described above, Auld Muddy is a revolting humanoid twist-limbed slime-poppet, rank to a nauseating degree and trailing filth wherever it goes.

Roleplaying Tips: You have suffered abominable things. Those ordeals have driven you past madness and into deeper

forms of sanity, so you employ the strange gifts of your rebirth by saving those less fortunate than you and punishing the callous folk who abuse them.

Focus: Deep within Auld Muddy's decayed psyche resides a semblance of alchemical belief. For the most part, however, Auld Muddy is an elementalist using Forces, Life, and Matter magick to manipulate its body and environment. Auld Muddy's primal ties to decay manifest as a talent for Entropy, while the Bedlamite's approach to renewal manifests as a commensurate understanding of Prime. Although Auld Muddy appears to be mindless, its madness connects the filth-magus to the principles of its environment. Thus, Auld Muddy senses anything (and anyone) within the local sewer system, maintains a Node and Sanctum deep within the sewers, can assume an instant physical form (essentially "teleporting") anywhere within that city's system, and may command the elements in that place as well, so long as raw sewage can be found there.

As described in **The Book of Secrets** (pp. 248-251), Auld Muddy combines a *cracked mirror* and a *horror's head* with the alchemical mysteries of a *Wyld spirit*. Elements, blood, and other bodily fluids are Muddy's obvious instruments, although, for the intellect trapped deep within its vile form, there must be a kind of ongoing ordeal involved as well. No one can say for certain what paradigm, if any, this Marauder pursues. Auld Muddy's existence, though, proves that Creation is alive in some form or other, and most likely — given Muddy's foul genesis — on a one-way trip to oblivion, too.

Avatar: Anyone managing to commune with Auld Muddy's fractured consciousness discovers that this Bedlamite is attuned to the spirit of the sewers themselves: a grotesque entity formed of all that is rotting and discarded about the city where Muddy dwells. This entity has essentially become Muddy's Avatar: the inner spirit of sublime alchemy forged in filth, flowing through the hidden bowels of a city that would rather forget such unpleasant, if necessary, functions exist.

Razor Jake

Long before the prison hulks reduced his sanity to ruins, Razor Jake was frightening even by the standards of the Victorian underworld. Supposedly, his father died mad, his brains eaten by the pox, while his mother had perished in childbirth. Cast on the streets as a young boy, Jake cut a bloody path to the top of his street gang before the Peelers took him down and had Jake bundled off to the hulks: rotting prison-ships anchored off the Woolwich dockyards and crammed with filthy convicts packed together in stench and darkness. Such confinement scarred the souls of most men involved with them — jailer and convict alike. For Razor Jake, those mental wounds ripped through his mortal form, unleashing the Mad One still bearing his name.

Even before his Awakening, Razor Jake was as sharp and cold as the name he'd earned from his favored form of violence. In an earlier day, he'd have been either hanged or recruited into the ranks of royal torturers; as things were, Jake's life was spared (if confinement on the hulks could be fairly called "spared") because certain barristers and judges owed large favors to Razor Jake. In the stinking holds and backbreaking labor of his imprisonment, Jake refined his imposing build and formidable influence over lesser men. When his Mad Avatar tore its way through Jake's psyche, its first gifts included inhuman strength and endurance, terrifying charisma, and the razor-tipped fingertips that helped him escape the hulks and now enforce his rule throughout the fog-wrapped London streets.

Given his rough history with hard work, Razor Jake soon acquired command over the elements as well. His formidable presence has inspired a cult at the core of his street gang, called "Jake's Edge." Their reputation for appalling carnage has (literally) carved out a segment around the London docks and railways in the East End. When the gang and the Edge don't cut deep enough to protect his interests, Razor Jake himself appears — often accompanied by the horribly mutilated members of the Edge. To warrant such attentions is… unfortunate… for the subject's body, mind, and soul.

Nature: Survivor

Demeanor: Monster

Essence: Primordial

Affiliation: Marauders

Attributes: Strength 4 (7), Dexterity 3 (5), Stamina 5 (8), Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 1, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Abilities: Alertness 4, Area Knowledge (London underworld) 4, Athletics 4, Awareness 3, Brawl 4, Carousing 3, Firearms 2, Intimidation 5, Investigation 2, Law 1, Leadership 4, Medicine 3, Melee 4, Occult 2, Stealth 5, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 4, Survival 4, Torture 3, Vice 4

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Avatar 2, Backup 5, Contacts 3, Cult 4, Resources 3, Spies 4

Willpower: 8

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0 / 5 / 8 (five / eight soak dice, total; when fighting, Jake employs Life magick to soak lethal damage, boost his Stamina, add health levels, and often all three at once)

Arete: 7

Spheres: Correspondence 1, Entropy 2, Forces 3, Life 4, Matter 3, Mind 3, Prime 2

Image: Jake was always a huge man, gauntly muscular even after starvation on the hulks. Now prosperous (in a manner of speaking), Razor Jake is a thickly bearded, wild-haired, black-maned bear of a fellow. These days, Jake favors dressing like a gentleman, but though his top hat, pants, and waistcoat are coal-black (to better *hide* the blood he sheds), Razor Jake enjoys wearing starched white shirts (to better *show off* the blood he sheds). Beneath that clothing, his body is a mass of scars. A lattice-works of scars cut across his face and hands, as well. His left eye disappeared long ago beneath the long slash of another rogue's blade, although he replaced it with a glass eye that's disturbingly mismatched to his remaining orb.

Razor Jake enjoys the chilling effect his bright blue and dark brown eyes convey when he glares at someone — especially since he appears to be able to see out of both.

As a rule, Razor Jake cloaks himself in shadows even during the few times he might be seen in daylight. When he's perturbed or eager for a kill, long straight-razor-like blades emerge from his palms and fingertips. The wounds they inflict are horrific enough to make hardened battlefield surgeons quake with nausea.

Roleplaying Tips: You have survived the worst this world can throw at you, and now straddle at least a small bit of that world. For a supposed madman, you appear quite sane and rational, at least by the standards of a Victorian crime boss — until the shadows close in, the blades emerge, and you begin to chuckle with the joy of a *very* messy kill.

Focus: In Marauder terms, Jake is a *blood-mad maniac* (as per **The Book of Secrets**, pp. 246-247) employing sanity sinks and other disruptions in connection with his cult (**M20**, pp. 238-239). Although he's dabbled in the occult arts so beloved by London's ne'er-do-wells, Jake does not consider himself any sort of magus. Instead, he views his Arts as extensions of his affinity for darkness, blood, and terror. His Marauder Quiet assumes the form of pervasive, hungry darkness that must be watered with the hot blood from human corpses. Magick, to him, is an extension of his will to survive and command — something he mentally grapples with to subdue it and direct it to accommodate his will.

In Razor Jake's world, *might makes right*; *Creation is indeed alive*, but it's malignant and sick, and so must be dominated by men of superior willpower and physical might. Jake's 19th-century gutter magick features a sort of god-bonding mediumship wherein he bonds with and appeases the hungry darkness in which he makes his home. Especially when drunk, Jake employs a rough invigoration practice that makes him superhumanly strong. Blood and fluids, shed by his razor-hands, are Jake's most obvious instruments, but he also uses eye contact, brews (mostly hard alcohol), the "element" of darkness and shadow, group rites (his ceremonies when leading the Jake's Edge cult), offerings and sacrifices (of other people to the darkness), social domination and, of course, the weapons jutting from his hands.

In game terms, Jake's razored hands are a Life 3 / Matter 2 / Prime 2 Effect that inflicts his Strength + 2 dice in aggravated damage. The damage in question involves deep, thin slices that sever tendons and shred flesh in awful ways. Because they grow out of his hands, Jake uses Dexterity + Brawl, not Melee, when putting those hands to use.

Jake also uses these razors in a more delicate form for the torturous surgical procedures he performs on his most trusted acolytes, and the less-delicate torments to which he subjects his rivals. When striving to impress people through less-violent methods, he employs potent Mind-based influence, and in combat, he channels the darkness both within and without his body to soak lethal damage, to heal himself (and, occasionally, his followers), and to raise his Physical Traits to inhuman degrees, as shown by the Attributes in parenthesis above. Thanks to his affinity with darkness and shadow, Jake also uses Forces to manipulate those "elements" within his local environment.

Avatar: As both child and adult, Razor Jake has survived many attacks from rats. They emerge from the darkness, often as gnawing, sharp, dirty teeth, and so Jake perceives his Avatar as fanged darkness with rat-like teeth and a powerful, rotting stench. To work his magick, Razor Jake reaches into that darkness, grasps its teeth, and turns both the darkness and the teeth against his enemies. He despises real rats, of course, paying a generous bounty on them, and wages constant, bloody war with the London arm of the Children of Rat.

Crossroads and Cobblestones: Mortal Antagonists

When compared to the might of Awakened or Enlightened Arts, of what value is a common man? Surely such commoners, regardless of their station among the mob, are of but little consideration to those whose Arts command storm and fire.

Many a magus has died with such delusions in his head.

Too easily dismissed as "slumbering masses" by wizards and Luminaries alike, the common folk are, in many regards, the foundation of a magus' world. For is it not the servant who prepares that wizard's food, clears away the plates, and keeps the home fires burning? Is it not the Peeler who guards the Chantry gates at night? Does not the resurrection man claim corpses from the grave and bear them through fog and shadow to where the doctor's lab awaits? What happens, then, if those common folk should turn against their Awakened masters — rarely in an open fashion, but more likely in covert sabotage against his home and health? Though he might dwarf them in sheer power, mortal antagonists enjoy a thousand miseries they might dispense upon the head of an unwary magus.

The following templates can inspire a multitude of un-Awakened antagonists. Further research, often noted in the entries below, provides plot hooks and authentic details that turn a faceless template into a memorable character. For Storytellers, we recommend giving each non-player antagonist (mortal or otherwise) a name, personality, and agenda of her own. That way, the "servant" template becomes Betsy Blake, the vengeful maid who filches occult trinkets from her master's study to rain mystic ruin upon the former lover who left her with child years ago and then abandoned her to die in the choked streets of Spitalfields.

For further information about Traits and roles for un-Awakened characters in a **Mage** chronicle, see the **M20** rulebook (pp. 323 and 355-357), the Social Merits and Flaws provided in **The Book of Secrets** (pp. 53-68), and the first chapter of the sourcebook **Gods & Monsters** (pp. 18-60).

Of Mad Arabs and Other Clichés

Victorian yarns and chronicles crawl with a mangy assortment of wicked foreigners, each set for a proper thrashing from an upright English or American hero who is, of course, white. Meanwhile, the people opposing him conspire in the shadows, occasionally leaping forth with drawn blades, deadly poisons, and creatures laired in those exotic, far-off lands. These antagonists — a sinister pantheon of swarthy Italians, demented Arabs, "Indians on the warpath," and far worse stereotypes — clutch weapons and spells to their primitive breasts, cackling at the doom they have prepared for the Great White Hero and his kin.

Do we really need to say how offensive this tradition is?

The Victorian era, in many regards, is the heyday of racism. A combination of imperial ideology, racial "science" (much of which still gets trotted out on the internet), economic parasitism, and the justifications of slavery and genocide cast a bright patina over some of the worst atrocities in human history. Because few people like to think of themselves as villains, though, European colonizers, authors, and journalists portray a beastly world in need of civilization — by force, if need be. "The white man's burden," they say, involves plucking those defiant primitives up by the scruff of the neck and hauling them into a new and civilized age; an age in which the white man reigns and all other people obey.

This racism isn't confined to non-white people, either. Although often granted "conditional whiteness" under law, the Irish, Scots, Italians and Sicilians, Spaniards, Slavs, Corsicans, Greeks, and low-caste people of other Western European nations are considered "subhuman mongrels" by upper-caste Europeans of the Victorian era, too. Poor white people, in the eyes of Victorian high society, are just as pestilential and savage as any foreigner. A special level of hatred was reserved for Jewish people of all classes and cultures — a hatred that breeds the Russian forgery called *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* (1903) and the antisemitic tirades of Richard Wagner, H. Rider Haggard, and many others, which, in turn, inspire the later horrors of the Holocaust.

Beneath this proud posture lurks the fear of being destroyed by the people Victorians attempt to "civilize." As the pseudonymous author, Ragnar Redbeard, writes in his 1890 book *Might is Right*, the price of compromise is conquest by people more ruthless than yourself. To survive and prosper, both men and nations must grind their competitors into dust. The phrase "survival of the fittest" — coined by Herbert Spencer in 1864 to reflect his interpretation of Charles Darwin's research — asserts what Spencer called the "preservation of favored races in the struggle for life." As harbingers of civilization, then, it was each Victorian citizen's duty to bring the rest of the world to heel, lest Victorians and their society be destroyed by rampant barbarians.

Over a century later, this attitude still finds its way into political debates and popular media by way of ethnic stereotypes and adventure-story tropes that portray non-white characters and cultures as slavering beasts, mysterious occultists, noble savages, or wild combinations of them all.

Please don't do this in your **Victorian Mage** game.

Behind the Victorian stereotypes of villainous foreigners stand human beings whose lands were being taken, whose families were being enslaved or slaughtered, whose bodies were being chained and starved and shot from cannons in the name of someone else's empire. Flipping the perspective, it's easy to see why those "primitive savages" were violently opposed to Great White Heroes getting away with mass murder. Although certain Victoriana tropes — the rains of "hostile arrows," the poisoned daggers, the tigers or snakes or jaguars set loose against European adventurers — are based in reality, the motivation for such attacks is perfectly understandable: survival, revenge, and protection for one's people.

From the perspective of people in the path of Empire, any tactic is fair game when survival is at stake. Those "wild Indians on the warpath" are probably avenging the settlement burnt down by some cavalry officer, and the loved ones killed by his men.

In place of ethnic stereotypes, then, present antagonists of all kinds as people with their own needs, fears, grudges, and goals. These people have their own cultures and traditions, many of which reach back far beyond the recent technological supremacy of European conquerors. Those cultures have their own technologies and traditions, too, many of which surpass the blundering arrogance of the invaders. Historically speaking, the European advantage in Africa, Asia, and the Americas takes decades and thousands of lives to acquire; more often than not, it also involves the effects of traveler-borne plagues and the economic might of heavy taxation back home. Even then, certain cultures, like Ethiopia and Japan, resist European rulership entirely, coming into the 20th century as powerful nations in their own right. The people of foreign cultures should be treated as *people*, not tropes. They have good reasons for opposing the spread of Empire, and though they might be enemies of European characters those people should never be played or run as offensive stereotypes.

The Arcane Practitioner

Hidden orders prosper in the fractures of an enlightened age. Many otherwise respectable people gravitate toward such orders — most for thrills, many for knowledge, a handful to nurture genuine talents of a mystic nature, and a goodly number out of simple boredom or pursuit of status only shadows can provide.

Unlike the desperate souls who often fill the lesser ranks of cults, the serious occultist is often a person of means and scholarship. It takes money, after all, to obtain the tools and tomes of this vocation, and to secure the secrecy that allows this person to shift between honest society and the darkened halls of an occult lodge. By necessity, such activities must take place behind veils of secrecy; in an odd paradox of the era, many people belong to occult orders but *admitting* to such membership risks social ruin. A handful of occultists are brazen (and rich) enough to flaunt social censure, but in general, such orders demand oaths of secrecy and complex initiations that imperil a member's freedom and reputation if he betrays such trusts. The occultist, then, has money, status, influence, discretion, a fair head for scholarship, allies and servants, and potentially the arcane gifts to which many aspire but few attain.

Suggested Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 2-4, Manipulation 2-5, Appearance 2-4, Perception 2-4, Intelligence 3-5, Wits 2-3

Suggested Abilities: Academics 3-5, Alertness 1, Awareness 1-3, Cultural Savvy 2-3, Enigmas 1-4, Etiquette 3, High Ritual 2-4, Meditation 1-3, Riding 2, Occult 2-5, plus Abilities appropriate to the individual, Backgrounds appropriate to their social class, and perhaps hedge magic and/or Merits and Flaws for especially skillful practitioners.

Willpower: 3-6

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Fine clothing, ritual garb, tomes, occult paraphernalia, and most likely some sort of hidden weapon (sword-cane, Derringer, hatpin, stiletto, etc.) to protect against attackers in the night.

Image: Near-inevitably, European and Middle Eastern arcane practitioners in this era come from the moneyed upper classes, with the cultivated manners, skills, and fashions of their caste. Certain occult orders (mostly Masonic) hail predominantly from the laboring classes, however, and although more "traditional" mystics from Asian, African, and American cultures often lack the pageantry and wealth of their European counterparts, they still tend to belong to an elite caste of some kind.

More often than not, occultists tend to be mature adults, with especially accomplished ones being quite elderly. This isn't always the case, though; Aleister Crowley becomes remarkably adept and influential when hardly out of his teens.

Roleplaying Notes: There are secrets we do not speak about, paths we do not acknowledge, wisdom that flows best when cloaked in shadows. To better embrace such enigmas, pursue them only in the company of those you trust to understand the need for learning and discretion.

The Blade in the Fog

The fog-choked streets of Victorian metropolises host a small but eager cadre of shadowy killers. Such murderous rippers stalk their prey with superhuman patience, pouncing from concealment with a speed that jaguars would envy. A few quick passes with a knife, and the blood of a victim cools steaming upon the cobblestones. Why? Perhaps as initiation

into some occult brotherhood; or revenge for long-ago abuse. Does the killer achieve sublime erotic thrills from his act of bloody Thanatos? Or are his attacks random acts of chaos meant to shake civil folks from their stupor? Not until his blade appears will you know such a person for what he truly is. By then, of course, for most people, that knowledge means less than the gore upon the nearby walls.

In game terms, a nighttime slasher may have supernatural powers of stealth, speed, and physical strength; a mundane murderer, of course, poses little threat for an Awakened magus. Fiendish entities might possess a human host for such bloody work, or else confer monstrous talents upon a soul-sworn devotee. As with Poe's Rue Morgue murderer, the killer might not even be human to begin with. Although this devilish bladesmith confounds mortal authorities, a magus or Luminary might be just the person to finally bring him down.

Suggested Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 5, Appearance 1-3, Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 2, Medicine 1-4, Melee (knives) 4, Stealth 4, Subterfuge 3

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Black cloak and clothing, top hat, large knives, Gladstone bag filled with surgical tools.

Image: A black-clad figure wrapped in mist, face often concealed, probably male but possibly otherwise. Those who see this murderous apparition cannot generally discern his features, and those who feel his knife generally do not see him at all until recognition does them no good.

Roleplaying Notes: Your motives are your own — but deadly, nonetheless.

The Blooded Warrior

Empires have soldiers. Cultures have warriors. Where the soldier fights for pay and duty, the warrior fights for his people, life, and lands. Oh, empires have warriors, too — great ones, sometimes. The true warrior, though, is a man (or, occasionally, woman) who finds the center of their soul in righteous war.

Often, but not always, associated with an army, our warrior possesses formidable skills. No mere soldier or veteran, this fighter becomes violence incarnate when need be. A warrior might achieve peace for a time, perhaps even seek escape from the bloody trade. Eventually, though, fate brings this person back to the killing grounds — probably to die there, but to take a good many souls to Perdition by that time.

Suggested Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1-3, Perception 3-5, Intelligence 1-4, Wits 3-5

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Brawl 3-5, Crafts (traps, camps, etc.) 4, Hunting 2-5, Intimidation 4, Melee 4-5, Medicine 1, Stealth 3, Survival 3-5, and other Abilities (Archery, Demolitions, Firearms, Leadership, Martial Arts, Riding, etc.) between 1 and 4, suited for the individual warrior and his associated culture.

Willpower: 5-9

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Clothing, gear, and weapons appropriate to the warrior's role and culture.

Image: Depending on the character's background, our warrior could be anything from a Prussian officer to a Zulu *impi*, Shaolin "boxer," Wild West *pistolero*, Mescalero resistance fighter, Scottish Highlander, Indian *Gurkha*, *Dahomean mino*, *or any other person who has dedicated themselves, willingly or otherwise, to war.*

Roleplaying Notes: "*Run they would not, and of death they seemed to have no fear.*" (British soldier, referring to the Gurkha.)

The Constable of the Law

Often called *Peelers* for their founder, Sir Robert Peel, the police officers of London and other British cities are a rough-and-tumble lot. Often hardly better than the criminals they roust (and frequently a great deal worse), these men patrol the gaslit streets and rain-slicked cobbled streets, sometimes alone, but often in groups of two or more. Historically speaking, women are not allowed near such a grim profession until 1888, when Lucy Grey becomes the first Police Matron. In the Gaslit Mystery world, of course, such customs, like rules, are often more flexible than "official histories" can be.

Traditionally outfitted in the distinctive blue swallow-tail coat, under-trouser boots (often fitted poorly), and either a cane-reinforced top hat or (after 1865) the *custodian's helmet* (or "cockscomb"), each Peeler carries a wooden truncheon and one or two pairs of iron handcuffs. His coat's high collar, stiffened and reinforced to protect him from garotte attacks, gives rise to the expression "stiff-necked." In cold weather, he often wears a cape, and he straps a black-and-white "duty band" on his left-hand sleeve to show when he's on the job. In summers before the mid-1800s, these constables wear white trousers; during the 1860s, the entire uniform becomes a dark blue. Until 1884, our brave Bobby carries a loud and heavy wooden rattle with which to summon aid, after which, tin whistles replace those wooden noisemakers. So equipped, a Peeler prowls the cobblestones, looking for infractions, bribes, and suspicious characters.

It's a perilous lot, this profession. Our Peeler might be beaten to a pulp by angry costers, stabbed by slinking cultists, drained of blood by undead fiends, or otherwise sent to a sickbed or an early grave. Thus, he gives at least as good as he gets as often as possible, laying his truncheon upside some poor fool's head for little-to-no excuse. To the average citizen of Her Majesty's Empire, he's little better than a thief himself, and he often supplements his meager income with look-away money and other forms of payment. Yet despite the criminal tendencies of his field, the Peeler often has a strong sense of moral outrage and a passing code of honor, if only to his fellow officers. Regardless of their town or nation, constables of the law have little trust for anyone

outside their ranks; for fellow officers, then, a fight with one is a fight with all.

In France, the *Sûreté* ("Safety," "Security") force predates the innovations of Robert Peel. Formed in 1812 by the former criminal and legendary detective, Eugène François Vidocq, it inspires many of Sir Robert's ideas nearly 15 years later. The *Gendarmerie nationale* ("the Nation's Armed People") is even older, reaching back to the medieval period. Unlike Peelers and the *Sûreté*, though, the Gendarmes are military personnel with law-enforcement powers, and they were found in most possessions of the French Empire by 1800. All empires, by this era, have their own form of police officers, with special forces being created throughout the 1800s to deal with the rising rates of urban crime. The American marshal and the Japanese *dōshin* have a great many differences, but one thing remains consistent: an officer of the law holds a grudging respect from a populace that often loathes him and yet depends upon his presence for their safety after dark.

Suggested Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2-4, Perception 2-4, Intelligence 2-3, Wits 4

Suggested Abilities: Academics 1, Alertness 3, Area Knowledge (local) 5, Athletics 3, Awareness 1, Brawl 3, Melee 3-5, Intimidation 3, Investigation 1, Law 1-2, Stealth 1, Subterfuge 2, Torture 2; American marshals generally also have Firearms 2-4, mounted police have Ride 2-4, and police Inspectors and Detectives have Investigation between 2 and 5.

Willpower: 5

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Uniform, truncheon, handcuffs, lantern, noise-maker, and law-enforcement badge. It's worth noting that few rank-and-file police officers carry guns during the Victorian era, except for those in the Americas, who often carry several.

Image: Each police force has its own uniforms, and some — like the marshals of the American West — wear none.

Roleplaying Notes: Perhaps you truly believe in law and order, or perhaps the idea of breaking skulls for a few shillings and "the common good" suits you. Most likely, you have seen first-hand the face of criminality, and though you accept it can never truly be defeated, you do your level best to protect your community and fellow officers from its ugliest effects.

The Costermonger

Victorian Britain is always hungry. To sate that hunger, *costers* (or, more properly, *costermongers*) throng the street markets of that green and pleasant land. Other large cities host such vendors, too — the shouting hordes of fruit-sellers, ribbon-merchants, fish-wives, rag-hawkers, paper-boys, flower-girls, and the multitudinous array of street-based goods-sellers who operate from carts or baskets in their endless quest for full bellies and a healthy purse. It's a precarious living, to be sure; hostile police, grasping guttersnipes, and haggling would-be customers make each day a new challenge to body and soul. Add to that the reckless antics of sorcerous louts and Oh-So-Lofty Luminaries, and it's no great mystery to see how such merchants might get cross.

In contrast to the shopkeepers and their relatively permanent storefronts, the coster makes her living from street traffic and passers-by. Etiquette grants a certain pride-of-place for long-established costers who've cut out a reliable location or two. Most such merchants, however, move from spot to spot, starting as early in the morning as possible to catch a profitable niche for the coming day. Manners, though, are hard to come by in such a life, and so our costermonger must be shrewd, perceptive, quick-handed, and quick-witted if she expects to last long in the bustling marketplace. Chances are good she'll have some ingratiating gossip or quiet favors to share with good customers. A person making an enemy of our coster, though, might find himself the subject of such gossip, too. Despite their rivalries, costers are a clannish lot, and the man who offends one may well offend them all.

Suggested Attributes: Strength 2-3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 1-3, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2-4, Perception 3, Intelligence 1-4, Wits 2-4

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 1, Area Knowledge (local) 4, Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Crafts 2, Intimidation 2, Streetwise 3-5, Subterfuge 3, Survival (urban) 1-3, and other Abilities, Merits or Flaws appropriate to the goods being sold.

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Some form of cheap goods for sale. A poor coster might simply hawk a basket of flowers, a handful of matches, or a bag of newspapers, while a prosperous one could have a cart filled with street food, ribbons, clothing, and so forth.

Image: Even the most successful street-merchants live on the edge of poverty, and the struggling ones might be ragged, barefoot creatures a few shillings shy of total starvation. All of them, however, have a knack for getting people's attention and convincing folks to buy something; that knack, after all, is the foundation of survival.

Roleplaying Notes: "A flower for yer Ladyship? It don't cost much a'tall…"

The Decadent Demimonde

In the *fin de siècle* ("End of an Age") sentiments of the late 1800s, civilization is a doomed, frail prospect whose climax is nearly upon us now. (Sound familiar?) Even before that, though, the decadent pleasures of the *demi-monde* ("half-world") offer artistic delights and occult diversions to those brave and jaded enough to plumb their depths. Artists and models, atheists and heretics, gender-rebels, prostitutes, slumming rich boys, and those whose lives and genders diverge from the lines of Victorian propriety often find themselves, willingly or otherwise, among the demimonde. Brothels, artists' studios, opium dens, and secluded estates (some of which host "hell-fire clubs" in imitation of Sir Robert Dashwood's infamous society in the previous century) provide an escape from the pressing concerns of conventional morality. From the "black saloons" of the

American West to the *Ukiyo* ("Floating World") of Japan's counterculture, this era teems with disreputable places and the rebels populating them.

To the average citizen, a demimonde (or, for certain women, *demimondaine*) is a slovenly bohemian, or perhaps a dapper jade, who's a bit *too* concerned with her own appearance to be truly *respectable*. Unlike the poor wretches inhabiting these twilight dens out of desperation, the upper-caste demimonde is a class-outlaw who chooses to revolt in Luciferian splendor. A drinker, a brawler, a potential slave of intoxicating chemicals and infernal philosophies, she quite likely has a pack of burly associates who happily send a painful (maybe permanent) message to those catching her ire. Where other mortals slip along the edges of the Gaslit Mystery realm, this pretender aspires to its occult secrets. Therefore, it's likely that a True Magus or Daedalean Luminary will meet, perhaps befriend, and probably incur displeasure from demimondes of all kinds — especially if Background Traits like Allies, Cult, or Spies are involved as well.

Suggested Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 3-5, Manipulation 2-5, Appearance 3-5, Perception 3, Intelligence 2-5, Wits 4

Suggested Abilities: Academics 3, Alertness 2, Art 0-5, Awareness 1, Brawl 2, Enigmas 2, Etiquette 2-4, Expression 1-4, Melee 2, Occult 1-5, Seduction 1-5, Stealth 2-4, Streetwise 3-5, Subterfuge 4, Vice 2-5, and other Abilities and other Traits suitable to the character's vocation and social class.

Willpower: 4

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Fashionably rebellious clothing, sword-cane, hatpins or stiletto, vices of choice (opium, cannabis, absinthe, etc.).

Image: Beauty of some sort is essential to a demimonde, though that beauty tends to be of a pale and languid nature. Unfortunates within this scene, however, have that beauty stripped from them by addiction, violence, syphilis, and other maladies.

Roleplaying Notes: Decadence is your calling card, wit is your refuge, art is your escape from a foul world, and a blade, cane, or hatpin is waiting for the man or woman daring too much without your acquiescence.

The Domestic Servant

The Victorian world is built upon the servants' backs. For although the role of servants (and below them, of slaves) is millennia old, the growing luxuries of middle-class life demand the backbreaking labor only servants can provide — or so, at least, the thinking goes. All the *right* people have at least one servant, and a household's wealth is often measured in the number of servants it can afford.

A large estate supports many servants with specialized tasks and domestic hierarchies that can be quite strict, mirroring the descending family order from the household master to his youngest child. A modest household of the middle-class kind, however, may have a single servant: the "maid-of-all-work," sometimes referred to by the kinder title, "general servant." In such a home, with only a servant or two, the work runs from before dawn to long after nightfall, with a single tiny room (or perhaps a rug or cot in the kitchen) awaiting the few hours of sleep that person has until the next day begins. Even large households keep the servants busy, and so it's not surprising that those workers do not, it may be said, always look kindly upon their masters.

To the Victorian upper classes, servants are by nature foolish, spendthrift, uncultured layabouts whose lazy souls must be elevated by exposure to "the better sort of people" and lots of good, honest work. Thus, our servant is kept busy with back-breaking, often spirit-breaking, work. Though not enslaved in the sense of ownership, she has no true freedom short of being sacked (fired), at which point it's back to the streets or the workhouse for her. Thus, her days and nights are spent in servile labor, typically peppered with verbal, often physical, and frequently sexual abuse. The lot of male servants is only slightly better, with more-taxing but less-degrading physical toil and a more subtle sense of sexual objectification. And so, can one really blame those upper-class Victorians for fearing that their servants would rob them, spy on them, sell them out for a handful of shillings if a better offer comes along — or blame the servants for doing such things if the opportunity should present itself to them?

For an exhausting overview of a Victorian servant's lot, see "4: The Scullery," in Judith Flanders' book *Inside the Victorian Home*; for an-depth treatment of the British servant class, see Lucy Lethbridge's *Servants: A Downstairs History of Britain*; and for a look at servants employed by magi, see **Gods & Monsters**, pp. 42-44 and 48-51.

Suggested Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2-4, Perception 3, Intelligence 1-4, Wits 2-4

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 2, Athletics 2-4, Crafts (as per duties) 3-5, Etiquette 3-4, Stealth 1-3 (servants are not to be heard or seen unless called upon), and other Abilities appropriate to their work and station (Cooking, Riding, etc.); favored servants can also read, write, and perhaps teach (Academics 1-3), and high-ranking servants may possess Leadership, Knowledges, and Merits and Flaws appropriate to their duties.

Willpower: 2 (scullery maids) to 9 (prized butlers)

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Uniform and tools appropriate to household duties.

Image: A lowly stable boy or maid-of-all-work is generally a lower class youth in her teens or early 20s; more accomplished servants (nannies, governesses, groundskeepers, etc.) are older, perhaps even elderly; and favored servants (butlers, archivists, body servants, etc.) range from smart young adults to well-seasoned elders.

Roleplaying Notes: You live to serve. Whether or not you like this life depends a great deal upon the treatment you are given. Remember your station, speak only what is

required, and be as attentive to your duties as you can. If you are sacked, the streets and poverty await.

The Fervent Revolutionary

The 19th century simmers with revolutionary sentiments. As kingdoms fall in the wake of Empire, some folk — students, laborers, disaffected youth, drunk philosophers, and the damnable rabble who consider themselves "artists" and "free spirits" — protest that this Gilded Age is oppressive, greedy, and cruel. Most such folk content themselves with intoxicated ramblings and the occasional pamphlet; a rare few, though — fevered by the French revolt and the giddy promises of "free love" and "equality" — take their grudges to the gaslit streets. With guns, knives, slogans, and bombs, these conspirators seek to pull down the pillars of society and replace civil discourse with shouted rhetoric and the screams of dying aristocracy.

Although terms like "anarchy" and "nihilism" become near-meaningless for later generations, the upheavals that rock France and the Americas during the late 1700s and culminate in World War I and the Russian Revolution in the early 1900s exert constant tension on the years in between those revolutions. Violence is an acceptable tool for certain anarchists, although the threat they pose is often overstated by authorities eager to crack down on malcontents of any kind. Marx and Engels are only the most notable revolutionaries of the Victorian era, and a magus or Luminary from any faction could find herself at odds with an anarchist from one faction and in bed with one from another.

And, of course, there are people whose desperation drives them to extremes. In contrast with half-pint theorizing of pampered gentlemen, such folk seek revolution because their lives and loved ones have been ground beneath the boots of Industry and Empire. Factory laborers, forsaken veterans, conquered people struggling to shake off Empire's yoke; for such revolutionaries, revolt is not mere philosophy but the potential key to the chains their people bear.

For further inspiration, read the works of Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and other ruthless reformers of the age — or just watch the second half of *Les Misérables*. For game systems regarding explosives, see that section in **M20** (pp. 437-438 and 455).

Suggested Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 2-4, Manipulation 2-4, Appearance 2, Perception 2-3, Intelligence 1-3, Wits 4

Suggested Abilities: Academics 3, Alertness 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Crafts 1-4, Demolitions 1-4, Firearms 2-3, Melee 1-3, Politics 2-4, Subterfuge 3, Technology 1

Willpower: 4

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Work boots, heavy clothing, radical literature, improvised and stolen weapons.

Image: Although the stereotypical radical of this era (or any other) is a young hothead, a good many anarchists are people who've worked hard for many years and become fed up with the system that abuses them. That said, the most radical nihilists tend to be born into families of means, and hence pursue philosophies more out of intellectual ire than from true desperation and hard experience.

Roleplaying Notes: The time has come to destroy a hopeless and decadent society. Doing so might be the greatest glory to which you may aspire.

The Footpad

In a hard world, certain men and women must be hard as well. Slinking through the darkness toward careless prey, these *footpads* — so named for going on foot rather than on horse — stalk, surround, and rob those more fortunate than themselves. On the open roads, such robbers move under cover of darkness and the trees; in cities, they blend into fog and coal smoke, their feet quiet on the cobblestones until the moment when a shout or blade rends the silence with shed blood.

As that name suggests, a footpad is often poor, typically desperate, of common stock, not especially bright, and brutal enough to make a living by theft. Thanks to fearsome punishments for this crime, she quite likely bashes a quarry's brains out, slashes his throat, or leaves him likewise unable to identify or follow her. This line of work demands stealth, patience, physical strength, and brutish nerve. For safety, such criminals often travel in packs, too, so a single robber probably has friends waiting just out of sight or reach in case a robbery goes wrong.

Suggested Attributes: Strength 3-5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3-5, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1-2, Perception 2-4, Intelligence 1-2, Wits 2

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 2, Area Knowledge (local) 3, Athletics 1, Brawl 2-4, Carousing 1-3, Melee 1-3, Stealth 3-5, Streetwise 2-5, Subterfuge 2

Willpower: 3

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Ragged clothing, cudgels, farm implements or knives, a bag for the loot, and something to drink to keep the cold away.

Image: Often slovenly and of ill-health, footpads tend to be the dregs of the local underworld. That said, such people are, by necessity, sneaky, strong, and callous, with feet bare or wrapped in rags to muffle their footsteps on the cobblestones.

Roleplaying Notes: Life is cruel. So, then, must you be as well, at least when there's a shilling or so to be had for your troubles.

The Gentleman Scholar

Knowledge is the foundation of this civilized age. Thus, those making knowledge their life's work are well-equipped to shore up our flawed world with the pillars of wisdom, crafting a perfect Empire for future generations! That's the theory, anyway, and the academic lives and sometimes dies by such ideas.

Ensconced in a university, archive, laboratory, or research society, this noteworthy individual not only pursues learning for himself, but he also determines the standards for what other people will and will not learn. To that end, Victorian academics compile dictionaries, manage libraries, wrangle languages, write histories, pursue scientific research, and otherwise determine what is and is not "true" for subsequent generations. Such men also guard the halls of academia from untoward influence — which, in plain English, means they keep out women, Jews, foreigners, and other undesirable elements. Meanwhile, these men cultivate the rigorous methods through which knowledge is conferred, determine which knowledge is and is not orthodox, and gradually craft the Great Man approach to history — that is, the idea that Great Men (near-inevitably white, and usually from the academic's home nation) are responsible for all noteworthy things. Over a century later, humanity is still sorting through the legacy of Victorian academics, disputing "historical revisionism" and other scholastic standards that differ from the "facts" these men set down. In fairness, the typical Victorian academic strives to be accurate in his work. Many innovations of this era (and subsequent ones, as well) depend upon the rigorous standards of this age. Even so, a certain bias and blindness are inevitable, with occasional malice and misinformation tragically prevalent.

Gentlemen scholars, of course, are the backbone of the Order of Reason's quest to control and quantify reality on a global scale. Secretly, however, a good many of them also pursue Hermetic Arts and other occult studies, if only for the strange, invigorating insights such studies can provide. Thus, the academic may belong to the Orders of Reason or Hermes, a clandestine occult society, or possibly several such fellowships at once. Therefore, our scholar is likely to be an ally for some magi, an enemy to others, and quite often both for the same magus. Such men are rarely powerful in a physical or metaphysical sense, but they wield incredible social and political influence — easily enough to bar a rival from archives, clubs, and universities, and sometimes enough to have an enemy's existence struck from historical records.

Suggested Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 1-3, Manipulation 2-4, Appearance 2, Perception 2-4, Intelligence 3-5, Wits 3

Suggested Abilities: Academics 5, Enigmas 3, Etiquette 2, Intimidation 3, Investigation 4, Networking 1-4, Research 5, and a host of Knowledges and specialties appropriate to his fields of study, including, quite possibly, Esoterica, Occult, Science, or perhaps all three

Willpower: 4

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Tweed jacket (after 1855), reading glasses, pipe and tobacco, all manner of books; if he's a teacher, then probably also a switch to thrash the behinds of unruly students.

Image: Quite often pale, typically sporting a luxurious beard and sideburns if fashion permits. Historically speaking, a handful of Victorian scholars (and many teachers and librarians) are women but professorial academics are, by custom, near-inevitably men. In **Mage**'s world, things are different; *how* different they are, though, depends on the Storyteller's approach to history.

Roleplaying Notes: Knowledge is what separates us from beasts. Therefore, while the menial professions are, of course, necessary, your studies provide the road to a greater future for all mankind.

The Resurrection Man

Everyone dies. Not everyone rests in peace. Mad scientists, medical schools, and other less-than-savory characters pay handsomely for fresh corpses, and so grave-robbing resurrection men make a sordid but tidy living digging up the dead. Such crimes, in the grand scheme of things, are mere trifles; policemen rarely interfere, punishments are light if they do, and unless some angry relative objects to the gruesome trade and catches the body-snatchers in the act, there are much harder ways to make a handful of coin.

While a magus could potentially cross paths with the cemetery man, she's far more likely to deal with him as a customer, not as a product. Many an Enlightened Luminary has contracted the services of body-snatching commoners, and such jaded souls rarely take insults lightly. Our resurrection man, by definition, is brave enough to prowl graveyards at night, strong enough to dig up graves, and callous enough to haul bodies out of them and hustle those corpses off to a secret meeting-place. Women, too, enter this trade from time to time, often as "mourner" spies at funerals or "grieving relatives" seeking information or staking out the grave where male associates arrive long after dark to dig up the earth and pry open the casket. When times are lean, our body-snatcher might create corpses; after all, when freshness is important, no one's going to notice slightly fresher blood or a faint warmth clinging to the skin…

Suggested Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3, Charisma 1, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1-2, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 2, Area Knowledge (cemeteries) 4, Athletics 3, Brawl 1, Crafts (grave-digging) 3, Melee 2, Stealth 3-5, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3, Survival 1

Willpower: 6

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Dark and rugged clothes (suitable for grave-robbing) and/or mourner's clothes (for spying on funerals), bulls-eye lantern, ropes, shovel and pick, sacks or tarps to conceal a body, cart to help carry it away.

Image: Grave-robbers tend to be disreputable in appearance unless they're infiltrating a funeral — and perhaps even then. Those digging up the graves have strong, calloused hands, dirty nails, and a faint smell of death and soil upon them.

Roleplaying Notes: Your morbid trade gives you a rather ghastly outlook, a stoic bearing, mordant humor, and a grim philosophy toward life and death.

The Rough-Necked Hombre

A rough life breeds rough people, and certain people live rougher lives than most. Mountain men, French Foreign Legionnaires, professional brawlers, bodyguards, stonemasons, cowboys, blacksmiths, longshoremen, lumberjacks, pack bearers, lion-hunters, bull-wranglers, steel-drivers, coal-miners, wilderness scouts, and other rough customers build iron muscles and steel-trap souls. While many such men fight only when need be, others gladly take up a grudge for any reason or none at all, and although women are rare among this hardy breed, such rugged members of "the weaker sex" are tough enough to put most men in the dirt for good.

Suggested Attributes: Strength 4-5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4-5, Charisma 1-3, Manipulation 2, Appearance 1-3, Perception 3, Intelligence 1-4, Wits 4

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Awareness 1, Brawl 3-5, Crafts (suited to vocation) 3-5, Intimidation 3-5, Medicine 1, Melee 3-5, Streetwise 1-5; hunters and soldiers also have Archery and/or Firearms 3-5, wilderness-types have Hunting and Survival at 3-5, and professional building-trade men have Esoterica (Freemasonry) at 1-5. Too Tough to Die is a common Merit for such characters.

Willpower: 7

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Rugged clothing, tools, and weapons appropriate to the trade, class, and culture.

Image: Regardless of an individual's background, all roughnecks project an aura of supreme capability.

Roleplaying Notes: Do the job, get paid, tend to your own business, and pound into paste anyone who messes with you.

The Soldier

A shilling he took, and he signed the book. So goes the saga of a poor soldier named Johnny in the song "Fighting for Strangers," and though comparatively few soldiers come home in such bad shape as Johnny does, many never come home at all. Yet Empire demands an endless supply of soldiers — that brave calling for any young man with a mind for making his future with a gun in hand. If Empire treats those soldiers poorly (which it near-inevitably does), their blood is still the grease for imperial wheels and cogs of industry.

Our fighting-man (more often than one would think, a woman in disguise), then, is a hardy fool long-disciplined by toil and the lash. His war skills have probably been tested, if not honed to the degree of a grizzled veteran's own. He marches, he brawls, he gambles, and he whores, he sleeps when able and fights when necessary. His brothers-in-arms keep close company with our solider, even off the field of war. No one, as any military man can tell you, understands the soldier's lot except another soldier. When military service is a lifelong obligation (as, in many armies, it is), those soldiers are closer than mere brothers could be. Engaging one soldier's wrath, then, often means quarreling with many.

Suggested Attributes: Strength 3-4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3-5, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 1-3, Perception 3, Intelligence 1-3, Wits 3

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 3, Athletics 3, Crafts (camp-making) 3, Firearms 3, Hunting 2, Melee 3, Survival 3, plus other Abilities between 1 and 4, suited to the soldier's culture and rank; officers have Leadership, scouts have Stealth, surgeons have Medicine, soldiers from armies that use bows have Archery, and so forth.

Willpower: 5

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Uniform, gear, and weapons suited to the army, era, and culture in question.

Image: Although the archetypal soldier of this era is a British or French infantryman, each nation or empire has its soldier class. India, China, Japan, Ethiopia, the Ottoman, and Zulu Empires — all of them feature standing armies of conscripted and/or professional soldiers, most of whom can match or exceed European soldiers in skills if not often in armament. European armies feature units and soldiers from the nation's colonies around the world, too, and even the segregated armies of the United and Confederate States of America feature units or individuals of Indigenous, Latino, and sometimes Black American heritage. The soldier's defining characteristics, then, are his (or her) uniform and gear, tactical thinking, and experience with war.

Roleplaying Notes: Travel, toil, and all the torments of hell — you've seen them, lived them, and they are your home.

The Street-Thief

Every city has its thieves, but the largest cities swarm with them. London, Paris, New York, Cairo, even in lands with strict laws and horrendous punishments, there are always those outlaws so desperate or contentious that they live out of another party's pockets.

Proud of her work, if not always of her calling, our thief often hails from harsh circumstances, and she masters skills that help her survive. She might be a stealthy sneak thief, a subtle safe-cracker, a sly pickpocket, witty cozener, light-fingered pilferer, or soundless burglar. Perhaps she works alone, or with partners or a gang. Even magi rarely see her coming, and unless she's rather unlucky or bad at her job, folks rarely notice her presence until after she's disappeared.

(*The Victorian Underworld*, by Donald Thomas, overflows with inspiration for thieves of this era, and the *Bloody Jack* series, by L.A. Meyer, shows how useful an array of thieving skills can be.)

Suggested Attributes: Strength 2-3, Dexterity 3-5, Stamina 3, Charisma 2-5, Manipulation 2-5, Appearance 1-4, Perception 2-5, Intelligence 2-5, Wits 2-4

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 3, Area Knowledge (local fences and marks) 2-5, Athletics 1-4, Awareness 1, Brawl 1-5, Crafts (burglary) 2-5, Melee 1-4, Investigation 3, Law 1, Stealth 3-5, Streetwise 2-5, Subterfuge 2-5; specialized thieves have 2 or higher

in Acrobatics, Climbing, Empathy, Gambling, Seduction, and other useful Abilities.

Willpower: 3-5

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Simple pickpockets rely only upon stealth, distractions, and quick fingertips; professional cracksmen carry bags full of specialized tools, like those illustrated in *The Victorian Underworld*, p. 74. Most thieves carry a concealed weapon or three, as well, and wear clothes with extra, hidden pockets sewn into them.

Image: If a thief looks like a thief, she's not very good at her job.

Roleplaying Notes: This cruel world has forced you into an outlaw's way of life. Your immortal soul, they say, is forfeit, but surely God understands how hard it is for a poor innocent like you to get along in a world so loaded with temptations! Your victims won't miss what you steal, and by ridding them of unnecessary possessions you're really doing them a *favor*, right?

The Urchin

Childhood, in the Victorian age, is a paradox. On one hand, Victorian England essentially invents the idea of an "age of innocence" for children; on the other, that same Empire condemns millions of children to starvation, disease, and misery. Even in the gutters of its glorious capital, children live and die short, desperate lives. Often barefoot, dressed despite the weather in whatever rags they can scrounge or beg, these young urchins (from a French word for "hedgehog") sell flowers, sweep manure, clean chimneys, scavenge sewers, dodge kicks, pick pockets, bear errands, hawk newspapers, hold horses, suffer plagues, and rarely live to see puberty.

Should a child survive the harsh winters, urban predators, and ever-present filth of the cities, he often winds up taken into service (or slavery), conscripted into the military, engaged in crime, prostituted, jailed, transported to a prison colony, or simply disappearing into the shadows, muck or waters surrounding most cities of this age. Until he does, however, this child of the streets learns every trick possible to stave off the Reaper, keep a roof over his head and food in his belly, and profit from the kindness of strangers and the blunder of rich folk who look away at the wrong moment while the urchin grabs a prize and runs.

Game-Traits and story elements regarding children of various ages can be found in **Gods & Monsters**, pp. 18-22, and *Bloody Jack*'s debut novel deals with Jackie's early years as a London street kid.

Suggested Attributes: Strength 1-2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 2-4, Perception 2-4, Intelligence 1-4, Wits 3

Suggested Abilities: **Alertness** 3, Athletics 1-3, Brawl 2-3, Climbing 1-3, Melee 1, Stealth 2-5, Streetwise 3-4, Survival 1-3

Willpower: 4

Health Levels: OK, –1, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Ragged clothes (probably too small or too big), small concealed weapon, perhaps a tiny, treasured keepsake (locket, toy, coin, etc.).

Image: The adorable orphan fetishized by Charles Dickens and Hans Christian Anderson is actually a grubby, stinking, starving child grimed with street-spatters and horse manure, caked with soot, lice-ridden, and desperately in need of bathing. Such kids are understandably skittish, crude, fearful of grown-ups, and yet often remarkably proud and loyal to each other.

Roleplaying Notes: Life is big, and cold, and harsh, and ugly. Stay alive.

Eaters of the Weak: The Fallen Nephandi

The brightest lights, they say, breed the deepest shadows. Fittingly, therefore, an era lit by gas, cannon fire, and finally, electricity provides a fertile ground for the darkest form of magus. Mingling equally well with sinister cultists and high society, the predatory Eaters of the Weak prosper during the Victorian era — so much so that their rise to catastrophic influence in the 20th century goes almost unseen by magi who consider the Fallen to be little more than Satanic pretenders stuck forever in the Dark Ages.

To common preconception, the Nephandi are little more than brute devil-criers, mortgaging their souls for a taste of power before their inevitable demise. That's the image they have propagated, and, for centuries, the ruse has worked. As Victorian ballrooms and counting chambers beckon, the Fallen maneuver mortal pawns and fearsome allies in an endgame the significance of which pays off in the unprecedented carnage of two World Wars and the parade of atrocities that mark the following century. Those atrocities, of course, are nothing new; as the "Great Game" of European conquest grinds cultures and people into bloody pulp across the world, the Fallen dangle riches and adventure before the faces of their dupes, then sit back (or, occasionally, join the fun) as Empire forges its Gilded Age from the bones of people in its path.

Thematically, the Fallen personify the hypocrisy of this age. Drenched to the neck in other people's blood, they appear perfectly respectable as they maneuver lesser beings to do their killing for them. Meanwhile, Nephandic philosophies influence intelligentsia: slavery is desirable; hard work does a soul good; superior beings have not only the moral right but the moral *imperative* to exploit lesser beings, and if a few of those lesser beings wind up skinned and stuffed as decorations in your study? Well then, bully for you! It's *science*, after all. Might makes right, and no amount of moral (and often hypocritical) posturing changes that fact as far as the Fallen are concerned. The bright lights of riches and technology blind our eyes to the human and environmental costs of those blessings, and

Nephandi — through Arts and influence — encourage such blindness and prosper from it.

In game terms, most Fallen magi prefer spells of influence over those of force. Any Nephandus worthy of that name has an arsenal drawn from the various Effects described in the "Uncanny Influence" section of **How Do You DO That? Mage 20** (pp. 224-233) presents the tactics and organizations favored by this faction, and **The Book of the Fallen** explores their Arts and practices in detail. Too smart to engage an enemy head-on, a typical Fallen antagonist aims pretty much any other sort of character from this chapter at her enemies, then lets those enemies chase shadows while she sits back and enjoys the show.

Of Predators and Prey

The expression "*it's a dog-eat-dog world*" encapsulates the Nephandic philosophy, with the caveat that Nephandi aspire to be the biggest, hungriest dogs in the ring. That expression (an ironic inversion of the older proverb "*dog does not eat dog*") hails from the dog-fighting arenas of the Victorian era, and the analogy of betting on the hound most likely to tear other hounds to bits fits well with the Fallen approach to life, death, and magick.

Predation, not deviltry, is the Nephandic ideal. Where outsiders see pathetic soul-sellers begging for scraps off Satan's table, the Eaters of the Weak pursue an ethos of self-elevation at the expense of lesser beings. Given the tenor of the times, when the excesses of Empire are justified with Darwinian zeal, Nephandi find kindred spirits among the richest and most powerful people of this age. Nothing, they argue, is "evil" about power seized from those too weak to use it properly. While maneuvering lesser cultists in blood-spattered rituals, the Fallen prosper from a firm, quiet devotion to the appetites of Empire and the many rewards it brings.

The stereotypical Nephandus is the least-powerful of his kind. Oh, certain Fallen Ones indeed stoke the flames of hell-fire clubs where decadent aristocrats drink and whore their way through Sadean bacchanals. When rival magi and Luminaries stumble across such cults, the frothing Infernalists at the heart of such revels display uncanny powers and unpleasant tendencies toward atrocity. These lesser Fallen Ones keep rival factions occupied. It would not do, of course, if the Council and Order were to discover just how pervasive Fallen influence truly is. Few suspect, for example, that a handful of Fallen are working on special projects under the eye of the Golden Guild, least of all the Guild itself.

Thus, the more-accomplished Nephandi preserve illusions of propriety. They deal with tycoons, whisper to nobility, and command the vast armies of this age. Outwardly respectable, they cloak their devotions under layers of discretion, wealth, and threat. While their rivals seek Jack the Ripper-like occultists, the wise Nephandus encourages King Leopold's Congolese endeavors, taking a good cut from the profits while perhaps venturing down to the rubber plantations to hack off a limb or two for pleasure's sake.

So respectable, so rich, so *very* dangerous.

Although the story itself appears late in the era, Stevenson's "Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" also reflects the Nephandic approach. In that story (as opposed to its adaptations), respectable Dr. Jekyll wants to set his inner monster free, and yet remain in society's good graces. He creates Mr. Hyde as an escape, eventually learning "that man is not truly one, but truly two." To a Nephandus, the key to Enlightenment involves reconciling that conflict by embracing man's most predatory appetites while asserting control instead of giving in. Thus, like Hyde, a Fallen magus projects a respectable image while indulging a voracious soul.

Lord Edgar Croft, "Croesus on the Thames"

The superior man does not ask or wait for what he wants. The superior man simply takes it. Lord Edgar extols this philosophy at every opportunity; and given that he's among the richest men in London, he has many opportunities to do so. He is known as "Croesus on the Thames" — and occasionally "the Red Lord" — by friends, enemies, and debtors alike. Although he owns several palatial estates across Europe (and two in North America), Lord Edgar seems most comfortable close to the seat of Victoria's court and the global influence such proximity brings.

The Croft family has a long history of wealth. Ship-building enterprises and Caribbean plantations built a network of trade that made the Crofts an essential part of the British East India Company. Young Edgar's father schooled him in discipline, and that education serves him well. While peers squandered their legacies in pointless self-indulgence, the young lord chose to pursue a military command. His adventures across distant lands brought greater fortune to his clan — and if some of those ventures involved opium, diamonds, and the forbidden trade in slaves, well, none of Edgar's many dinner guests complained. By the middle of the century, Lord Edgar has the ear of royalty and the envy of lesser peers. Whip-smart, handsome, and rich beyond imagining, this modern Croesus seems to mint gold from thin air.

That impression is not entirely incorrect.

Among the disciplines passed down by Lord Edgar's patriarch were the Arts of Desire, True Alchemy, and Goetia. Those paths, of course, remain a closely guarded secret at the foundation of the Croft family's wealth. Since the mid-1600s, each suitable male heir of the clan has been initiated into the Midas Key Society and the Ivory Pact (**Mage 20**, p. 230). Although the family was forced, in 1807, to disavow its holdings in the American slave trade, Lord Edgar still maintains a profitable relationship with a handful of American plantations. Given the constant demand for Southern cotton in European military uniforms, that trade provides a brisk cash flow for the Lord's estates even after the technical "end" of slavery in the former Colonies. African investments, plus the burgeoning fields of rubber, silver, diamonds, and gold, supplement Croft's involvement in the railroads and opium trade. In addition to their vast financial merit, Lord Edgar's journeys to those distant properties allow him to hone the nastier aspects of his hidden disciplines — and if a fine British

gentleman were to teach an errant savage a bloody lesson or two in decorum, who's to naysay him, especially when said instruction is carried out far from high society's sight?

Although he's not personally involved with the High Guild, Lord Edgar remains privy to the hidden fellowships of the Order of Reason. Many of his friends and contacts are noted Luminaries within that Order, but he pretends to be ignorant of their Enlightened Arts. "A man of vision and integrity," he says, "has no need of ancient tricks, no matter how advanced they might appear to be. He needs only himself, and the will to do what must be done."

Nature: Tycoon

Demeanor: Visionary

Essence: Pattern

Affiliation: Nephandi

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4, Charisma 5, Manipulation 5, Appearance 4, Perception 5, Intelligence 4, Wits 4

Abilities: Academics 4, Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Awareness 3, Brawl 2, Carousing 4, Cultural Savvy 4, Esoterica (alchemy, Goetia) 4, Etiquette 4, Finance 3, Firearms 3, Hunting 4, Intimidation 4, Law 2, Leadership 4, Melee 4, Occult 5, Politics 4, Research 2, Riding 3, Seduction 4, Streetwise 3, Style, 4, Subterfuge 5, Technology 2, Torture 3, Vice 5

Backgrounds: Allies 9, Avatar 3, Backup 10, Contacts 10, Demesne 4, Fame 3, Influence 7, Library 8, Node 4, Rank 3, Resources 8, Retainers 5, Sanctum 5, Spies 7, Status 3, Wonder(s) 4

Willpower: 9

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0 (four soak dice, total)

Arete: 7

Spheres: Correspondence 3, Entropy 3, Forces 4, Life 4, Matter 5, Mind 4, Prime 5, Spirit 2, Time 3

Image: Rangy and muscular, Lord Edgar was born at the cusp of the century but looks considerably younger. His fair skin never seems to freckle or burn in the sun, and his thick red hair seems mannered enough for respectable company yet rebellious enough to be appealing. He is, of course, strikingly attractive; combined with wealth and charisma, this "Red Lord" cuts a dashing figure everywhere he goes. From shirtsleeves in the tropics to the latest fashions at home, Lord Edgar (*never* simply "Eddie") seems comfortable, stylish, and in full command of any situation.

Roleplaying Tips: You are, in all respects, superior to those around you. The fact that you're comfortable, not arrogant, in your supremacy just makes you that much more compelling. To you, each person is an opportunity — raw materials for your further prosperity. Instead of treating lesser folk like chattel, as so many of your peers and family do, nurture their trust and friendship while looking for ways they might best suit your needs.

Focus: Trained from childhood (rather harshly, too) to be a master of men, Lord Edgar specializes in the practices of dominion, invigoration, alchemy, and Goetia. He's also picked up and incorporated bits of medicine-work, mediumship, artisanship, animalism, High Ritual Magick, and Voudoun in his work; any tool, he knows, is useful in the proper hands.

Croesus on the Thames knows that *might is right*; it's his guiding principle for all other beliefs. To that end, he employs any tool or edge. Money, eye contact, social domination, and occasional violence are his favored instruments, especially because they don't seem like superstitious pursuits. In hidden laboratories (he has several), the Red Lord employs traditional alchemy to transform substances into whatever he desires. The greatest magick, however, is his command over other people. This, to Lord Edgar, is the supreme form of alchemy: refining lesser beings into greater avenues of wealth. With his Mastery of the Prime Sphere, he can conduct that process literally (for details, see **How Do You DO That?** pp. 49-51).

Game-wise, Lord Edgar puts a malignant slant on various practices, but prefers to keep his hands clean and his activities subtle if anyone's watching and might survive the experience. Though alchemical Arts keep him young, strong, and vital, he eschews vulgar displays of "magic" in favor of vigorous athleticism and wild strokes of luck. His primary avenues of power are social and financial, and his formidable Backgrounds keep him far from danger unless he wants to be there. This is not some knockabout devil-cultist but an imperial villain whose influence is strongest at a safe distance from the fray.

Avatar: Given his strict (in modern terms, abusive) upbringing and Nephandic allegiance, one might expect the Red Lord to have hated and eventually killed his father. In reality, Lord Edgar loved the man and still does today. His Avatar takes his father's form, continuing lessons from beyond the grave. Whether or not this entity truly *is* Lord Croft the Elder, Croesus on the Thames obeys and reveres that guiding spirit as he did the man himself.

Rose Reboul–Lachaux, "The Pale Mistress"

It's hard to be a genius in any era. However, during an age in which women are considered to be pretty, fragile, baby-making toys (unless, of course, the woman in question is on the throne — and even then, the sentiment remains whispered behind her back), the term "genius" is reserved for those of testicular inclination, regardless of the achievements of one's sex. Such, at least, is the reception given to Rose Reboul-Lachaux. With a slightly different life, she might have found company among the budding Etherites; instead, she sought and won the mentorship of Alexandre de Lefebre, one of the most infamous inventors in France.

Architect of some of Napoleon's most devilish weaponry and tactics, Lefebre had earned the grudging admiration of his fellow Artificers during *la Terreur* by designing several especially sadistic yet theatrical execution machines. His hidden devotion to forbidden Arts of blood and craftsmanship can be seen in the name given by friends and enemies alike: "The Nightmare Merchant." In young Rose, his "Pale Mistress," Lefebre found a talented apprentice. While young men blanched and vomited at the effects of his machines, Rose asked all the right questions about function, theory,

and practical construction. Although he registered her as an assistant with his fellow Luminaries, Alexandre downplayed her abilities as far as other people were concerned. For Rose, whose gruesome childhood hobbies had fascinated her peers and terrified her parents, such subterfuge was the price a bright girl paid among provincial minds.

Given her predilections, the Nightmare Merchant was not surprised when he found himself employed as the subject of Rose's experiments. The smile on his face as her machine peeled the muscles from his limbs is one of the few things Rose has seen that actually made her shudder.

A healthy inheritance from her mentor — including a hidden estate filled with interesting devices and fear-caged servants of an oft-inhuman nature — keeps Rose occupied. She continues to serve as a seemingly dull-witted go-between for the Mechanicians and Electrodyne Engineers, but holds covert membership in the Golden Bull, courtesy of Alexandre's patronage. Being a young French woman from modest heritage, she's well-schooled in the art of lies. In her laboratory, though, the Pale Mistress enjoys another servant-given moniker: *Mademoiselle de Sade*, so named because she follows the dread Marquis' libertine philosophies to the letter when she can. Like Justine, she appears a facile innocent; like Juliette, she is a creature of appetites, though hers are far more mechanical than carnal.

Nature: Architect

Demeanor: Conformist

Essence: Pattern

Affiliation: Nephandi / Mechanician *barabbi*

Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Charisma 2, Manipulation 4, Appearance 2, Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 5

Abilities: Academics 5, Alertness 3, Athletics 1, Awareness 3, Carousing 3, Crafts 4, Cultural Savvy 2, Etiquette 4, Finance 3, Firearms 4, Intimidation 2, Library 5, Medicine 4, Melee 2, Node 2, Politics 3, Research 4, Riding 2, Science (various) 4, Subterfuge 5, Technology 5, Torture 5

Backgrounds: Allies 4, Avatar 5, Backup 4, Contacts 4, Resources 6, Sanctum 5, Spies 4

Willpower: 7

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0 (two soak dice, total)

Arete: 5

Spheres: Correspondence 2, Entropy 4, Forces 4, Life 4, Matter 5, Mind 4, Prime 3, Time 2

Image: Despite her given name and titles, "pretty" is not a word most people would use to describe Rose. By most standards, she appears gaunt and pale, with a tendency to freckle and burn even in modest sunlight. Her features are what many people might consider "handsome" but an unnerving predatory air about her makes even the brashest rake hesitate to court her. That said, Rose's hair is rather lovely — a luxurious fall of blazing gold, bound back in the laboratory but set loose or stylishly coiffed when she wants someone's attention.

Like any artisan, Rose has short fingernails with dark half-moons of dirt and grime beneath them. Splinters, burns, and scratches from her machinery and experiments mark the Pale Mistress' white skin, and so she tends to wear gloves unless she's performing especially delicate work. Her favored clothing is simple, functional, ruggedly constructed, and badly stained. The disconcerting origins of those stains bring pause to anyone recognizing their hue and patterns. Of course, Mademoiselle de Sade has a few outfits of the libertine style; such fashions, though, are just more tools for her experiments.

Roleplaying Tips: Everything around you is a machine; every*one* around you is a machine, too. Your clinical manner about such things, coupled with your apparent lack of passion or fear, makes you seem mechanical as well. Despite the libertine appellation, you find matters of flesh to be more stimulating *intellectually* than *sensually*. In a future time, you might be considered sociopathic; that prejudice, however accurately it might describe your cold faculty for deception, is an insult to sociopaths. You are a tinkerer, and living things are just another form of device to dismantle for curiosity's sake.

Focus: Rose believes in *a mechanistic cosmos*, but one in which *I'm a predator and the world is my prey*. She accepts the Marquis' assertion that *indulgence is Nature's only law*, and thus indulgences her curiosity and tinkering mind by reveling in mechanical cruelties. Those cruelties involve especially malign forms of artisanship, European-style medicine-work, dominion, and, of course, weird science. From torture machines to clockwork slaves to abhorrent bio-monstrosities, Mademoiselle de Sade employs her arts and instruments through an agonizing approach to science. In all her works, however, Rose's Arts take the form of machines or the idea of living things as machines. The servants that Rose and Alexandre "constructed" for their home lend awful power to that argument. For details, see the **Gods & Monsters** entries regarding "Igors," "Slaves," "Constructs," and "Renaimates" (pp. 41-42, 49-50, 85-89, 184, and 186).

A useful Trait for her double-life among Technocratic Luminaries, Rose has the Merit: *Innocuous Aura* (detailed in **The Book of the Fallen**, p. 117); this gift conceals her Caul-stained Avatar from metaphysical inspection. Note that the Pale Mistress does *not* appear to be an "Innocent" (as per the Merit of that name); her presence is unnerving but not discernably Nephandic.

Avatar: Ironically, considering her mechanistic maltheism, Rose refers to her Avatar as *L'Ange Blanc*: "the White Angel." Like her, this presence is deathly pale with shining gold hair, wearing a white shop-apron spattered with blood, grease, and viscera. This entity has appeared to Rose since childhood, urging her toward greater curiosities. She dubbed it L'Ange Blanc back then, both from a sense of her parents' religiosity and in rebellion against it. Dedicated as she is now to infernal pursuits, it amuses Rose to consider the entity an "angel" of any sort of heaven. These days, it wanders the labs and estate grounds with her, unseen by most eyes but very much a sister, friend, and lover to the magus.

Shadows of Reason: The Night-Folk

In the sleep of reason, monsters dwell. Thus, the Victorian era is in many ways the age of monsters. Whether such beasts are chased from hiding by the bright lamp of civilization or, more likely, cast into sharp relief by the pretensions of an overambitious age, the Gaslit Mystery nights echo with the scuttle of near-human feet and the gasps and snarls of primordial hunger close enough to touch if one reaches into the fog or darkness at the right moment — or, rather, at the *wrong* moment.

Educated minds scoff at the idea of monsters. Pursuers of the mystic or Enlightened Arts, however, hold no such illusions. For them, vampyres, beast-men, and hostile fiends are innate hazards of the Invisible World. A magus or luminary of any age may find himself crossing blades or curses with such entities, but in the vast plains and mist-shrouded streets of this mysterious era, the chance of such meetings is very high indeed.

The following entries detail monstrous adversaries or potential allies *as a magus would perceive them, not as such beings would perceive themselves*. For simplicity's sake, a **Victorian Mage** Storyteller can reflect their vast array of supernatural powers with the "Common Magickal Effects" described in **M20**'s rulebook, pp. 508-510. Such powers are not subject to the Straits, but they lack the flexibility of True Magick's Spheres.

For further notes about the Night-Folk and their relationship with True Magick, see **M20** ("Body Magick," p. 508; "Do the Night-Folk Count as Witnesses?", p. 531; and "Night-Folk Counterspelling," p. 546). For a **Mage**-style conversion of their strange powers and frailties, see Chapters One and Five from the sourcebook **Gods & Monsters** (pp. (pp. 61-75 and 187-220), plus the "Umbrood Spirit Entities" section from **M20**, systems for their interactions with True Magick in Chapter Ten (pp. 508 and 546), and Appendix I of that same book (pp. 485-493 and 631-641). For magi who are closer than usual to such beings, see **The Book of Secrets** (pp. 74-76). For the specific abilities and characteristics of the various Night-Folk in their own right, see the rulebooks and supplements for **Vampire: The Masquerade** and **Victorian Age: Vampire**, **Werewolf: The Apocalypse** and **Wild West**, **Changeling: The Dreaming**, and **Wraith: The Oblivion** and **The Great War**.

The Faerie Folk

The Victorian world has a strange affinity for the Fair Folk. Science, of course, disdains their existence, but Fae allure finds its way into popular fiction, rebel artistic movements, children's nursery tales, and occasionally — as with the horrifying murder of Bridget Cleary in 1895 — into newspapers and court reports. Although the famous Cottingley Fairies appear in the early 20th century, Victorian mortals often cling to their faerie counterparts in secret belief if not in open admiration.

As mystics and Luminaries may attest, however, such beliefs are neither as fanciful nor as innocent as they might seem. Away from the safety of the middle-class nursery, the Fair Folk embody awesome terror. Capricious tricksters and gorgeous predators, they ensnare mortals in coils of dream-stuff and live by alien moralities. Though Celtic lore divides the Folk into Seelie and Unseelie binaries, all Fae are, by

Of the Birth of Modern Monsters

In many regards, our view of "classic monsters" comes from the media of this era. Although Shelly's *Frankenstein* and Polidori's *The Vampyre* predate Victoria's reign, their creations redefined monstrosity for the modern world. Vampires, before Polidori's half-satire of Lord Byron, were essentially zombies, not the seductive antiheroes we know today, while Shelly's mad doctor and his misbegotten Adam have no real precedent in earlier literature, save perhaps the Golem of medieval Jewish folklore. Ghosts and beast-people existed in media before the 1800s, certainly, but our modern conceptions of them owe a great deal to creators like Sheridan Le Fanu, Washington Irving, Ann Radcliffe, M.R. James, Elizabeth Gaskill, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Edgar Allen Poe, among many other authors and artists of the Romantic and Victorian eras.

The 19th century, from end to end, is awash with monsters; Leroux's Phantom and his tormented Christine, Hugo's hunchback and the lascivious friar, Stevenson's Jekyll and Hyde, Stoker's White Worm and Count Dracula, Rosetti's "goblin men" and their bewitching fruits, Dickens' Marley and those Christmas ghosts… they all hail from this era, with a nameless dread cast across the scene by way of Chambers' *King in Yellow*, Hawthorne's haunted New England, and the half-glimpsed terrors of Arthur Machen, Ambrose Bierce, Joris-Karl Huysmans, and many other authors whose work foreshadows the 20th century's taste for monstrosity. Meanwhile, graphic artists like Harry Clarke, Aubrey Beardsley, Gustave Doré, Henry Fuseli, Francisco de Goya, Gustave Moreau, and other painters of macabre matter illuminated the dark corners that produced the horror films of later generations. Monsters have been with us since the dawn of humanity, but the 19th century's taste for fright was like nothing seen before that time; and deepened, of course, through the following centuries into the media horrors we know and love today.

nature, strangely *Other*. The best of them demolish mortal lives without thinking, and the worst of them devour souls for fun.

Although the faeries of classical folklore have retreated behind Shakespearean verse and Pre-Raphaelite paintings, their earthly kin wander this mortal realm, cloaking their true selves behind banal masks. Illusionists of a sort, these "changelings" cast innate glamours around their appearance, and work dream-stuff into magicks only certain mortals can perceive. The towering butler to a lord might, beneath this guise, have blue skin and curling horns. An irascible tinker may shape the elements with mystic arts. The sullen Lady of the Haunted Garret could be a ghastly, toothless nightmare who feeds upon fear, and a willowy artist's model could, in actuality, conjure arts of her own from the inspiration of her mortal lovers. Although some changelings drift through high society, aping the games of vicious socialites, the majority of such Fair Folk remain secretive, nurturing themselves in quiet corners of Empire's world. A canny eye might spot their aversion to iron, or peer through the dream-veils they cast about themselves; thus, the Awakened and the Fae tread many roads together — often unwillingly so, but always with a sense of wary curiosity. Of all the hidden creatures in this world, the Fae have the most in common with magi, yet exist in a world sublimely apart from them. Their Arts are "such stuff as dreams are made on," but those dreams can be very dark indeed.

Fair Folk work best in **Victorian Mage** when they're passing through, affecting the people around the magi without dealing directly with the Awakened themselves. Whenever possible, a Storyteller should treat them more like story elements than like collections of Traits. For those times when **Mage** simulations of faerie powers prove necessary, see **Gods & Monsters**, p. 71.

Fae-Ravaged Mortal Artist

He had a gift, once. His hands could turn pigments and canvas into breathtaking magnificence. Then he met his Muse — the beauty whose image adorns his final creations. She took him by the hand in a dark woodland, and then led him toward the pinnacle of artistic madness before letting him walk over its edge. She's gone now, and only madness remains. He sits, and he mumbles, and he stains his fingers with paint and his lips with laudanum and absinthe as he drinks away the dregs of his fortune. The Muse has left him, now, and she took his inspiration with her. Behind his eyes, she dances still to music only he can hear.

Suggested Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 1, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 1

Suggested Abilities: Academics 2, Alertness 1, Art (painting) 4, Awareness 5, Crafts (woodworking) 3, Enigmas 3, Etiquette 2, Occult (faerie folklore) 3, Research 2, Streetwise 2

Willpower: 1

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Equipment: Ever-present intoxicants of some kind, sketches, brushes and charcoal, paints and paper but the inability to use them as he once did.

Image: Young and once beautiful, now crumbling into drink and despair that rob his fine-shaped features of their vitality. His careless appearance once suggested bohemian flair but now slips toward slovenly ruin.

Roleplaying Notes: You have touched the Goddess Art, and she enflamed you in return. Now, though, that fire fades into embers and all that's left of you is ash.

Fae Enchantress

You saw her in a painting once — no, *more* than once, actually. She's popular among the artists and the poets of your fair city, who speak of her in whispers and seek to win her favor. She floats among them like a mist, her laughter chiming and her eyes bright as summer storms. From time to time, she takes a lover and draws that person toward the heights of accomplishment. For weeks, sometimes months, an inspired man or women crafts sublime creations. Inevitably, though, that inspiration falters and the Muse moves on, endlessly seeking a mortal whose gifts prove inexhaustible enough to nurture her eternal need. No conventions bind her whims; no consequence invokes remorse. Artists crave her notice; their loved ones crave her blood. No one, though, has yet secured her lasting favor or brought revenge down on her head. The enchantress moves among them still, her presence a reminder that dreams have substance and nightmares are real.

Suggested Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 6, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 3, Art 3, Awareness 4, Brawl 2, Cosmology 3, Empathy 4, Enigmas 2, Etiquette 5, Expression 4, Networking 3, Occult 3, Seduction 4, Stealth 3, Style 3, Subterfuge 4

Willpower: 4

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0 (two soak dice, total)

Powers: Bedazzling enchantments of a social nature, combined with the ability to nurture mortals' inspiration, harvest their creative energies, leave those mortals drained, disappear when necessary, and then find and charm new patrons while deflecting (perhaps fatally) attempts to harm her with revenge. For suggested powers, see the "Uncanny Influence" section of **How Do You DO That?** (pp. 114-125), plus the entries for "Quintessential Blessings" and "Energy Vampirism" (pp. 48-49), "The Old Mind-Push" (p. 72), "Clearing Crowds, and Getting Lost" (p. 75), and "The Batman" (p. 77) in the same book.

Image: A Pre-Raphaelite painting come to life, with a softly compelling voice, bewitching laughter, a literally charming touch, and an innate luminescence that accentuates her uncanny beauty.

Roleplaying Notes: The human lack of immortality instills such beauty in their art that you cannot help but adore the men and women who craft it. Your love for them accentuates

your own eternal essence and inspires their work to dazzling heights. It's a shame so many vessels shatter from the force of that attention, but really, without you, they would have died slow, bitter deaths, always wondering what they might have accomplished had they never crossed your path. Your appreciation brings those people the immortality they crave.

Ghostly Phantoms

The dead remain among us. Though science may deny this fact, the Restless ghosts filling Victorian haunts and battlefields declaim the truth of it. Spiritualism — the dominant European occult fascination of the Victorian era — is based on contact with the dead, and this era is replete with phantoms whose troubled lives endure beyond the grave.

As with so many elements of monstrosity, the Victorian view of ghosts reflects the concerns of the living world. Empire, after all, is built upon the corpses of the cultures it overruns and the people whose lives feed its endless sprawl. The present arises from the bones of the past, but those bones seldom rest easily, and the ghosts of the people who once *lived* upon those bones may have the proverbial bone to pick with the living world. From time to time, those Restless people seep back across the Shroud between the living and dead realms — or else burst out in the frenzied violence of poltergeist behavior. The Victorian era is especially noted for its "noisy ghosts." Considering the vast carnage of the recent Napoleonic Wars, the conquest of Africa, the bloody last stand of Indigenous Americans, and the depthless miseries of lower-class Europeans in this industrial age, is it any *wonder* that such ghosts make so much noise?

To a magus, ghosts contain the living essence of a person whose flesh has died. Certain authorities within the Order of Reason theorize that phantoms are instead the echoes of psychic energy trapped within alien energies, or else preserved within the Ether the way dead flesh may be pickled in formaldehyde. Traditional mystics see those ghosts as bygone ancestors whose rest has been disturbed by mortal incursions and misdeeds, while ritual wizards speculate about the ways to which such ephemeral entities might be put to work. Seldom, regardless of his faction, does an Awakened person doubt the existence of a ghost. The nature of such spirits might be a matter of debate, but as far as most magi are concerned a ghostly phantom is as real as any living thing.

For the **M20** version of ghostly powers, see **Gods & Monsters**, p. 73. For magickal feats based around dealing with the dead, see the "Necromancy" section of **How Do You DO That?** (pp. 84-89), the "Deathwalker" and "Mediumship" entries in **The Book of Secrets** (pp. 74 and 202-203), and the entry "Spiritualism" in this book (p. 149).

Ancestral Haunt

In this place where life shares space with death, the overlap between those worlds shelters souls whose legacy did not end when their heartbeats stopped. One such phantom reaches across the Shroud whenever possible, seeking solace in a cold existence. For her (she *was* once "her," wasn't she?), the distant descendants of the person she once was provide the finest source of comfort. She talks to their children, leaves messages in the dust with her fingertips, sings them to sleep at night (*Why does that song distress them so?* she wonders), and protects them from trespassers who seek to do her family harm. The battered corpses of several intruders have washed up on the shores of a nearby river, and one would-be burglar has a full head of white hair now where once his locks were black as coal. The children say, "*Grimmie takes good care of us*," but their elders don't know who "Grimmie" is or why she holds such interest in the clan's well-being. One thing, though, is certain: anyone daring to threaten this estate or the family that has dwelt there for over 16 generations is bound to meet an angry phantom and an awful fate.

Suggested Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3 (Physical Traits apply only in the Low Umbra), Charisma 2, Manipulation 5, Appearance 3 (1), Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Suggested Abilities: Alertness 4, Area Knowledge (family estate) 5, Awareness 5, Brawl 2, Cosmology 3, Enigmas 3, Expression 5, Etiquette 2, History (local) 4, Intimidation 5, Investigation 2, Occult 3, Stealth 4, Subterfuge 2

Willpower: 5

Health Levels: OK, OK, OK, OK, OK, OK, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: N/A

Powers: This phantom's ghostly powers favor poltergeist phenomena: eerie noises, minor physical manifestations, sudden frights, and so forth. When angry, however, she can also possess mortal hosts and drive them to do terrible things.

Image: To the living world, "Grimmie" is a disembodied voice and an unseen presence. Those who can see the Restless Dead, however, note a cloudy, indistinct but ostensibly feminine body formed of luminous mist. At times, the shape hints at a more masculine physiognomy despite its feminine dress, voice, and essence. Rarely, though, does that form become truly distinct except to display flashes of appalling, malformed horror. Whether that form is a reflection of the phantom's inner state, a deliberate attempt to scare the viewer, a legacy of its death, or something far worse is a thing no living person may discern. "Grimmie" herself, when asked, either doesn't know or won't reveal the truth.

Roleplaying Notes: Although you're not entirely certain who you once were, your family and home estate are the most precious things in existence as far as you're concerned. So long as it remains in your power to protect them, nothing and no one will harm them. Ever.

Primordial Wehr-beasts

Man, Charles Darwin assures us, is a beast. Some men and women, though, are more animal than most. Feral in flesh as well as spirit, these beast-folk creep through wilderness and settlement alike. When provoked, they assume terrifying war-forms that can tear a horse in half with a single stroke of their claws. A wise magus knows better than to provoke such creatures; but not all magi, sadly, are so wise.

The motivations that drive such monsters are as mysterious as the forces that allow them to manifest their bestial nature in the flesh. Are they throwbacks to a feral age where all folk were so cursed? Or is there some malediction that turns their outer forms into reflections of their inner monstrosities? The beast-folk keep their own counsel on such matters, and so magi and Luminaries have many theories and very few answers. The idea that such carnage-loving creatures have secret societies and tribal bonds is, for a magus of this era, too absurd to accept as truth. Surely, the raging monsters that devastate settlements in the savage wilds of Africa or the Americas could not possibly be driven by reasonable pursuits or legitimate grudges! What appalling excuse for a magus could believe that the towering wolf-things of untamed Russia or the thick forests of Germany might have cultures of their own? Oh, the magi favoring uncivilized Arts may attest that wehr-beasts enjoy a spiritual gift — that they *are*, in fact, shaggy avatars of Mother Nature's wrath. A studious wizard or rational Luminary, however, discards such foolishness. To such capacious minds, a beast-man is merely a primal monster to be avoided, destroyed, or if possible, studied — preferably on a laboratory table after its gory demise. For, as the law of the wild decrees, one either *kills*, or else one *is* killed.

Anyone familiar with **Werewolf: The Apocalypse** knows that the perspective given above is egregiously flawed. For a more accurate perspective, see the series above (especially **Werewolf 20th Anniversary Edition**) and its Victorian-era subseries **Werewolf: The Wild West** (itself given an update to **W20** rules in the **W20 Wyld West Expansion Pack**). For **Mage**-style rules about werewolves and their powers, see **Gods & Monsters**, pp. 66-70, as well as **M20** (pp. 508 and 546) and **The Book of Secrets** (p. 74).

Corvid Trickster

Feeders on the slain, children of the Morrigan, allies of Odin, descendants of the Stealer of the Sun — Raven Folk have a wild, tangled occult history, and though the American writer, Poe, may have lamented the torments of corvid company, magi throughout time have sought their wisdom while dodging their trickery. Mundane crows and ravens make popular companions among the Awakened (even for certain Luminaries), but the most magical corvids of all combine avian forms and human intellect.

Like all corvids, this beast-folk trickster has sharp eyes and a penchant for mischief. Unlike his mundane kin, he can indulge his curiosities while slipping between forms: a very large raven, an uncanny bird-man, and a human with dark

hair and a penetrating gaze. Quick but fragile in all forms, he avoids fights when possible and flies away if he must. His strutting physicality and impish temperament carry over into all his forms, as well. From the Scandinavian wilds to the rainy forests of the Pacific Northwest, this trickster and his kind make rare and precious friends to magi who don't mind erratic moods, piercing questions, and the occasional trinket that goes missing so that the trickster can, as the saying goes, feather his nest a bit.

Suggested Attributes (human form): Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Charisma 3, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Suggested Abilities: Academics 2, Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Awareness 4, Brawl 2, Empathy 3, Enigmas 4, Expression 2, Hunting 2, Intimidation 3, Investigation 3, Melee 3, Occult 4, Stealth 4, Subterfuge 3, Survival 2

Willpower: 5

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0 (three soak dice, total, although wereravens add + 1 to the difficulty to soak damage)

Powers: Although not as physically powerful as the werewolves detailed in Gods & Monsters (p. 66), wereravens are immune to the harsh effects of silver; instead, due to mystic associations with the sun, they instead suffer those effects from gold weapons and assaults. As mentioned above, a wereraven can assume a human form, a raven-form with a roughly four-foot wingspan, and a bizarre war-form that merges the most threatening aspects of a corvid bird and a human being. The latter form has claws like a werewolf but pecks with a large beak instead of biting with fangs. Like other werecreatures, these beast-folk employ limited spellcraft, with an especially unsettling talent for "drinking the eye" of a dead being to discern the good (right eye) or evil (left eye) associated with its death.

Image: Black of feather, hair, and eye, the trickster has sophisticated taste in clothes and appears as a dandy of sorts. Birdlike in movement as well as temperament, he seems sly yet charming, nonetheless.

Roleplaying Notes: Secrets are your stock-in-trade, and the chance to humble some gangly wizard makes seeking out those secrets seem all the sweeter.

Strait Apparitions

Nature abhors a paradox. When the vanities of man seek to overrule the laws of nature or the currents of belief, that disruption manifests in strange and frightening ways. Such apparitions, some claim, personify the wrath of natural forces as reflected through the minds of men. Thus, they assume forms of grim poetic vengeance, turning back the Arts of magus or Luminary with awful powers that seem immune to the reality-shaping whims of magick.

Each of the following entries features the Spheres most closely associated with the Strait Apparition in question. For more details about Strait Apparitions, see Chapter Six, p. 134.

The Black Gunmen (Forces, Mind, Spirit)

They appear as if from nowhere, striding out of the night, smoke, or mist with guns in their hands and murder in their eyes. From beneath the brims of their hats, these black-clad gunmen stride toward their target with murderous deliberation, level their guns, and shoot. Until the magus invoking their appearance is a bloody mass of twitching, dying flesh, the Black Gunmen blaze away. Their guns never need reloading, and no physical force can stop them. When their gory work is through, the Gunmen stride back, swallowed up and disappearing into the darkness.

A frightening mass manifestation of Straits-backlash energy, the Black Gunmen have become a fearsome new sight across the world. Targeting mystic magi and Enlightened Luminaries alike, this gunslinging pack embodies the awful power of modern firearms and the men employing them. In the coming years, C.J. Jung might explain them as a nightmare of the collective unconscious; to the people in their path, the Black Gunmen distill terror into storms of death.

Depending on where they appear and who's in their gunsights when they do, these spirits (or perhaps *this spirit* — no one's quite certain) manifest as duster-clad gunslingers of the American West, black-uniformed soldiers suggesting a vaguely (though not distinctly) European nation or the newly-formed Imperial Japanese Army, musket-bearing Zulu impis, Winchester-equipped Cree riflemen, black-garbed Pinkerton Men, or whatever other sort of gunmen would most intimidate the viewers. Silent save for the thunder of their firearms, the Black Gunmen have, in a few short years, become the stuff of legend.

From a game perspective, the "Gunmen" act as a single spirit appearing (as per the Charm: *Appear*) in several seemingly physical bodies. When drawn by the magicks of a careless mystic or Luminary, they fade into view, take up positions, and open fire using the *Blast* Charm. Physical attacks pass through them, and the "men" cannot interact with the mortal world except through their Charms.

Generally, the "Gunmen" concentrate the Blast on the magus whose activities drew their attention; if attacked, however, they fire at anyone catching their attention. That Blast appears to be a hail of gunfire from several assailants, but it gets rolled as a single attack that inflicts eight dice of lethal damage per turn. Those eight dice can be divided up between several targets or directed against only one. As stated in the Rage Trait entry in **M20** (pp. 488-489), normal armor cannot soak this attack, though magi and other entities can use various methods to reduce it. As detailed under the "Spirit Combatants" entry in **M20** (pp. 417-418), physical attacks cannot harm the Gunmen, and even many magickal assaults fail.

The uncanny stillness of the "men" and the unnatural roar of their gunfire also whips people into a panic. When the Black Gunmen first appear, the spirit(s) also cast(s) a *Terror* Charm; anyone witnessing the Black Gunmen's approach must make a Willpower roll against difficulty 7, or else shudder and flee. Thus, rumors of the Black Gunmen spread far beyond

their immediate presence, becoming the stuff of legend and helping that spirit's power grow.

Willpower 4, **Rage** 8, **Gnosis** 6, **Essence** 30

Charms: Appear, Blast, Create Wind, Insight (to discern a target's fears), Shapeshift (into whatever sort of gunmen that target fears most), Terror

Image: As described above.

Roleplaying Notes: Emerge. Kill. Depart.

Doppelgänger (Correspondence, Life, Mind)

The Victorian fascination with "keeping up appearances" leads, at times, to an awful phenomenon: the "evil twin" whose antics undercut a proper person with the scandals and misdeeds they publicly suppress. The virtuous gentleman is seen whoring about brothels; the generous lady snatches food away from starving orphans in the street. Such is the nature of the *doppelgänger*: a spirit (or type of spirits) who manifest the repressed passions of a magus or Luminary by assuming her guise and perpetrating the sins she dares not commit herself.

When Straits energies coalesce into this entity, the offending magus has no idea a backlash has occurred. In due time, however, she begins to suffer odd rumors and reports: she was seen doing terrible things in a place she's never been, at a time when she knows she was elsewhere. Clearly, she could not have done the things she's accused of having done — and yet, just as clearly, she was seen doing those things. The doppelgänger has assumed her form, of course, and now expresses deeds and desires plucked from the magus' repressed self. In time, that magus may confront her doppelgänger-twin; and in that confrontation, the first assault she aims at the imposter rebounds upon the magus as the spirit disappears.

In game terms, the doppelgänger manifestation appears in a different location after the Storyteller rolls up a Straits backlash of 10 points or more in association with one or more of the Spheres Correspondence, Life or Mind. If the backlash came about as the result of a spell that used two or more of those Spheres, so much the better. Once conjured, the doppelgänger runs around town in a near-perfect imitation of the magus who invoked it. The Storyteller bases its activities upon the darkest, most repressed aspects of the magus' personality; if the player and Storyteller want to collaborate on this part of the story, the player might suggest things her character's evil twin would do. The manifestation and its activities continue and intensify until the magus locates and confronts her doppelgänger. At that point, the spirit antagonizes the magus (typically with the *Insight*, *Influence*, and *Soul Reading* Charms) until either that magus lashes out at the spirit, or someone else does it for her. The doppelgänger immediately disappears, and the assault hits the magus with the same force and effects it would have had if the attack had hit the evil twin instead. If that assault involves more Catastrophic

Arts, then the resulting Straits energies might gather toward a future appearance from the doppelgänger. Game-wise, any Straits energy stirred up by attacking the evil twin — even if a different magus attacks the spirit — goes into the Straits pool of the magus whose magicks invoked her evil twin in the first place, and in a future backlash for that magus, her Doppelgänger might show up again.

Willpower 6, **Rage** 6, **Gnosis** 6, **Essence** 25

Charms: Flee, Insight, Influence, Materialize, Mirror Mimic (to duplicate the magus whose acts invoked the spirit), Mind Speech, Rebound (as above; reflects any physical or magical assault from the magus who conjured this spirit back upon the assailant), Reform, Soul Reading

Materialized Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3; use Gnosis for Social and Mental Traits

Abilities: Alertness 4, Brawl 4, Empathy 4, Seduction 4, Subterfuge 4, plus the temporary capacity to mimic the skills and knowledge of the person the doppelgänger imitates.

Materialized Health Levels: 10 for attacks by people other than the magus who invoked it; 1 for attacks from that magus herself.

Image: An infuriatingly perfect duplicate of the magus whose activities conjured the spirit, but who's doing things the real magus would never willingly do in public.

Roleplaying Notes: You exist to cast an unflattering light on the hidden aspects of a person's soul.

Incendio (Forces, Matter)

Guns. Cannons. Dynamite. Steam boilers. Coal dust. They all explode with predictably fatal results. While most explosions can be blamed on perfectly mundane conditions, people who work with unstable matter can detect a certain malicious glee behind those blasts. Some credit the Devil, angry ghosts, or the hand of a vengeful God swatting down man's vanity with fire. Others, especially those among Enlightened artisan guilds, have a name for that presence: *Incendio*.

By such accounts, Incendio is a spirit or clan of spirits who delight in igniting the works of men. Old archives and ancient magi refer to this entity as *Powderbane* or other fire-based monikers. In the Penumbral realm, Incendio might be seen as a glowing ember or firefly who seems to gutter with an intelligent response when questioned or addressed by name. Sensing enjoyable catastrophe, this spirit nestles itself within potentially explosive substances or machines, glows brighter, and then provokes disaster. While the fate of the spirit remains unknown, the effect on its mortal victims is obvious.

As a character, Incendio is simple: Summoned by a Straits backlash, this entity finds a volatile spot in a machine, lab, or firearm, lands there, and then explodes, inflicting its Rage Trait as damage. That attack begins as 10 dice of lethal damage that cannot be soaked by normal armor, but could grow as high as 15, 20, 25 dice or more if the spirit ignites an especially large cache of material. An exploding ammunition dump or powder magazine, an airship, steam engine or infernal contraption, a stock of nitroglycerin, or an alchemical laboratory could level buildings or devastate whole city blocks. Ultimately, the Storyteller decides the amount of dice involved in the detonation. Major characters can try to escape, of course, but many others will not be so fortunate.

For rules dealing with explosions and fire, see the appropriate **M20** entries, pp. 436-438 and 454-455.

Willpower 2, **Rage** 10, **Gnosis** 3, **Essence** 20

Charms: Blast Flame, Create Fires, Materialize (as a spark or small flame)

Image: Noted above.

Roleplaying Notes: *BOOM!*

Pastosiwew

(Correspondence, Forces, Matter, Spirit)

Tornados: Only fire, perhaps, provides a more terrifying manifestation of nature's wrath. Those who've seen them swear there's something alive about the towering funnel clouds and the hungry roar they make. In the case of the spirit known in Cree as *Pastosiwew*, the cyclone truly *is* alive; and, when conjured by acts of alien magick, very angry indeed. Legends claim this spirit first appeared when the white men began polluting her land with smoking machinery and the blood of its people. When roused, she sweeps them away with black winds and storm. Never, it's been said, does she harm the People of the Land. Trespassers, though — be they white or black or otherwise — are tossed about and broken like straw.

Manifesting when foreign magick violates the ancestral medicines of the North American plains, Pastosiwew appears in the form of a tornado whose shrieking roar suggests a raging goddess. Although she holds a special hatred for mechanized Enlightened Arts, this spirit punishes mystics and artisans alike. Her Charms won't harm people of Indigenous heritage unless they've joined the invaders and thus turned their backs on what she considers to be their rightful ways. For obvious reasons, Pastosiwew cannot manifest indoors. Out in the open, though, she stretches from the skies, a dark and lightning-crackling pillar of elemental death. Anyone who cannot outrun or hide from her is sucked into the vortex and either torn apart or tossed high into the air and left to fall…

Rules-wise, Pastosiwew takes several turns to form; once she touches down, she shakes the ground with her *Quake* Charm and then chases the magus or magi who invoked her punishment. Until she catches them, this spirit uses the awful power of tornados and lightning to destroy everything in sight. If they try to flee into the Umbra, she follows them with her Umbral Storm. Pastosiwew's winds and lightning bolts inflict 10 dice of lethal damage on anyone she manages to reach with a successful Dexterity + Brawl roll against difficulty 6. Structures and machines in her path are quickly torn apart. Once the intruders have been dealt with, Pastosiwew dissipates back into the sky.

In many regards, Pastosiwew is more of a force of nature than a "character" per se. An Indigenous American medicine worker might try to communicate with her, but other magi

are better off running as far and as fast as they can. For the larger effects of Pastosiwew's wrath, see the **M20** entries for "Harsh Weather and Environments" (p. 435), "Dodging the Blast" (p. 438), and "Falls and Impact" (p. 439).

Willpower 10, **Rage** 10, **Gnosis** 3, **Essence** 70

Charms: Cleanse the Blight, Create Wind, Element Sense (Air and Earth), Lightning Bolt, Materialize (as a tornado), Meld (air), Quake, Terror, Umbral Storm

Materialized Attributes: Strength 10, Dexterity 3, Stamina 20; use Gnosis for Social and Mental Traits

Abilities: Alertness 4, Brawl 3

Materialized Health Levels: 60

Image: A very black, very loud, very angry tornado.

Roleplaying Notes: The only solution to this foreign infestation is to sweep it all away.

Un-Dead Vampyres

This is, perhaps, the quintessential Age of the Vampyre. For centuries, legends had regarded the Un-Dead as voracious corpses driven by need. With the dawning of the 19th century, however, that masquerade, as it were, has been gradually pulled aside to reveal the true face of vampirism: predatory monsters with sophistication and intellect equal to (and often exceeding) those of mortal men. In the Victorian era, these creatures achieve their greatest degree of influence: an uncanny blend of social grandeur and infernal appetites that rule this age from the shadows while glutting itself on spectacular amounts of blood.

Among these hungry monsters, a magus is most likely to encounter either an elegant sophisticate with aristocratic tastes and political machinations; or a near-feral beast reveling in her damned existence. Wizards have long and often bloody histories with such creatures, but even among the Houses of Hermes such histories are written more from supposition and misdirection than from in-depth knowledge of vampire-kind.

In plain English, the Un-Dead work best as enigmatic threats rather than as recitations of clan and generation familiar to players of **Vampire: The Masquerade**. Unless a character has several dots in Lore: Vampires (and even if she *does*), her perception of the Vampyre remains cloaked in mystery. The Kindred play their cards extremely close to their chests, especially with regards to the equally confounding societies of **Mage**… all the better, after all, to avoid stakes being driven into said chests after dawn has burdened them with sleep.

A vital note for players and Storytellers of **Victorian Mage**: *The common media tropes about vampires do not exist in the 1800s*. Although *Carmilla*, *The Vampyre*, *Varney the Vampire*, and other penny-dreadful novelties have begun to popularize the modern vampire among people disreputable enough to read such trash, Stoker's *Dracula* does not appear until 1897 and Murnau's *Nosferatu* (which invents the trope of vampires dying in sunlight) will not appear until 1922. Victorian characters won't have our familiarity with vampire media, and so the Kindred should appear far more menacing and enigmatic to them than such creatures seem to us today.

For details and game systems regarding vampires from a **Mage** perspective, see **M20** (pp. 508 and 546), and the sourcebooks **Gods & Monsters** (pp. 61-66), **The Book of Secrets** (p. 74-76 and 87), and **How Do You DO That?** (p. 116) For a wealth of material about Caine's childer in this era — including their involvement with certain mystic societies — check out the **Victorian Age: Vampire** series.

Imperious Kindred

The night has always belonged to their kind. Cloaked in darkness and mystery, the Un-Dead claim whole cities as their domain and then rule the mortals within them from the shadows. Though it's a rare vampyre careless enough to drink his victims dry, the devotees of Awakened Arts and Enlightened Sciences understand that rumors of these predatory corpses are frequently exaggerated but very seldom wrong. The Order of Hermes, for example, has a long and bitter history with those calling themselves "the Heirs of Caine," some of whom claim ownership of a long-disowned Hermetic House. Enlightened Luminaries hold no such sense of kinship; to them, the Un-Dead are simply monsters to be slain — more powerful than most, of course, but a pale travesty of the magnificence to which these so-called "Kindred" pretend.

This vampyre, as one might expect, sees things differently. Though he might be an aristocratic socialite, a brooding artiste, a blood-wizard, raving beast, or some trash-dwelling foul thing, he imagines himself superior to the mortals upon which he feeds. His powers make him formidable, no doubt, but those limited talents, however impressive they might seem to lesser minds, are nothing compared to the powers of True Magick. This vampyre and his kind mingle freely in occult societies filled with gullible fools, many speak an impressive range of tongues, and they *do* wield uncomfortable degrees of secret knowledge and mortal influence. Even the youngest of them, though, seem befuddled by the press of industrial technology and the recent shifts in mortal affairs. It's folly, of course, to face such monsters openly — and often perilous, as well, to try to checkmate them in a social arena. A smart wizard or scientist, though, can strike these creatures from a distance before the beast even sees the blow. While the Un-Dead do not die easily a second time, long experience shows they can, indeed, be slain again.

Suggested Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Charisma 4, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3, Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 2

Suggested Abilities: Academics 4, Alertness 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Empathy 3, Enigmas 3, Etiquette 3, Expression 3, History 3, Hunting 2, Intimidation 3, Leadership 3, Melee 3, Occult 3, Research 3, Seduction 4, Stealth 3, Streetwise 3, Style, 4, Subterfuge 2

Willpower: 5

Health Levels: OK, –1, –1, –2, –2, –5, Incapacitated

Armor Rating: 0

Powers: See above. An imperious urban vampyre favors uncanny influence (as per that entry in **How Do You DO That?**) over brute force; even so, the Un-Dead *are* difficult

to fight head-on, especially since many of them can become surprisingly fast or strong, grow claws, command the elements, or transform in bestial ways. They heal quickly from physical damage, and they often share a mental link with human servitors. Thus, a magus can find himself outflanked by those servitors if he's not careful about his approach to the Un-Dead hosts.

Image: Although the Kindred adopt different guises, from rat-like sewer creepers to noble-blooded Peers of the Realm, the imperious one described above is most likely a socialite of staggering wealth and influence, possessed of inhuman beauty and a rich, if somewhat outdated, sense of fashion.

Roleplaying Notes: Wisdom dictates careful hunting; hunger demands blood and revelry. Your unlife balances between the two, but you have wealth and influence enough to indulge excesses from time to time.

Chapter Nine: Around the World

"If you have men who will only come if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all."

— Dr. David Livingstone

The reign of Queen Victoria begins on 20th June 1837, and it lasts until the beginning of the 20th century. During those long years, change wracks the world — often with a terrible price in human lives, suffering, and dignity. The last days of piracy upon the high seas play out to their bloody conclusion under imperial cannonade and shot. The spark of revolutions ignites many times across the globe, all too often to gutter out as the pendulum of civic oppression swings back and forth. Some inspire great change, others end in crushing defeat upon blood-slick streets as a stark warning, and others yet are simply forgotten. Gunfighters exchange salvos of lead in gripping stories of the Wild West, but the backdrop of such derring-do is an industrial-powered military machine grinding through a body count of native populations. Across the world, that which has gone before and is now deemed as "primitive" is crushed and brushed aside for the new order.

Along with the carnage comes the infrastructure of imperial control and exploitation. Education spreads, but in a form approved of and controlled by authority. The halls of academia and power see an effort to chain languages in new, standardized forms, even as handwriting itself is meticulously curated into strictly set cursive styles. The Industrial Revolution burns at the era's heart, a rabid expression of new (and sometimes stolen) technologies utterly changing innumerable lives at an incredibly swift rate. Smokestacks rise, tools split mountains, and machines cut the earth open to feed the belly of the industrial beast. Cities — packed so full they bulge, spill, and spread — swallow whole villages and communities like ravening beasts.

Among magi, the era is just as fundamentally transformative. The Order of Reason metamorphoses into the Technocratic Union, and its rivalry with the Traditions begins the Ascension War in earnest. Rigid systems of formality and propriety let the will of the powerful and the state press down on the individual, caging them in the foundations of the Order's paradigm. A precious few rise against such magickal and mundane systems, but all too often become consumed by the very things they struggle against.

This chapter presents a broad sweep of the world during Queen Victoria's reign, including viewpoints of events through the eyes of various observers. It covers both the magickal and mundane, delving into the fall of nations and the advance of imperial power alongside the trials and tribulations of magi across the globe. Key events shape the

attitudes, actions, and beliefs of the people of the day — and the consequences thereof.

By necessity, this chapter can only serve as a starting point for games set in the Victorian era. Detailing the entire world's worth of rich cultures, dramatic turning points, courageous struggles, and brutal atrocities is far beyond the limitations of any single text. Take what is presented here as a source of inspiration and plots for your chronicles, and invent or research as you need.

Furthermore, a **Victorian Mage** chronicle need not follow the rails of the past, whether it be historical events or already-established fictional happenings in other **Mage: The Ascension** products. The World of Darkness is a shared fiction, and each chronicle the possession of its particular players. Be adventurous, and do not feel limited by what has gone before. Magi have the opportunity to change the world, after all.

A Brief Overview

The world is vast, and filled with distinct peoples and unique situations; no single theme or law can be applied across the whole. Certain topics, however, do affect vast swathes of the globe, whether imprinted through the influence of imperial conquest, stirred by the resistance to such, or spreading through the magickal societies of the Awakened themselves.

Some consider this era an age of exploration — which perhaps comes as a surprise to the people already living in the regions supposedly being discovered. Isolated and isolationist nations open their borders, sometimes under duress and often at a cost in civil strife. Cultures mix and interact as the sheer size and power of the British Empire chains innumerable vassals into one greater whole, and expansion in the American west and south on the back of canals and railways drains ever more people into its melting pot.

Migrations march throughout the era, as people seek new lives beyond the horizon — often unwillingly. Growing empires see mass slaughter and genocide as a legitimate tool of statecraft when dealing with the cultures they newly meet. They exterminate entire populations to make way for new railroads and other expressions and avenues of power.

Magi likewise strive to push back the boundaries of their knowledge, and often with equally heavy-handed means. Some press into the Umbra, seeking undiscovered realms in the infinite tapestry; others stride across the world weaving Magick or Science and uncovering what they believe to be the hidden corners of the globe. Long-hidden bygones now stir and awaken as the Awakened disturb their last refuges on Earth. Spirits change shape and purpose, and new ones emerge from the deeds and works of humanity.

Various branches of science and study erupt into oft-poisonous bloom. Fascination with the new juxtaposes the re-interpretation of the old — often in ways that conveniently suit the prejudices and mores of the Victorian ruling classes. Medical knowledge lurches forward in a dangerously haphazard fashion. Studies in physical and mental malady, in surgical and chemical treatments, rise upon a foundation of newly mixing ideas and the reeking corpses of progress' victims. Often, methods of treatment are more akin to torture, especially for troubles of the mind.

The growth of cultural studies fills academic journals and logbooks with everything from brilliant insights to blithering, conceited misunderstandings, as the empires of the day deal with the integration and unrest of native populations and colonies. With the cross-pollination of previously distant cultures, an obsession with the exotic and the macabre generates an incredible volume of muddled appropriation from peoples whose actual lives rarely resemble such lurid depictions. Interest in archaeology, conspiracy theories, and mythologized notions of Europe's own past all skyrocket. For magi already exploiting such notions for their workings, this can serve as both boon and bane.

The fingerprints of imperialism manifest upon the great engineering works of the era; this is the time of the Industrial Revolution, and the Age of Steam. Transportation, motive force, work engines, military advancements, machine-filled mills and workshops, and the attitudes employing them for maximum effect spread far and wide. New institutes of learning build up around the principles of engineering and technology. Towns swell and explode into cities as populations mass and surge around the new opportunities for which they must by necessity grasp. Almost every inch of advancement is paid for in someone's blood, whether conquered peoples whose land provides the needed resources or the broken bodies of laborers whose efforts underpin the great edifice of industry. Amid the steel, smoke, steam, and the clever secrets that drive them all, the roots of the Technocratic Union run deep. Despite all the glories they build, these are the last days of the Order of Reason and of everything it was meant to be, brutally sacrificed on the altar of their new vision.

Under Queen Victoria's reign, the Order knows power the likes of which it has only previously dreamed. Such reach across the world of Sleepers, pushing the spread and benefits of Enlightened Science, is everything the Order thinks it ever wanted. Luminaries wax lyrical about a safe humanity, of horrors pushed back into the night, and a world under the dominion of reason. Or it will be, soon, and so they lie to themselves and each other that the end result will be worth such a hefty price paid by those very Sleepers on whose behalf they pretend they act. The price is death, suffering, toil, sacrifice for this notional greater good that consumes entire populations through famine, slavery, labor, or simple mass murder. The Order of Reason deems these tragedies and atrocities simply the "price of progress" or, at most, moralizing Luminaries wring their hands as they speak of a "necessary evil." The Order's vision and purpose grow colder year by year, a fist of authoritarian ideology tightening around its heart.

The drawing back of boundaries does not only spur science; the era sees an explosion of literature. While this is the time of Poe and Stoker, Shelly and Byron, and Dickens, of Sherlock Holmes, and penny dreadfuls and dime novels, this flowering of the written word is not limited to these famous

western figures. The works of writers across the world come to fruition, whether more contemporary creators, such as Jippensha Ikku, or the admixture of much older texts such as Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat* across the world's interconnected cultures that comes about from a new wave of translations.

Cultural and political movements, imperial powers, and commercial companies all exploit the easy creation of leaflets, pamphlets, and posters. They appear everywhere during the upheavals that stretch across Spain, France, and the Germanic states, and then among the fringes of empire where resistance simmers and sparks. Typewriters appear late in the century, adding fuel to the blaze of readily-available texts. Mass media moves into the arena of goods as well, as the tides of fashion now turn handicrafts and keepsakes into nascent statements of identity among innumerable consumers. Such commercialization serves both Traditions and Order in their struggle for a hold upon human hearts.

Ultimately, this is an age of upheavals. Old kingdoms crumble, and new empires rise to positions of dominance that last into the 20th century. Governments shift and change, with new philosophies and political experiments rising to prominence. The British Empire is one of the era's few constants, its gravity catching innumerable lands and cultures in its orbit. Ultimately, though, the massive power blocs that settle into alignment and balance among the era's great powers are fragile things, as the early 20th century and its new wars reveal.

The British Empire: Sun Never Sets

7th August 1870AD

To my most esteemed colleagues in the Golden Guild and bene cent masters of the Invisible Exchequers.

I regret that these last several years have kept me busy with our far-shore projects. As such, I missed the shaping of this grand experiment into the union of purpose I see today. I am, however, glad to report the ef cacy of the Rejuvenation Tonic over the last eighty years or so.

I admit to being amazed at the size and scope of the British Empire's heartland functions; the active support and involvement of the Sleeper monarch's of ce is a stroke of genius. Also, the advancement of the ground level of technology seems almost impossible, if I did not know better. Devices that seemed taboo when I last visited now require only the most rudimentary education for the un-Enlightened to operate - impressive indeed. Please forgive my ruminations; I present my analysis on affairs in the Indian territories as requested.

The East India Trading Company, long our tool in dominating interests in India and into the Asian continent, had proven to be a useful tool until a few years ago. However, its historical trappings, outmoded policies and practices, and dated approaches to a changing world made it a blunt implement of control. Despite several hundred years of success it is, or was, a fossil that had exceeded its usefulness.

The new methods employed supporting of cial usage of the Raj have outstripped all expectations in effect and returns on investment. While certain sacri ces have been a regrettable necessity, the projected bene ts far outweigh the costs; and evidence suggests those projections may have been understated! Projects for a complete modernization of the country, with the use of almost entirely native populations, are proceeding at a pace that borders on the fanatical.

The machinations of the so-called 'Chorus Celestial' to undermine our in uence and authority through Imperial rule and other means are all but completely broken. The separation of our interests from their formerly deeply rooted connections has allowed for superior integration of culture and commerce with the common population and governmental functions.

I have considered the concerns that Ahl-i-Batin renegades may use these separations to reinvigorate their own support and operations. Despite the secretive nature of these deluded individuals, it is ultimately nothing of concern. Already I have set in motion initiatives to set the two 'Traditions' against one another and to allow our principle designs to proceed unimpeded.

We are also afforded a rare luxury in this new direction of in uence upon the subcontinent, in the form of new educational institutions without embedded organizations. They are a clean slate with which to teach Enlightenment to the masses and, with a large population, of which to take advantage. Some of the 'Traditions' here may be beginning to realize our agenda in this eld (see Report No. 191 relating to the 'Euthanatoi'), so we have also taken steps to shroud our victories with events that appear to have handed them considerable achievements as well. By the time these charades have been penetrated, it will not matter.

Lucius Magellan

Britain

The island nation of Britain comes to rule a full third of the globe in this era, straddling a vast and sprawling empire under the reign of Queen Victoria. Despite being the cradle of the Industrial Revolution, gorging on the riches of the world that it has conquered, the island's people, cities, and towns are a disparate lot. Sudden changes wrack the nation; communities blossom into cities in a few short years, while enormous efforts remake the landscape itself at a frightening rate. Steam steel, fire, and smoke cover swathes of countryside. Industrialization penetrates villages and towns that are scarcely past medieval in content and produce; a traumatic convulsion through old ways of life. People struggle with new ideas, concepts, and technologies on an almost daily basis.

Britain draws fuel from the wealth and exploitation of her colonies, and the industry of the mills and factories upon her island heart. The canals and railways that reach out across Britain are not for the benefit of the common people (a side effect masquerading as purpose) but to better fuel the needs of the imperial beast. Terraced housing springs up everywhere, providing workers with easy, quick access to their jobs. While the numerous engineering marvels are works of true craftsmanship, and expensive to produce, the conditions for many workers were terrible and tragic. Metal moved by motive forces slashes the flesh of the careless or the unlucky; machines of vast weight mindlessly crush the unwitting in their workings. Maiming is common, and the wounded are easily discarded; there are always more hands looking for factory wages, and always more work that needs doing. Mines and quarries lead to falls and injuries, and air so polluted you choke upon it. Demand is constant. Whole generations work long hours in the deep and the dark. Children provide cheap labor for factories and fields, with workhouses providing disposed and orphaned workers for even less. "Work in these places or starve" is the rule. Slavery may be abolished on the island of Britain, but the freedom to starve is no freedom at all.

Cities bulge and strain under rapidly growing populations, reaching out to absorb nearby villages into their swelling mass — all to transport, tally, and freight the vast quantities of resources that flow from quarry, mine, and port to production yard. The housing is often poor, built cheap for speed. Inadequate or non-existent sewage systems lead to tainted water, frequent flooding, and rodent infestations. In an age of gas and, later, electrical illuminations, indoor plumbing, and steam engines, the mass of Britain's people still draw water from river or well-pump and see by candlelight or oil lamp after dark. Clean, potable water, gas lamps, drained streets, and level floors meant you were someone with the wealth to spend on such things.

The rapid expansion of cities and roadways, canals and railways, and all the other things that would change Britain forever, created their own consequences. Invisible communities spring up within the grasp of the industrial cities. Navvy gangs, canal diggers, mining communities, old villages now wrapped in a city, and more besides; each spinning their little fragments of lore and culture and new traditional ways. Here, the Traditions of Britannia find their bedrock in all the tumult. Wise women, village musicians and performers, local parishes, local doctors, hunters, charcoal burner families, extended matriarchies, and so many more exist in the cracks of the world of mill and factory workers, bottle collectors, and other creatures of the Victorian era. In the soot and smoke that now frames their world, or from the greenery that still surrounds it, a whole slew of local legends spring up. Some are new, invented by imaginative minds or recounted by those unlucky enough to have seen something genuine; others are old, embers of almost-lost stories now tended back to life among the whispers and rumors. After all, who can tell what an age of screaming steam, spitting fire, and clashing steel and iron might awaken?

The Stories of Navvies

The construction crews of Britain's railways and canals (often referred to as navvies) did what many people do when alone in the dark — a common experience for them as they would hew through hills or beneath cities. They told stories, and in the process of doing so created a whole basis of orally recorded superstitions, many of which are sadly lost today as few were ever recorded. Numerous folk tales exist in the small towns and city boroughs that dot the canals, especially of creatures beneath the hills, in the woods, or under the ground. They range from the mischievous to the downright dangerous. Some spring from older stories, like the Cornish knockers, but many are entirely new urban legends.

Railway construction routes in Britain, and especially the canals that crisscrossed much of England, make for great tie-ins with the activities and existence of Nightfolk and Bygones for a Mage chronicle. Mysterious or murderous events surrounding these locations can also easily take a story from inner-city to small rural community, or even run up and down the length of the nation. This is also a good way of presenting the strange and almost jarring juxtaposition of eras that makes up Victorian Britain, from the sometimes almost medieval countryside to the smog-shrouded industrial centers.

Street Crimes

Victorian society in Britain is one of very strict social mores, hierarchies, and behaviors. It's also a beast straining desperately at the bars of its cage. Violence simmers underneath the tight bindings of society and, even as authoritarian control stretches across the population of the island, so too does it sometimes lose its grip. The Lime Street Golem, Jack the Ripper, and the Boston Street Strangler bring names to some of the most terrifying crimes of the era as captured by the growing press media. There are others too, and alarmingly many carrying with them a morbid air of mystery. While humanity is doing terrible things to one another, the altercations between magus and Luminary are easily concealed.

Britain's cities become a melting pot of cultures, dispossessed, travelers, and, of course, gangs. More violence erupts as worlds clash on the back of imperial expansion. Money, drugs, weapons, and esoterica of all kinds flow through black market channels. The nascent trade unions and the enforcement agents themselves are often gang-affiliated or controlled. Turf wars are common among the 'slogging gangs', who otherwise engage in thuggery, armed robbery, and other petty and often violent crimes. In some boroughs, these fights are a form of morbid entertainment, a release from the drudgery of brass and ironwork that made up most of the employment of sloggers and scuttlers. The police break up any groups when they can but often don't acknowledge gang activity in their districts, or are involved in it themselves via corruption. From the smuggling in Liverpool and Glasgow to the prominence of clipping and shaving in Birmingham's Jewelry Quarter, from

the racketeering rife in all the big cities to the mysterious bloom in graverobbing around the Worcester area. All these activities are typically connected to one gang or another. Many in the gangs are young men, newly away from home and finding that laboring does not fit so well with them; it's easier to take and to fight. Some become very successful, but they still live a see-sawing existence of extravagance one day and hiding in sewers the next.

Whole new languages and attitudes develop around these gang-related activities, as varied as the gangs themselves. Cockney rhyming slang, the 'street cant' of many cities, the Black Country dialect, and more are all local variations on the language adopted by many gangs, who then add their own terms into the mix as desired. Older gangs become more business-like as the 19th century crawls towards the 20th, garnering influence in their communities like organized crime the world over. These provide a haven for dangerous people, whose services could be useful to those willing to pay and keep quiet. Through these cracks in society, other things walk too — Nightfolk of all kinds thrive on the activities of the gangs, a convenient veil behind which to conceal their activities.

This covert clash of cultures from across the empire and beyond brings with it new legends, mixing with the escapades of the gangs and the popular attention given to mysterious crimes and murders. In part, this leads to the upswing of occult interests among the middle and upper classes of society (and more than a few of the lower classes, too). Ghosts, demons, and other wicked things of all kinds rapidly became a fascination of strata in society that otherwise consider themselves rational and intelligent. High society favors seances, but novices and naive obsessions with the occult sometimes lead to very real, grisly results. The dark alleys and the forgotten, winding paths lost among the new roads and buildings of the age become avenues of a new conflict between all manner of creatures in Victorian Britain.

Learned Minds

During the early-to-mid-1800s, institutes of higher learning spring up across Britain with alacrity. While often expansions of existing educational edifices, some are newly built to purpose. Biological, chemical, and physical sciences, along with explorations into the functions of the mind and body in specific, have rapidly become the dominant disciplines of the age. The Order of Hermes long stood preeminent in these places, although they have had to make concessions over the recent centuries to the Order of Reason, but now the pendulum shifts aggressively. Thinking themselves secure in their secrets and power, the Hermetic magi failed to understand the threat posed by the Order of Reason. In this age, that changes. Colleges of science and engineering rapidly replace or expand through extant universities. Astrology, philosophy, and history are not swept aside but diminish in the face of mechanics, metallurgy, anatomy, microbiology (in its infancy), Darwinian studies, and more.

Cambridge University presents an apt example of these changes, beginning in 1818 with a massive swell of student numbers followed by near-constant expansion through the century. Once evangelically focused, the university shifted dramatically in the 1830s as Church ties fray and the study of the sciences flourished. Birmingham, meanwhile, barely existed until the 1800s and grows from a town of 74,000 to become a city of over 650,000 in less than 30 years. The Birmingham School of Medicine and Surgery (founded 1825, later to be called Queens College) and the Mason Science College (established 1875 by Sir Josiah Mason), each expands rapidly and, in 1900, receives a Royal writ unifying both institutions as the University of Birmingham. The focus of this entity is purely the application of modern sciences, engineering, and other practical applied educations.

Both the Orders of Hermes and Reason respectively have supported such creations and changes, finding a use for those Sleepers of higher learning and the potential new Awakened or Enlightened among their number. However, the philosophies that lead many to the halls of Hermes increasingly erode, and in the case of new universities scarcely exist at all in the curriculum offered. The paradigm of the Order of Reason, especially from 1850 onwards, pervades throughout the halls of learning — supported by no less than the full Royal assent of Albert and Victoria. Desperately, the Order of Hermes draws new battle lines as their strongholds of Sleeper authority are openly challenged. Unlike anywhere or anywhen else in the Ascension War, members of both Orders may well share a building, a place, and class in local Sleeper society, and interact frequently — a dangerous proposition. As the century progresses and reforms occur more frequently, pretenses of civility continue to slip and 'accidents' happen to careless magi of both sides around campus.

Amid this struggle, the Verbenae and Cultus Ecstasis find a nook in which to thrive. Botany and the Arts are two fields that neither the Order of Hermes nor the majority of the Order of Reason value much as the world looks toward a future of steel and steam. Botany, besides the extraction of useful medicines, is heavily overlooked by the Conventions, who rely largely on individual specialists of the Hippocratic Circle's Guild of Apothecaries.

Despite all the reformations happening in colleges and universities, many of the botanical gardens across Britain are not owned by the schools that use them. Rather, they are the private collections and facilities of individuals and families that have had an interest in botany and horticulture for a great many years. The few colleges that do boast botanical facilities of their own, with a few exceptions, find themselves relocating the houses that hold specimens, whose construction projects inevitably take a long time. Cambridge, for example, takes several years to move a botanical garden during its expansion, rendering the specimens inaccessible to idle attention from both Order of Hermes and Reason magi for the duration.

Though otherwise scattered, the Verbenae have cabals gathering in botanical gardens across the nation, more than

a few of which are built on Nodes, and have cloaked themselves accordingly. Many experts on exotic flora — and even sources for some of the Guild of Apothecaries' works — are Verbenae. It is no accident of paradigm that a tree bark once boiled to make a painkilling elixir now produces paracetamol, a fact that disturbs the cannier Hippocratic Circle members.

Meanwhile, the Cultus Ecstasis engages in a low-key struggle with the Ivory Tower and the Syndicate, both of which are focused on politics and money above anything else. Victories here allow the Ecstatics access to every level of society through the study and promotion of the Arts in many forms, almost uncontested on their home ground. The Tradition extends its influence through the blossoming of newspapers, cheap fiction, music hall shows, and the like. In retaliation, its Luminary foes throw what support they can behind Sleepers opposing the political movements for civil rights and liberties that are increasingly heard in parliamentary debates.

Great Exhibition

1st May 1851: The Great Exhibition of the Works and Industry of All Nations. The brainchild of Prince Albert, and one of the grandest endeavors and wonders of the Victorian Age, the Exhibition is both a display of the marvels created over the last half-century, and of the leap forward in British power and influence that has occurred during Queen Victoria's reign to date. It is meant as a solid response, and rebuttal, to the similar series of expositions that have been held periodically in France since the turn of the century. This colossal political maneuver was designed to show the superiority of the technological and scientific might of the British Empire. In many ways, it works. By the end of the exhibition in October 1851, over six million people have attended from every walk of life across Britain itself, and from many other nations too.

Housed in the custom-built Crystal Palace, the exhibits would run on for ten miles if placed end to end. On display are 100,000 exhibits from 15,000 contributors, ten times larger than the grandest of the French expositions that have come before. Although claimed as an action of multinational peacemaking with many contributors from across the globe, it is a stamp of imperial British power and an outright declaration of the Ascension War. It comes as no accident that the Great Exhibition coincides with the Albertian Reforms within the Order of Reason, and it sees an enormous uptick in hostile actions against Tradition magi and uncooperative Luminaries. The tensions of what the Order was and could become start boiling over, objectors to the reforms make their protests known, and the first footsteps from Order to Union are felt.

The Traditions are, for the most part, caught off guard. Even though the French expositions have been going on for over half a century by this point, and the exhibition itself has been planned since the late 1840s with the construction of the Crystal Palace taking nearly a full year, the sheer success and scale still takes them by surprise. The Great Exhibition features mundane technologies (albeit ones potentially born of Enlightened Science) from around the world, and in among it all the Order of Reason has several of its own advances on display. From this one six-month spectacle comes a huge paradigm shift, and shockingly a jarring alteration in what would later become properly known as the Consensus. The gateways to *elegant* techno-magick go from creaking open to swinging wide.

The sights on display are spectacles that existed to be just that, wonders to be gazed upon, with theoretical applications being displayed for all and sundry. There are practical examples of work done by machines and technological advances, such as textiles, freshly printed works, and other physical products to see and touch, as well as the appliances themselves. More than this, concepts and theories are shared among excited Sleepers, partnerships brokered and made, alliances of study and developments struck up — and more than a few rivalries born into the bargain. The attitude of this event is different from what has gone before. Its great achievements on display, while presented as the best of what there is, are not seen as finite or final in any way, but as stepping stones to even greater things. The same is reflected within the Order of Reason itself as, even with the internal struggle around the Albertian Reforms, in mid-to-late 1851, the paradigm of the Order rapidly expands. To the Conventions of the Grand Faculty and League of Constructors, the doors to the future are well and truly open.

In terms of consensus and the ideology of humanity, the Great Exhibition does tremendous damage to the Traditions in Britain and across the Empire. The Order of Hermes, best placed to foresee this, is already caught in internal struggles while waging war with the Order of Reason in the battlefields of higher education. The Verbenae and Chorus Celestial find the massive shift in the communities they support and rely upon something of a wake-up call in mainland Britain, and begin their own true build-up to war. In the colonies, the Traditions, while often at odds, rally to try forcing a separation between the technological and spiritual, while writing off British and Eurocentric associates as a lost cause. In the middle of this ripple across the consensus, it's the magi of the Dream-Speakers, Chakravanti, and Akashayana that prove the strongest, all largely anti-imperialist by nature and ready to challenge the dominance of both Britain and Order of Reason.

The Empire

The British Empire holds a third of the populated lands of the world under its rule. The reach of Queen Victoria's domain is vast, stretching across Australia, Africa, Asia, Europe, and out to Canada. The sun never sets on this monolith of imperial might, and the British Empire flourishes; but as is always the case, not everyone benefits. The exploitation and oppression of native populations lead to an enormous tally of deaths, much of the details of which remain unacknowledged even into the 21st century.

The Royal Navy is the grand ship of state that allows the projection of British authority around the globe. Its ability to move and support soldiers is unrivaled, rendering the small island nation an imperial powerhouse. Clever politics plays a role in the success of the empire too. Authoritarian rule is a key, but not exclusive, tool. British diplomats become experts at playing sides off against each other in internal conflicts, leaving Queen Victoria on top once the dust settles. These political maneuverings have their own repercussions that come home to roost decades later — but until then, the flag of the Union flies over much of the globe.

Rule Britannia, over a world of suffering and smoke.

Canada

Canada is born in the 1830s, right at the start of Victoria's reign, with armed and political rebellions led by activists collectively called Reformers — mostly French Catholics looking for a stronger democratic government in place of the government of largely British oligarchies, with parliaments with limited autonomy. Come 1841, the Act of the Union is passed in Britain, forming the United Province of Canada. This unites the northern and southern colonies of Canada under one body, but it is a political move to annex the French presence out of what is a now British state with the scattered parliaments operating under much looser guidance. Less than 20 years later, the British Empire leaves the parliamentary bodies to almost full autonomy as the interests of the Empire now lie fully elsewhere. In 1867, the four largest colonies formally create the Dominion of Canada under a single governing body.

During the Victorian era, Canada goes from being a collection of colonial towns and a few small cities to a nation in its own right. While the path of doing so is hardly smooth, it is successful. This success is largely off the backs of those living in the would-be nation, and from learning the lessons of the American Revolution and the Civil War. For the Traditions, it's a time to flourish, as the Order of Reason as a whole largely ignores the lands of Canada for a period. Tradition magi speculate as to the reason for the Order's absence, but the Order's focus within the British Empire remains in places like Britain itself, and the Indian and Australian territories. This is not to say the Order of Reason is completely absent, but the technocratic paradigm continues to lack elegance in the Canadian wilderness — a problem they look to resolve only in the latter part of the century.

The Traditions seek legends, mysteries, and local lore here that might just help tip the balance in their conflict with the Conventions. Potential allies, new enemies, and a wealth of surprises call to European magi just as the Wild West does, only without the Order of Reason having anywhere near as much a presence. Canada presents a golden opportunity for any cabal willing to reach out and take it, but also the possibility of massive failure bound up with arrogance and hubris. Their eager rush to exploit the region's magick often casts the Traditions themselves in the same imperial mold as the Order of Reason elsewhere, and the native magi and mysteries of the Canadian landscape rarely offer second chances to the foolish and prideful.

However, the legends and myths that perpetuate the colonies carry just enough weight to draw the attention of elements of the Exploratory Society and the Ivory Tower, keen to discover and label what's there, and get rid of that which humanity no longer needs. These groups of Enlightened often skirt the edge of their own practices, drunk on the freedom of being so far from the Order's centralized authority and engaging in uncanny and even catastrophic acts with regularity. Later in the era, a few other select Luminaries see the changing sociopolitical environment of the burgeoning country as good soil for the Technocratic Union's seed.

Canada's political changes over the century offer an array of possibilities for both sides to gain influence and direct matters. The Nephandi, too, are never ones to pass up an opportunity to set the world to greater strife, and the blood that has spilled between natives and settlers is no less in the northern colonies than with the rest of the American continent. The desperation often found in this time of upheaval and change proves fertile ground for the children of Descension. Acts of violence and desecration of native sacred land are far from uncommon, and the trees and the snow hide many sins. Whispers of wendigo activity can so very easily be the result of a Nephandus at work.

Australia

Australia presents an especial challenge to colonists, an unforgiving frontier quite unlike anything that they have encountered. Rule here is far more militant and restrictive than in Canada at the same time. With the official end of slavery in the British Empire, wealthy Australian settlers overestimate their ability to tame the lands and, without free labor, many of their initially successful endeavors fall into difficulties. This leads to the governors using convict labor from Britain to work the lands and farms of Australian colonies as their penal sentencing. While a number of these convicts face sentences for political activism, a great majority are convicted for violent crime to one degree or another. For some, violence is simply a necessity of survival; for others, it's just an imagined brand of condemnation from the upper classes rather than the reality of their actions. This legacy of violence continues to run through life in the colonies, however.

Throughout the colonial era of the 1700s and 1800s, prejudice and aggression see hundreds of indigenous Australian people from populations of one or two thousand die in land clearing exercises, and many more succumb to disease while they are kept in manners more fitting for livestock than people in resettlement camps. Slavery may be officially over, but techniques to control and move native peoples have not changed. In Australia, the Aborigines suffered regular and repeated persecution and attacks from settlers, and are ill set to defend themselves against this assault. Often, this is attributed to the convict populations and their supposedly

violent ways, but the truth is that imperial expansion is at work, rolling out the tool of strategic genocide to serve the greed and racial bigotry of its masters.

The infamous Black War of 1830 in Tasmania reduces the Aboriginal population of the isle from around 2,000 individuals to less than 200. The Aborigines have bounties placed on their heads, dead or alive, for simply being found outside of the areas where they are forced to live. Cordons of soldiers and settlers sweep miles to round up or force native tribes into designated settlement zones, killing many as they went, in an operation known as The Black Line. By 1832, the Aboriginal tribes have surrendered and been moved to Flinders Isle and Hunters Isle. Disease kills many more, and entire communities all but vanish.

In the mid-1800s, gold rush fever sparks with the discovery of gold fields, copper deposits, and other mineral wealth. Mass migrations of prospectors flood into the country and more violence erupts, this time between Chinese gold diggers, British farmers, and other miners and prospectors from across Europe and Asia. These conflicts reach a head with the Buckland and Lambing Flats riots, with a few later conflicts carrying the point home. The government response leads to a xenophobic outlook on newcomers to Australia so that only those from within the British Empire and parts of Europe are considered settlers or immigrants. Anyone else is there illegally, and fair game for colonists and authorities alike. For some time, only a single community of Asian settlers remains from the original Chinese gold-diggers that come to Australia in the gold rush, although the 'Chinatowns' in Brisbane, Melbourne, and Cairn persist.

A land of unique creatures and some special qualities, Australia lends itself perfectly to the Dream-Speaker Tradition. The veil here is very thin, and absent in places, with many Aboriginal tribes acutely aware of this fact. The opposition that the British Empire and the Order of Reason face in Australia is perhaps rawer than anywhere else in the world. Here, the Dream-Speakers, Verbenae, Ahl-i-Batin, and Order of Hermes form something of a united front, in a desperate attempt to stem what becomes a monstrously violent act of expansionism — and a front that acts in flagrant disregard for the relationships and interactions between the Traditions in many other parts of the world. Faced with atrocity, these magi forge a new alliance; but as inspiring as this may be, the loose coalition of cabals and Chantries faces not a single Convention of the Order of Reason, nor even a single Bloc, but all of it. Every part of the Order has its eyes set upon Australia — and expends the resources required to see its goals achieved. The Australian regions, especially the Outback, are a haven to many Bygones and breaches in the Gauntlet. Unimaginable things slip between the real world and the Umbra here, dreams themselves can twist reality according to local lore, and the existence of such a place horrifies the Order of Reason's masters. The magickal territories that the Dream-Speakers have nurtured are utterly anathema to the encroaching Consensus. The Luminaries believe Australia must be pacified and controlled, utterly, and its remoteness in the empire and its closed borders make it a perfect testbed for the new technologies and pogroms of the coming Union. The changes in the Albertian reforms are witnessed and tested in practice, taking effect away from the hallowed halls of Britain's institutes and in a very different environment.

Opportunities exist for both the Traditions and the Order of Reason to once again shape the course of history. Easy access to the Umbra can open worlds for those willing — a path in which plenty of members of the Traditions and Conventions have a vested interest. Spirits manifest here like nowhere else on Earth, and while in the secluded or hidden and unexplored parts of Europe, Asia, Africa, and America legends may wear flesh and bleed, in the dreamscapes of the Australian Outback new stories and mysteries take form as swiftly as they can be spoken. Many of the Traditions see a chance to tip the scales in their favor. If the magick of Australia can be protected and empowered, it could change the world.

The Akashayana present a divisive presence during this time. Those that come with the Chinese gold-diggers in the initial rush and the other Asian communities that try to establish themselves feel little kinship with the loose alliance of Traditions already active in Australia, especially given the overwhelming hostility shown to their respective communities of Sleepers. Euthanatos and Chorister involvement in matters on the continent serves to only muddy the waters further, as both seem to be pursuing very personal agendas at odds with both the Order of Reason and the other Traditions.

Australia has become a war zone for the Awakened and the Enlightened, and the terms of victory seem to shift from day to day.

India

To one degree or another the East India Company has for decades ruled over India, the jewel in the crown of the British Empire. With their private army providing British dominance in India and local regiments treated as elite specialist troops, this presents a powerful mixture of military and cultural dominance combined with economic mastery. Throughout the early half of the 19th century, methods become more draconian. The Company's and Empire's demands for modernization challenge the local regiments' special status, meaning the loss of luxuries and privileges. Missionaries become more frequent, with the backing of the Company and local imperial governors. Religious intolerance grows, and the native population increasingly becomes second-class citizens in their own country. The extent of British rule expands, and even loyal land holders are stripped of properties in favor of British administrators.

In 1856-57, things explode into bloodshed. Innumerable grievances and slights have piled up, with the final breaking point the issuing of new bullets rumored to be coated in pig and cow fat grease — unacceptable for Hindu and Muslim soldiers alike. The Sepoy Mutiny breaks out, a bloody uprising riddled with atrocities that, unlike the events in Australia at

the time, are graphically reported in the newspapers. Public shock is high, and the power of information and media technologies are again made readily apparent.

In 1858-59, the British Empire moves forces into the contested country, crushes the rebellions, and executes the Sepoys in their entirety. The East India Company is disbanded as enforced peace returns to the country and direct rule by the Crown is established. While the Raj had been a term informally used concerning Britain before the Sepoy Mutiny, the term becomes official as the new system of government is put into place. This government is unusual for the era; it distances itself immediately from missionary works within India and moves towards promised religious freedom. The Order of Reason depicts what follows as a victory for its philosophy. A story of the government investing in the people, Indians building and benefiting from the colleges and universities they build, an end to shameless exploitation as the industries of Britain come to India with railways, machine shops, and all the other emblems of progress that put a halt to rebellion. But this is, of course, just that: a story. The British build railways to strengthen the foundations of power and force Indians to pay for British tools and goods. Indian taxes pay for the enterprise. Millions of Indians die in famines.

Still, the Consensus does spread and strengthen, and the Order of Reason is quick to capitalize. Agents and operatives of an Enlightened nature seek to guarantee the success of the Order's interests in India, and the Traditions, which would have been best positioned to oppose them, suffer from the terrible price of this industrial and societal change. For a time, they seem easy pickings for the Order of Reason. It turns out, not quite.

While the Ahl-i-Batin are trying to re-establish themselves in the country and the Chorus Celestial are busy at odds with them, the Chakravanti have gone nowhere. As much as the Ivory Tower and Syndicate benefit in the aftermath of the rebellion, the tumult provides a shelter for the Euthanatoi to further entrench their influence. Likewise, the Sahajiya ride the wave of public self-reflection and resurgent currents of cultural and national pride, and they are an adversary the Order of Reason overlooks at its own risk.

The Sepoy Mutiny

Begun in March and April 1857, the Sepoy Mutiny is known in India as the First War of Independence. The Sepoy Mutiny is a smaller event in a much bigger series of rebellions that sweep India for two years. Indian soldiers kill British officers and seize several key cities and towns including Delhi and Kanpur. Massacres are common on both sides, each claiming reprisal for what the other does. Smaller uprisings follow across India, taking many forms, most of them violent and many not ready for the scope of the British response, but all adding to the movement in wide-scale rebellion. Thousands die, then hundreds of thousands — almost all Indians. Ultimately, the British Army crushes the rebellion.

When the war officially ends in 1859, many Indians are hopeful for a return to the anti-foreigner attitudes that the princes had held for much of history. They would be disappointed. Direct rule from the British crown is established, albeit one that courts involvement from the Indian powers rather than being aloof from them. Though some of the Indian population benefits from the installation of the Raj, it was still a British imperial state.

The Crimean War

The Crimean War is the most technologically advanced engagement of its time. The conflict foreshadows aspects of warfare to come, including those later seen in the American Civil War and First World War. When the Napoleonic wars ended, the web of diplomatic agreements and settlements, and later aggressive politics, that formed and followed the Treaty of Vienna in 1815 laid the foundations of the conflict.

In 1853, imperial tension between the Russian and second French empires played out in Ottoman territories. Both exploit Christian populations of the area's heavily mixed religious communities in a power struggle to claim weakened Ottoman regions. These political maneuvering and military posturing turn to war with a surprise offensive by the Ottoman Empire, the "sick man of Europe." against Russian aggression. Tsar Nicholas the First expects support from Britain and Austria — but neither wants a Russian-ruled Dardanelles and so both states side with Turkey and France.

While superficially resembling prior wars in deployment and tactics, the military technology employed by Britain and France is considerably superior. Logistics, the bane of any military campaign where multiple fronts are engaged, becomes a more flexible tool thanks to telegraph wires and photography. Naval vessels with modern guns provide artillery barrages and coastal mooring positions, while the smooth bore musket is replaced with rifled muskets, or simply 'rifles', providing greater range and accuracy. A new era of warfare begins.

Despite all this, the conflict itself is a muddled and confusing mess. The British and French empires have very different objectives and desires while sharing a few basic common goals, and neither truly falls in line with the Ottoman empire's agenda. The British Empire engages in a limited war that focuses on the economic and political pressure its vast power can bring to bear, whereas Turkish, French, and Austrian forces all possess an attitude of total war in this conflict. The use and implementation of new technologies is also often a complication as the wrong orders are given to the wrong units, or a willful lack of communication between allied forces leads to uncoordinated engagements. The most famous of these — successful even though it is an erroneous action — is the "Charge of the Light Brigade" at the Battle of Balaclava.

For the Order of Reason, not only is this is the perfect time to prove their investment in British authority can yield dividends, but also an opportunity to influence France and Austria. The new mundane tools of war are humble devices compared to what the Order of Reason can construct and deploy. Though such things still lack stability on the battlefield, they can certainly sway the outcome of specific battles. The political confusion also offers a chance for the Order to gain ground amid fractious Tradition strongholds in and around Istanbul and other key areas in the Ottoman territories. The Choristers have long suffered divisions in the region; Russian and French influence and pressure from the Vatican fans the flames of their internal conflict. So, too, with the Ahl-i-Batin, whose ranks are divided between those desiring the defense of the Ottoman empire and those objecting to its existence and practices. These fractious divides are the perfect target for an Order spearhead to claim Nodes and bring order to chaos. Such a heavy-handed, militant attitude sets the stage for Luminaries acting in this theater of war.

The militant imperialism of the newly reforming Conventions does not go unchecked. Divided they may be, but the power and presence of both the Chorus Celestial and the Ahl-i-Batin are still very real. The Chakravanti, too, see the conflict as a time and place in need of their knives. While the Order of Reason scrambles for gains amid the struggle of colossal empires, every step they take comes at a heavy price in operatives and resources.

The lands through which the Crimean War rages, or whose forces from one side or the other occupy, bear the roots of many Traditions, Crafts, and Conventions. Old masters have left behind secrets in the ruins of Constantinople — now the bustling city of Istanbul — including wonders crafted during the fall of Rome itself. The wise and winding spirits of the Danube begin to whisper to passing magi, eager to share their insight and lore. Forgotten terrors are drawn to the newest conflict in this old hotbed of humanity's bloodletting — 'Dracul' is a name whispered by Ottoman soldiers once more. With walking dead spotted on some battlefields, on others soldiers share reports of men appearing of out thin air, or with breath like steam and glowing eyes, shrugging off bullet and bayonet alike.

Europe: The Old Continent

For the eyes of Aleah bint Khalid,
most esteemed bearer of her name and Murshid of the Zawiya of Morocco,

My dearest colleague, I have done as you requested. I have followed my feet across the sea, one step at a time. I have walked the sloped streets of Sicily and the cobbled alleyways of Paris. On every road, at every rest, I explore the faces of the common people. What I see unsettles me, enough that I no longer feel safe to make this journey as the Sleeper does. I am preparing to travel east, by the Higher Path, to the heart of Prussia. By good grace, I am drawn to the Cabinet des Médailles, an exhibit containing coins from all realms. Here, among the gathered currencies of a thousand trade accords, I sense a place rich in unity that can aid me in my journey. This is good, as I see little cohesion elsewhere in these lands. The people of Paris sharpen their knives, once again hungry for the meat of their masters.

Everywhere, I hear the cries of resentment among the people. They are hungry, shivering, grasping for alms. I can hear the music in their minds. They want to sing together but they have forgotten how. King Louis-Philippe cannot hear them, and so the song has become a scream, the march has become a riot. The people do not know how to cure this disease, and so they must cut it away instead. I do not believe he will remain King for long.

There is much to discuss, but I fear your prophecies are correct. The fraying threads of discord run deep through the tapestry of these lands. These nations have become too big, their eyes always scanning the horizon for new frontiers. The countries of Europe are exhausted, thousands of men lost at sea, dragging each other down to keep their heads above water.

I see these people, driven to despair, raiding the homes of the wealthy, burning their books, and dragging their former masters out into the street; and I am terribly afraid. There is no hope here, there is no unity; only anger — and it is growing. Across all of Europe, it is growing. They hate their kings for squandering the wealth that they bled to earn, and soon they will hate their church for the same reason. They hate us also. I have received word from my cousin that the Circassian slaughter in the east continues unabated. More countries shall succumb to this anger, I am certain of it. The call for a republic is woven into the hearts of the people, but the thread is frayed. Evil men lurk in the shadows, ready to seize the reins of revolution for their own purposes. Tomorrow then, I shall stand in Berlin. I can only hope that a way is discovered to mend the broken tapestry, for today, as I sit in judgment, I find this land wanting.

How can these people, born into brotherhood, with so much shared history, become so divided?

—Omar Al-Bashoud,
Qutb of the Western Kingdoms

Europe is an old, crumbling fleet adrift at sea, struggling to repair itself before it sinks. For years, this collection of nations has relied upon the conventions of the Vienna Congress and the Concert of Europe to recognize and maintain the border of each country, but the system has failed. Countries shift, splinter into nation-states, and merge into new empires in turn. The populations, swiftly growing, scream and claw at themselves and bleed their enmity into the rest of the world. Change is a constant, and open warfare is an ever-present promise. The old symbols of power falter; the crown and the cross have lost their glint of heroism. The wilds shrink, the monsters are dead. Humanity only has itself to fight now, and it does so with growing ferocity, with every weapon the sciences can create.

As above, so below.

In this world, the Verbenae are in decline as the march of industry strips power from their homelands. The forests of Germany, potent nodes for Prime magick, are being felled to build ships and burn in factories. The Black Forest, diminished in size and power, no longer terrifies the loggers and colliers consuming it, with the handful of Verbenae still

living within it performing magic to fold the last groves away into the Middle Umbra. Larger civilizations eradicate and assimilate smaller indigenous populations and their traditions, such as the Sami and the Adyghe, breaking cultural ties to their native soil. Machines replace animals, and the few Dream-Speakers born into the continent flee it in fear.

The Euthanatoi are undergoing a schism; they find newer expressions of entropy in the clash and decay of competing nations. Some seek power in the all-consuming fire of the furnace, their hunger twisting their belief and compelling them towards the Order of Reason. Others march across the bloodied fields and heaving factories of the continent, watching the Great Wheel become a charnel house. The few Ecstatics and Ahl-i-Batin that still walk these lands do so with growing uncertainty. Their cultures are condemned, and they become ever more reliant on their knowledge of medicine and philosophy to maintain their power. The armies of Europe threaten the outer territories of the Akashayana, forcing them to tread carefully in the lands of their enemies. The Order of Hermes and the Chorus Celestial endure under these changes, at least for now, but the faith and sciences they preach to the masses falter under a shifting consensus.

The Revolutions of 1848 — the Fall of Monarchs

1848 sees a series of liberal and radical revolutions erupt into being across the continent, astonishing the world with their sheer scale and short-term success.

Discontent is high among all walks of life. For the working classes, the popular press expands political awareness, introducing values and ideas such as popular liberalism, nationalism, and socialism. Starvation and rationing due to rye and potato famines across the continent two years earlier are still in effect, particularly among peasants and the working urban poor. Riots are commonplace in the cities, and in rural districts, crop and wood theft sharply increases. The ruling classes seize communal hunting and farming districts, selling them off or keeping them for their own use.

Royal absolutism, the complete authority of monarchy to issue laws and adjudicate disputes without oversight, now alienates large swaths of the upper class and lesser nobility. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, working in Brussels, write the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* at the request of the Communist League. Their demands urge the unification of Germany, universal suffrage, and the abolition of feudal duties, agitate the masses.

The middle and working classes share a desire for reform, but their participation in the revolutions differs. While much of the political and financial impetus comes from the middle classes, the lower classes take up arms and bring blood to the city streets. The first uprising of this new era begins in the Bourbon Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. In January 1848, the people of Sicily march the streets, fomenting rebellion with posters, notices, and public outcry, ousting King Ferdinand II from power. The February Revolution follows in France, ending the constitutional monarchy of Louis-Phillipe and forming the French Second Republic, led by President Louis-Napoleon (who would later declare himself Emperor Napoleon III). In the March Revolution soon after, the thirty-nine states of the German Confederation demonstrate in support of freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and a united German nation. This pan-German sentiment provokes war with Denmark over the duchy of Schleswig. Denmark, having just revoked the absolute power of King Frederick VII to form a constitutional monarchy, is similarly emboldened to rebuild its national identity through military conquest.

Meanwhile, tensions between the Order of Hermes and the Order of Reason escalate dramatically. The Hermetics, having spent centuries building allegiances in the royal courts, risk losing it all if this trend continues. The Order of Reason, in contrast, benefits greatly from the rapidly growing middle class and the distribution of wealth from the elite minority to the increasingly enlightened many. Both factions blame each other for the strife between the working and ruling classes, pushing the conflict between the rival orders close to tipping into open war.

Rising concerns shift sharply in late 1848 when Jakob Holtzmann, a senior figure within the High Guild, presents a report attributing the path of revolution across the continent to a cabal of active magi traveling under the banner of the *Grimm Carnivale*. The Carnivale, an entertainment troupe known to use theatrics and displays of magick to present fables of witchcraft and malevolent fairytale beasts, are accused of satirizing the ruling classes and fomenting disorder. Long suspected of housing Bedlamites among their number, the Carnivale becomes an easy target for blame, and the Order of Hermes is quick to accept Holtzmann's overtures of reconciliation and unite against a common agitator. Following their trail, from Moldavia and Wallachia, back to Belgium, the allied Traditions force an ultimatum upon the Carnivale to hand over any and all Marauders within the troupe, accept formal censure, and disband immediately. According to official testimony, the Carnivale reject all charges, escalating the conflict with a fiery display of vulgar magick. In the ensuing conflict, most of the Carnivale perishes from their misuse of magick, and Hermetic agents chase the remaining few survivors into the night.

The veracity of these events remains strongly contested among the rest of the Traditions. Some claim the Carnivale is innocent of all wrongdoing, a clique of disparate Hollow Ones hoping to reinvigorate wonder among the common people with petty theatrics and tales of folklore. Others further claim the Marauder presence is utter fiction, while a few vocal members of the Order of Hermes insinuate that accouterments and foci found among the scorched tents of the Carnivale prove them to be agents of the Nephandi. Only those present at the final confrontation know for certain, although rumors persist that several surviving members of the former cabal have been seen entertaining with another traveling troupe, *Anastagio's Olde Time Lunar Carnival*.

Regardless of the truth, in the months after this battle, the revolutions sweeping across the continent become less frequent, and over the following few years, many of them collapse. A series of counter-revolutions return governing power to the monarchy in many of the affected regions. Agents of the Order of Hermes spend much of this time traveling across the continent to re-establish their contacts and assets among the sleeping world. This does not herald a complete return to peace, however, as the continent enters a new era of conflict — one from which the Order of Reason continues to benefit.

The Tides of War

The Order of Reason's influence over the technology of warfare during the 19th century has an immeasurable impact on the culture of conflict and conquest throughout Europe. Continuing the trend of the previous century, all military arms and services undergo significant developments including more mobile field artillery, the transition to more open battalion formations to counter the increase in concentrated rifle fire, and the almost complete replacement of all types of cavalry with dragoons.

The ease of loading and maintaining newer gunpowder weapons allows countries to shift recruitment from professional soldiers to large-scale conscription. The average martial and mechanical aptitude of the lowest tiers of society improves by a staggering margin in a short amount of time as they learn to fire gunpowder weapons and fight in uniform cohesion. Technological advances pushing at the limits of Consensus become increasingly important; encounters such as the Battle of Königgrätz, in which small advances in the range and reloading speed of artillery play a decisive role in determining the victor. This combination of rapid deployment and explosive weaponry allows the Awakened and Enlightened to engage in open warfare in Europe in ways once thought impossible, raining fire, crushing earth, and shredding flesh without risk of unleashing the Straits. Death at the hands of a distant rifle brings new fears and superstitions into the hearts of men. Do not whistle at night, it attracts demons. Never light cigarettes in threes, for death seeks the last to smoke. Speak softly near the killing fields, lest the ill fortune of the dead creeps into your open mouth. Predatory birds call thunder onto sleeping soldiers; kill them quickly and quietly.

Through the 19th century, these armed conflicts have a decisive impact on the Awakened of Europe. The practice of *total war* allows the magick of war to reach beyond the battlefield and into the densely packed cities of the masses. Before attacking cities, forces destroy nearby farms and fishing villages. Before that, the forests and fields are razed; a campaign of starvation and panic, targeting supply lines to besiege armies before they muster. Roads, railways, and riverways are blockaded, and trade goods are stolen wholesale. These scorched-earth marches eliminate the enemy's access to munitions, food stores, and fresh crops. The increased mobility of armed forces necessitates besieging entire cities and the civilian populace forced into crippling labor to stop them from coordinating as a hostile militia. War creates hostility and inflames a growing sense of nationalism among the working classes; guerrilla warfare and peasant uprisings challenge all invaders. The fight is everywhere, and the Awakened and Enlightened cannot avoid it.

The Caucasian War (1817–1864)

The Russian Empire, seeking to consolidate power and authority within its expansive borders, engages in a bloody campaign against the indigenous nations of the Caucasus, the territories between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. Imperial forces — including displaced Cossacks, Georgians, Caucasus Greeks, and Ossetians, offered wealth and land in return for their service — loot and starve local trade caravans and outlying villages. Conflict soon escalates as the people of the Abkhaz-Abaza, the Kumyks, and the tribes of the Adyghe defend their homeland. The terrain and the elements are a potent ally for the indigenous nations, as brutal winters and treacherous mountain paths bring the conflict to a halt many times over. At the same time, rival Verbenae and Dream-Speakers compete to control the Nodes of magick lying deep in these lands. Seasonal floods trap the imperial forces between supply points and wild dogs rip apart the stragglers lost in the wilds. Fighting on many fronts, the Russian Empire halts the offensive many times in response to hostility from other nations, and a truce is called at the onset of the Crimean War. The local tribes and nations, allied in their defense, hold the mountain regions against the imperial invaders in a protracted struggle, led for a long time by Imam Shamil of the Dagestan. The region, riddled with natural choke points, becomes the arena for a long campaign of ambushes, feints, and carefully coordinated assaults. In 1859, Imam Shamil is captured and made to swear allegiance to the Tsar, yielding the eastern territories of the Caucasus to the Russian Empire. Over the following five years, Russia slaughters the tribes of the Adyghe and drives them out of the western territories, completing the empire's conquest of the region.

In the aftermath of this war, the new authorities relocate, slaughter, and expel the indigenous peoples of the Circassian region, including a sizeable Muslim population, from their land in one of the largest genocides of the century. The Circassian diaspora eradicates much of the local culture, at the same time wiping out multiple sects of Awakened refusing to abandon their mountain Nodes. Many of the displaced, including one of the last sizeable holdouts of the Ahl-i-Batin in the region, travel south to the Ottoman Empire. The Circassian genocide disgusts the Ahl-i-Batin, whose magick, faith, and culture are inextricably tied, driving them away from Europe and shaking their trust in the Council of Traditions.

The Aerial Bombardment of Venice (1849)

In 1848, Venice rebels and declares independence from the Austrian Empire. The empire lays siege to Venice from land and sea, creating a perfect proving ground for the arti-

ficers of the Order of Reason. They use this opportunity to permanently shift the global paradigm with a public display of technological warfare.

The following year, as paddle steamers and gunships blockade the city's docks, a plan is set in motion for the first aggressive use of balloons in warfare. Austrian imperial forces besieging Venice prepare 200 paper hot air balloons, each carrying a thirty-pound bomb set to be dropped from the balloon with a timed fuse over the besieged city. Ground forces shelter their allies with protracted rifle fire, working in shifts to arm and inflate the heated balloons. Near the sea, the *SMS Vulcano*, a side-wheel steamer acting as a balloon carrier for the operation, launches additional munitions. Two hundred bombs, the first aggressive use of balloons in warfare, fill the sky, set to change the very nature of siege combat.

Early explosions are encouraging; the tall buildings lining the waterways create wind tunnels, guiding the explosives into the city's heart. Balloons snag at the tallest towers, detonating in plain sight. Some enterprising individuals attempt to shoot the balloons down. The Awakened within the city watch this aerial flotilla in baffled wonder, attacked from a direction the masses once considered impossible.

Success soon turns to humiliating failure. Fuses mis-time, with bombs detonating at the city limits or passing through the streets harmlessly. Later waves detonate during launch, injuring the Austrian troops. Rising winds, not anticipated for two more days, arrive earlier than expected, diverting the last of the balloons away from their targets. All these small coincidences and shifts in fortune ruin the offensive, so less than a tenth of the prepared bombs detonate within the city, and most that do detonate harmlessly overhead. Many of the *Vulcano*'s own balloons drift back out to sea, striking it with multiple explosions. As the thunderous spectacle drifts from sight the populace, briefly cowed, turns to openly mocking the invaders for their inept display. This turn of events greatly amuses the Seers of Chronos, known to control a few of the mercantile houses within the city, but they take no credit for them.

The failure of this assault sets the Order's use of aerial weaponry back by many years, but the long-term damage is done. The bombing of Venice is an audacious display of explosive weaponry. Reliability notwithstanding, the artificers have proven to the public that man can rain fire from the skies; they simply need time to codify the process and refine their accuracy.

Franco–Prussian War (1870–1871)

In July 1870, the French parliament declares war on the independent southern German states of Baden, Württemberg, Bavaria, and Hesse-Darmstadt. Prussian Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, seeking German unification, calls on Prussia to ally with the independent states. The German coalition mobilizes its troops sooner than the French and invades northeastern France. The German forces, superior in numbers and with better training and leadership, make effective use of modern technology. Rail-mounted artillery and troop carriers hasten the Prussian assault.

The quick German victory over the French alarms neutral observers, many of whom anticipated a protracted war ending in a French victory. Other nations scrutinize the German military's strategic advantages, seeking to mimic their innovations. The use of a General Staff, universal conscription, and formalized mobilization systems demonstrates the benefits of a bureaucratic approach to warfare. The French and Prussian armies benefit greatly from the Order of Reason's technological and scientific advances, and the war itself becomes a testing ground for clashing ideologies among the Enlightened. The overwhelming success of the German alliance becomes a declaration of what the separate Conventions of the Order of Reason can accomplish when united in agency and purpose, combining innovations in logistics, military ordnance, education, and political science. The Great Exposition of London paves the way for the Technocratic Union, but the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war shows the stragglers among the Order of Reason the dangers of being left behind.

Composed of conscripts, service within the Prussian Army is compulsory for all men of military age, allowing Prussia and their German allies to readily deploy a million soldiers to the field. German tactics emphasize encirclement battles like those used at Cannae, coordinated with offensive artillery whenever possible. The Difference Engineers reviewing the battles witness a rapid adaptation to modern weapons. The Prussian army eschews column and line formations, opting instead for small group deployments which evade artillery and coordinated rifle fire. The mobility of this marching structure allows the soldiers to encircle the French formations, locking them in place to be bombarded with cannons.

Artificers also monitor the advancements of firearms made in this conflict. The Prussian army favored the Dreyse needle gun, an outdated design with a short range and a muzzle flash that limited aimed fire. The deficiencies of the needle gun are compensated for with the support of Krupp breech-loading cannons issued to their artillery batteries. Firing a contact-detonated shell, the Krupp gun has a longer range and a higher rate of fire than the French bronze muzzle-loading cannon with a structure that allows it to be reloaded from a crouched or prone position. The French cannons, prone to misfire, use a muzzle system. This forces their artillery teams to stand while reloading, allowing them to be identified and targeted by enemy gunfire.

The Prussian army serves under Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke and his General Staff. The army is unique in Europe at the time for having the only such organization in existence, whose purpose in peacetime is to prepare the overall war strategy, and in wartime to direct operational movement and organize logistics and communications. The officers of the General Staff are hand-picked from the *Kriegsakademie*, their war academy. Moltke embraces new technology, particularly the railroad and telegraph, to

coordinate and accelerate the mobilization of large forces. The fledgling Technocratic Union, eager to gather data, closely monitors this coordinated application of logistical and technological solutions to warfare.

These advances in military theory strengthen the Prussian army's ability to control large formations spread out over significant distances. The Chief of the General Staff is given autonomy independent of the minister of war and answers only to the monarch. The Technocratic Union borrows heavily from this system, allowing it to codify its burgeoning hierarchical structure and create clearer communication channels between the Conventions.

A series of swift Prussian and German victories in eastern France, culminating in the Siege of Metz and the Battle of Sedan, ends with the capture of French Emperor Napoleon III and the decisive defeat of the Second Empire's army. Power changes hands many times in France. In September 1870, an emergency government declares itself the Third French Republic. In January 1871 following the Siege of Paris, the capital falls. A revolutionary uprising, called the Paris Commune, seizes power in the city until it is bloodily suppressed by the regular French army four months later. In the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, the Second French Empire collapses, and Germany is unified with the creation of the German Empire. This encourages even greater cooperation among the Enlightened across all the Technocratic Conventions.

The Decline and Modernization of the Ottoman Empire

The Ottoman Empire is a constant arena for change and conflict in this century, competing with the rising empires of Germany and Russia and struggling to suppress and appease multiple burgeoning rebellions. At the same time, the Broken Wheel, a group of Euthanatoi watching the Empire's descent into entropy, impedes the resident Choristers and Ahl-i-Batin.

During the Tanzimat or 'reorganization' period (1839–1876), the government's constitutional reforms lead to a modern conscripted army, the decriminalization of homosexuality, the replacement of religious law with secular law, and guilds with modern factories. These changes limited the overall influence of the dominant Muslim faith. The Choristers and Batini in the major cities soon see this as a benefit, as less dogmatic oversight from the local faiths grants them flexibility in how to interpret their rites and eases their ability to work together.

During this time the order of the Broken Wheel becomes active in the Empire. A fringe group of eight Euthanatoi, these magi adhere closely to the words of Senex; humans, not their science, corrupt the world and its magick. They see imperialism as an illness of the world, and societal collapse as a communal fever designed to fight off the disease. Over the latter half of the century, they record the wars and rebellions of the Ottoman Empire, noting the nationalist rivalries between the principalities. Insistent on seeing how the Masses invoked the powers of Entropy, the Broken Wheel works in secret to limit the efforts by other Enlightened and Awakened orders to stabilize the Empire. The Broken Wheel does not care if the Empire thrives or deteriorates, only that it is permitted to change at the hands of the Masses until it either crumbles to dust or learns to transcend its sickened state. At the same time, the Choristers and Batini strive for a common purpose, hoping to reconcile their competing ideologies in the process. This is not an easy process. The Christian population of the empire, owing to their higher educational levels, control more of the Empire's wealth than the Muslim majority, leading to resentment in the communities. This growing class divide increases further in 1853 as the Crimean War drives Muslim refugees south into Ottoman-controlled territory. The financial burden of the war leads the Ottoman state to issue extensive foreign loans as Circassians and Crimean Tatars seek refuge from the Russian Empire. This influx forces the Ottoman Empire to overhaul and modernize its education system and promote the ideals of Turkish nationalism, both of which heavily disrupt the consensus of the region.

The Tanzimat reforms do not halt the rising animosity in the principality regions, many of which have been semi-independent for almost six decades. As the Ottoman state attempts to modernize its infrastructure and army in response to threats from the outside, it also opens itself up to a different kind of threat: creditors. The Ottoman state, in debt after the Crimean War, is forced to declare bankruptcy in 1875. In the same year, the tributary principalities of Serbia and Montenegro, and the United Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, unilaterally declare their independence. The Russo-Turkish War (1877–78) ends with a decisive victory for Russia and her Orthodox Christian allies within the Ottoman Empire. Bulgaria is established as an independent principality inside the Ottoman Empire and Romania achieves full independence. Austria-Hungary unilaterally occupies the Ottoman provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Novi Pazar. Relations falter between the Choristers and the Batini within the Empire, each frustrated at their lack of agency, neither fully aware of the efforts of the Broken Wheel in their midst. Representatives of the Conventions refuse to speak with each other, and the Ahl-i-Batin withdraw even further from the European politics of the Council of Traditions.

In the aftermath of the Russo-Turkish War, the Congress of Berlin is held, a meeting of leading statesmen across Europe's great powers and the Ottoman Empire. They address the urgent need to stabilize and reorganize the Balkans and set up new nations. International boundaries are adjusted to minimize the risks of major war, while also recognizing the reduced power of the Ottomans and balancing the distinct interests of the great powers. British Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli advocates for restoring the Ottoman territories on the Balkan Peninsula during the Congress of Berlin, and in return Britain assumes the administration of Cyprus in 1878. By 1881, the Ottoman Empire agrees to surrender its debt management to an institution known as the Ottoman

Public Debt Administration, a council of European men with its presidency alternating between France and Britain. The administration controls most of the Ottoman economy and uses its position to ensure European capital continues to penetrate the empire, often to the detriment of local Ottoman interests. As a result, Ottoman holdings in Europe decline sharply.

As the Ottoman Empire shrinks, the Muslim population and its culture also dwindle with millions migrating to Anatolia and Eastern Thrace. Returning soldiers introduce a cholera epidemic to the city, and migrating communities are soon dying at the roadside. The Awakened fare no better; four members of the Ahl-i-Batin succumb to seemingly unnatural sicknesses while aiding the Masses in their forced migrations. Their colleagues in Istanbul, convinced of betrayal from the Choristers, retaliate with a series of ambushes, escalating into open conflict by the close of 1896. The Awakened of Istanbul flee the city within two months, while the city descends into riots and instances of the Straits destroying portions of the western wall and the main square.

The decay of one of the oldest empires of Europe emboldens the Broken Wheel to bring their findings to their fellows in the Euthanatoi. They speak with conviction about the potential for the Awakened to dissolve the great nations, to actively push for this change. They argue that societal collapse can be weaponized to restore consensus and prevent the Technocratic Union's growing stranglehold over the continent. Throughout all this, their peers are impassive and then perturbed when Archmagus Senex presents himself at the Broken Wheel's symposium. After the magi conclude their findings, Senex sits in silent solitude for over nine hours before calling his councilors to discuss the matter privately. When he returns, he commands the Euthanatoi of the Broken Wheel to return to Istanbul and await further guidance. Over the coming year, six of the eight members of the Broken Wheel disappear without explanation, and the remaining two, Niketas and Helena, are brought to Senex's Chantry, Cerberus, in the Deep Umbra. Senex does not speak on their fate, whether they came to him as students or as prisoners, and he never declares his views on whether their interpretation of the Great Wheel is correct. Ultimately, the Euthanatoi take this as a warning not to wield the words of their masters in vain, lest their pursuit of destruction become too successful.

The Kulturkampf (1872–1886)

The Kulturkampf, or culture struggle, is a period of conflict between the German imperial government and the Roman Catholic Church. Under the influence of new ideologies such as the Enlightenment, nationalism, and liberalism, the government challenges and limits the role of religion in society. Many countries in Europe demand the separation of church and state, with state supremacy in education and diplomatic affairs. The Catholic Church, viewing this as an attack on religion, seeks to maintain and strengthen its role in society. The papacy at this time is at a weak point in its history, having just lost all its territories to Italy. Pope Pius IX spends this time in self-imposed imprisonment, refusing to leave the Vatican, and rejecting the authority of the Italian government over Rome. The church strives to revert its waning influence with a Catholic revival, publishing papers, and founding schools and social establishments. The church also announces new orders encouraging pilgrimages, mass assemblies, and the veneration of relics.

During the Kulturkampf, the Catholic Church makes systemic changes in its use of print media, encouraging the distribution of theological articles in pamphlet and newspaper format. Pope Pius IX centralizes and streamlines the church's hierarchy with the needs and views of the international church taking priority over local parishes. The church's opposition to recent liberal reforms and revolutions angers their followers across Europe, many Catholics oppose demands for overriding loyalty to the Pope and his war against modern governance, science, and spiritual freedom.

Germany's unification in 1871 creates a segregated religious demographic with the inclusion of many highly Catholic provinces in the new empire. A new 'Center Party' is explicitly founded to defend the position of the church, which Chancellor Otto von Bismarck regards as an illegal union of church and state, and as a threat to German consolidation. In response to this, a series of ministerial appointments and laws are passed to directly impede the role of the church in Germany. This includes the criminalization of political sermons and the abolition of church oversight (both Catholic and Protestant) in the Prussian primary school system.

At the same time, similar struggles take place in Switzerland, Austria, Italy, and Belgium. Papal infallibility is poorly received in each of these countries, and the appointment of new bishops to the regions without state consent leads to religious schisms with Catholics divided between the Pope's new representatives and the existing appointees, who oppose the changes to papal dogma. The Choristers, as enmeshed in religious politics as they are, suffer under similar divisions with some seeking to defend the role of the church in government, while others insist papal infallibility damages the ideals of a unified voice transcending all faiths.

By 1878, Europe's political landscape has changed considerably. The Kulturkampf has succeeded in changing the relationship between church and state in many countries, and the death of Pius IX opens the door for settlement with the Catholic Church. On the day of his appointment the new pope, Leo XIII, writes to the Prussian king expressing a desire for peace. Bismarck, himself a religious man, believes the laws he enacted have done little to hinder the Center Party's popular support, and his trepidation over the growing Socialist movement has distanced him from his liberal allies. Over the following decade, a series of laws are passed to reaffirm Papal involvement in Prussia, including a civic registry for clerics, as well as the Royal Court of Justice for Ecclesiastic Affairs. This latter step is significant in rebuilding trust, as it acknowledges direct papal authority to discipline their priests in Prussia.

Officially, peace is restored, though tensions remain on both sides of the Kulturkampf debate. Both the pope and Bismarck receive open criticism for their concessions. Where this conflict succeeds in limiting the political power of the church, it also fails to weaken public support of religious office with divided groups now united in what they see as a cultural martyrdom. The Kulturkampf stirs up a new wave of anti-religious sentimentality, exacerbating the growing cultural divide. Ultimately, the Kulturkampf gives the secularist and socialist movements a platform to attack all religions openly, but in doing bolsters the social identity of the faithful considerably.

The New Wonders of Europe

In the 19th century, the forces of Reason and Wonder are not yet fundamentally opposed. Innovations arise still capable of delighting the Traditions. As the recording of sound brings awe to the Choristers, mankind's greater understanding of chemistry and anatomy intrigues the Hermetics. Spirituality and science, not yet driven apart, gives many among the Traditions hope that their philosophies will become commonplace.

In 1855, the German chemist, Friedrich Gaedcke, successfully isolates the organic compound cocaine from the coca plant of South America. The isolation process, itself a triumph in the field of chemistry, spurs on decades of research into the compound's analgesic properties. Within thirty years, it gains use as a local anesthetic in Germany. Sigmund Freud praises it as "exhilarating and euphoric," popularizing its use as a recreational drug. By the end of the century, its medical use is refined enough to make lung and nerve-blocking anesthesia possible, allowing physicians to treat and examine living tissue to a far greater extent than previously possible.

The following year, the world's first large-scale oil refinery opens in Romania. More soon follow, greatly reducing the cost of oil-based products such as paraffin preservatives (for wax paper), motor lubricant, and heating fuel. Transport infrastructure expands and the large-scale haulage of fresh and frozen food over long distances becomes possible.

In Paris 1858, Édouard-Léon Scott de Martinville creates the phonautograph, the first true device for recording sound. Replicating the anatomy of the human ear, he attaches a hair-thin stylus to a paper membrane that moves in response to the pitch and waveform of nearby sounds, etching their pattern onto glass and paper. Created as an experiment to 'see' sound, within twenty years mankind builds machines capable of recording and replaying poetry and song.

In 1865, Gregor Mendel, an Augustinian friar in Moravia, formulates his laws of biological inheritance, laws

of segregation, independent assortment, and dominance of genes allowing scientists to map and predict the frequency of genetic traits such as eye color. This system, contentious and overlooked in its time, gains popularity at the turn of the century. It becomes one of the codifying systems to determine how traits are passed from parent to offspring, conceptualizing the idea of a genetic language that can map and express the poetry of organic life.

In 1867, Swedish chemist, Alfred Nobel, invents a safely manageable explosive far more powerful than black powder. Originally sold as *Nobel's Blasting Powder,* he renames it to evoke the idea of alchemical 'power' — or δύναμις (*dýnamis*) in Ancient Greek — and it becomes popularly known as dynamite. The use of dynamite is commonplace in mining and engineering, giving the Sleeping world the power to shatter stone and break mountains, but it is swiftly repurposed into a weapon of war. Mistakenly reported as dead in 1888, Alfred reads his obituary, dubbing him the "merchant of death," and is so disappointed with his legacy that he allocates the bulk of his estate to found the Nobel Prizes, given for advancing scientific progress, literature, and peaceful congress without regard to nationality.

In 1869, the Russian inventor, Dmitri Mendeleev, drawing on older historical attempts to classify the alchemical properties of gases, metals, nonmetals, and earths creates the periodic table of elements, a visual classification of the chemical elements ordered by atomic number, electron configuration, and chemical properties. This table allows Dmitri and other scientists to successfully predict the reactive properties of rare chemicals, as well as the composition and properties of chemicals not yet discovered.

The following year, Rasmus Malling-Hansen develops the Hansen Writing Ball, the first commercially sold typewriter. Despite limited commercial success, the Writing Ball is prominently lauded at exhibitions in Copenhagen, Vienna, and Paris. This leads to his invention of the Takygraf, a high-speed typing machine for stenography, and the use of blue carbon paper in copying images and typed pages.

In 1885, the French biologist, Louis Pasteur, helps to create the first successful vaccine against rabies, cultivating the virus in rabbits and weakening it by drying the infected nerve tissue. His first human test subject, a young boy, receives thirteen inoculations over eleven days. This treatment is done at personal risk to Pasteur (not to mention his patient!) as he is not a licensed physician, but the positive results spare him from legal action.

In Germany 1886, Karl Benz registers the Benz Patent Motorwagen, the world's first commercial automobile. In 1888, his wife, Bertha, drives from Mannheim to Pforzheim on the first long-distance automobile road trip to demonstrate its feasibility. Bertha Benz maintains the vehicle herself, cleaning the carburetor with her hat pin and using a garter to insulate wires. She refuels with ligroin at the local pharmacy in Wiesloch, making it the first filling station in history. As the brakes wear down, Bertha asks a local shoemaker to nail leather to the brake blocks, inventing brake linings. On arriving in Pforzheim, she sends a telegram to her husband and returns home three days later, covering 121 miles in total.

In 1895, while experimenting with electrical discharges in glass vacuum tubes, German Physicist, Wilhelm Röntgen, discovers a new form of electromagnetic radiation, which he refers to as 'X-rays' for their unknown nature. Noting a green-hued glow in the air when he holds paper up to the light, Wilhelm surmises these rays can pass through solid matter. He discovers their medical use when he uses these X-rays to take a picture of his wife's hand on a photographic plate, creating an image of her skeleton. When his wife sees the picture, she says "I have seen my death." This morbid association continues among the scientific community, as studies into the medical applications of X-rays lead to frequent reports of sickness and hair loss among test subjects.

In 1896, following on from Röntgen's research, Henri Becquerel discovers radioactivity, the understanding of nuclear transmutation, and radioactive isotopes. Invisible energies, capable of miraculous and destructive power, are now wonders of the modern world, present in every atom of creation. Their potential use for fuel, medicine, and warfare, stand poised to shape the sciences of the following century.

The Revival of the Olympic Games (1880–1896)

During the 19th century, several small-scale sports festivals across Europe are named after the Ancient Olympic Games. In 1890, Pierre de Coubertin, a French pedagogue and historian, writes an article in La Revue Athletique espousing the success of the Wenlock Olympian Games, a festival of athletics and team sports held in England for the past forty years, as well as the Greek Olympics being held at the same time. In 1894, Baron de Coubertin, endorsed by King George I of Greece, organizes a congress of 11 countries at the Sorbonne in Paris with the intent of reviving the Olympic Games as an international competition, a sentiment the international community readily accepts.

Two years later, in the Panathenaic Stadium, the Olympic Games are reborn with participants from Western Europe, Australia, and the United States of America. Heroes and celebrities of the new age wrestle and clash with swords, stunning the crowds with feats of strength and athleticism, challenging the conception of human limitations. They battle with rapiers in the halls of the Zappeion, swim in the bay of Zea, and run the marathon in the for which the city was named. To the broader western world, it is a resounding success, a unifying drive towards competition and physical excellence.

For the Awakened, the Olympics is a powder-keg of conflicting agendas, ready to explode at any moment. Magi, both Traditional and Disparate, each fearing the potential threat of the Technocratic Union gaining a prominent role in orchestrating the event, antagonize each other and strive to make their mark on the proceedings. This fear is not unfounded; the Traditions are in a state of upheaval, failing to

communicate and warring due to the pressures of competing empires. The games, capable of showing the pinnacle of human physicality, are seen by many magi as a chance to push the boundaries on public human achievement. What starts as a series of gentle prods, soon spirals into a heated confrontation in, under, and around stadiums teeming with the Masses.

The Choristers make early overtures, hoping to co-opt the commencement ceremony scheduled for Easter Monday. They plan to steal copies of the Olympic Hymn, a choral cantata specially penned for the event, and modify the words and intonation. With members of their Tradition planted among the choral group, they hope to inspire the audience and dedicate the entire event to the ideals of a unified song and spirit. The Choristers intend to deflect blame with claims of a maga from the Sisters of Hippolyta scheduling the event to coincide with Greek Independence. The Sisters, if they learn of this, do not accept the insinuation lightly.

Multiple Traditions target the proposed course for the marathon. It is amended numerous times in the months before the Olympic games as various Hermetics from lesser Houses, oblivious to the rivalry in play, map the course to match the shape of a ceremonial glyph. Each House intends to tie the site to a forgotten Horizon Realm lost centuries earlier, creating a doorway for their use. The Euthanatoi are also at work here, etching symbols into the waypoints of the race and declaring it as an expression of the Great Wheel, a spell to drain a small tithe of life energies from the athletes, the spectators, and the city itself. If both schemes continue unaltered, there is a risk of the Euthanatoi unwittingly tapping into the Hermetics' pathway to the Horizon Realm and unleashing far more energy than they anticipated.

The Verbenae claim no interest in the proceedings while actively sabotaging the sailing and shooting events, thwarting any efforts to pair mechanical ingenuity with physical aptitude. They bolster the tides of the sea, waves breaking the docks as the water rises and grounding the ships as it sharply recedes. Initially overlooked, they risk suspicion when these complications hinder the swimming held along the same coastline.

The Akashayana and the Ahl-i-Batin make repeated requests to the Council of Traditions to have a recognized presence at the Olympic Games, but they are repeatedly denied. Complications around the political landscape of Sleeping Europe and fears of Akashic and Batini magick dominating the proceedings cause continued exclusion. This becomes an overture in the growing culture war against the Akashics, serving to emphasize the European stereotype of the "sick men of Asia" and the founding of the Chin Woo Athletic Association in response to Western imperialism.

Finally, the Seers of Chronos, now known as the Cultus Ecstasis, engage in a series of schemes from creating rites that enhance the crowd's growing euphoria to meddling with the outcome of many events to count coup against rivals across the continent. Each time an athlete surpasses expectations or fails to live up to them, a wary eye turns to the Ecstatics. The growing euphoria, linked with the songs of the Choristers, runs the risk of unleashing a wave of zealous religious and democratic sentiment across Europe. For the six-day duration of the Olympic Games, wary magi travel between venues, chasing shadows for fear of sundered alliances and a shift in power among the Traditions. Ironically, Technocratic involvement in the games, aside from a superficial connection to the cycling and shooting events, is preventative with Enlightened agents investigating for any sign of supernatural disruption.

North America: Our American Cousins

December 13th, 1890

They hate us. They hunt us. We have done nothing to deserve such treatment. Nothing, except to peacefully live under these skies before the white man arrived. They wage war on each other, each coveting the next man's success. We see little difference in the shifting of white nations' supremacy over each other. British, Americans, and even the French took turns claiming and stealing the lands our ancestors taught us to respect.

Once, we celebrated wondrous diversity between the different People. There were medicine men, dancers, dreamers, and many other ways for our People to connect with the lands on which we lived. When the white man spread out from the east, he didn't just steal the land — he crushed the land's spirit. The sickness he brought claimed countless lives, but his mere presence devastated our relationships with the many aspects of the land around us.

The Americans, in their efforts to consume every gift the land could offer, waged war on us and herded us from our homes to lands deemed not worthy for their own pursuits. The British, through the supposedly "responsible" government of the Canadian provinces, opted to outlaw our culture and forcibly prevented our children from learning our ways. Railroads snaked across the land like dark tendrils of disease. Vultures devoid of spirit descended upon any hole in the ground hiding precious metals. Beacons of terrible, charismatic force directed wave after wave of zealots, intent on replacing our ways with a singular way to revere a singular god who cares nothing for these lands.

Our light is not yet extinguished. A precious few still know the secrets, remember the calls, and practice the dances. Hidden medicine lodges house the secrets of Midewiwin, scant few Crow succeed in finding sources of Baaxpée, and Ghost Dancers now adapt ancient traditions into inspirations our People use for resisting annihilation. I feel the orenda in everything around me, having heard the song of the Great Spirit above. I hope there are many others still out there.

We are alone in our pursuit of true cooperation with the land around us. There are learned men and women from other lands, and they see the plight these lands suffer. The pillager nations steal our land, divide it up, and leave mere crumbs scattered for future generations. Unfortunately, most of the aware men and women traveling in the wake of the pillager nations are content with those crumbs. They wage secret battles and compete for the right to siphon the land's orenda — white men call it "quintessence." Even those supposedly enlightened men and women seem to lack the capacity to care what happens to us "savages."

Filthy cities throughout the expanding United States and the calcifying Canadian Provinces hide many of the subtle battles for their lesser subjects' hearts and minds. Fanciful stories about grand councils and spiritual bastions lead one to believe someone resists the spread of industry and apathy. If they exist, where are they now? What do they stand for? Have they already surrendered to an irresistible enemy?

Nobody comes to Fort Yates. Nobody brings compassion or understanding. Only one man dares to stand up to the white man's relentless assault on respect and reverence.

North America sees an incredible amount of change in a painfully short amount of time. From the beginning to the end of the Victorian era, Canada and the United States recklessly spread from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. Railroads and telegraph lines draw the two coasts together, and torrents of hopeful settlers cover the lands in between. Greedy hordes herd native peoples like livestock. Invading Europeans rationalize mistreatment of the innocent peoples, drunk on the excesses of raiding the world for its resources. By the turn of the century, migrations (voluntary and forced) blanket the continent with cities, farms, and infrastructure designed to extract as many resources from the land as possible.

The Order of Reason easily finds opportunity not only to thrive in North America but to make themselves a part of the growing culture. They capitalize on imperialist drives, fostering technologies and sciences that create an entitled sense of expecting even more. Before the Union can make any sort of unified effort to control the growing nations, their own fracturing Conventions' plans splinter and become hopelessly tangled in the cultures growing and mixing around them.

Most of the great Traditions scramble to remain relevant while the new nations of North America grow at unprecedented rates. Immigrants from around the world arrive on

both coasts, bringing all the myths, practices, and wondrous legends from the places they once called home. The insidious effects the Order of Reason imprints on the developing societies, however, challenge all the Traditions' efforts to take advantage of the melting pot of culture. A combination of poor leadership and distracting internal schisms hobble the mystics' plans at least as much as they are held back by the Order's successes.

Throughout the 19th century, every faction and order of magi, Luminaries, and mystics precariously walk a fine line between expansion and dissolution. The quickly evolving landscape of North America raises the stakes for all the secretive sects wanting to benefit from, use, or protect the burgeoning societies. Neither the Order's guilds nor the Council of Traditions reaches any sort of stability they hope to achieve.

Shifting cultural norms and the violent clashes between people of vastly different origins create a turbulent magickal landscape. The very uses of magick and science produce unpredictably potent or disastrous results. Towering cities, sprawling subjugation of the land, and seemingly endless expanses of pristine wilderness mix in a horrible tempest of epic proportions. Given the fragile state of so many magickal societies, founts of ancient wisdom, and scientific conventions, properly led efforts to swing the balance one way or another could conceivably move the future into wholly unexpected territory.

Ruthless Purges

Conflicts between European colonists and the continent's indigenous populations are not products of the 19th century. American and Canadian leaders relentlessly target native People throughout this era. Expanding populations and coveted resources focus the invading Europeans into rationalizing the vile treatment they inflict on the various native peoples. The American States ruthlessly attack one group after another. When the usurpers tire of *"Indian resistance,"* soldiers literally herd the indigenous residents to desolate lands hundreds of miles away. The British Empire, via their Canadian provinces, instead opt to destroy the culture and forcefully assimilate the First Nations. Under the guise of advancements in education, state programs split native families apart. The government rips children out of their homes, sends them to 'residential schools', and prohibits children from receiving any of their parents' culture. The practice lasts a shockingly long time: the last residential school won't close until the 1990s.

The Technocratic Union neither initiates nor leads these cultural pogroms, and they are rarely present at the front line of the terrible acts committed in the name of expansion. The Order's resources are spread too thinly to directly confront the Awakened leaders and mystics among the Indigenous Peoples. More importantly, forcefully introducing their methodologies and technologies into magickal territories of conflict risks cataclysmic (and very public!) failure of their advancements. Instead, the Union takes advantage of mundane cultural developments to find timing for the spread of advancement.

During these conflicts, the presence of magi from established Traditions is incidental at best. Few magi recognize the scope of the atrocities being committed; even fewer have any idea how to hold back the imperialist frenzy ravaging the land's People. Some manage to make a difference; the Indigenous Peoples have precious few allies among the Europeans, but those brave souls tend to be extremely zealous in their efforts.

The few allies sometimes introduce new concepts, and the People occasionally adapt their cultures and practices. Movements to introduce Christianity, for example, illuminate some Peoples' reverence of a singular Great Spirit above. The Chorus Celestial stands as an influential Tradition among the tribes and nations. Other philosophies, while not necessarily wholly adapted, subtly shift how spirits are related, how the land lends strength, and more.

Most of the Awakened among Native Americans, the First Nations, and other groups indigenous to North America develop as smaller Crafts. Many forgo classification or names for demographics, social standing, or classes, simply calling themselves Men and Women. As such, their magickal knowledge tends to share common threads, but most practitioners don't unite under a single larger banner. Some join the Dream-Speakers, and if the Dream-Speakers unite enough of the indigenous Awakened, such a movement might threaten plans for conquering the entirety of North America.

Mass Migrations

From British loyalists fleeing the thirteen colonies to Canada after American Independence to the exodus of freed slaves from Reconstruction-era southern United States, sweeping migrations during this period bring the greatest changes to North America. Within these massive groups of people moving from one place to another, magi and mystics follow the shifting cultural landscapes.

When families and communities migrate, they take their beliefs, superstitions, and religions with them. At times, the sheer volume of mobile population is enough to change the predominant reality of how magick functions. *Banshees* and manifestations of *the Morrigan* assault spiritual totems and great nature spirits. Freed slaves' repeated offerings provide new domains for *abosom* and the *Nsamanfo* ancestors, which displaces previously established spirits. In some areas, mystics intent on forcefully changing the magickal landscape lash out with spiritual extermination efforts as destructive as mundane imperialist invasion.

At the beginning of the 19th century, French colonists inhabiting the Canadian Provinces experienced varying degrees of conflict with the Iroquois and other First Nations. Due to Britain's industrial revolution and resulting population explosion, large segments of the British population left the Isles. Some emigrated to the growing United States, but most opted for the open expanses in Canada. Other European countries experience similar changes and developments;

Freedmen's Towns

The *Emancipation Proclamation* frees millions of African-Americans from slavery, but widespread resentment from racist legislators quickly brings the dreaded Jim Crow Laws to bear. While most freedmen remain in the south as sharecroppers, hundreds of thousands migrate to states that had never been slave states. States from one coast to the other find former slaves banding together to build entire independent towns instead of relocating to white-dominated established areas. For several years (until disbanded by President Andrew Jackson), a government agency of abolitionists assists with the settlement and construction of the new towns composed solely of Freedmen (slaves freed by the Emancipation Proclamation).

Canada becomes a territory dotted by communities clinging to their ancestral origins and developing their new homes accordingly. Cultural diversity becomes part of Canada's foundation, but it does little to rally and unite the isolated magi and mystics among them. Fear of American expansion turning northward pushes the British Crown into solidifying their claims. Completion of an intercontinental railroad and unifying the provinces under a singular government deters any further thought of American annexation.

An Era of Immigration

Those Who Were Here First

So many cultures and lives have faded since European settlers arrived in the Americas, and it's a trend that doesn't show any signs of declining at the start of the Victorian Era. Adding insult to injury is the fact that many tribes know that they will not survive unless they trade with the colonists. Acts of revenge enacted by both colonists and indigenous tribes spark various attacks and wars across the continent. Land infringement, stealing, and killing often fueled this lust for retribution. Viewing each other with varying degrees of skepticism, the relationships between tribes and outsiders are often tense. Tribes whose ancestors were enslaved still find it hard to trust in the anti-slavery sentiment sweeping across the nation. As the Americans continue to perpetuate their *Manifest Destiny* ideology, inventors such as Oliver Winchester and Samuel Colt help arm patriotic colonists with improved weapons. These rifles and revolvers solidify the image of Americans resolving their issues with violence.

Living in the Arctic region, the Inuit and other groups exchange furs and other goods for tools. From these trading interactions with northern Indigenous People come the Métis, a term used first used for French-speaking mixed-race people. They establish themselves as translators and fur traders living near the various trade posts owned by different companies. As Canada forms its own responsible government, efforts to assimilate the Aboriginal Peoples increase, and several acts forcefully remove Indigenous People from their homes to settle in model farming villages or boarding schools. The forcibly-relocated people have to give up their semi-nomadic lifestyles, and the children placed in school are especially subjugated to abuse should they speak their old language.

The Trail of Tears begins shortly before the Victorian era, following the Indian Removal Act in 1830, and affects those inhabiting the land east of the Mississippi River. The numerous and similar descriptions made by the tribes leaving their homelands against their will to make room for gold rushes and farms gave the Trail of Tears its name. Thousands perish both on the march and from resistance against the move. Similar events happen all across the continent to different peoples, such as the Potawatomi Trail of Death in 1838, and the Long Walk of the Navajo lasting from 1864 until the end of 1866.

Those Who Came Here

The United States

With the Declaration of Independence signed in 1776, the U.S. is still a young nation. Some of those alive at that time are still kicking in 1837 when Queen Victoria ascends to the British throne. The original 13 British colonies had successfully rebelled against the Empire after around a hundred years of governance. As time continues to pass, the citizens' pride over the free nation continues to grow, stamping out any lingering hopes of reuniting with the British Empire. The English are still vocal in their criticism of the States, and many of those who remain become steadfast patriots. As the years go on, U.S. citizens continue to think highly of the Declaration and often quote it during political debates to publicly declare themselves as "real Americans." Going against what was written by the Founding Fathers is unconstitutional — and seen as downright unpatriotic and disrespectful towards those that had spilled blood to secure freedom.

The Declaration states that "all men are born equal," yet the man who wrote that was a prominent slave owner. Even with the hypocrisy pointed out by racial minorities and abolitionists that slavery goes against this idea of equality, slavers say that it's their constitutional right to own slaves, and claim that slaves are crucial for the economy of the New World. The subject of slavery is a major topic of internal strife, taking many wars and many reforms to settle. Some patriots point their fingers at the British Empire for introducing slavery to the colonies in the first place, yet do nothing to abolish the practice. The abolitionists like to remind slavers using this rhetoric that the British Empire outlawed the slave trade in 1807 and then abolished slavery in 1833 — not that this stops many British magnates from still profiting off slave labor one way or another.

Suffragettes write the Declaration of Sentiments in 1848 to loudly state their belief that it was "all men *and women*" who are born equal in this nation. New Jersey had been the first state to allow women to vote; their 1776 constitution

gave voting rights for all adult inhabitants who had a worth of at least 50 pounds Proclamation Money, owned real property or land, and had lived in the same county for a minimum time of one year. In 1807, legislators rescinded the right for women to vote under the excuse of local voting fraud. This back-and-forth pattern would continue through the era with the movement gaining more traction as more people join.

Canada

The flames of revolution also hit British America with two revolutions in 1837 and the following year. The revolutionaries, displeased colonists rejecting government reform, ultimately fled to the U.S. when they lost the conflict. The British Empire dispatched Lord Durham as the new Governor-General to investigate what caused the uproar. To his surprise, he determined that the cause was not due to the economy or changing liberal views, but instead a clash between the existing French and British cultures among colonists. France and Britain share a turbulent history, and while the New France territory fell into British hands after the Treaty of Paris in 1759, many of the people in the settlement still view themselves as French. To them, it felt as though their heritage and culture were under direct attack by the British government.

Lord Durham pens a report of his findings and the suggested assimilation of the French populace along with some reforms that would unite Lower and Upper Canada. While the British government dismisses the suggestion, many colonists, as well as British people overseas, support the notion of creating an independent Canadian government. It may be the only option of unifying the two cultures and not repeating another rebellious disaster like their American cousins.

Those Who Were Forced Here

In the land of the free, one person can still own another — one of the sickest paradoxes of the entire era.

Slaves have long served as the lifeblood of the plantations that made a select few rich while displacing millions of others. When Europe began colonizing the New World, they exploited the land's indigenous peoples for slave labor. When the masters worked those natives to death or they succumbed to diseases brought from the Old World, it became clear that the colonists' hunger for slaves demanded more working bodies than the local population and imported indentured servants could provide.

Even when slavery is finally abolished as a result of the Civil War, the now-free men and women face a new fight. By law, they have liberty, but the social perception and notion of superiority among the white populace deny them the same opportunities and treatment as their former slavers. Propaganda sees attempts to sanitize history through uplifting stories of "good slave owners," but the stories of fugitive slaves, such as Harriet Jacobs, Frederick Douglas, and John Anderson, reveal the harsh reality so many had suffered through.

Both magus and Sleeper spiritualists in Illinois and Wisconsin invite Native Americans to band together in the face of adversity. The passing of the Black Hawk, a Sauk war chief, is met with grief by both his people and those who oppose the continual advancement of white settlers on the continent. The spiritualists among the African diaspora in what used to be French Louisiana honor his memory and spirit. As the Sauk tribe continues to lose their land, the Bata'a extend a hand of aid to the tribe. They hope that

their actions ensure that old traditions and knowledge are not lost to history.

Others in the Bata'a Craft focus on recruitment missions and gathering allies for a major push. This group of magi, known as the White-necked Ravens, believe that peaceful existence cannot be enough; they resort to sabotage and violence against remaining pro-slavery and expansionist factions. "Being an ally is not enough; be a conspirator," is the message of the White-necked Ravens, the common refrain of their recruitment process. Deriving their name from a southwest African species of raven with a white patch on its nape, the group's initiates wear a white neckerchief or other cloth around their neck as a symbol of these birds of their homeland.

Those Who Are Yet to Come

The drive of *Manifest Destiny* and the ambition to out-compete the Order of Reason's detractors necessitates the procurement of more bodies for the Luminaries' schemes. Whether these people are magi or Sleepers matters not, only that they serve the greater plan. The Traditions also adapt for a similarly aggressive recruitment drive to meet the challenge.

The era of immigration is a boon for both sides, as it brings more human resources to the continent. The Old World sees the United States as a land of opportunity, so many come fleeing from crop failure, job shortages, and famine. The sentiment of ripping up and leaving one's failing situation rings true for both the masses and Technocrats alike; more than a few Luminaries seek assignments in the New World precisely because they feel stifled in advancement among the stratified ranks of the Order back home, or because they want to escape the consequences of their past mistakes. This serves to fill the Order of Reason's ranks in America with plenty of arrogant or careless Enlightened, each looking for their chance to make it big at the expense of their fellows.

European immigrants enter the United States through several ports on the East Coast, most famously through the "Golden Door" that is New York. Magi frequently travel to New York to scout for freshly arrived talent near the Castle Garden in Manhattan. When the city constructs an immigration processing center on Ellis Island in 1892, that becomes the new destination to pick up new blood. Some talent is of course impossible to discern at first glance, even with magick, so monitoring of immigrants is standard practice. While not viewed as the most prestigious job, this watchdog role is an important one, as the numerous projects and schemes of the great factions demand a constant stream of minds, bodies, and sometimes lives.

The land of opportunity draws entrepreneurs showcasing their technological inventions and scholars on the verge of a scientific breakthrough. With these gifted Sleepers, the Technocrats can easily manipulate the general public's perception of the limits of technology. By comparison, the Traditions want magi from different cultures so that they can pool their knowledge together to create a better understanding of the new line between uncanny and catastrophic magick. After a few incidents that risk catastrophe for both sides, the clashing magi soon agreed that the immigration ports are neutral ground and that it's a "first come, first served" situation when recruiting. While attacking another magus there risks censure, leaking false information, or distracting them remains a favored tactic for headhunting Awakened wanting to ensure they beat rivals to the cream of the crop. Although a rather dehumanizing attitude to their recruitment pool, in the face of grand plans and opportunities humanity is often the first thing the great factions in America toss aside to reach their goals.

Immigrants commonly settle near the port at which they arrive. Not knowing where to go and wanting to be around people sharing the same language as oneself means that previous settlers from the same homeland establish enduring communities. States and organizations take to luring immigrants inland with promises of jobs or land, bringing them to sparsely populated areas rather than continuing to pool in these coastal settlements. The first Homestead Act in 1862 washes a fresh tide of colonists, doling out parcels of land for establishing new homesteads. From one perspective, this Act is surprisingly egalitarian as it welcomes new immigrants, freed slaves, and women with an opportunity for land ownership. That "free" land, of course, has been stripped from the native peoples who previously lived there, and homesteading is itself rife with greed, rivalry, and profiteering over key locations.

People arriving from Asia are primarily from China, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines, generally entering through West Coast ports. The number of Asian immigrants coming to the states is soon perceived to be a threat by the white colonist populace — so much so, they make the first federal law restricting immigration by a specific ethnic group. The Page Act of 1875 expressly forbids Chinese women from entering California. The law is further extended in 1882, prohibiting Chinese laborers from immigrating. Though the number of people arriving from Asia is nowhere near the masses from Europe, Asian immigrants suffer extreme discrimination and violence rooted in intense racism. As a result, both Sleepers and magi from the East prefer each other's company — if nothing else, it's far safer. Language barriers further hinder the development of more cordial relationships, as white settlers rarely speak the languages of their fellow immigrants hailing from Asia.

The majority of Asian immigrants settle in Hawai'i and California. In the Golden State, many of them perform back-breaking labor creating the infrastructure needed throughout the Gold Rush and during its aftermath.

Call the Presses

The systematic mistreatment of black people in America continues even after one is deemed "free." Many in the Bata'a feel their allies minimize the suffering of those who used to be slaves and just want to move on to something else. It can be hard to dismantle preconceptions from before one became Awakened, although upholding the same old values

from when one was a Sleeper only hinders a Willworker and their magus peers.

The Bata'a struggle with an internal conflict over whether newspapers in New Orleans and Louisiana writing about Voodoo is good or bad press. The papers describe the African Voodoo practices in a negative light, exaggerating or telling outright lies about animal sacrifices and zombies, and describing the faith's practices as depraved acts. The upside is that the more people believe the tabloids, the easier it is to manipulate reality. The downside is that it makes the lives of those practicing Voodoo harder, as persecution and segregation increase in society. The best of both worlds may be achievable if they can gain control of the rumor-mill, spreading farther the stories they wish, even as they fine-tune the details of the reports to adjust public perception.

The Mexican-American War and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo

At the beginning of the Victorian era, Mexico continues to struggle internally. The country is still trying to find its identity, first under an emperor and now as a Republic. It isn't until a year before Queen Victoria ascends to the British throne, 1836, that Queen Isabella II acknowledges Mexico's independence.

Texas has in the same year declared its independence as a republic. As its economy began to dwindle, its population favors annexation by the United States rather than returning as part of Mexico. For the United States, it's tempting to expand their territory, but annexing the rebellious state means going to war with Mexico, as the latter does not recognize Texas' sovereignty. It takes years of political maneuvering before newly-elected President James K. Polk announces in 1845 that he will send armed troops to the disputed area of Texas. This successful but controversial action sets the stage for the occupation of Hawai'i later on.

War between American and Mexico breaks out after Texas became the 28th state, lasting for almost two years. After suffering significant losses, the two countries enter an agreement where Mexico cedes a large amount of land and, in exchange, the U.S. pays war reparations. A wave of patriotism sweeps the nation of the perceived victors, and many Americans fully embrace the ideology of Manifest Destiny. In Mexico, the resentment against Americans and their ambitions grow. The country enters a reflective state while doing its best to recover from the disastrous war.

The Gold Rush

Gold has always fascinated humans, its shine and rarity rendering it a symbol of wealth for thousands of years across a myriad of cultures. One can create a sobriquet for a commodity that immediately describes its worth and rarity by pairing its color with the word "gold." Sugar was known as white gold in the 16th century; later, oil becomes the notorious "black gold."

By comparison to such glamour, being a miner means unsanitary, dangerous conditions and backbreaking manual labor. Miners scrape by, and few strike it rich; when ore deposits run out, one has to begin the search anew. Miners make the Blue Ridge Tunnel by using black gunpowder and hand-drills. While the construction is a success, explosives aren't standard practice among independent miners as they are difficult to control and take many lives. In 1867, mining becomes even more volatile as dynamite is more readily available, now produced in California. Not only is it safer than using gunpowder, but its blasting capacity is also more potent.

When traces of precious metals such as gold or silver turn up in a lawless land, it becomes a free-for-all rather than a mining company reaping the profit. Rumors say that Sutter's Mill, a territory remaining disputed after the Mexican-American War in 1845, has an abundance of gold. Its riches lie on the surface, ready to be collected by any daring travel there to try their fortune. The Order of Reason sees these gold rushes as an opportunity to not only fund their plans but to make the United States' economy prosper. They believe that history has time and again proven that innovation comes with prosperity, and golden eras need golden wealth to fuel them.

The opportunity to strike gold presents itself once more near the end of the era. Alaska is practically empty after America's purchase from Russia, which decided to sell the "block of ice" considering it difficult to defend in any future war. Rumors about gold in the Yukon have swirled ever since Russia owned the territory, but no one had publicly confirmed their validity.

Learning from the previous gold rush, the Syndicate moves in to make money off the prospectors rather than going after the ore itself. Information gathered from earlier expeditions by the Exploratory Society tells them that icy weather conditions would make the mining more complicated than the rush in California. Sturdier tools and warmer jackets are needed — and don't use explosives unless you're willing to die in an avalanche or risk destroying stable footing.

To set up a successful mining town, one needs to accommodate the miners and prospectors. The Order knows it can make money by starting businesses in such hubs of activity. Every boom town needs the same things, after all: a general store to buy everything one could need, from food to burlap sacks; a bar to unwind after a hard day; and a jailhouse for when rowdy miners drink too much. Larger towns might also need a local blacksmith to make tools and a church to soothe one's spiritual needs.

The Syndicate sees the key to making money fast as being opportunistic, matching the prospectors themselves; they have to be ready to pack up and go once the boom is over. Prospectors set on making money are not afraid of resorting to less reputable trades, such as prostitution, thievery, and the fabrication of fraudulent mining licenses. When the Syndicate has packed up and left, the Exploratory Society comes in and scavenges the resulting ghost town for remaining

valuables while documenting changes to the region. Some magi, independent or Luminary, venture into the aftermath of a gold rush to scavenge items and spin tall tales surrounding them to up their value. They argue that collectors, universities, or museums will pay good money for a mundane piece of what will soon be history. Such magi act in secret, even those mapping the country for the Order of Reason, as senior Luminaries look down on the practice — especially as a trade for trinkets and curios reflecting miners' and prospectors' superstitions grows.

New Religious Movements

Many magi remain faithful to the religious beliefs they held as a Sleeper. Before the start of the Victorian era, the Second Great Awakening in North America began as a wave of Protestant religious revival reflecting Romanticism, which possessed an appeal to the supernatural while rejecting the skepticism of the Enlightenment movement.

The multiple diasporas and the distance to the Old World mean magi sometimes find new opportunities to bend the rules of reality under the cover of religion. All across the continent, variations or interpretations of existing teachings mix with entirely new beliefs to form a heady concoction of spiritual possibility. Both the Traditions and Order of Reason use new churches and religions for their benefit, trying to respectively nail down or break free from stultifying conformity. Magi are rarely in the founding seat of the new religions and splinter sects cropping up across America. They're more likely to pose as a believer, covertly helping the founders perform seeming miracles and exercising influence from behind the scenes rather than painting a giant target on themselves for investigating Awakened from a rival faction.

The Grand Faculty observes with interest new faiths that claim they embrace scientific thinking and inventions, such as Christian Science and the Unity Church. However, with each resulting failure, they deprioritize religion as a tool for the Bloc to exploit. Many members conclude that focusing on religious beliefs places more importance on the past with a fear of what innovations the future may bring, rather than being forward-thinking. Christian Science, though promising in its name, preaches that the power of prayer is enough to heal one's ailments — a distinct conflict with the growing Consensus. Some magi believe that the Grand Faculty are involved with trying to discredit its preacher, Mary Baker Eddy, by purposefully fueling her and other members' paranoia; but if it is the work of the Bloc, the Luminaries involved are careful not to expose themselves.

Eventually, Mary, representing one of the Christian Science members, Lucretia Brown, goes on to sue

a fellow Christian Scientist, Daniel Spofford, for attempting to hurt Lucretia using malicious mind powers. Convinced that the mind can not only heal itself but also harm others through "mind crimes," Mary names this concept "malicious animal magnetism," or MAM for short. For the supernatural charges and that the trial took place in Salem, the event is dubbed the Second Salem Witch Trial.

Evangelical Christianity, which arose in the First Awakening and comes to dominate U.S. cultural institutions, is far from monolithic. Churches split over political issues such as the abolition of slavery and interpretations of the Holy Bible. At its heart, evangelicalism focuses on rebirth and the authority held by its religious preachers. The Syndicate attempts to milk every last dollar from those claiming virtue yet who believe that they can buy their way to salvation. The infiltrating magi line their pockets with donations, harvesting the wealth of churchgoers convinced that the act of giving money is what will ensure heaven.

The Verbenae maintain a stable underground holding among those diasporic religions coming together to practice old beliefs mixed with the new. Many tie family and faith to their identity, with many former slaves and their descendants practicing beliefs that mix fragments from Africa, spiritual traditions born from resistance and survival during slavery, and the new branches of Christianity forming on the continent. Some Verbenae struggle with feelings of anger over the "bastardization" of old religions, whether because owners and colonists have forced Christian beliefs on slaves and natives alike, or because they believe the sanctity of older ways is disrupted through such fusions. Ultimately, though, such new spiritual practices that emerge are often reflections of the trials and triumphs of people who have survived the worst that humanity can throw at them, and it is not the place of the Verbenae to deny former slaves the comfort of those beliefs they can now choose and shape for themselves.

It's Electrifying!

Many scientists and engineers trace their fascination with electricity to the deeds of Benjamin Franklin. Before Franklin, electricity was a curiosity whose utility was limited to parlor tricks. This perception shattered when one of the Founding Fathers proved that lightning was caused by discharged electricity, framing it as a naturally-occurring phenomenon rather than a sign of God's wrath. He made many believe in the possibility of harnessing the primal energy of the storm, and he formed the centerpiece of this new image of humankind reaching up to seize lightning from the sky like some new Prometheus. By Victoria's reign, the power of electricity is almost worshiped, and electrical engineers create contraptions that one could scarcely believe if one had not witnessed them oneself. Other scientists of the era, such as Thomas Edison and Nikola Tesla, continue to change and develop the understanding of electricity. It is clear to the Order and the Traditions that this power source is a conduit for forging powerful new magic with seemingly unlimited potential. Slowly but surely, it begins reaching every citizen, touching their daily lives. Entrepreneurs in the field of electricity are so vital for the Order that Luminaries go out of their way to ensure inventors have ample funding and opportunities to showcase their creations.

Manifest Destiny

Throughout the Victorian era, the United States practices the same kind of imperialist policy as the British Empire, even if it does so under the masquerade of democracy and equality. Ironically, Americans rationalize westward expansion across the continent as "preventing British monarchs from stopping the flow of democratic excellence" even as they crush the people already living there underfoot. Some Americans do not subscribe to the idea that the United States is uniquely gifted with this divine providence once posited by John Winthrop and reinforced by Thomas Paine. This philosophical difference compounds the legitimacy of states' rights and the morality of slavery. The paradox that is American policy during this time leads the country to rapidly expand and trample over natives and Mexico so that more lands may be designated as free states (where slavery is illegal). The practice aggravates relations with slave states (where slavery remains legal) and eventually tears the country in half in the resulting Civil War.

Large populations of many cultures find themselves working for and abused by American military, business, and cultural leaders. Misguided zealots ensure vengeful legislation prevents African-Americans from joining white society as equals. Government-backed companies use Chinese immigrants as cheap labor across the continent for everything from workers during the California Gold Rush to the construction of railroads. Citizens of the states even target some groups of other white Europeans, treating them as, at best, second-class people due to some difference of ethnic group or origin. Because of industrial advances, famines, and overpopulation, millions of people from every part of Europe poured into the United States, further feeding into this boiling pot. Segregation of the different immigrants becomes a humanitarian catastrophe.

Nearly every city and region hosting significant numbers of immigrants develop segregated neighborhoods. Chinatown, Little Italy, and Germantown are but a few examples of immigrants settling (or being forced to settle) in the same areas as their fellows. With such high levels of immigration and this concentration of community, new residents bring a lot of culture and tradition with them. It opens America wide for the introduction of mystics and magi from all backgrounds and Traditions and, because the whole continent is unstable in terms of clashing paradigms and different belief systems, sequestered neighborhoods are sometimes able to support paradigms that contradict the predominant beliefs outside of their area.

Discovering a renewed focus to hold on to the traditions and practices they bring to America, diverse magi start to cooperate and begin an urban renaissance for the Council of Nine Traditions. The cities in North America pit magi against

the Order of Reason in very close quarters; conflict often turns hot, forcing Luminaries to pour more resources into the growing populations of the coasts. This resurgence in mysticism also sparks movements such as secret occult societies, resistance to urbanization, and the first organized efforts to conserve the environment. The Order of Reason, initially struggling to overcome disarray and rivalries within their own ranks, provide the archaic mystics with the opportunities needed to reinvigorate the masses with wonder and substance.

Industrial Revolution

While mass immigration does prove to be a boon for the Traditions, the Order of Reason eventually takes full advantage of large population centers with urgent needs. Sanitation and famine are key initial challenges that allow the Order to demonstrate the potential success of its policies. In their desperation, the masses more readily accept strange, alien, and complicated processes that miraculously produce consistent results. Repeating cycles of illuminating (and sometimes creating) social challenges, providing solutions, and releasing reproducible methods to the public becomes the Order's trusted method of entwining themselves in these growing countries.

The Order's many Conventions enter an era of rampant growth, and more importantly firmly establish themselves in American society. Introducing and influencing new technologies only gets the Order so far, but active cooperation between the Conventions solidifies the masses' need for their conveniences. Advancements in manufacturing paper and printing processes enable unprecedented levels of propaganda and targeted education. Quickly shipping huge quantities of food, materials, and manufactured goods supports more abstract wealth management too complicated for the lay person to manage — yet convinces the common citizen millions of dollars routinely move from one hand to the next to keep the cities running. Perhaps the greatest tool in the Order's plan for domination, the cooperation between railroad expansion and telegraph development promises a firm grasp over the entire continent.

The combination of those two industries reinforces one of the Order's primary objectives: globalization. Being able to move goods or people across vast distances in a short amount of time, and nearly instantaneous communication between any two points, combine to create an infrastructure with which the Tradition mystics simply cannot compete. However, even the Order of Reason cannot easily realize a massive project such as the Transcontinental Railroad. Early locomotives, no matter how many advancements are designed to prevent breakdowns and no matter how many legions of workers descend on the land to build the tracks, frequently conflict with the territories of the wilderness and their resistance to the technomantic paradigm. Should the encroachment of rail across the countries be met by more organized resistance capable of reinforcing an area's predominant paradigm, plans to lay a web of railroads across the continent faces real danger.

Less tangible advancements also place the Order of Reason at an advantage. Standardization allows progress towards globalization and, more importantly, widespread acceptance of anything related to the specific benchmarks the Order desires to introduce. Uniform use and measurement of machine tools bring unprecedented collaboration on an industrial scale. Establishing commonly agreed-upon time zones lets the Order project, plan, and coordinate projects of epic proportions. Introducing and using such high concepts might permanently place Tradition magi on the defense unless enough people doubt the veracity of the Order's achievements.

The Gilded Age

Reconstruction and post-war booms usher in the golden age of the Victorian era. Some regions enjoy a reprieve from widespread warfare for a few decades, and many nations experience surges in economic and social development. America's "Gilded Age" develops from social, economic, and technological changes building upon each other at astonishing rates. Rapid steam-powered transportation allows even distant parts of the country to receive manufactured goods and floods urban centers with necessary foodstuffs from any farm able to meet such needs. Increases in consumer demand and the cities' capacity to produce labor result in rising wages and standards of living. Standing on the backs of the men and women producing the goods, a privileged few take control of the country. Eager scions of the Order's guilds attach themselves to the American behemoth. Feeding on avarice and aggression, luminaries respond only by infecting the system with methods to *control*.

Urbanization sweeps across North America. Coastal cities reach for the skies in towering skyscrapers and extend their roots deep underground with complex sanitation systems and twisting subways. The British Crown urges the Canadian Provinces into policies that ironically mirror the United States to their south, subjugating French and First Nations cultures. Land grants bestow hundreds of thousands of immigrants, freed slaves, and displaced veterans with free land — suppressing the last resistance Native Americans can muster. The United States government and their new *robber baron* titans of industry form sinister partnerships and conspire to simply purchase or enthrall everything that prevents them from ruling over all they survey.

The reckless growth and economic policies result in terrible inequalities of wealth. Coupled with institutionalized (and upheld by the Federal government) racism, abuses of entire immigrants' communities create appalling levels of poverty. This does, however, work to galvanize more mystics and magi from the various Traditions and Crafts opposing the juggernaut Conventions in the Order of Reason. With each wave of immigration washing up on America's shores, more and more people turn to the traditions and faiths of their forebears. Without power, wealth, or basic rights, the cast-offs from "civilized society" band together for survival

and to celebrate independence from addictive temptations offered to the masses sympathetic to the Order.

As much as the Awakened gather under various philosophical or religious banners, the Order's Conventions experience daily victories. Wondrous technology astounds the average citizen and inspires them to imagine and predict the next miracle of science. Unimaginable amounts of wealth trade hands without the appearance of a single dollar bill; such abstract determination of wealth culminates with stock markets, complexities of high finance, and other institutions the lay person accepts without understanding. Indeed, the Order's crowning achievement in America proves its dominance over all other methodologies. Wall Street — the concept and collective activities — provides the Order with the same potent support and guidance as the mightiest of celestial hosts bestow upon the pious. Wealth and greed replace gods and prayers.

Vaudeville in America

Postbellum America enjoys the beginning of the era of troupes of performers and organized companies traveling the country and establishing large performance halls. Animal-filled circuses roam in their colorful railroad cars. Carnivals bring rides, games, and curiosities to every town willing to let them erect their tents. Shows, stage plays, and illusionists entertain crowds of all ages. All kinds of entertainment can be found commonly mixed within the same company or production, intent on attracting a broader audience.

Most of the traveling crews develop poor reputations, whether they deserve it or not (and many do). They tend to have closed, tight-knit cultures akin to extended families, traveling and performing together for months at a time. Some of the carnivals travel from place to place without ever calling a single town a home. Con-artists, fixed games, and fraudulent exhibits become a way of life for many traveling operations. In other cases, managers of traveling troupes take advantage of desperate people needing to escape and disappear.

Occasionally, a carnival's "freak show," palm reader, or strongman might not be the usual fraud that seasoned troupes use to fool people into paying to see. Magi and other creatures of the night find the cover of a traveling circus or performance troupe to be highly effective for practicing talents they might not fully understand — or to avoid persecution. Constantly traveling in such a private arrangement with the same extended family might create a "localized" magickal territory that travels with the company. Magi in such companies are formidable, indeed; they draw their very strength from the fidelity of everyone in the company playing the part expected by the paying audiences.

Battle lines, however, are not always clear. The Awakened may be wise and aware of the world's many aspects, but they are still human. Growing societies find priorities and moralities crossing each other and intersecting with unpredictable results. Electorates elevate politicians and civil servants as moral examples, yet the people depend on their "leaders" to monitor and manage economic issues, large and small. Such a conflict of interest eventually allows the propagation of unchecked, selfish endeavors. Unfortunately, the corrupt and the wicked have little trouble leading mundane society astray. Some magi and scientists also change their overall mission when they discover unintended consequences or recognize their hubris. With the prospect of cultures vanishing via assimilation (or destruction), entire groups of Awakened question *why* they accept their place within the growing conflict of ideologies. With doubt comes dissent — and even more impassioned reactions.

Frequent clashes around the nation's development (*subdual*, some insist) test the cultures and communities the Awakened battle over. Even if on a subconscious or spiritual level, mundane society reacts to the subtle manipulations they endure. Corruption, civil unrest, and calls for sweeping changes certainly happen without the presence of the hidden Conventions and Traditions, but the charged machinations of magi can shift the balance of public opinion and calls to action. Critical issues are at stake, especially deep into the so-called *Gilded Age*. Rampant (and exceedingly violent) racism rages across the nation, supported by legislation "protecting" American interests. Overbearingly patriarchal society all too easily dismisses women's rights. The stranglehold of two-party politics fosters widespread and firmly entrenched corruption through every level of government.

Every step of the way, the Awakened attempt to guide the tumult towards a future that favors their missions. Guilds, Crafts, and Traditions swell with aspirants and apprentices from every class, origin, and creed. All factions must face the prospect of managing the chaos within their ranks before their adversaries exploit that disarray.

Fight for the Future

As the century closes, the Awakened feel tensions building. Conflict threatens the souls of men and women on the streets and in the farms across North America. Those old enough to remember the Civil War, bloody conflicts with Native Americans, and the Mexican-American War are mostly marginalized by the country's unimaginably rapid changes. Policymakers, social leaders, and average residents just trying to eke out a comfortable life are ill-prepared for true conflict on the world's stage. Magi may similarly lack organization and focus to properly prepare themselves for the next onslaught of tactics and maneuvers designed to expel culture from society. A single cabal or Chantry, however, could be capable of giving just enough of a push to the era's precarious balance of power.

Everyone — Awakened and asleep — knows a battle is brewing. How will the magi and enlightened scientists in America fire the first shots of the next century's Ascension War?

South America: The New World

A stack of recordings from South America confiscated from a member of the Exploratory Society, labeled "L. 1872"

(Record starts with a loud screech followed by scratching noise.)

The New World is now. Never since its first discovery has the name better suited this continent, which is rapidly changing even as we speak.

If only I had the opportunity to travel here sooner! Though I understand the decision to not send members out during the most intense periods of war, I feel that much knowledge about the borders has slipped through our fingers. I'm currently mapping the new boundaries for these Republics and Kingdoms, though I'm certain another survey will be required as the new countries are still fighting. The rate of civil wars and revolutions has fallen since the beginning of the century, but one would be foolish to believe that the bitterness of people's hearts can be stilled after centuries of what they construe as grievous mistreatment.

This land is always changing, not just in name but in environment. The natural resources of the colonies allow the Empire to shift focus from producing so many raw materials in our fatherlands and instead export more finished goods that fetch a higher price on the world market. The New World is a food basket for the Old, where agriculture must make room for technological advancement. A part of me misses the forests of my childhood, but I cannot deny the joy of the industrial progress we've made. Let us not forget about the new foods and spices now a staple of so many households.

The sun is bright, and the seasons are opposite from Britain — our summer months of July and August are their coldest times. Again, true to its sobriquet, my journey here feels as if I'm in a different world. I wish I could provide a colorful description of the volcanoes and long mountain ranges that would do them true justice.

Ah, but before I lose myself on a tangent, I must log the political events that are unfolding.

Our convoy landed in Brazil after a long journey at sea. Most of the newly formed nations decided to do away with a monarchy, choosing to pave their way to the future as a republic. Others, such as the former Portuguese colony of Brazil, are still kingdoms — this one ruled by the same house as the royal family of Portugal, who fled from the Napoleonic forces invading Lisbon generations ago. The countries here have fallen behind if you look at the industrial progress of Europe, but many of the Order remain optimistic for the Kingdom of Brazil that they may grow prosperous and contribute much to the spread of technology.

One could easily forget how bloody these conflicts are when walking amid such beautiful nature. We're avoiding populated areas as we do not wish to be drawn into a conflict. To satisfy my curiosity about such places, a member of our cabal told me of a recently posthumously published book. It's a mix of fiction and history of the Federalist regime, and how its dictator utilized a multi-purposed military force to torture his opposers. I have not yet perused the contents of the book as its name — "The Slaughter Yard" — invokes images in my mind that distract me from work. To think that my home country would allow this villain, who orchestrated such senseless massacre, to live in exile inside its borders!

As our trekking through the untamed lands of Argentina continues, I'm hoping to reach Chile soon and map out their borders. I must be on guard for any ongoing conflicts, although it's the conflicts that, in turn, create the new borders for me! But my orders are absolute, and so I'll follow them. Europe never colonized the southern parts of the continent, and so remains in control of the indigenous tribes — for now.

Some of my fellow travel companions have expressed their disgust over what they call hypocritical behavior in the expansion of these countries' borders after proclaiming freedom — saying that they're no better than the people who colonized them to begin with. Their naivety is apparent as they scold me for being apathetic in their little echo chamber. I'm not wasting my energy on such idealism bordering more on fantasy rather than reality.

After all, so long as we each remain still our own, closed-off self and view others as different and separate, can a world without borders truly exist?

(A few clicking sounds mark the end of the recording.)

As the world enters an era of bloody revolutions and social reformations, tumult grips the Central and South American continent. In prior centuries, great empires like the Inca and Aztec fell when entire populations of indigenous people died from foreign diseases and interference. European powers colonized most of the continent, with a few exceptions like the Western Caribbean Zone where indigenous polities, runaway slaves, and settlers formed semi-independent communities.

Once the wealthy imported prisoners and African slaves to work the land due to a level of resistance to disease and a lack of familiarity with the region, believing this would make them more dependent on their owners and less likely to rebel. Now, generations later, the descendants of those slaves rise up in bloody revolution. As rebellions escalate across the continent, colonies tear free to independence. As European countries, like the United Kingdom and France, outlaw slavery in their heartlands and provinces, former and current slaves seek the same rights as free white people. Amid the tumult, magi take opportunities to delve into the past of the landscape and the ages before it fell to colonialism. Other Awakened scrabble to escape the chaos and change or look to the future instead of the past and seek to forge new identities in the emerging nations and peoples.

The independence of South American colonies threatens an incredible blow against the empires that once managed them. These imperial forces lose a tremendous source of natural resources and manual labor; the terrible price of struggle is paid for in lives. Pro-imperialists are torn between remaining at their posts or returning to their headquarters, either to regroup or to abandon colonies entirely. Even where imperial factions cannot retain complete control over newly independent countries, though, the material hunger of empires does not cease. Their choking grasp frustrated, they must now turn to the possibilities and opportunities of trade.

The ex-colonies are at a disadvantage when it comes to mercantile matters. Extraordinarily little investment went to the colonies for development except for maximizing profit and extracting natural resources. If it was no longer beneficial to keep a colony after a drought or pandemic, empires might well sell it to other powers, like how the French traded the colony of Saint Barthélemy to Sweden in 1784 so they could secure trading rights in Swedish Gothenburg. These colonies have been vital to their imperial owners with more produce to sell on the global market, and such produce becoming staples for their upper and middle-class families.

Social reforms in Europe impact the New World. The atrocities committed both during and after colonial rule is the topic of divisive debates among both the people of the Latin American continent and humanitarians in the Spanish Empire. The humanitarian movement and romanticism reach the New World from Europe, where it mixes with notions of nationalism. Such discussions and introspection are used to influence people within and without their social circles, seeking to sway public opinion. Many explore these ideas through criticism of imperialism and the European powers that once ruled here, especially the Spanish Empire, clashing with the remaining imperialist believers who consider it the foundation of everything the colonies have achieved. Even now, some still look to the European empires as sources of aspiration and inspiration for what morals their newly freed nations should embrace.

Magi often feel torn between their ideals and their morals. Opportunists see the potential to gain from the misfortune of others, while idealists risk burning themselves out in the process of realizing their dreams. Awakened of the Crafts and Traditions alike participate in local and national politics to a hitherto unprecedented level, not as hidden masters or shadowy manipulators but as equals to the Sleepers in eager debate and activism.

On the back foot since the wars of independence, the Order of Reason seeks time to regroup and rally, much like their Sleeper imperialist allies. The parade of conflicts on the continent seems endless, and so some magi of the Order of Reason resort to extracting newly-Awakened candidates entirely, shipping these recruits and converts to Europe. Their new masters believe they can educate and train this crop of junior Luminaries in safety. Such magi often struggle with conflicted feelings, torn between staying in their homeland and exploring the new identities of these free countries or obeying the duties and responsibilities that the Order impresses on them. A target for the Traditions, cabals in the continent's ports try to poach such individuals before they begin on the long journey across the ocean, offering them training and a chance to be a part of the still-ongoing struggle.

The Pearl that Sparked a Revolution

In 1492, Columbus arrived on the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, marking the beginning of a dark age for the indigenous peoples of America. French buccaneers later settled the western part of Hispaniola, naming the colony Saint-Domingue. They called it "the Pearl of the Antilles" not just for its beauty, but also because it was the most profitable French colony in the Caribbean. Following the revolution in North America and France, an insurrection

on Hispaniola sparked. Whether the uprising began because people saw the revolution as inspiring or because mainland Europe was preoccupied with its own war, the people of Hispaniola wanted freedom, and they struck while the iron was hot. The revolt spread across the entire island, renaming the new republic Haiti, the indigenous name of the island before colonial contact.

A strong sense of anti-imperialism remains in Haiti, so much so that they purged the country of any French colonists remaining after they declared independence. Centuries of subjugation have left scars on both the country and its people, and the population still fears that Europe might retaliate. Haitian magi share this antipathy towards their European peers. Not only were the indigenous magi oppressed as people, but their magickal traditions faced erasure. Haiti was one of the first countries to rebel against colonizers, and so Haitian magi view themselves as natural leaders in the fight against the Order of Reason. As with many other Central and South American countries, their focus is on securing their newfound independence and spreading resistance against the grasp of imperialism elsewhere. These magi call themselves the Messengers of Fire and, with the spark they lit for their revolution, they travel to other countries to spread their cause.

An Island of Conflict

Though many foreign powers initially refused to recognize Haiti's status, the people of Saint-Domingue declared their independence in 1804. The fight for freedom left its mark, and the tales that spread of the revolution were so bloody that many outsiders outright feared the Haitians as a result. The 1804 massacre scared white Europeans and Americans the most. For many, the tortured or imprisoned and later murdered white French, conjured the specter that such violent retribution from former slaves and subjects might spread to other colonies and conquests.

Stories of "the horrors of Santo Domingo" spread wide and far, and they are now common knowledge across the Americas. This strains foreign relationships following Haiti's independence. Refugees in the United States, slaves and slave-owners alike, shape the opinion that the Haitians are willing to slaughter anyone with pale skin, and white traders are unwilling to sign trade agreements with the republic. Additionally, many imperialists and pro-slavery politicians used the events in Haiti as a reason to reject the abolition of slavery in other countries.

At the beginning of the Victorian era, Haiti still struggles with unification efforts on the island. Many oppose the current government, thinking the country's finances are handled poorly and that heavy taxes will not fix the large debt they must pay for their independence to France. Imperialists waste no time in humiliating Haitians for the poor state of their country. Spanish plots brew to reclaim Santo Domingo.

Haitian Vodou

The Haitian slaves suffered greatly under the tyrannical shackles of their masters, treated merely as property. Many sought comfort in their homeland's beliefs, but West African slaves were actively suppressed by the French for those same practices. Upon arriving in the colonies, most slaves had only two weeks to convert to Catholicism. Slavers executed those found practicing Vodou openly, so many took to hiding beliefs in plain sight by masking them with Christian elements. Altars dedicated to Christian saints display Vodou influences if one knows what to look for; markings on the ground made with cornstarch, or the remains of a veve — a sigil representing a spirit.

Haitian Vodou shares the same belief system as its progenitor, West African Vodun — that of a god-like creator with subservient spirits called *loa* or *lwa*. The creator does not interfere with mortal affairs, but a human can communicate with the spirits. Many Haitian Vodou practitioners have loa for whom they consider themselves patrons, as there are many of them — one for each aspect in life. Some of these loa have larger cabals or organizations dedicated to serving and cooperating with their patron. Many Awakened Vodou practitioners view themselves as belonging to these groups as well, often several at a time, and fold their Sleeper spiritual beliefs into their new lives as magi.

The Search for an Identity

Disease and genocide took the lives of many indigenous people, and further persecution by the Inquisition killed the native cultures, tearing away the foundations of cultural and national interconnection. Both Magi and Sleepers now wish for their countries to form new identities. Some hark to the past to learn about what was lost, while others instead look to modern imperialist beliefs for guidance as to what path they should forge in this newly-emerging world.

Official colonial documentation uses the term *casta*, meaning lineage or caste, to describe the different mixed-race people in Spanish America. Even after the abolition of the *casta* system in Latin American countries in 1821, many still covet a paler complexion. The obsession with the "purity" of one's lineage runs so deep that some even resort to powdering their skin white to pass as a different category. First elected in 1884, the president of Mexico, Porfirio Díaz, is a notable example of this. Selecting a marriage partner is often a question of race, with imperialists viewing some as "dirty" based on their parents' ethnicity and that it can somehow be "cleaned" by breeding with a person with pale skin. Even though the end to imperial rule was brought about by many with mixed-race — their diversity a strength — magi like those of the Messengers of Fire fear that real societal revolution has yet to happen while the roots of imperialist ideals still run so deep.

Casta paintings that display the different (usually 16) groups in a systematic presentation are a point of controversy between magi groups seeking to eradicate the systemic oppression in Latin American society. One side argues that preservation of history is important, to not repeat the same mistakes. The other sees the paintings as intolerable symbols for elitist Spaniards obsessed with lineage and who believe in the supremacy of their people. Most of the paintings that display the different groups ranked in society are bound for the Spanish Empire. Those the magi intercept are either destroyed or kept in private collections.

Cuba

Even in the wake of revolutions, many empires still sought to keep hold of colonies for use as plantations and bargaining chips. In Cuba, the Spanish quelled the Aponte slave rebellion in 1812. Everything then seemed calm with no further attempts to establish independence until 1868 when Carlos Manuel de Céspedes, a sugar plantation owner, frees his slaves to fight with him for a liberated Cuba. Having embraced anti-authoritarian ideals during his European studies, he returns to Cuba in 1844 where he associates with other plantation owners of the same political alignment and from the less wealthy parts of the island, along with Chinese indentured workers, and women. Notable amongst them was Ana Betancourt, who argued that the fight against colonialism was vital for both female emancipation and the abolition of slavery. Those Awakened who took in the resulting war focused on logistics, seeking to turn the tide with seeming strokes of (still probable) luck, and influencing politicians' minds directly through magick.

Near the end of the Victorian era, the United States joins the war, though many on both sides are suspicious of their involvement. The United States publicly claims a humanitarian purpose but has a long history of trying to annex Cuba. Exiled Spanish general, Narciso López, led filibustering expeditions to seize Cuba for the U.S. (particularly the South) until his capture and execution in 1851, inspiring many more such expeditions over the following decade. In 1854, three U.S. diplomats stationed in Europe drafted the Ostend Manifesto, a secret proposal to buy (or otherwise seize) Cuba from Spain; when it is leaked to the newspapers, it becomes a political hot topic for its pro-slavery stance. Thus it seems clear that the United States has its eyes set on Cuba. In 1898, the *USS Maine* explodes and sinks in Havana Harbor, which spurs the rising superpower to support the revolution. Anti-American Tradition magi believe that this may be a false flag attack orchestrated by the Order of Reason. As conflict flares into a new Spanish-American War, their fears seem justified. In the aftermath, Cuba effectively becomes an imperial subject of the United States under the yoke of a restrictive treaty.

The Empire of Brazil

Once the most important Portuguese colony, Brazil is now an independent monarchy separated from Europe. The reigning family is the House of Braganza, the Portuguese royal family, forced into exile due to the Napoleonic Wars.

While neighboring republics struggle with their economic and political instability, the independent Empire of Brazil sees prosperous times. Nationalistic Portuguese are not pleased with the wave of independence movements sweeping across the continent that results in the loss of their most valuable colony. Many go to Portugal to serve their country and help out on the European front. Those remaining seek ways to regain direct Portuguese rule or swear fealty to the emperor, as he is of Portuguese royalty.

Portuguese settlers and multiracial descendants from outside of South America make up the majority of the empire's ethnic groups. The indigenous people and those of African ancestry are in the minority. When Brazil declared independence in 1822, between a fourth and a third of the population consisted of slaves. The number of slaves declines over time; in 1888, slavery is finally abolished in the country.

The previous Portuguese royal residence, the small Palace of the Viceroys in Rio de Janeiro (Paço Imperial), now serves as the workplace of the Brazilian royal family. Located in the middle of the city, by a large square, monarchs address the public from a balcony in this white, colonial-style building. Though its status was arbitrarily elevated when Portuguese King João VI had to flee to Brazil, the Palace's location offers a strategic view over the quay, which all ships approaching the capital must pass. The repurposed building always has guards stationed around it, but ultimately, lacks the fortification of a proper military fortification.

Although independence was declared in 1822, Portugal did not officially recognize Brazil's independence until 1825. As problems escalated in Portugal, Emperor Pedro I of Brazil abdicated in 1833 and sailed to Europe to fight for his daughter's claim to Portugal's crown. No one foresaw the sudden abdication, nor the worry for the future that spread among the population. The former emperor announced his son as his successor, but Pedro II is only five years old at the time — far too young to rule. The power-hungry fight to be appointed regent. A group of magi and royalist supporters, calling themselves the *Royal Defense Council*, seek to ensure the child is protected from such predators and given the finest education. Many Awakened, however, see the Council themselves as precisely the same sort of power-hungry manipulators as the competing Sleepers. Pedro II never sees his father or his foster mother again.

Filling the Vacuum

The Empire of Brazil enters the beginning of the Victorian era with a major power vacuum. Those seeking the abolition of the monarchy by overthrowing their former overlords are in the minority. Most political factions, including those of the Awakened, see instead an opportunity to obtain some of that power for themselves, imagining a future empire fit for their own ideals. Though Pedro II is only a child, many flock to the future emperor in hopes of influencing the boy's mind. The most overt are shown out the door within

a week of their appearance, especially given the clique of pro-monarchist magi seeking to eliminate rivals with what they see as harmful agendas.

The blue waters of Baía de Guanabara see ferry after ferry of foreign and returning magi, arriving under all manner of guises and wards to avoid the vigilant Royal Defense Council. Incognito magi lurk all over the royal palace — among the guards, servants, and the teachers. Some pull strings to sway the court on the matter of allowing the boy to ascend sooner, or never at all. Opposers to the monarchy entirely believe that as long as the royal family still stands, a Portuguese attempt to reassert dominion over the colony is inevitable — especially if the former emperor manages to restore his power in Europe.

Despite these competing interests, the Brazilian empire undergoes a period of stability and prosperity over the passing years. Though the young ruler might have had a turbulent childhood, he seems to develop into a benevolent man. Magi still stalk the shadows of his court amid their shrouds and secrets, and many see in this reigning a disinterest to rule that worries or excites them. Pedro prefers books to political intrigue; unsurprising, perhaps, given the would-be puppeteers and manipulators offering false aid while chipping away at his esteem.

The Royal Defense Council expends most of its efforts on this struggle for control over the Emperor. Having embedded themselves firmly in the court, the Council represents the status quo and the maintenance of the empire. Essentially the most overt of 'secret' societies among magi, the Council includes both Luminaries and members of the Traditions working hand in hand. However, the founding magi cannot disentangle themselves from this increasingly static hierarchy due to both loyalty to the Emperor and the need to keep a deadlock between the great factions. Representatives of both the Order of Reason and the Council of Nine have their hand on the tiller together, and neither dare step back from co-operation for fear that the resulting instability lets the other take full control. Established Council members find it hard to trust newcomers, and indeed their own superiors from outside of Brazil. Magi who would be rivals elsewhere are here caught in a strange, co-dependent relationship.

Who Can You Trust?

Various factions seek to plunge the country into chaos or return it into the hands of the country that subjected it to years of colonization. Even among magi, the danger is very present. Someone brutally kills both pro-monarchist and republican magi, leaving them vulnerable. The killers send messages to the cabals of the deceased with instructions to find the remains. Following the trail of evidence, the Royal Defense Council suspects the handiwork of a group of Nephandi though their purpose remains a mystery. Are they nationalists seeking to restore the Portuguese Empire to its height? This seems unlikely, the rightful heirs to the Empire of Portugal is the Brazilian royal family. Are they instead supporters of Napoleon trying to further weaken Portugal's legacy? Most probably, they have no other purpose than to wreak havoc among the factions so the Nephandi are free to pursue their grotesque ideals. The growing Nephandi presence stirs strong distrust for anyone outside of a given magus' cabal, including the newly Awakened. The risks and the paranoia weaken the grasp of all the major factions present in Brazil.

Though the empire continues to prosper within its borders, a violent storm brews on the horizon. The Argentine Confederate rapidly expands its territory, threatening the Brazilian peace. Deciding that the aggressive expansion to reach their borders is too dangerous, the Kingdom lends support to Uruguay. The magi of the Royal Defense Council struggle with making decisions for this inevitable conflict, but they all agree that allies are invaluable. The empire's military is smaller than that of Argentina, but the Brazilian magi hope that with unbelievable (yet probable) luck, infallible diplomacy, and brilliant military strategies, they will succeed in protecting the empire's borders. Luminaries seek to bolsters their guns and cannons with some additional firepower to literally blow the enemy away.

A Golden Age

Outside of the palace, Luminaries turn their eyes towards the Imperial Academy of the Fine Arts. As Pedro II ascends to the throne, and with the increase of immigrant painters, engineers, and visionaries, the Imperial Academy sees new interest from the people. Eclecticism is a clear favorite subject among the different Blocs, as by providing multiple theories to how the mind works, their power over it grows.

Still, no one has an exclusive hold on this prestigious building. While Luminaries may have more influence among the gentry and educated, the commoners enjoy the public shows held by magicians. These spectacular shows are excellent ways to connect with the masses, as well as providing a distraction for any other scheme a magus may have, even if risking being exposed by displaying their abilities among the entirely mundane Sleeper magicians. Magi performers often looked at how the Sleepers perform to understand what is possible in the territory even without magick, and what they can do to further embellish their performances.

At the beginning of the 20th century, bright-minded Brazilian scientists contribute great discoveries. Biomedical scientist and immunologist, Vital Brazil, creates anti-venoms for various indigenous species; inventor and aviation pioneer, Alberto Santos-Dumont, builds airplanes and airships.

With a growing interest in the country's pre-colonial history and traditions, many artists see fame through depicting the plight of the indigenous people. Magi specialized in manipulating Time hope that raising the public's feelings and awareness of history will eventually allow them to open time portals and learn more about the people of the past, who left nothing behind. Due to the extreme dangers of the Straits, such magi with time-traveling ambitions work in secrecy and often alone. Still, the knowledge they may glean is potent and alluring: were the magi of those pre-co-

lonial civilizations capable of magicks the Old World has never seen? Did they suffer from a backlash of the Straits as a consequence of European sleepers suddenly dominating, and what lessons might be learned from such that can be applied to the tumult overtaking modern magickal territories? Was there a supernatural aspect to the diseases that caused such a death toll?

Argentine Confederation

At the beginning of the 19th century, the Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata enters a period of numerous conflicts. These struggles involved coups d'état, mutinies, politically motivated trials, banishment, and imprisonments. This finally culminated in outright civil war, which by 1831 resulted in a three-way split in with land going to Brazil, the formation of Bolivia, and the Argentine Confederation. The latter's name refers to the region's mountains and silver mines.

The new borders stir a reshuffling of cabals and magickal factions across the region, as magi seek to maintain supply lines from their allies or hurry as the borders of territories that support their magickal practices shift as well. Some use magick on Sleepers to try to maintain calm across their chosen regions or to move resources and magi across the vast distances in the blink of an eye, but the Straits are particularly punishing here, and the Awakened and their methods are largely forced into the shadows as a result. The practicalities of survival necessitate subtler sorceries out of sight of the Sleepers. Into the void steps the Exploratory Society, becoming the pre-eminent magickal force in the region via a willingness to expend resources and bodies via brute-force techniques if necessary, mapping the new borders and investigating regions of the continent that have not fallen before the tide of imperialism.

Sleeper conflicts rage as internal problems escalates to violence. The biggest political factions amid this strife are the Federalists and the Unitarians. Though far from being the only country with bloody struggles unfolding, many magi consider the region a no-go zone for the inexperienced. Such restricted access, and the ongoing hostility of magickal territories in the region, means that magi remaining in the area have strong opinions regarding the ongoing political development. Those not prepared to die for their opinions quickly leave to a more stable neighbor or flee the continent entirely. The strongmen, *caudillos*, happily crush the meek and dominate the political sphere with physical force.

Resentment among the population against the European powers grows as both Britain and France invade Argentine territory. The animosity comes to a boiling point when both France and Britain issue a naval blockade in 1845. The Anglo-French blockade of the Río de la Plata lasts for five years, hurting the European empires more than the Argentine economy. Having previously resisted a French blockade in 1838–1840, governor Juan Manuel de Rosas succeeds again here in resisting two of the most powerful empires simultaneously.

The victory against Britain and France makes Argentine nationalists feel untouchable. They seek to eradicate any traces of European presence in the country and instead elevate everything *Rosismo*, representing the nationalistic faction supporting Rosas.

The Butchers and the Slaughtered

After independence, early proposals to replace the foreign monarchy in Argentina with a local one were rejected; having fought hard for freedom from European control, why now replace it with the traditional European model of rule? The resulting republican state was first led by the Unitarians, but the growth of the Federalist movement threatened their majority. The two political factions had opposed each other even while they fought for Argentinian independence, and there were absolutely no signs of their conflict slowing down. The Federalists wanted a strong leader, whom both the public and its soldiers looked up to that could turn the tide; sympathetic magi invested in the political sphere began searching and pushing for those they saw as the best candidates. In contrast to the magi in Brazil, those of Argentina are hardened and callous in their methodology. Their primary focus is obtaining power through military conquest rather than attempting to fund academies to churn out Ultra-Romantic art. The Order of Reason dominated, quickly expunging dissenters to their totalitarian approach or the further development of technological warfare. To establish total political control, the Order brook no opposition. To their luck, no shortage of Sleepers embraced the same ideal and a suitable candidate soon rose from the crowd.

In 1832, Juan Manuel de Rosas defeated the Unitarian League of Argentina. He is the Ivory Tower's paragon — their epitome of ideals, an unyielding man willing to crush his enemies and go beyond. As his first term as governor passes, there is a lull in the Argentine civil wars. His focus shifts to securing the frontier from the indigenous population. Still influenced by European views, most don't hesitate to treat the indigenous people as lesser beings. Nicknamed "Restorer of the Laws," Rosas has his forces slaughter civilians and indigenous people through multiple military campaigns, such as the Desert Campaign (1833-34) and the Conquest of the Desert (1870-1884). For the people he leads, the man is a driven revolutionary. Elite supporters close to him also greatly benefit from material wealth and confiscated land.

The use of colors is how the Argentine people show their allegiance. Rosas demands that those siding with the Federalists wear red. Anyone employed by the state has to wear a red badge with the inscription "Federation or Death." White, by contrast, is used to prove one's support of the Unitarians. Infiltrators who would undermine the other side cannot wear their true colors; copying the Sleepers, magi therefore often use symbols to show their actual allegiance. These symbols are of objects typically associated with the color of the party into which they have infiltrated and then painted in the color of their true loyalty — white apples, white hearts, red wings, and red unicorns. Cells of infiltrators

frequently change their recognized symbols to detect any leaks or impostors.

The atrocities inflicted by the regime's soldiers spawn the first Argentine prose, *The Slaughter Yard*. Though categorized as fiction, it describes in visceral detail the torture and execution of Rosas' opposition. In the face of such awful brutality, some Luminaries who once supported the Federalists attempt to flee the country or defect. They find few friends. Tradition and Craft magi offer them little welcome, fearing them to be infiltrators or simply disgusted at how late they have found a semblance of morals. The Order of Reason is predictably brutal in its own expurgation of such renegades, making good on the Federalists' motto — "Federation or Death." Still, the brutal response to this outbreak of doubt and uncertainty spreads ripples through the Order further afield. It's one thing when the Sleeping masses pay the price for the greater good, but quite another when the Order turns upon itself once again.

During atrocious times, many seek comfort in the house of God. The Chorus Celestial exploits the Order's reduced focus on religion; however, resurgent faith fans hatred of the indigenous people and their different way of life. Those who are not European or descendants of the Spanish colonists have fewer political rights. Imperialists see them as inferior beings — simply less than human. The Chorus tries to carefully manipulate public opinions about the practitioners of *Brujería*, different types of spiritual practices among the Afro-Latin diaspora that often incorporates Christian doctrine and iconography into older beliefs. Priests launch personal crusades against *brujas* and *brujos*; Christians vandalize *Brujería* practitioners' properties, seizing objects of Catholic symbolism from them. Not even *curanderos*, who view themselves as Christians, are spared the ire of the zealous servants of God.

This leads most of the remaining Dream-Speaker magi to retaliate or move out to Chile and Brazil. Unhappy with the treatment directed against both themselves and indigenous people, a group of Dream-Speakers launch frequent attacks against the Catholic church and their Chorister rivals, initiating raids to return stolen Brujería property. Simultaneously, the Dream-Speakers fight against Argentine expansion and Order consensus by impeding military operations through magick. The magi shoulder terrible risks of the Straits as they work magick to collapse mines or make the forests seem haunted, hoping to force public perception of the fringes into fearfulness.

Generation of '80

Like anyone clambering for power in Argentina, the Ivory Tower and the Order of Hermes butt heads. Everyone scrambles for influence within the Generation of '80 — the governing elite near the end of the Victorian era. Many tire of war and want nothing but to usher in a new era of

prosperity; such weary masses see the political elite as the best way to ensure future peace. However, those with power want more, and would happily deny the general public any say in what direction the country is heading.

The machinations of the Syndicate entangle the Bloc in Argentine bank loans and financial transactions, which ends in disaster when the Argentine government defaults on payments to the British banking house, the Baring Brothers, which in turn collapses; the catastrophic result of Syndicate monetary schemes stemming back to before Victoria's reign even began. The resulting recession strikes hard at Argentina and costs the Bank of England millions of pounds — substantial sums of which come from Syndicate coffers. Some in the Bloc believe themselves the victim of a conspiracy aiming to halt Order progress in South America, and fear a degree of coordination between rival magi on both continents.

In the aftermath, money loses purchasing power in society. Opponents find it harder to reason against expanding the borders for the potential gains to the Argentinian economy. However, public unrest is certain to overflow, since many immigrants came to Argentina on the promise of a change from the constant wars in Europe. Corruption has long since been taking root in the political class, and as the nation crests the end of the century and faces the new, those Awakened surviving the tumult and the brutality of the Order of Reason wonder which is the lesser evil — politicians thirsting for money, or politicians thirsting for blood?

Chile and Araucanía

During the mid-16th century, Spanish colonizers seized the northern and some central regions of Chile. The independent Mapuche people lived in the central and southern parts. The tribes of the north succumbed to Spanish expansion into their territory, but their resistance prevented the Spaniards from reaching any further than the Bíobío River. The indigenous tribes destroyed any colonial settlements south of the river. However, these lands would not remain free; the Victorian period sees them integrated by force.

Chile has a greatly varied landscape, ranging from deserts in the north to forests in the south. The frequent earthquakes mean that damaged infrastructure has to be rebuilt, sometimes from scratch. This environmental disaster ultimately proves to be too much for many Order of Reason members wanting to focus their effort on constructing their magnum opus without having destructive elemental forces work against them. While constructions may not be the strongest of cornerstones in Chilean culture, the country is rich in artifacts from ancient eras, underscoring the rich cultural diversity and artistic splendor of the Pre-Columbian Americas.

After declaring its independence from Spain in 1818, Chile emerges in the 1830s as a republic. While Chile does not experience the same level of immigration from Europe as neighboring countries did, both Sleepers and magi make their way to the country. Revolutions in countries like Germany and Austria bring some new arrivals; others come as part of a state-led colonization scheme. Luminaries from the Exploratory Society and the League of Constructors seize the opportunity and also move into the region in force.

The Divided Lodge: The Amalgamation and the Condors

Chile was the first country on the South American continent to abolish slavery. This is what makes the country an important gathering point for anti-imperialist magi. Members of a secret society, the *Lautaro* Lodge, issue a call to arms to see a free South America; many magi from across Spain and its colonies rally to the cause. The name comes from the famous Mapuche leader who valiantly fought against the Spanish colonizers in the 14th century.

At the beginning of the Victorian era, it seems as if the group has seen their goal of a free South America fulfilled, at least on paper. However, cultural imperialism is still propagated by the new political powers, and some Caribbean islands were still colonies. The magi that join the Lautaro Lodge are idealists and not short of principles to fight for, which itself becomes a point of contention. Once united by a singular cause, they are now divided on what their new focus should be. Some want to pursue the dream of a Francesco; a United Spanish America. Others disagree, believing that trying to unify the entire continent would mean giving up on what they have fought for: individuality and freedom. The lodge splits; the Amalgamation pursues a path of conquest, while the Condors seek to resist the Amalgamation in the name of liberty. Those who cannot bear to war with their former comrades scatter, seeking new causes clean of any such confusion.

Exploring the Strait of Magellan

The Strait of Magellan is of great interest to explorers. When the government orders expeditions of the area, members of the Exploratory Society seize their chance. At the time of its discovery centuries ago, rumors spread that the indigenous people of the area performed rituals that conjured a large amount of smoke, contributing to the naming of the islands. Imagining it to be the work of indigenous magi, Umbral phenomena, or perhaps something stranger yet, the Order of Reason intends to find and lay claim to a conclusive answer. Few Luminaries involved bother seeking out the knowledge of Chilean Awakened. With Chile's claim of the Strait in 1843 putting an end to fears that Great Britain or France might try to occupy the area, the heads of Order magi are filled with dreams of man-made canals or other technomagickal solutions to traversing the route.

The Preservation of Old Magick

Due to the south and middle remaining independent from European colonization, a large community of indigenous and tribal people still exists. Many magi now dwell in the area called Araucanía, often refugees from earlier imperial expansion. The Dream-Speakers and Cultus Ecstasis feel safer here than in neighboring Argentina, which is heavily dominated by the Order of Reason and its brutal scions.

Tradition magi establish stable communication with the native communities, though the Mapuche have no interest in simply sharing their knowledge and traditions, but they are willing to trade. A few Awakened Mapuche do offer recognition that the Dream-Speakers are both preserving and practicing indigenous rituals from various tribes and lost empires.

Called the *Leaves of Mate* after the tea they frequently drink, a band of older *machi* women, serving as Mapuche healers and religious leaders, surprised everyone by eventually offering a hand in cooperation. The native machi have a short temper when dealing with the men among the Tradition Awakened, especially of European descent, as they are not interested in European views of women and femininity. Dream-Speakers quickly adapt to and disseminate this information among their Tradition peers in the area.

The Mapuche Awakened, much like any other magi, have expertise within the ten Arcana. However, the leaders of the Leaves are particularly talented with creating wards against spirits and sealing up rifts in the Gauntlet, a knack developed through their performance of their traditional societal roles among the Sleepers as machi.

As Chile enters the middle of the Victorian era, the government places more stock in further expansion. At the time, the authorities claim that the imperial powers of Europe are eyeing the as-yet-unclaimed lands of the New World, but those Sleepers and magi facing Chilean intrusion into their territories find it a poor justification and there is little evidence to support it. Most assume it's just another excuse to seize their land and their lives.

Although a strategic plan by the Chilean government had already been made in 1829, their campaign does not start until almost 30 years later. No faction of magi claims ownership of this delay, although it certainly seems to frustrate the Order of Reason at first. Once this new war begins, however, a diabolical aspect becomes quite clear to Traditions and Crafts alike who seek to hold it back; it occurs parallel with the government-sponsored programs of extermination against the natives taking place simultaneously in Argentina.

Facing two military campaigns at the same time, the Conquest of the Desert led by the Argentines and the Occupation of Araucanía led by the Chileans, Araucanía begins to succumb. Luminaries of the Order of Reason exploit both campaigns, and their agents are often at the forefront of the effort, but the Leaves of Mate reveal their discovery that something more sinister may be at work. An unknown magus with an incredibly potent mastery of Fate is engineering sequence after sequence of probabilities, stacking up the odds against the indigenous population on every front until the dominoes cannot help but fall with horrific effect. The local Crafts and the Dream-Speakers must find the mastermind of this magickal assault and put a stop to them if they are to have any chance of holding back the tide. However, the identity remains as yet unclear, and not even the Order of Reason seems to know who is responsible for their sheer uncanny fortune.

Africa: Land of Plundered Spirits

(A ciphered letter with invisible ink discovered by a cartographer magum in Ethiopia.)

My dearest A.

I pray this letter finds you well. Don't forget to celebrate our small victory over the British, though hopefully not in the same way as we fooled them! It never ceases to astound me how they underestimate us, despite them coming to our home. Do they truly not understand that we fight in familiar territory? The British drink, and drink, not smart enough to realize that the sun leaves them dehydrated.

My beloved A, I can see the hesitation grow stronger in you. Sacrifices must be made to ensure freedom for our children, and so I have sacrificed my soft heart to become a weapon. You must become cold if you wish for the same. Your creed is to protect the Sleepers, as you call them, but in war, death doesn't discriminate, and you cannot save everyone. I thought you had realized this when you joined us and said that you believed that all life is equal. However, it's easy to claim a virtue by words, but one needs to look at a person's actions to see what ideals they truly embrace.

The British refuse to see their hypocrisy, placing all the blame for the remaining slavery on our people. They speak with such a tone as if this has always been their belief, but history tells a different tale. A transaction requires two parties, a buyer and a seller. No one is guilt-free in this crime. Their laws and norms still say that Africans are inferior and have less worth. Do you believe their words when the British speak of abolishing slavery because they view us as equals? The British would not tolerate slavery if it were their people that we sold, so don't believe the lies these imperialists are spewing. They say that we and their other colonies are not capable of running a "civilized government" by ourselves. The real reason for abolishing slavery is because they fear us and want to appease us while still ruling over our people. They thought they could cage us like beasts and not expect us to free ourselves. Absurdly enough, they never thought we would have had the

courage to fight back. They believed they were so superior that they grew complacent that centuries of abuse would not awake a sense of righteous fury within us.

"We have the power to topple empires, but for that, we must become the monsters they fear. They write everything terrible they can think of us, but we must continue to fight. Their way is by the use of pens and taking lives. It does not matter if we try to make them understand. We can tell them how we view ourselves and of our traditions, but the imperialists do not listen to what we have to say — they only read what one of them has written without questioning the symbols in front of them.

Should we perish without any resistance, without any words of our perspective, then nobody knows the truth. We must destroy our enemy from within, with no regard to what names they call us.

At the beginning of the 19th century, only a few colonies in Africa are officially ruled by external empires, mostly littered along the coast and primarily used as trade posts and supply stops for sailors on longer journeys. That will soon change.

Literacy in the continent is rare beyond Christian clergy and westerners. Most people convey their generational knowledge in forms other than the written word. In the West, the spread of literacy allows the dissemination of lies about these people in a format that excludes them from refuting or even providing their stories, giving the liars free reign to go unchallenged. This is a problem for all the indigenous religions on the African continent. Some band together against the common enemy to halt the forceful eradication of their culture and beliefs.

No centralized alliance exists between all the magi indigenous to Africa. Numerous Crafts exist with a shared purpose, but communication and cooperation between them rests on mutual understandings between their Sleeper cultures, and some Crafts remain unaware of many others beyond rumor and speculation. Most would rather remain with the people they know than invite magi from other lands into their organization, turning insular from years of persecution and the threat of outsiders. Though such magi often follow teachings to respect all God's creations, there is no denying that all too many have been too hurt to extend a friendly hand to those beyond their own people.

As more countries abolish slavery, some return to the continent that is their ancestral home. These people are from different walks of life, and come from freed families now searching for a sense of identity; Sleepers and magi alike struggle with the feeling of not belonging anywhere. However, the majority's search for identity and opportunities fails; few know the specific land or communities their ancestors came from, or speak the local languages. Among the African-American magi returning as part of the "Back-to-Africa" movement, most end up seeking each other out to form an alliance of displaced Awakened. They struggle with a mixture of loyalty and resentment, hoping to protect the continent from imperial expansion yet faced with local magi often offering them little welcome.

As the era progresses, imperial powers shackle more African countries to their yoke. All the empires of Europe seek to cut themselves a piece of African flesh and land. The Belgian, British, French, German, Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish divide the map of the continent among their patchwork of colonies. Magi and Sleepers alike try to stay alive and free in the middle of this changing world.

Despite the seemingly obvious threat of imperialism, some African magi accept or even welcome it, reaping rewards from working alongside the Order of Reason or seeing themselves as so far above the concerns of Sleepers that this new era merely gives them a greater opportunity for travel and wondrous sights. Most, however, see the imperial onslaught choking their magick and slaughtering their cabals, and they search for a way to fight back. Everything is at stake, and that sometimes pushes a magus to take questionable actions for the benefit of themselves and their people. An Awakened can struggle to figure out just who can be trusted in these uncertain times. Some isolate themselves entirely as a result, much to the dismay of potential allies and comrades.

The harsh dawn of the Victorian era challenges the magi of Africa to build bridges among themselves and withstand the march of imperialism — but their enemies are many, and powerful.

Magi in Africa

The Nephandi

The Nephandi revel in the suffering caused by imperial conquests all across Africa. From native oppression and slavery to the destruction of African cultures and the erosion of their belief systems, the Nephandi find themselves drawn to the continent like moths to a flame. The irony is that these magi are not the instigators of most Sleeper atrocities committed in Africa, and usually work on a much more local scale to avoid detection by Order of Reason Luminaries and local Willworkers. While a Nephandus might scheme for months or even years to corrupt a particularly choice soul, it takes entirely human greed and malaise to engineer abuse and murder on the industrial scale now taking place.

The Nephandi didn't create the slave trade or inspire the oppression of the native cultures, but they revel in the atmosphere it creates and work to further corrupt those involved. A Nephandus posing as a slave trader's assistant might encourage his master to greater atrocities, while another in the guise of a headman encourages a colonial farmer to abuse his local rivals. For every tainted Nephandi at work, there are hundreds of people touched by their evil. The fallen ones are nothing if not subtle.

The Nephandi in Africa are a fractious lot, working across racial lines following their various masters' wishes. Native Nephandi use European encroachment as a tool, waiting for their countrymen to reach the point where they gladly sacrifice anything to save their families and can be driven into the arms of darkness to protect the ones they love. The greatest victory for the Nephandi in Africa is their recruitment of magi burdened with grief and loss from colonial conquests and abuses. As each kingdom falls, the Cauls swell with fresh barabbi.

The massacres, atrocities, enslavement, and wars inflicted upon the native populations create a perfect environment for fallen magick. Resonance laden with death and despair oozes from the air of every slaver's camp and site of mass murder. Corrupted Nodes and other tainted places of power litter the continent; the sacred places of fallen kingdoms now serve as Nephandi strongholds. Flux-state territories litter sub-Saharan Africa, making life especially difficult for the Awakened.

The Order of Reason

The Order of Reason desires control, safety, and unity above all, and most of their members see the "uncivilized" otherness of Africa as an affront to this ideal. The Order backs the imperialist exploitation of Africa, eliminating supernatural threats, sharing their geographic and cultural knowledge, and carefully excising beings and places that don't fit into their vision for the consensus.

The Order makes careful use of geomancy to tame the proud African Umbrood, using bridges, railroads, dams, and roads to bind them while Willworker and Sleeper followers are either reeducated or slain. Local deities and spirits find their homes chosen for mining sites or their worshipers enslaved. Once they deal with the gods and monsters, the Order believes that rest will fall into place for their grand vision.

Not every Luminary is a staunch believer in an imperial way. The atrocities committed on the front lines turn more than one Enlightened against the philosophy of conquest and supremacy, leaving them questioning their own beliefs. A few even turn Marauder, unable to keep their grip on reality after the erosion of their value structures; better to hide in madness and dream of a new world. Few magi standing against the Order feel any great sympathy for these turncoats and broken Willworkers; it's a little late to find your conscience when your peers are already engaging in industrial-scale destruction, and so many lives are already lost.

The Traditions

The Traditions take an active hand in the exploration of Africa and, to some extent, the preservation (and sometimes looting) of both its magickal secrets and its terrors. The Council of Nine largely fails to extend this protection to the continent's unaligned magi, although hope to find a ninth member among the local Crafts keeps some Awakened trying to build those vital bridges between their factions. Rather than standing with the likes of the Ngoma, the Order of Hermes, obsessed with lost knowledge, sponsors expeditions to loot archaeological sites. While focused on dust-choked tombs, the Hermetics miss opportunities to shift the direction the consensus is moving.

The Dream-Speakers have a long association with Africa. Some hail from the continent and many others visit the wondrous Umbras there to seek wisdom from Umbrood witnessing the birth of humanity itself. The Dream-Speakers assist their African brethren as much as they can but their numbers are stretched beyond breaking point across the world. They are forced to turn down requests for aid so often that many other African groups question their allegiance.

Other Traditions spend time on the continent for their own purposes. Ahl-i-Batin spies find the tumult within the African Order of Reason makes intelligence-gathering easy, while the undisguised corruption found across the continent keeps Chakravanti reincarnationists busy. Permanent strongholds are rare outside the coastal cities though the Chakravanti have a large Chantry hidden in South Africa. A handful of groups, sponsored by European Chantries, seek out African magi to recruit for the Ascension War, but they have little interest in anything beyond garnering new soldiers in their battle against the Order of Reason.

The Crafts and Independents

Africa has a diverse range of magickal groups; from the scholarly wizard-priest Ngoma of the central continent, to the Vodun-wielding medicine people of West Africa who birthed the Bata'a, to the unspeakably ancient Hem-ka Sobk. By the end of the Victorian period, each of these groups finds themselves in deep hiding, avoiding the Technocratic Union's dread gaze.

Of these groups, the Ngoma are the most organized and respected worldwide, but sadly, despite warnings from the Dream-Speakers and their relative isolation in the continent's center, they find their former schools aflame and the kingdoms they support cast into ruin by imperialist greed. The Ngoma find themselves on the defensive from the start. As a group made up primarily of academics and wise folk, they are ill-suited to conflict, and the speed, depth, and sheer brutal intensity of the advance of empires leaves them reeling.

It takes years before the Ngoma recover enough to respond, but respond they do, hiding their remaining lore and schools deep in secure Umbral realms or distant locales while adapting to the Order of Reason's own technology and turning it against them. Ngoma surviving the initial conflict continue to teach the ancient ways while also pushing the population

to understand the newcomers and their technology. A thirst for knowledge and a willingness to adapt to change drive the Ngoma, allowing them to maintain their power base in the face of overwhelming force. The Craft even joins with the Order of Hermes for a time, gathering strength before standing on their own once more.

The Bata'a find their roots in the West African magical traditions. The Bata'a's siege mentality and broad world view suit the hidden battlefields of the Ascension War in Africa, allowing them to assist their fellow African magi with both knowledge and raw firepower.

The Hem-ka Sobk remain invisible during the era, steadily performing their tasks day after day. The Order of Reason often mistakes their actions for those of the Chakravanti or Ahl-i-Batin, allowing them to avoid detection while continuing their work. The revelation of the persistent Hem-Ka presence late in the period leads to much consternation among the Order of Reason, and the Luminaries mobilize a task force to investigate and root out the Craft, but despite their best efforts, the trail goes cold after "beings unknown" devour a steamer carrying a captured Hem-Ka spy back to London for interrogation.

Outside of the Crafts above, a multitude of smaller groups and individual practitioners are scattered across Africa. With hundreds of communities, kingdoms, and peoples, the mind staggers at the sheer number and variation of magickal traditions. African magi outnumber their European counterparts at the start of the century; by its end, this balance has been brutally tilted in the other direction.

Regions

Africa is a vast landmass, approximately three times the size of Europe, and home to a population of about 90 million in the early 1800s. Even a single kingdom or culture offers a backdrop for countless stories, and the constant upheaval during this age ensures that characters always live in "interesting times."

The sections below give Storytellers a taste of Africa during the Victorian era, but the sheer scale of the continent necessitates that this is only a brief glimpse of its true, diverse potential.

Ethiopia

European powers see the continent of Africa as nothing more than a plot of land to be claimed by any country that can stick a flag in the ground and fend off the other imperial vultures looking to expand their dominion. Ethiopia, though, has managed to protect its independence despite an onslaught of would-be colonizers.

At the dawn of this era, Ethiopia is in a long-lasting time of conflict that they call *Zemene Mesafint*, the Age of Princes. The Ethiopian lords fight against each other and the king, dividing itself into several regions. Regarding the monarchy as nothing more than a ceremonial title, the regional rulers act to reduce the king's power through their disobedience. Some local magi engage with this internal strife, hoping to return Ethiopia to stability, although their meddling and their struggles with each other likely contribute as much to the tumult as they do to solving it. Soon, though, a promising emperor, Tewodros II, takes to the throne, ending the Age of Princes in 1855 and centralizing power once more.

The Preservation of Old Magick

Remaining independent from European colonization, Tradition and local magi here form something of a cooperative effort to hold off malign influences and protect the landscape's magick. Ethiopia's native Crafts are largely distrustful of using foreign technology to record their history, causing some consternation among Tradition magi fearing the loss of more of Ethiopia's unique knowledge and history. Still, diplomats among the Tradition Awakened ensure that newcomers to the region have the importance of being understanding of local concerns impressed upon them.

Agreements to store and preserve local history make ground, but even once these informal treaties with the Crafts are in place, local magi largely remain fiercely protective of their culture and magick. Access to the wisdom of the Ethiopian magi remains extremely rare for Awakened outsiders. A few Tradition magi lose patience at what they see as a lack of compromise, seeking to crack open the secrets of the region and make records themselves, often on the back of Sleeper efforts.

Sentinels of Tradition

Waaqeffanna is the old religion of the indigenous *Oromo* people in Ethiopia. Their belief centers around a single god, *Waaqa*, who created the world and the creatures inhabiting it. Waaqa manifests as spirits, *Ayyaana*, that possess people to offer guidance and protection. By contrast, Ethiopian magi view frightful reports of evil spirits crossing over to haunt victims as a deadly consequence of the Straits should one not practice magick carefully. Inaccurate views about African indigenous religions proliferate during this era and are as common among European magi as they are among Sleepers; outsiders of the Traditions are therefore surprised to find that Ethiopian Awakened followers of *Waaqeffanna* intertwine it with a sophisticated interpretation of the laws and risks of magick.

Christianity is also prominent in Ethiopia, as parts of the ancient Kingdom of Axum lies within its borders. Tradition claims that the Ark of the Covenant rests somewhere in the region and that Queen Sheba was the ruler of ancient Ethiopia. Magi from the Chorus Celestial travel here in search of religious artifacts and records, translating works to modern languages.

Egypt

The Nile Valley is not just a cradle of civilization; it has also birthed many magical and technological wonders. Though its glory days are in the past, the land remains rich in mysteries and a gleaming jewel sought by Sleeper powers.

Many have staked claim to this ancient land, from Persia and the Roman Empire to the Ottomans. As Queen Victoria ascends to the British throne, Ottoman Albanian commander, Muhammad Ali, rules as Viceroy of Egypt.

European Interference

In 1867, Egypt gains the status of an autonomous vassal state under the Ottoman Empire. For those wanting independence, this isn't good enough. Others are content, however, as the Ottomans at the time have little presence remaining in the country. However, European powers soon focus on Egypt as a potential colony in their scramble for Africa. The country buckles under corruption, huge debts, and natural disasters. The British, taking advantage, occupies Egypt in 1882. For years, many nationalists considered the politicians to be mere puppets for the British, but the official change in status only fuels their rage. Among magi, the Traditions and Crafts reel on the back foot as the new rule comes hand-in-hand with a terrifying crackdown by Ivory Tower operatives. Militant magi are unable to catch their breath and reorganize to push back, hounded through the shadows at every step.

Suez Canal

The British dominate trade with Asia. One must sail around the African continent to reach there by ship. Merchants have long sought a faster maritime route, but precursor canals in ancient Egypt never spanned far enough to connect the Mediterranean with the Red Sea. The League of Constructors has agitated in the past for the construction of a water route through Egypt, even going so far as to fund archaeological investigation of the ancient waterways, but the price has always been such a colossal hurdle that it has never come to fruition before now. Even Enlightened science can only achieve so much.

After heavy lobbying and campaigning, the Constructor's wish is granted in 1859 when construction is finally approved and the French-led Suez Canal Company begin work. Luminaries swarm to the nascent canal to aid this technological marvel; some under the guise of French private investors, others who simply *are* French private investors.

The construction proves not only expensive but deadly. The working conditions for the laborers are so notoriously poor that many die shortly after arrival. Investors, eagerness overcoming their sense, take dangerous shortcuts. Whenever money runs short, the Constructors ask other Blocs to invest in the waterway, promising them a share of the profits once completed. The sheer ambition of the project makes the British nervous as they fear they might suffer losses in their trades with India, especially if the canal is open for everyone. Some British decry the French for using unpaid labor, equating it to slavery.

The problems for the people invested in the Suez Canal don't end after its completion. On its first day of passage, the ship *Péluse* runs aground, blocking following vessels. The Suez Canal cannot have ships travel in both directions simultaneously. Hostile magi foresee the humanitarian disasters this canal may enable, facilitating the exploitation of people and resources in the lands beyond, and some of the Traditions actively sabotage the movements of vessels belonging to imperial powers in the hope of discouraging the Canal's use. Some of the problems are more whimsical; an odd sport emerges among junior magi of the Order of Reason posted to the area, who bet on how fast given vessels will pass through the waterway, interfere with each others' chosen racers, and fiddle with official schedules to cut the margins of time even further, with no regard as to the consequences for the hapless Sleepers involved.

War Brings Innovation

Wartime is always a good time for innovation, and many Luminaries are in their element when thinking of how they can improve the logistics or mechanisms of warfare. In Egypt, the young Technocrats flocking to this new dominion are largely French and British. The French dominate the Suez Canal and explore the land, while the British focus on railroads. To ensure that their trains transporting resources and soldiers run smoothly, the British Royal Engineers set up their 8th regiment to support the military's need for functioning infrastructure. The League of Constructors send Mechanicians alongside these Sleepers to modernize the railroad and trains, seeing such methods of transport as a necessity to bring technological innovation to the rest of the world.

One invention that gains popularity among Luminaries at this time reflects the subtler currents of conflict — the covert efforts of spies and assassins that act out a shadow war behind the scenes of Egypt as powers and factions struggle for control over the land's future. Agents write ciphers on celluloid cuffs, a cheap material made to look fancy stemming from the city of inventions, Birmingham. These ciphers are numerical, made to look like a banker's calculations, and carry key information relating to needed resources, hostile movements, and worrying rumors. The material allows messages to be washed off and thus facilitate reuse, but celluloid is also extremely flammable and can instantaneously combust with as little as an ill-placed cigarette. While some Luminaries question the use of such a simple form of technology for vital message carrying — especially one so prone to catching alight — young Enlightened are quite taken by the romanticism and daring associated with figures of espionage, and celluloid cuffs remain popular for some time.

The Sahara Desert

This vast desert mostly consists of hamada and dunes. For centuries, the difficulties inherent in crossing it have protected the native clans of Tuareg people; so much so that imperial powers are often forced to work with the locals to accomplish their goals. In the Victorian Age, most of the great powers work around the desert entirely, and trade routes that date back thousands of years are but a shadow of their former selves. The desert conceals many secrets, from a hidden Ngoma Chantry in the lost oasis of Aoudaghost to several ancient cities buried beneath the sands, doubtless

containing terrors and treasure in equal measure. The desert is also the final resting place of some fallen god or ancient archmagus, whose death throes created the feature known as the Eye of the Sahara. Legends among the Ngoma and Hem-ka Sobk say that beneath the desert sands, the god's power still writhes, seeking a new home.

Southern Africa

Upheaval and Change

In 1815, the British Empire annexes the Dutch colonial lands in Southern Africa. Over the following decades the existing Dutch colonial population, known as the Boers, move north into an area known as the Transvaal, founding communities beyond the current reach of the British. In the meantime, Shaka kaSenzangakhona creates a large empire in the north, the Zulu Empire, destroying the Ndwandwe alliance in the process. The fragments of the Ndwandwe displace existing Nguni tribes, which results in a concentration of refugees and military forces in a relatively small region. While some groups flee, others find themselves trapped between the expanding Zulus and the displaced Boer settlements.

Wars and Discord

The concentration of so many cultures in a relatively small area, combined with population pressure and the ever-present slave trade, leads to an intense and extended period of local-on-local violence, known as the Mfecane, which lasts until 1840. During this time, the death of their last monarch collapses the great Rozvi empire, which had stood for nearly 200 years. The conflict effectively depopulates the region by the end of the 1840s. The Boers move further into the interior, coming across the remnants of settlements and refugees from the Mfecane. The Boers mistakenly assume that this is normal for the region, reinforcing their belief that they are bringing civilization to a "dark land."

The Boers come into conflict with the Zulus and their splinter nation, the Marabele, but still manage to carve out a territory for themselves. Within a short span of years, the British promptly annex this new territory and others taken by the Boers. During the mid-40s, the British establish sugar plantations in former Boer lands. Unable to get natives to work there, they ship in labor from India. This results in a large population of Indians in the region, both indentured and free. The population integrates with the British and Africans, but there is some conflict with the Boers. The Chakravanti and Akashayana slip into Southern Africa undetected within this movement of labor. Focused on native magi, the Order of Reason often miss these newly-arrived Tradition magi, scarcely conceiving that indentured laborers might possess real magickal talent.

The continual British annexation of Boer territory, often due to the discovery of gold or diamonds, results in the first and second Boer Wars in the latter part of the century. The British make war against the Boer-dominated South African Republic, also known as the Transvaal Republic, and British concentration camps alone kill over 20,000. These start as refugee camps, but the British scorched earth tactics against the Boers include rounding up anyone who could help them, including all women and children. The camps are overcrowded, ill-supplied, rife with disease, and lack adequate shelter. The Boer population dies from military-approved neglect, starvation, and disease.

As the century progresses, the British South Africa Company takes control of territories to the north, forming the company-controlled state of Rhodesia. The BSAC's corporate state appeals to many in the Order of Reason as shareholders control the governmental structure. The state's greed soon forces it into conflict with the Zulu splinter kingdom, Matabele, resulting in the two brutal Matabele wars.

The Zulu Empire

In 1818, Shaka kaSenzangakhona, also known as Shaka Zulu, takes over the Mthethwa alliance and begins a wide range of social, cultural, and political reforms. Shaka curbs the power of the tribal witchdoctors after a direct showdown and brings the ancestor-worshiping religion and the state together while reforming the Zulu army with more modern weapons and tactics. The Matabele, a breakaway faction of the Zulus, flee Shaka's punishment for disobeying him and carve out their own kingdom covering much of what will be Zimbabwe. In the later part of the century, the British demand that the Zulu emperor disbands his army and submit to their authority. In the resulting war, the British suffer their greatest ever defeat in Africa, but later rally to break the Zulu empire and sack the capital in 1879. The British government divide up the Zulu Empire into smaller kingdoms and, while the empire endures in this lessened form, it is never again a serious threat to colonial rule.

The Kalahari Desert

The arid Kalahari savanna stretches across a vast section of southern Africa. The desert features grazing lands and, while dry, has seasonal rains. Despite this, crossing the desert during the middle of the dry season or without proper guides is tantamount to suicide.

The most unique people in the Kalahari are the San, who have made the desert their home for perhaps 200,000 years. These semi-nomadic hunter-gatherers operate an equal and egalitarian society that doesn't sit well with the colonials who put stock in rank and strict gender roles. The colonials and other native groups both put pressure on the San; driving them out of newly claimed lands, hunting their traditional food animals to near extinction, and forcing them into conflicts they cannot win. San magi practice mysticism involving a combination of magick feats similar to, but distinct from, Verbena herbalism, Dream-Speaker shamanistic beliefs, and Sahajiya ritual. All three groups visit the San from time to time, seeking to learn from their distinct tradition.

Like its northern cousin, the Kalahari hides secrets beneath its sands. The ancient and long-dead Lake Makga-

dikgadi, now nothing but a dried-up bed, plays home to a vast Umbral court of piscine spirits that remember the lake as it was tens of thousands of years ago. A humble traveler may find themselves the lucky guest at a splendid banquet; a less respectful one may find themselves the main course, so let the wanderer beware. San legends speak of a powerful being that hoards the waters of the Kalahari under the sands, and that a powerful sorcerer might one day find its lair and release those waters, turning the sands into a wondrous green land.

Central Africa

Central Africa is a vast area encompassing uncharted jungles and bordered by sea and savanna. With some of the worst colonial oppression of the Victorian Age, the region's people are exploited, slain, and enslaved, its kingdoms brought down, and its lands scoured of resources. Idealists within the Order of Reason begin the age with high hopes for this region, hopes that die as imperialist Sleepers and their fellow Luminaries turn it into a slaughterhouse.

The Kingdom of Kongo

Founded in 1390, the Kingdom of Kongo is an influential independent kingdom at the start of the Victorian era, but it spends the latter part of the century as a vassal state of Portugal with Portuguese garrisons reinforcing the native king's policies. A royal council elects and advises the Kongo's king, who rules the Kongo and its provinces. As the age progresses, trading clans called *makanda* gain more power and interfere with politics, making handovers of authority difficult amid trying times. The kingdom is notorious for slavery and the practice continues after being outlawed in 1839 — first illegally, and later as a form of contract labor. As the century wears on, the ivory, rubber, wax, and peanut trades replace the slave trade as a main source of income. The kingdom has significant influence over the entire region and serves as a major trading hub. In the early part of the century, the kingdom bears witness to a covert war between Portuguese Luminaries and their opposite numbers in the Order of Hermes, who maintain a small colonial Chantry in the capital. The shadow war trails on for decades with most of the fighting done through pawns and mercenaries; local Awakened struggle to rein in the excesses of either side. The conflict is unusual in that its most spectacular battles were fought on or under the coastal waters.

The Luba Empire

The Luba Empire is noted for its traders and its deep respect for the arts. The sacred Luba kings are highly respected, even outside of their borders, and rule with the assistance of a council of nobles. This form of government allows the Luba a great deal of flexibility when working with imperial powers and other nations. Oral histories are kept by "memory men," who serve as imperial officials with significant responsibilities. The nation's position protects it from exploitation until the middle of the 19th century when the Luba find themselves under siege from slave traders, raiders, and ivory hunters. The failure of the Empire to modernize its military and the impact of constant outside threats brings this realm to an end. The kingdom's remnants are forcibly absorbed into the Belgium King Leopold's notorious Congo Free State. The Ngoma, former patrons of the kingdom, find themselves driven south as traders and raiders sponsored by the Order of Reason slowly eat away at the native consensus. The Bata'a try to assist the Ngoma, but social friction between the militant (and often outsider) Bata'a and the more reserved Ngoma makes formal alliances difficult to maintain.

The Congo Free State

In the 1880s, the Congo Free States springs into being following the Berlin Conference, held to place a framework on the European colonization of Africa. The Conference grants control over the new corporate nation to King Leopold II of Belgium. Thus begins decades of horrors and abuse heaped upon the native peoples by the invaders. King Leopold assures the other European nations that he intends to perform humanitarian works and will not tax trade in the region, but quickly moves to consolidate his power, exploiting the natives and stripping natural resources, such as copper and rubber. The King faces strong opposition from Arab slave traders and warlords, who effectively rule the interior; the resulting proxy war, from 1892 to 1894, costs the native population even more lives.

Leopold, using a series of laws, slowly centralizes control of the land and resources, forcing natives to only sell their goods to the government. By the late century, he has reduced the population to the status of serfs, forcing them to meet draconian quotas for rubber. Leopold's private army, the European-led Force Publique, serve as brutal enforcers during this time, committing countless atrocities. Mutilation — particularly severing of hands — becomes endemic. Human hands become a ghastly currency among Force Publique troops. The Congo Free State continues its horrific existence well into the early 20th century until official reports cause a public outcry and force European governments to act on what they likely already know.

The Congo Free State becomes a battleground for multiple mystical forces in this era. Monsters and dark Umbrood run rampant, while the Shadowlands heave with the influx of disquieted souls. Native shapeshifters and magi struggle with invaders, both European and African. Nephandi revel in the bloodshed, drawing power from massacre sites, while the Order of Reason attempts to enforce some kind of order on the region, and the local magi fight off the worst of the predatory supernatural entities. While it would be easy to blame the various dark forces for the horrors inflicted by the Force Publique and warlords, the truth is that the actions of the mystical community are themselves spurred on by the actions of Sleepers. Human agency and Sleeper imperialism are the driving forces, and the grotesque carnage in the shadows is just a warped reflection of the entirely mundane horror already taking place.

Some Luminaries later point to the Congo Free State as the complete antithesis of what the Order of Reason expected when they began backing imperialist thinkers. Other Enlightened scholars ask what they expected would happen when Sleeper greed and casual disregard for human life merged into a single entity. This is, itself, a convenient excuse; the truth is that among the Luminaries involved at the time, the atrocities are believed to be a price worth paying, or even the entire point of the enterprise. The Order of Reason is not blind to what it helps perpetrate here, and moralizing among future generations of Technocrats does not negate the crimes it commits in the nightmarish now. In the end, the Congo Free State is a monument to everything wrong with humanity and European imperialism, and a grim reminder of the darkness within the human soul.

West Africa

The Ashanti Empire

The Ashanti Empire is one of the few native kingdoms that survive the Victorian era, albeit in a diminished form. This wealthy empire is mostly made up of the Akan people, with several client states and tributary kingdoms. For hundreds of years before the dawn of the 19th century, the kingdom itself has been accruing wealth with gold mines, an active trade in a wide range of goods, and considerable arable lands. Using this wealth to purchase European firearms, they have one of the few armies in Africa primarily armed with such weapons. The coastal client kingdoms are important to the Ashanti for trade and, early in the century, a series of wars and rebellions weaken the empire.

The Dahomey kingdom to the East has a querulous relationship with the Ashanti and the two kingdoms have clashed on the battlefield more than once. During the 19th century, the Ashanti go to war with the British Empire on four occasions, and while they do well initially, the later wars see them reduced to the status of a British protectorate by the early 20th century. The Ashanti army is one of the largest in Africa and even has dedicated battlefield medical units and specialist troops. While Ashanti tactics are considered excellent, their firearms lag behind the times, and they aren't as effective as the British repeating rifles and Gatling guns.

The Empire has an impressive system of roads and uses drums for long-range communication. Ashanti drummers can send complex messages as quickly as the telegraph. Indoor plumbing and the adinkra symbol system are further examples of the innovations used by the Ashanti.

The state is a theocracy in which the Ashanti king is a representative of the Ashanti ancestors. The Ashanti king is an elected position and, while they wield considerable power, a council of elders and a complex bureaucracy temper the king's will. The council of elders can even remove a king from power, eliminating them as an agent of the earth goddess. A dethroned king loses their right to sit on the golden stool (*sika dwa*), the throne of the Ashanti given to them by the gods and reputedly containing the soul of the Ashanti nation. The consequences of such a focus of belief falling into the hands of the Nephandi keeps several archmagi up at night.

The Akan people believe in a supreme sky god, Nyame, and a mother earth goddess, Asase Ya. Beneath these gods sit the Abosom, lesser deities that assist humans on Earth. The Abosom are akin to the Orisha of the Yoruba faith and are similarly invoked. The Bata'a grow from this faith and others like it, and, use the relative safety of the Ashanti kingdom as a base of operations to dive deeper into the continent.

Dahomey

Situated on the trading coasts of Western Africa, Dahomey is a kingdom built on commerce. At the beginning of the Victorian era, Dahomey is free from its tributary status to the neighboring Oyo Empire. Notoriously, one of its key exports is slaves, something many magi of the African Crafts heavily criticize and hope to stop. These slaves are prisoners captured during wars or raids, then sold off to Europeans for weapons. A response to the slave trade is the founding of the city, Abeokuta, built by people running from slave hunters. Eventually, the city tries to compete with Dahomey in trade while also being a haven for those escaping slavery. Abeokuta isn't the only settlement established for this reason. Drastic measures lead to a tribe constructing the village, Ganvie, in the middle of Lake Nokoué. From the bigotry of not wanting to associate with native Africans, let alone admit they might possess valuable knowledge, some of the magi in the League of Constructors dismiss even the possibility of learning how the Sleepers constructed buildings on top of water. Intrigued by the possibility of implementing that knowledge in cities, such as Venice, that are prone to flooding, others in the faction, in particular the Mechanicians, push for increased Order interference in the region in the hope of pillaging Ganvie for its secrets.

A Franco-Dahomean friendship treaty in 1851 allows French missionaries to enter Dahomey, offering an avenue for covert Luminary influence. The French spare no time in forcing their worldview and limitations on the people, although some find their own beliefs impacted as they witness things that go against their preconceptions, such as the *Mino*, the "Dahomey Amazons," a high-status, all-female military unit serving the country's king.

Forty years after the treaty, the first war between France and Dahomey breaks out, which ends with Dahomey forcibly making concessions to the French. The second war a couple of years later ends with the defeat of King Béhanzin and the kingdom's annexation to the French colonial empire. It strikes a hard blow for the Dahomey people, who have desperately fought to keep their homeland free. Those wishing to remain at liberty make their way west to Liberia, or east to Ethiopia.

Transatlantic Slave Trade

Slavery is a major issue in Dahomey. The country relies heavily on trade with the European Empires and the United States, so eliminating their most sought-after commodity would greatly impair Dahomey finances. The people here

have polarized opinions on the trade, either extremely against it or positively for it. Some of the pro-slavery side claim that the rise of abolitionist sentiments in Europe is nothing more than an excuse to weaken the African kingdoms by refusing to trade with them as equals, condemning them for the very slavery of which the European powers once so eagerly took advantage, and serving as an excuse to lay claim on their lands. After all, being opposed to slavery doesn't make one anti-imperial, as the British Empire has officially abolished the practice in its heartland yet still seizes new lands for its own. Many Dahomey people simply view the British as enormous hypocrites on the matter.

Ghezo, the King of Dahomey at the dawn of the Victorian era, ascended to the throne in 1818 with the aid of a Brazilian slave trader, Francisco Félix de Sousa, as part of a coup d'état against his brother, the former King Adandozan. The circumstances of the coup surprised the magi of Dahomey; while Ghezo has his supporters among them, frightening rumors spill among the cabals of the local Crafts that de Sousa has Nephandi patrons, now poised to harvest the rewards of some dark scheme. Nothing concrete ever becomes of it, but local Awakened struggle with recurring Nephandi activity throughout the rest of the era and can never quite stamp it out.

As the European empires increase their pressure to stop the slave trade, the Dahomean King promises to end the trade in 1852, and a British blockade of Dahomey ports forces the matter. Celebrations are short-lived, as the Dahomey Kingdom resumes the slave trade five years later; it is too profitable to give up. Europe might have a waning interest in slaves as a commodity, but slave ships still sail to the United States and its ravenous appetite for human lives.

Vodun

The Fon people in Dahomey practice Vodun, the origin of many associated faiths in the New World. Some interpretations claim the existence of a god, who does not spare any time to listen to the pleas of humans, or that there are two ever-conflicting parts of this divinity. In service of these gods are spirits, whom priestesses and witches call upon to ask for aid. Maintaining good relations with spirits is paramount, so shrines are built in family compounds and around villages.

The importance of blood, a life-sustaining source, in Vodun causes the most disturbance among outsiders, especially if violence and death are not part of their daily lives. However, the sacrifices are always chosen with care for a particular purpose and nothing goes to waste. Some of the meat is eaten, and body parts are made into talismans for use in other ceremonies.

Though many practice Vodun in their daily life, the king and royal line holds particular sacred status within Dahomey. The Annual Customs of Dahomey is a long-standing tradition held in the capital, with the royal family taking center stage, and parades and gifts for the King. Europeans are frightened by the human sacrifices that take place as part of the celebration in honor of the royal ancestors. Many outsiders conflate these sacrifices with the practices of the wider Vodun faith.

Asia: Empires Old and New

To Little Sis, Little Bro, Auntie, Uncle, and everyone else at the Company:

Jt's Lü Buwei, but not that Lü Buwei. Obviously. Look, if you wanted a logbook with just the facts, you should have sent Little Sis.

1840 Snake Month 20th — On our way to Manilla. The mate says it'll take ten days, but J have a feeling that we're going to have great tailwinds the whole way there.

Snake 26th — The first mate might not be wrong after all. Sailing past Taiwan should have been a simple heading confirmation. Jnstead, a French merchant clipper attempted to intercept us.

Originally, they were sailing towards Taiwan like everyone else, but they came about hard for us, white water in their wake. They ran swiftly, clearly experiencing the same sort of luck with the wind that we'd had. We had to play hide and seek with them for most of the day. Fortunately, a pod of whales breached in front of their bow, forcing them to make maneuvers, buying us enough time to put the horizon between us. J'm burning some incense to Mazu as thanks. J don't know what they wanted, but we weren't about to wait to find out.

Snake 29th — Arrived in Manilla. Jt looks like we'll have buyers for all of the porcelain crates by tomorrow. The payment will be mostly silver. Boring. J was hoping for tobacco or coffee. Even hemp would smell more interesting than silver. J discreetly asked if any of

the Filipino locals knew about strangely aggressive French merchants and received a vague answer about a Guild of some sort. Unhelpful.

Horse Month 1st — Received payment of 2 picul and 55 catties of silver. More than twice my weight! We also received a few taels that J distributed to the crew as thanks for their help in escaping the French. Heading to Jshigaki. The Yaeyaman people of Southern Ryukyu receive less trade than their Okinawan counterparts, so we should get a better deal there.

Horse 3rd — Made it to Jshigaki and were immediately met by the Yaeyaman people, who were ridiculously friendly. Despite the cheeriness of the people, the crew feels nothing but dread. They whisper about an approaching typhoon, but it doesn't smell like a storm to me. Jt feels like we're being stalked. You know J'm great at hiding, but even J can't shake whatever's out there. Jt must be able to see as Little Sis can, except J don't think Little Sis would try to eat me...

The Governor received us, treating us to a lavish dinner of pork at his mansion, which looks quite new. He explained that it was built only a few decades ago. The rounded red clay tiles of the roof remind me of some of the Jmperial buildings in Beijing. After the dinner, J struck a bargain that should prove quite lucrative for the Company, although the crew might mutiny over it. J can't say that J'd blame them, but J had to probe the ambergris barrel to make sure it was full. J guess J got my wish for interesting-smelling trade goods. J need to stop wishing for things.

The Early Victorian Days (1838–1858)

The early Victorian era is a tumultuous time for the entire continent of Asia. To the East, war; to the South, war; to the Southwest, the beginning of a concerted attempt to shift the balance of power in one of the most powerful nations of the world.

Central Asia

Despite being instrumental in placing the ethnically Manchu Qing Dynasty on the Dragon Throne, the Mongols are in a bad spot. The previous emperor, the Jiaqing Emperor, emptied the royal treasury fighting rebellions and opium smugglers, and then passed this deficit on to the Mongol people in the form of taxes. The romantic days of Mongols riding the endless steppes are at an end as more turn to farming to make ends meet. Even in the cities, Mongols struggle to find a place. Beyond financial problems, the Qing prohibition on Mongol-Han intermarriage effectively prevents them from assimilating into mainstream Chinese culture. Wulong enforcers drive Mongol shamans from the cities, further exacerbating the situation.

In the western frontier of China, the Xinjiang province, the Uyghur, Hui, and Kazakh peoples live in relative peace. At least, until 1852, when Wali Khan first invades the province. The notoriously cruel Khan has Uyghurs executed for increasingly petty reasons. According to at least one account, Wali accidentally murders an honored guest when he mixes his recreational substances with his battle drugs. When the Qing army finally engage his forces in 1857, they find themselves outnumbered 12,000 to Wali's 20,000. Fortunately, the two-month-long battle diminishes Wali Khan's strength and violence of action. The moment his allies feel the sting of defeat, they abandon him, restoring an uneasy peace to Xinjiang.

Eastern Asia

Japan makes it through the opening of the Victorian era unscathed physically, although the arrival of America's Admiral Perry in 1853 nearly sends the Sleepers of the island nation into fits that are not unlike the Straits. Among his expeditionary fleet are four black steamships, whose mere existence forces the Japanese people to confront numerous uncomfortable truths, particularly the fact that they can no longer shut the world out and pretend it doesn't exist. Although Perry arrives with a forceful demand that Japan opens its borders to the West, he also provides the gift of nearly 200 modern firearms. The Consensus of Japan changes overnight. A new world of danger has opened for the Japanese — magi and Sleepers alike. Japan's Five Elemental Dragons spend the following month in a stupor before the Earth Dragons institute a plan to modernize the Dragons that ultimately inspires the Meiji Restoration.

Topping off this massive dose of strangeness, the shogun of the Tokugawa government, Ieyoshi, is nowhere to be found at the time. Whether he is lost, ill, or being tortured by oni, no one can say, but the diplomat, Prince Hayashi Akira, finds himself in the unenviable position of negotiating on the behalf of his entire nation in the face of a fleet of gunships. He successfully stalls long enough that the Americans leave, vowing to return the following year. By the time they do so, Ieyoshi has been found — dead — and his son, Iesada, accepts the Americans' treaty, beginning the end of 200 years of isolation.

Having struggled for decades with British smugglers bringing in potent Indian opium, China finally takes decisive action to outlaw the substance. To prevent more Chinese citizens from falling prey to addiction, they destroy an entire warehouse of the drug in 1839. British traders retaliate by pulling their government into a brutal three-year military campaign that crushes Chinese resistance, forcing the Emperor to sign new trade treaties at gunpoint. In 1856, the whole drama plays itself out again, this time with the French joining in. The Wulong directly oppose the Westerners, although their resistance is complicated by agents of the Order of Reason, particularly the colonial Void Seekers and The Golden Guild, as well as the Water and Earth Dragons of the Dalou'laoshi, working all sides of the conflict and finding common ground in war profiteering.

Korea, also known as Joseon after the ruling dynasty, has been living in a strange sort of terror over the past few hundred years. The most successful invaders of Korea — the Jurchen tribes — rule Korea's longtime ally China as the Qing Dynasty. Their second-most successful invaders — Japan — are getting armed with modern firearms from the Americans and warming up to the idea of conquest. Topping it off, King Heonjong has utterly no power. His grandmother, Queen Sunwon, serves as regent until he comes of age, and then *keeps* serving. In 1849, the king dies suddenly and mysteriously, and the Queen once more becomes the official regent, at least until she installs Cheoljong as the king, an illiterate distant relative, who signs whatever she puts in front of him. No one outside of Korea seems to notice the Andong Kim clan is in charge of everything. At least, no one except for the Knights Templar, who appreciate the Andong Kims' protection of Korea's burgeoning Catholic population. Some survivors of the 1837 massacre of the Cabal of Pure Thought are rumored to have found sanctuary thanks to the Kims.

Pacific Asia

The beginning of the Victorian Era holds hidden dangers for the Kingdom of Hawai'i from all directions. Although King Kamehameha I unified the islands through blood and diplomacy just a few decades ago, the Hawaiian people are worse off than they had been as separate nations. British,

French, and American diseases ravage the population, and that is merely the start of their troubles. By the time Kamehameha III takes the throne in 1835, many of the people look to Christian missionaries for political and spiritual guidance, just as they did with their kahunas. Unfortunately for the Hawaiians, these missionaries are completely inept and untrained as politicians. With such advisors, it is no surprise that the King accidentally loses control of the Kingdom to the British Crown for a few months in 1843.

Continuing this trend, American hunger for sugar causes a surge of money into politics, with American businessmen bribing missionaries to counsel their Hawaiian flocks favorably towards Western expansionism. Predictably, the Golden Guild and the Invisible Exchequers fight each other just as much as they do the local Kopa Loei kahunas over financial and political control of the islands. Blindsiding everyone, a small group of fanatical survivors from the Cabal of Pure Thought enacts a horrific ritual in 1848 that shreds the Consensus of Hawai'i's Territory — as well as themselves. In the blink of an eye, land ownership becomes a reality, and the Cabal is finally dead.

New Zealand has just been annexed by the British, and the New Zealand Company wastes no time establishing settlements and arranging for vast numbers of colonists to arrive. The Void Seekers accompanying the Company gun down local Kopa Loei on sight, starting a guerilla war that lasts most of the Victorian Era. The Company's leadership aims to create a ruler slightly better than that of American slavery or Australian convict labor, by creating a permanent economic underclass through land ownership. The British government approves the plan and New Zealand is a self-governed colony in 1852, despite the violent misgivings of some of the native Maori.

A boon for the economy of the Philippines, the port of Manila is declared an open port in 1837. As ships from around the world dock, an influx of new goods, as well as foreign wealth, flows into the island nation. It also means an increase of foreigners, something with which some of the island peoples are unhappy. The Filipinos themselves face carefully constructed systems of discrimination forged by the Invisible Exchequers.

Although Japan had technically barred the Ryukyu Kingdom from trading with Westerners, Admiral Perry arrives at Okinawa in 1852 with his gunboats, threatening to attack. Without much in the way of gunpowder weapons or a standing army, the Ryukyuans reluctantly agree to his demands, sending Prince Ōzato Chōkyō on a trip aboard the Susquehanna. While the Prince is hostage, the King is interrogated about Ryukyuan defenses by a brother of the Void Seekers. Much to everyone's confusion, the brother evaporates, prompting the Prince's safe return. Fortunately for the Ryukyuans, France's trade mission in 1858 goes significantly more smoothly, ending in positive relations and the installation of new artillery pieces.

Southern Asia

Large swaths of India are firmly in the grip of the East India Company, a mercenary force backed by the British Crown. The parts that aren't, namely Rajputana and Nizam, have "princely state" agreements with the EIC to avoid foreign military control. The Sikhs of the northern province of Punjab are among the last few holdouts, leading to the Anglo-Sikh Wars from 1845 to 1849. The Hindu Kalika Rajas sect of the Sahajiya rises to prominence here, the Kali-worshipping magi working in loose collaboration with the Chakravanti to mercilessly destroy entire formations of the Order of Reason's colonizer sect, the Void Seekers. Although the Kalika Rajas repeatedly defeat superior forces, they suffer tremendous losses and ultimately fail to prevent the British takeover of Punjab.

On the coast of India, Bengal takes a wildly different turn. Well-educated Bengalis attending Hindu College in Calcutta in the 1830s form the radical Young Bengal movement. They question the nature of Hinduism, society, and government. Although their reach does not extend past the wealthy, other movements pick up on the ideas and begin challenging the ideas of the caste system, marriage, and equal rights among men and women. From these movements, the Naga Societies take root in the 1840s. Although the Naga receive an invitation to join with the Dalou'laoshi in 1852, they do not formally join until later.

In 1857, the sepoys of Delhi rise against the East India Company. Though targeted against the British and often couched as a freedom movement, the war exposes deep cracks throughout India. Regions with strong British military presence, such as Bengal, Bombay, and Madras, don't join in, while the former Sikh Empire of Punjab eagerly throws their lot in with the EIC. They see fighting the rebels as a way to prove their loyalty to the British and be further rewarded.

Southeastern Asia

The newly independent Burma and the British run into each other in Assam, where their colonial goals clash. Each country seeks more territory, but there isn't enough to go around, never mind the Assamese concerns on the topic. From 1824 to 1852, Burma and Britain fight off and on, each seeking a greater piece of the pie. Predictably, the better-funded British claims victory, gaining much of Lower Burma, especially after the violent colonial forces of the Void Seekers join the struggle.

Toward the tip of the peninsula, Vietnam and Rattanakosin have been fighting for control of Cambodia since 1832. Although the Vietnamese Akashics have led their people to control over the Cambodian throne, the influence of their puppet Queen Ang Mey has done little to quell their Siamese Akashic rivals. Between the two forces, the Khmer of Cambodia can see no future where they don't live under someone's boot. Despite a few breaks in the violence, Cambodia does not see (albeit brief) peace until 1847, when both of their conquerors decide to share control.

The Thai Rattanakosin Kingdom, now the dominant power in the region, terrifies the West, who deeply desired an open Siam. The 1840s are a flurry of diplomatic missions from Britain and America, each with their own demands for diplomatic immunity and favorable trade policies. The king rejects all of them. Not until his brother, Rama IV, succeeds him in 1851 does the Kingdom consider the agreements. With the recent defeat of the Qing Dynasty during the First Opium War, Rama IV realizes that modernization offers Siam's best chance at survival, despite the Siamese Akashayana's protests. In 1855, the reforms take their most visible step, the opening of Siam to Western trade, and by extension, the Order of Reason, although the local Akashics keep the Order's influence in check, at least for a short while.

Western Asia

Having repeatedly defeated their former Persian masters, Afghanistan faces a new threat: the British. An expeditionary force from India arrives in Kabul to ally with the Emir, though their plan rapidly changes to deposing the Emir and installing a new one of their choosing. The British choose poorly with Shuja Shah, whom no one likes. In 1841, Akbar Khan leads a violent uprising, culminating in the massacre of nearly all 16,500 soldiers and civilians in the expedition. Strangely, the ensuing Anglo-Afghan War sees factions from the Order of Reason taking opposite sides on this conflict, with the Void Seekers taking a brutal beating from their peers in the Invisible Exchequers and the Ahl-i-Batin, much to the confusion of the Batini. Had the Exchequers explained their plan to use Afghanistan as a buffer zone, they might have spared the Order the loss of a few magi.

The Ottoman Empire, not yet fully modernized, is on the decline, having lost territory to rebellious regions as well as Russia. The Tanzimat era begins in 1839, a huge reform effort that is as much to modernize the nation as to foster a sense of national pride that is disconnected from race or religion. The Tanzimat movement pours ice water on nationalist movements, elevating the Empire's non-Muslim citizens, and eventually culminating in the Reform Edict of 1856 that ends forced religious conversion and the execution of apostates. While not quite religious freedom, it is a hell of an upgrade. Various sects of the Taftâni argue over what they think about these changes, often coming to violence. Fortunately for the Taftâni, this period also sees the Crimean War, another Russian incursion, which gives a clear enemy to fight.

Middle Victorian Asia (1858–1880)

If the early Victorian era was Asia's wake-up call, the middle sees the region getting ready for the hard work ahead. The East Asian nations of China, Korea, and Japan finally accept Western technologies and ideas. Vietnam and France throw down, as Emperor Nguyen's treaties from the last century put the tropical nation in the crosshairs of a European nation that has a much greater thirst for blood.

Central Asia

With even greater Han migration to Mongolia, the Mongols become economically desperate, frequently unable to pay their taxes, leading to a spiral of taking out loans from predatory moneylenders to pay those taxes, and in turn, leaving them unable to pay the loan sharks. The Water Dragons of the Dalou'laoshi revel in their clever scheme and stream of silver taels. The Mongols have become second-class citizens in their homeland.

Dissatisfied with their position in the Qing Empire, Hui, Uyghur, and other Muslim groups in the western provinces get into frequent brawls with their Han neighbors. As the anti-Qing but ethnically Han Taiping Rebellion grows in strength and heads towards the Hui, the minority group begin forming defensive militias. No friends of the Emperor, the Wunung provide magical backup to the rebellion, to the dismay of their perennial foes, the Wulong. Stretched thin from fighting the main body of the rebellion, the Wulong are slow to react, leaving the Hui to fend for themselves. In 1862, riots break out and the Dungan Revolt is on. Muslims are split between rebels fed up with everyone and those who remain loyal to the Dragon Throne in Beijing. With many Han facing the brunt of this violence, it isn't long before the army steps in. Chaos descends upon the region. People of all races and religions rebel, even some of the Han.

The 1860s and 70s spell death for millions. In addition to the violence, countless farming communities flee their farms, leaving their crops untended for years. The resulting famine is brutal. It isn't until 1878 that the Qing finally pacifies the region. A huge number of rebel Hui flee to Russia. All in all, the western provinces' population drops by 20 million. Hui outside of the western provinces are completely unaware.

Eastern Asia

In China, the Taiping Rebellion, also known as the Taiping Tianguo, takes advantage of the Opium Wars to begin their work. Hong Xiquan, a Christian zealot, rallies an army in 1851, then marches into the eastern Chinese city of Nanjing in 1853, massacring the Manchu civilian population of the city and attracting the ire of the Earth Dragons and Wulong. They quickly find that a cell from the Void Seekers is aiding Hong. As the rebel army grows more ambitious, its leader becomes increasingly paranoid, hiding from the public eye, spying on allies, and having them assassinated. Hong eventually sends his army to Shanghai in 1860, successfully capturing the city but losing it again soon thereafter. In 1864, the Xiang Army, Wulong, and Earth Dragons lay siege to Nanjing. Several months into the siege, the Void Seekers flee the city under the cover of night. When the sun dawns the following day, the rebel leader and most of his army are dead.

Smarting from the Opium Wars and the capture of Nanjing, the Qing government proclaims the beginning of the Tongzhi Restoration in 1860. During the next 14 years, the Chinese government modernizes armies, factories, and infrastructure. China has finally broken its period of isolation, learning from the world as quickly as it possibly could.

This period leads to the rapid expansion of power for the Fire and Metal Dragons, who revel in the opportunity to guide and learn from China's industrialization. Although the Restoration officially ends in 1874, the Dragons press on, seeking to not merely bring China in line with the rest of the world powers but to surpass them. Unfortunately for them, the Order of Reason directly opposes them, leading to several skirmishes and factory fires. In one notable act of sabotage, a Void Seeker team takes control of China's first telegraph, turning the communication tool against the Qing government.

Meanwhile, like the rest of East Asia, the Korean Joseon government has been under a strict isolationist policy. While King Cheoljong ignores the French Catholic missionaries arriving during his reign, his successor, King Gojong, is eager to make his mark and prove his authority. This leads to the destruction of the Korean Catholic Church, the capture of all French Catholics, and the massacre of over 10,000 Korean Catholics in 1866. The Knights Templar, who have been hiding in Korea, flee to the Philippines.

Japan's Meiji Emperor has been born into an isolated Japan, largely led by the Tokugawa Shogunate, a military government. During his life, the world changes. China, the great power of Asia, gets thoroughly defeated — *twice*. Metal warships, powered by steam, have arrived on the shores. The isolationist policies all too common in Asia have undeniably failed. The Emperor opens Japan to foreign trade through a series of sweeping changes. He pulls in as many foreign experts as he can, learning as much as he can about Western ways. He takes their technology, weapons, and philosophy, and adapts them to fit Japan.

Gunpowder, foreign firearms, and gunsmiths flow into Japan. Instead of relying on regional samurai-led armies, the Emperor creates a conscript army, requiring every 21-year-old to serve four years in active service. Samurai fall from being above the law to being wealthy landowners. Unlike China's Tongzhi Restoration, the Water and Earth Dragons are the ones prospering in Japan. The Water Dragons are deeply in tune with the local communities, which means they are first to benefit when the Emperor sends modernization funds. Similarly, the Earth Dragons see the change as an opportunity to cut samurai families out of power and to claim it for themselves.

In 1869, the Meiji Emperor declares the island of Ezo to be the territory of the Empire of Japan. Unable to defend themselves against the invaders, the native Ainu people retreat from the coast. Although the Ainu shamans initially hold their own against Imperial willworkers, the steady influx of Japanese colonists transforms the Territory of Ezo into the Territory of Hokkaido, heavily restricting the natives' magical abilities.

That same year, the Emperor formally abolishes the samurai and daimyo classes. Though many of the former feudal lords simply find lucrative work, a sizable minority of conservatives fly into a rage, rioting and starting civil wars, much to the amusement of the Dragons. Without exception, the former samurai find that the new conscript armies are better trained, better supplied, and armed with modern *guns*. With his new conscript army battle-tested, the Emperor turns his eyes outside the borders.

Pacific Asia

As American businesses continue exploiting Hawai'i, the power of the Hawaiian monarchy wanes. The US government's main interest in Hawai'i is to establish a military base at Pearl Harbor, something the Hawaiian people find alarming for many reasons. In exchange for the US finally paying the Hawaiian farmers a fair market price for their sugar, King Kalakaua grants them a small island in Pearl Harbor, in 1875, despite furious protests from the Kopa Loei.

The New Zealand Maori King Movement want to create a Maori monarch to give the Maori people a seat at the table, as New Zealand's first five parliamentary elections did not allow Maori to vote nor to participate in government. The movement culminates in King Potatau Te Wherowhero's enthronement in 1858. Te Wherowhero, a successful military leader during intra-Maori wars, sees the British Government as an equal rather than an invading force. This stance proves immediately unpopular and he spends the rest of his life traveling up and down the nation calming the various Maori factions, particularly the Kopa Loei, who have been at war with the Order of Reason. When he dies in 1860, all of the peacekeeping fails and a series of wars between the Maori people and the British colonists erupt. New Zealand does not see peace until 1872.

This period sees the return of the Jesuits to the Philippines in 1859. The Jesuits, an order of scientist-explorers, had been expelled from the Philippines a century earlier due to *also* being an order of missionary spies. They waste no time, establishing a university the same year they return. Along with the Jesuits come the Knights Templar, who began aggressively recruiting from Catholic Filipino willworkers. By 1865, they have established a sizable Chantry hidden in the Caraballo Mountains of Luzon. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 cuts travel time between Spain and the Philippines from about two months to just over one. With faster travel, the Spanish become even more underfoot, leading to a brief mutiny by Filipino sailors in 1872.

In 1871, a fleet of four Ryukyu Kingdom ships encounter a typhoon, sinking two and forcing another to take refuge in Taiwan. A group of indigenous Taiwanese take umbrage at the newcomers and massacre 54 of the sailors. Once Japan receives news of this, several years later, they send a punitive force. In truth, they don't care that much about one group of indigenous people killing another, but gives the Meiji government the pretext to invade Chinese soil.

Japan seizes control of a portion of Taiwan, killing those in their way. This invasion brings the Earth Dragons of China and Japan into direct military conflict, renewing old wounds and firmly establishing the need for an international version of the Five Elemental Dragons. Japan eventually returns Taiwan to China, but they have undeniably demonstrated

there is nothing stopping Japan from taking what they want from the islands of the Pacific. The spring of 1879 sees that threat to its natural conclusion; Japan seizes control of the Ryukyu Kingdom. Officially, this is to protect them, but the Ryukyuans learn better soon enough.

Before the year was out, Japan is on a mission to crush the spirit of the Ryukyuan people. Children speaking their native languages at school are beaten by Japanese teachers. Less violently, but no less colonial, the Earth Dragons begin leaning on the local spiritualists and priestesses to get them to join the Dragons.

Southern Asia

In response to the recent rebellion, Queen Victoria issues an 1859 proclamation consolidating all territory owned by the East India Company under her rule, establishing the British Raj.

The somewhat wealthy state of Bengal has not participated in the rebellion, mostly due to not having an effective military force. With a great deal of revolutionary spirit, unrestrained by the horrors of war, the Bengali Renaissance surges forward. The Naga Societies grow in power and influence, finally extending beyond Bengal into the rest of India. By 1870, the Nagas have Chantries in every state.

Although the Sikh Empire technically loses Kashmir in the Anglo-Sikh Wars, the people still end up under Sikh rule. The only thing that has changed in the north is that the British have the final say in government matters. Although religious freedom is still in effect, the Kashmiri Muslims find themselves at the bottom of the pecking order. Poverty, famine, and social oppression cause another exodus from Kashmir to Punjab, almost entirely made up of Muslims.

The Punjab province, formerly the Sikh Empire's seat of power, is in a relatively good place. While the British are the official rulers, the Punjabi people are well off compared to their neighbors, who have more directly paid the price of the recent wars. Thanks to being largely in power over the entire region and uninvolved in the failed rebellion of 1857, the Punjabi Sikhs prosper and move to cement their position in the British Raj. Soon, more Indian Army recruits come from Punjab than anywhere else.

To the south in Madras, the Indian independence movement is taking its first few breaths, with Tamil and English newspapers run by Tamils sprouting up in 1878. Finally, South India has an Indian voice. The Nagas, Sahajiya, and Chakravanti engage in a shadow war over control of the broadsheets. Ironically, the three groups taking turns manipulating the people through the media end up creating one of the least biased papers of the era.

Southeastern Asia

Cambodia, desperate for relief from Thai and Vietnamese tyranny, turns to the French. In 1862, King Norodom begins petitioning the French for aid. A year later, they agree, rapidly setting forth a series of broad sweeping social changes, including abolishing slavery, weakening the monarchy, and establishing a significant French military presence. In return, French Order of Reason magi fight off both of the Akashic factions. Although safe from oppression by Siam and Vietnam, the Cambodians are leaping from the fire to the frying pan.

As the Thai king, Rama IV, continues reforms, the nation grows increasingly wary of the French, who have just invaded Saigon in 1859, capturing significant portions of Vietnam. He grants the British additional concessions in the hopes that they will help defend Rattanakosin from the French. The British have no interest in doing so, especially since they are still fighting the Burmese. Better relations with Rattanakosin simply mean they don't have to fear a war on two fronts, since Rama IV would have to deal with the French before the British do. The Siamese Akashayana steel themselves to fight.

Despite Vietnam's Nguyen Dynasty's ban on missionaries, Catholics from France and Spain continue to sneak in. Periodically, some are caught and executed, but not frequently enough to stem the tide. That changes in 1858, when a joint French and Spanish war party seizes Tourane. Although they are rapidly besieged and forced to flee two years later, blood has been shed and the vague armistice between Vietnam and the West is over.

Expecting an easy conquest, France and Spain return with a relatively small force to conquer the Vietnamese. Instead, the Vietnamese fight tooth and nail, the Vietnamese Akashayana surprising Void Seekers, who do not expect any real resistance. After the Akashayana send a Seeker ship to the bottom of the harbor, the European invasion grinds to a halt. In 1861, China loses the Second Opium War, freeing up French forces to reinforce their dwindling counterparts in Vietnam. The European armies surge in strength, finally defeating the Vietnamese, establishing the southern third of Vietnam as the French colony of Cochinchina.

Western Asia

As Russia and Britain continue to play the Great Game, Afghanistan is caught in the middle once again. Since Russia sends diplomats to Kabul while the Emir slaughtered the last British mission, the British understandably think the Emirate might be turning against them. In reality, the Pashtun people want nothing to do with either nation; the Russian diplomats come uninvited. Profoundly misunderstanding the situation, the Invisible Exchequers dispatch multiple teams to persuade the Afghani people to their side, a move that the Taftâni rightly see as a military invasion. Thus, the Second Anglo-Afghan War begins in 1878. Thousands on both sides die so that the British can get the Emir to sign a treaty declaring Afghanistan a Crown Protectorate and then leave.

The Ottoman Empire's restoration, the Tanzimat, finally concludes in 1876, and the Ottomans usher in a constitutional monarchy. After two years, Sultan Abdul Hamid II decides that his country has had enough democracy and dissolves the constitution. The Ottoman people fly into a rage at this act. In a rare show of solidarity, numerous Taftâni tribes band

together to reproach the Sultan. Sensing weakness, Russia invades again. The unbalanced Ottoman Empire loses badly, and the briefly unified Taftâni tribes depart to sponsor new independence movements, succeeding in Bulgaria, Romania, Montenegro, and Serbia.

Late Victorian Asia (1880–1910)

It's unfair to say that Japan is the only nation of note in this era, but it's damned tempting. After the success of the Meiji Restoration, Japan goes on to stomp China and Russia in stunning upset victories that leave observers of all nations slack-jawed. The Order of Reason's Asian counterparts start to become much more organized; with the Meeting of the Dragons in 1896, the Dalou'laoshi, Five Elemental Dragons of Japan, Naga Societies, and other like-minded orders gather, forming an international network to promote Asian prosperity.

Central Asia

Having screwed the Mongols for much of the Victorian Era, the Qing dynasty finally begins social reforms that include the people of Mongolia. In 1907, Empress Dowager Cixi ends the prohibition on Mongol-Han intermarriage and encourages it instead. The Wood Dragons see the new population trends and begin a decades-long research study of the people.

The Uyghurs find themselves once again in the newly conquered Xinjiang Province, only this time, they are the ones that have been conquered. As tens of millions of Han and Hui people have died or fled during the Dungar Revolt, the Uyghurs are given control over an even larger portion of the province in 1884. In addition to the Sleepers' flight from Xinjiang, the Dunganr Revolt also forces the peasant magi of the Wunung out, leaving the local jiangxi population unchecked. For the next decade, the qi-draining monsters have free reign, until a pair of Fire Dragon and Akashic teams arrive during the Lunar New Year of 1895. Initially, each accuses the other of being superfluous and orders their rival out. Before the year is out, they have started a friendly competition that leads to the near-complete eradication of supernatural life in the province.

Although the Hui of the westernmost province of Xinjiang are largely absent after the revolt, those in the neighboring province of Gansu still have bones to pick with their fellow Muslims. After two Sufi Muslim groups were unable to settle differences through the Qing court system, they take up arms, setting off a new Dungan Revolt in 1895. In addition to actual combatants killing each other, Hui simply living in the province are slaughtered. By the time the Qing army arrives, the rebel Sufis are out of control, and the Qing general orders the rebels slaughtered as well.

Eastern Asia

The final three decades of the Victorian era are especially rough on China. Although they successfully threaten Russia into returning a piece of territory lost during the recent Hui rebellion and fight the French to a standstill in 1884, their showdown with Japan in 1894 proves a terrible upset. With a heavy European presence and a weak government, the Qing Empire is in a sorry state. Once European criminal gangs, led by the nascent Syndicate, start taking advantage of diplomatic immunity, something snaps in the cultural psyche of China. In 1899, Wulong soldiers and Sleeper martial artists rise up in the violent Boxer Rebellion.

Despite past treaties pledging to prevent such actions, some Qing officials approve of the nationalists. While others condemn the violence, when a Boxer is captured and executed by the German minister in Beijing for no apparent reason, everyone comes off the fence. Akashayana warriors and even the Dalou'laoshi enter the fray with the Syndicate calling for help from their brethren in the Exploratory Society and Ivory Tower. Although the magi of China are united for the first time in centuries, they are badly outgunned. Despite the success of the Meeting of the Dragons in 1896, China sees little in the way of magical aid from their allies. After the violence claims tens of thousands of lives, the international coalition of Austria-Hungary, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, and the United States defeat the rebels in 1901.

After Korea's growing pains, a conservative religious movement called the Donghak urges a return to the nation's isolationist policies. Seeking a return to Korea's Confucian roots, the Donghak demands that the government reject Japanese influence and double down on their anti-Western ideas. The group rapidly turns into a rebel army composed of peasants and farmers. In 1894, the Donghak kill thousands of their country's soldiers.

King Gojong immediately beseeches Emperor Guangxu for aid, who sends nearly 1,500 Qing soldiers into Korea, technically violating the Tientsin Convention and giving Japan the excuse they needed to commit 6,000 of their soldiers to declare war on China.

The Donghak commander expects that the Qing forces would overwhelm the Japanese, allowing his rebels to seize control of Korea and form an alliance with China. Instead, Japan and its Earth Dragons deal defeat after defeat to China. By the time the rebels are ready to move on the Gongju, not the Korean Army but the Imperial Japanese Army stands in their way. The Donghak army numbers upwards of 200,000, greatly dwarfing the Japanese battalion of a few hundred. Not knowing the Japanese have the advantage of magi, far superior training, equipment, and preparation, the Donghak trust in their numbers and charge. After the slaughter, only 500 Donghak remain to surrender.

With the rebel army crushed and the Chinese withdrawing in a desperate attempt to protect their own country from an increasingly aggressive Japan, Korea stands alone. Over the next 14 years, Japan increasingly interferes, eventually culminating in a complete takeover in 1910. Seeing the writing on the wall, King Gojong begins the long-overdue Gwangmu Reform, modernizing the nation's infrastructure, military, and social systems.

Not content with Korea, Japan uses the diplomatic kerfuffle of the Donghak Rebellion as an excuse to go to war with China. Less than two months after the beginning of the Donghak crisis, China and Japan test their new naval reforms against each other. Japan's fleet prevails with few casualties while only a single Chinese ship returns home. The two nations meet on the battlefield eight more times during the era. China loses every single time. Here, the Dalou'laoshi's split allegiances mean that while they never openly battle their Wulong allies, they do tell Japan's Elemental Dragons military secrets, giving the Dragons all the help they need to nullify the Wulong's considerable impact. Foreign observers, especially those who have helped modernize the Chinese army and navy, are flummoxed that the larger and more expensive fighting force loses so decisively.

Drunk on power, Japan sets its sights on Port Arthur, a port city in Manchuria that Russia has leased from China. A year and a half of battles and blockades begins in 1904 with Japan emerging victorious. By the end, Japan's territory expands with the acquisition of Korea, Taiwan, and part of Manchuria.

Pacific Asia

In a reckless gamble, the Syndicate sparks an all-out war against the Kopa Loei in the sparsely populated Kilauea region of the island of Hawai'i. Picking a fight with the kahunas atop an active volcano seems like a suicidal move — and it is — but the Syndicate has a plan. By forcing the Kopa Loei to invest all of their energy in a battle of catastrophic magic, the Syndicate's non-magically active members are free to put their thumb on the scale of Hawai'i's future. Thanks to the shift in Consensus of the Territory earlier in the century, American businessmen take over Hawai'i in 1887. Though the Kopa Loei win the battle of Kilauea and kill virtually every Syndicate willworker on the islands, they lose the war for the soul of Hawai'i.

Having grown wealthy on the backs of the Hawaiian people, the Syndicate has the support of anyone who can be bought, including the all-white Honolulu Rifles militia. Holding King Kalakaua at gunpoint, they force him to sign a new constitution that bars voting rights to anyone that isn't a plantation owner. With business owners effectively in charge of the government, they are free to release their version of events, causing many of the Hawaiian people to blame the King. A series of US government coups follow, further tilting the balance of power towards the plantation owners, and eventually culminating in America's annexation of Hawai'i in 1897.

The Kopa Loei fare much better in New Zealand, taking a more coercive approach and finally forcing their colonizers

to shift towards equality. First, they force the colonial government to pardon the folk hero, Te Kooti, a Maori chief who led the last guerilla war against the colonists. Then in 1889, they reform parliamentary election laws to allow non-landowners to vote, effectively opening the vote to all Maori men. Four years later, they further press the issue, allowing women to join in, making New Zealand the first country in the world with universal suffrage. The bloody struggle between the colonists and the Maori is over.

The Philippines receives its first telegram from Europe in 1880. The arrival of international telegram cables is a boon for Spanish-Philippines relations; schools and universities sprout up everywhere. Before long, the Philippines' first newspaper is published. Filipino national identity grows, which places the country at odds with its Westerner-faced colonizers. Surprisingly, this means that the region's Western-minded, but mostly Filipino, Knights Templar get along better with the few magi among the Muslim Moros than they do the more like-minded Order of Reason.

This comes to a head after the 1895 elections give the people their first sense of control over their islands in a while. They like it and crave more, igniting a revolution the next year. Two years later, a battered Spain sells the rights to the islands to the United States and flees. When the Americans arrive to inspect their new territory in 1899, they are shocked to find out that the Filipinos are running everything. They are even more shocked to find Filipino rifles pointed at them. The islands return to war again. This time, things go poorly for the natives. The shock troops of the Exploratory Society fight indiscriminately, killing hundreds via magickal conflict over the three-year war — most of them civilians. The Templars sue for peace rather than allow more civilian casualties, but the Moros refuse to surrender, fighting on for another decade.

Southern Asia

In 1884, Indian nationalists of Madras form the Madras Mahajana Sabha, a political party seeking an India free from British rule. The much larger Indian National Congress follows in the next year. Although it creates friction between the Hindu and Muslim populations of India, the idea of Indian independence is on everyone's lips.

In 1885, the Nagas formally accept the Elemental Dragons' offer for an alliance in exchange for the Metal Dragons' help with a massive irrigation project in Punjab. The agricultural experiment creates thousands of miles of canals, connecting unsettled, arid land to waterways. In the matter of a few decades, five million acres of desert becomes lush farmland, creating a wave of internal migration as over a million Indians from Punjab and beyond seek to settle the new land.

In 1906, the unrest between Muslims and Hindus in Bengal becomes too much for either side. The tension and strife gives birth to the All-India Muslim League. Their goal? To split India along religious lines. The Naga Societies fly into a panic trying to resolve the differences between the two sides. Although the magi try their best, once the people begin dreaming of an independent, Muslim Pakistan, the idea proves impossible to stop.

Southeastern Asia

Seeking to transform the French hold on Cambodia from overbearing to total, the French launch an assault on Phnom Penh in 1884. Although nominally successful, it sparks a revolt led by the king's half-brother the following year. The Order of Reason plays both sides of the civil war, deeply confusing the Siamese Akashics, who are never quite sure whom to fight. By the time King Norodom emerges as the victor, the Cambodian people are thoroughly under the control of France, joining the Vietnamese French colony of Cochinchina as French Indochina.

The Thai kingdom of Rattanakosin is now under the rulership of Rama V, the first king to have a full Western-style education. While his father's reforms have been significant, they are nothing compared to what Rama the Great accomplishes. He abolishes slavery, creates a court system, and brings about new military modernization. Unfortunately, Siam finally sees French aggression in 1893. Despite Britain's 40-year-old treaty pledging to help defend Siam in case this exact situation arose, they decline unless they receive lands. The Siamese Akashayana fight bravely to defend against the Exploratory Society's incursions, but it isn't enough. With gunboats in the Bangkok harbor and a shitty ally at their side, Rama V takes Britain's deal, as well as surrendering Laos to the French. The next two decades see the same deals happen again and again. The Akashayana prevents Siam from being absorbed into French Indochina, but only barely.

Having been part of the French colony of Cochinchina since 1867, the people of southern Vietnam have been less than impressed. They are even less thrilled when the Exploratory Society wages a brutal guerilla war against the Vietnamese Akashayana. For every solid victory the Akashayana achieves, they lose a half dozen smaller skirmishes. By 1883, the Order has forced Vietnamese forces out of Annam, the central third of Vietnam. Shortly afterward, they assassinate the top three monks, one after the other, leaving the Akashayana disorganized and leaderless. All of Vietnam is now a French colony. In 1887, all of France's holdings in the region are consolidated under the French Indochina banner, further pissing off the people of Vietnam, although it is decades before they are in a position to do something about it.

Western Asia

In 1893, Afghanistan and the British agree to a new border between Afghanistan and the British holdings in India. The border becomes a source of anxiety for both peoples with each building military and infrastructure on their side of the line. Though it does not turn to bloodshed in this period, it does in time.

The end of the Victorian Age is pure chaos for the Ottoman Empire. In 1882, Britain turns a minor squabble

in Egypt into an excuse to seize it. Sultan Abdul Hamid blames Russia's recent military successes on all of Christianity, transforming the Armenian people of the Empire into scapegoats. As is frequently the case when a leader publicly blames social ills on a group of minorities, mob violence spikes, with entire tribes of Kurds forming vigilante posses. After a decade of disorganized hate crimes and lynchings, the Sultan declares the Armenians enemies of the state, leading to the first massacre of Armenians, as well as Assyrians and Greeks. 250,000 people are murdered thanks to the Ottoman leader's hate speech. With little real response from the rest of the Empire's citizenry and foreign observers, two more massacres follow.

In 1908, the Young Turk party revolts, placing the Ottoman Empire under the rule of a constitutional monarchy once more. Though this gives the Armenians time to breathe a sigh of relief, it is not to last. Sultan Abdul Hamid has been left as a figurehead with access to the people, which is where his poison is most effective. Less than a year after the successful revolt, the Sultan triggers a coup, eventually culminating in a deliberate genocide of over one and a half million further Armenians.

Crowdfunding Supporter

A. Berti
Alexander Rodriguez
Bori Vékony
Chevy Josselyn
Chuck Dee
Comrade_Yui
Corentin Dava
D. Trudel
Everynight Cainite
FlamesRising.com
Jason Freston
La Tormenta, Bruja Suprema
Matt M McElroy
Michael V. Roberts
Olga A.
Patrizia Larghero
Robert DeBroeck
Robert Ivan Haley
Roland and Morgan
Shawn Gaston
Tommaso Uomogufo Barater
Vucrulez
White Paws

Crowdfunding Contributor

A. London
Adam "Magusrogue" Loyd
Adam Horne
Adam Rajski
Adrià "Yggdrasil#942" Seguer Vicente
Alessandro La Grua
Alexandre V.
Almarion Sainclair
André S.
Andrea Uhde
Andrew C.
Andrew K.
Andrew M.
Andrew Peregrine
Andrija Andy Jovanovic
Andy Kempton
ANIMAfelis
Anthony John Bridge
Anthony Stillwagon
Antti Kautiainen
Archimedes G. Montgomery
Ardinzul
Aryn
Atomic Empire
Atropos
Auntie Aggie
Aurélien Djafari Rouhani
Balazs Bujna
Barrend Gorun
Bedrock City Comic Company
Bedrock City Comic Company
Benjamin "BlackLotos" Welke
Benjamin Haberek
Bertie Bobbins
Big Dad
Björn Lippold
BlueOddyssey
Brett Anderson
Brian King
Bryant Durrell
C. Sherbak
Cameron Hays
Captain History
Carlos E Restrepo
Casey Grant
Cassandra Blackstone
Charles W. Hill
Chris "The Dragon" Domakinis
Chris Ess
Chris Gawne
Chris Michael Jahn
Chris Parsons
Christoph Daether
Christopher J. King
Claudia Creed
Common Ground Games
Corbain Al Kyz
Cosmos furiosi
Craig "Doc Ryder" Brown
D.E. Wright
Dalt the Thinblood alchemist
Dani Jang(aka 너불레기)
Daniel García
Daniel Markwig
Danny Cuppen
Dave "Wintergreen" Harrison
Davi Ferreira (Taverna Literária)
David Chart
David Corriea
Daxius Van Meter
Demon & Blaze
Dennis Osborne
Derek Semsick
Dominic DiMichele
Dove "Sun-Seed's Sword"
Dr. Emil Hastings
Dragon's Lair Comics & Fantasy
Drew M Stark
Dutch_Orange
D'Yale A.
El Sobrino
Ella Feder
Elsanor
Eric Fitch
Eric Hal Schwartz
Eric W Murray
Ericc Whetstone
Erin W.
Ethan Wilke
Eva Örndahl
Ezekiel Amari McGee
Fabio Rojas
Fernando Autran
Forest Kenyon
Frank Reinart
Friedrich Roehrer-Ertl
Gabe, from Chile in Tinieblas
Gabriel L.
Garga Le Noir
Glenn Francis II
Graeme Lewis
Graziano Zanichelli
Gregory Eburn
H. Kuhn
Higor McParnell
Ian D. Ward
Ibon Presno
Igor Coura de Mendonça

Ilan Emanuel
Imran Inayat
Inigo
Integra Aetheria Phlogiston
Iván Harper
J. Brad Hicks
J. Burgess
Jacinta Salu
Jae Lerer
Jahaeng Park
Jamal L Wilkins
Jame Scholl
James Ford
James Glanville
James Holden
James Patron Bell
Jamie Roberts
Jan MacDonald
Jason Corley
jason e. bean
Jason Italiano
Jason MacKeen
Jason Mayberry
Jay Steven Anyong
Jay W
Jeff Lorenzen
Jens Rodemer
Jeremy Kopczynski
Jeremy Ruddy
Jesse Morris
Jim Brashears
Jimmy Acevedo
John B.
John Christensen
John Kusters
John Lambert
John Morel
John Rintamaki
John Yngve Fredrik Lundgren
John Yngve Fredrik Lundgren
Johnnie Nemec
Jonathan D. Harter
Jonathan Lang
Joseph "First Team" Coyle
Josh "JP" Parrish
Joshua Ramsey
JT Ho
Junie von Esch
Jussi Kenkkilä, Magus Theoreticus
Justin Triplett
Kari A. Clark
Karl The Good
Kebhab
Ken Kimbrough
Keslie
Kier Ross
Kimberly Morris
Korilthan McLaughlin
Krister M. Michl
Kristi York
Ky-Ree Burton
Lark Cunningham
Lee Carter
Legionman7087
Lensman
Lewis C.
Lily & Louis
Linda Lee, the Eel
Linny & Devin
Lonnie Scott
Lord EnOcH of Glencoe, bani Solificati
Lou Sydney
Luca Di Benedetto SV
Lucas Bourel
Lucas L.
Łukasz Korzeń
Luke Moran
M. J__ Giammarco, Librarian of the Hermetic Conspectus
Malte Schultz
Marc Collins
Marc-André Perreault
Marco Generoso
Mathieu LO
Matt Griffiths
Matt Russo
Matteo Tirelli
Matthew Ballard
Matthew Earlywine
Matthew Parmeter
Max Kaehn
Max Polun
Melissa Hughes
Melissa Krause
Michael "MMOaddicted" Molik
Michael Chernicoff
Michael Eckman
Michael J N Arellano
Michael James Kelly
Michael Parker
Michael S. Haynes
Michael Schatz
Mike Boyle
Moe Lane
Morgan Culbertson
Naomi Cross
Nebel F. Reyn
Nicholas Peterson
Nicodemus deLaurent
Nicola Went
Nils Jannet
Nils Meissner
Noble Knight Games
nollpunkt
Novy-San
Nuno Theodoro
Oliver Kenton
Olympic Cards and Comics
OmNom NomNom, Bone Gnawer Chef Extraordinaire
Outlander
P.J.Cottalorda
Panu "Possessed" Laukkanen
Patricia Jane
Patrick Bird
Patrick Sandoval
Paul Falshaw
Percy A Dietz III
Peter E.
Peter Steponaitis
Petri Wessman
Phil Hattie
Phil Masters
PK Sharp Garcia
Quetzalcoatl Carter Oropeza
Rafał "Kość w Eterze" Kalinowski
Rafe Richards
Ralosvek
Raphael Bressel
Rathen
Ray White
Raz Kabooz
Red Adams
Remy Spears

Richard 'Bat' Brewster
Richard J Rivera
Rob Crewe
Robert "Jefepato" Dall
Rodolfo Schmauk
Romain "Luther" PESSIOT
Romain Moreau
Ronan Roué
Ross Owen Qualls
Rubén E. Ballester
Russell Ventimeglia
Ryan "Galby" Galbraith
Ryan Kendy
S.A. Hjorth
Samir El Aouar
Scott A. Kendrick
Scott Hornbuckle
Scott Rick
Sean M
Sean Smith
Seana McGuinness
Sebastian Gift
Seth Wenger
Shafi Ziauddin
Sheev Palpacringe
Simon Brake
Sir Reginald Kensington III GCVO
SpeakerD
Stanislaus
Starteller
Stephen Egolf
Stephen Esdale
Stephen Near
Steve Chamberlain
Steve Hudson
Sung geun oh
Sunyoung.P
T.D Lake
T.J. Mathews
Taga-silab
Tamuz
Ted Ludemann
THE Donnie
The Masseys
The Primogen
Therry Tennant
THWarted
Tim Partridge
Tim Utke
Tim Voves
Tom Ladegard
trance[end]
Tribe Comics and Games
Trollune
Unferdd
Vito Chiarella
Whitt.
Will Harper
William H. Stoddard
Wolf Larrysson
Won Chang
Xylemicarious
Zachery Naldrett
Ziv Ragowsky

Crowdfunding Conjurer

"Sparky" Endicott
A R K H A A M
A. "Doc Wonder" Walker
A. Fomferek
A. Leslie
A. W. Morris
A.M.Valcher
A.R. McNevin, esquire
Aariea
Aaron Foster
Aaron Morgan
Adam & Looie Krump
Adam Beyonce Lowe
Adam Bowker
Adam Doochin
Adam Karpolorich
Adam Messner
Adam Rose
Adam Safwat
Adriftchalice
Aiden Barron
Alan, Sinead and Matthew makes three
Alan-Michael Havens
Aldo "Kwako" Montoya Reynaga
Alessandro Ravelli
Alessandro S. Peres
Alex Bell
Alex Coninx
Alex Context
Alexa Draconis
Alexander Brown
Alexandre Starck
Alexis, Jeremy, Lorelei, & Connor
Alison Ravey
Alistair "Lionsguard" Fellows
Allen Hoover
Alonso O. Rubio
AlQuick The Amazing
Amaya Booker
Anastasios "Cipher" Barbisis
Ancellius
Anders Holmström
Anders Torin Silverplats
Andre Snow
Andrei Antonio Gonzalez Reyes
Andrew "Inf0squit0" Mcmenemy
Andrew J. Bush
Andrew Kempf
Andrew W. Jones
Andrew Waterfall
Andy "Andreas Rayne" Dodd
Andy Blanchard
Andy de Quesada
Andy Kwong
Angelborn
Anja Kraus
Annida Christofi-Clark
Anthony Blea
Anthony C. & Ava Luna Sweet
Antoine Malardé
Arnodd "Hrafn" Heiriksson
Astrid Portner
Azouth
B Flowers
B&W Neeld
B. Bachman
B. Carrion
B. Hill
Bael the Cruel
barrasargtlin
Bastion Fennell

Baxter Johann Flynn
Beachfox
Bel Air Games
Bellum
Ben Luoma
Benjamin Lyons
Benjamin R.
Benoit Devost
Bentley W. Chism
Bertrand Kuentzler
'Bookmark' Ana
Borja García de los Ríos
Bracken McDaniel-Weissler
Brad D. Kane
Brandon Steward
Brett Murphy
Brian Bartholomew
Brian D. Nazaryk
Brian Johnson
Brian Koonce
Brian McMurrer
Brightfires
Brook Freeman
Bryce Alexander Lynch
Bryce Perry
C Eberhard
C. Martin Coulter
C. Wójciak
C.L. Uhland
Calvin D. Jim
Calvin Ference
Candela Moreno
Carl Jordan
Carl L. Congdon, Magus to the Stars
Carson Bellamy
Casey Martinson
Cat Connell
Cathi Gertz
Cedric Delobelle - Anarkia
Charles Andrew Katz
Charles Siegel
Charles Strange
Charles W. C. Chapman II
Charlie "PookaKnight" Cantrell
Charlotte Persephone Hoffman
Chase Morningstar
Chell R
Chris "@csmithere" Smith
Chris Cynefin
Chris Czerniak
Chris Kobbe
Chris Matthews
Chris Mawford
Chris Morrell
Chris Sandy
Chris Stevenson
Christian "Su-tehp" Fernandez-Duque
Christian J. Müller
Christian Lachance, esq.
Christiane Truelove
Christopher "Diablerist" Lenaris
Christopher Bishop
Christopher Brereton
Christopher Campione
Christopher Clark
Christopher G. Davis
Christopher Gunning
Christopher Hart
Christopher J. Lees
Christopher P. Crossley
Christopher Pelletier
Christopher Penczak
Christopher Pinder
Christopher R. Wain
Christopher RM Phillips, perennis Philosophiae Candidatum, bani Bonisagus
Chuck and Rebecca Rozakis
Claus M. Larsen
Colin Anderson
Colin R. Jones
Connor Fraser
Conrad Julian White
Corwyn Alambar
Coyotekin
Craig B.
Crüjen A. Geist
Cynthia Jerkins
D Weatherwax
D. B. Rosengard
D.M. Hubbard
Daggothus
Dakkar Darkholme bani Ex Miscellania
Dale 'Clayton' Millward
Dan 'Credorion' Griffith
Dan L. Nielsen
Daniel "Director" Haddon
Daniel "Dukal" Bell
Daniel "He Who Hunts the Moon" Weber
Daniel Gaghan
Daniel Infante bani Quaesitori
Daniel J. Burt
Daniel K. Lundsby
Daniel Ley
Daniel Peterson
Daniel Quinn
Daniel Stack
Daniel Strode
Danisty
Danny Seedhouse
Dante Laughing-Coyote
DarkeFroste
Darker Days Radio
Darksheer
Darrin M Dennis
Dashekita N. Brooks
Dave Arcs
David "Chartan" McFall
David "JustDave" Talboy
David B Summers
David Bresson
David Connell Olsher
David Futterrer
David Homola
David Jenssen Bergkvist
David L. Cutrell
David Lee Terhune
David Thomas
David Viars
Dawid "Dievas" Wojcieszynski
Deacon GideonThorne
Derek Grimm
Derek Guder
Derek W. Branim
derekticon
Devilgiraffe
Diaz Del Fuego
Doc Eternal
Doc Haddix
Doc Rampart
Doc Saturn
Doctor Alfons Von Grawitz Ph.D.
Doctor Thaddeus von Ravensberg, Electrodyne Engineer

Dominic Parent
Donald C. Dudley
Donald Clarke
Doug Geisler
Douglas Justice
Dr. Andrés Ulibarrena
Dr. Bang
Dr. Gideon Pyro, Electrodyne Engineer
Dr. Glasser
Dr. Nicholas J. Arkham-Corkigian, Director of the Abnormal Nuclear Ethics Institute
Dr. Schneider
Dr. T. Broussard
Dr. Taylor Hayden Wright
Dr. Van Buskirk
Duncan Lyons
Dystopian nurse
E. Kozaki
Eben Lowe
Edouard Contesse
Eidan Rodriguez
Elethayn
Elijah Dixon
Emilia Lanier
Emissary of Zork
Emperor Fishmanous III
Epitaph
Eric "Mageax" TELCIDE
Eric Chapman
Eric Embree
Eric Nathaniel M Henson
Eric Smailys
Eric Sorg
Eric Spikol
Erik Filean
Erik M. Schonberger
Ernesto Verdejo
Ernie Sawyer
Eternal_Life_Sentence
Ethan Flemming
Ethan Zimmerman
Euthanatos Of The Realm (M.I. VIII.)
Evan and Sarah Edwards
Extatic
F. Alexander Myers
F. Desouches
Fabio Almeida
FallenAkriel
Felix Daniels
Felix Shafir
Fianchetto Reavley
Filip Danielsson
Filip Kiršek
Fiona Sullivan
Flávio Moreira Vieira
Flo & Ria
Florent "killerklown" Didier
Florian Weiss
Francis Renault
Frank Marcelli
Frank Precissi
Franz Janson
Frédéri "Volk Kommissar Friedrich" POCHARD
Freya P. H.
G. M. R. Siciliano
Gabriel Sorrel
Gaël F
Gavin G. Smith
Gavin Greene
Geoffrey Rabe
George Dolby
George Taher
George W. Minor, Son of Ether
Gianluca Guazzo
Gideon Nightshade
Gimble Gax
Glen R. Taylor
Götz Weinreich
Greg Roy
Gregory Sween
Griffin Horn
Grzegorz Zawadka
Guido Gerritzen
h MacKiernan
Håkan Ståby
Hank Driskill
Haymar
Heather Rasinski
Heinrich Krebs
Henry F. Bruckman Vargas
Henry R. Moore III
Her Royal Highness, Panda
Herman Hassel — di Magvillus
He-Zin Kwon
Hiromi Cota
Hunter S. Paladin
Iain MacPhee
Ian A. A. Watson
Ian Hamilton
Ian Nusskern
Ian Sargeant
Ian Smith
Iker Marín Estébanez
Iñaki Iglesias "Lenguadeplata"
ipsi
Irina Krysina
Ishcar
Iskra of Amity Island
Ivo de Mooij
J Mellor
J. "Coyotl" Bender
J. Piper
J. T. Nielsen
J. W. Bennett
Jacky Leung
Jacob L. Rice
Jacques Barcia
Jake Tessler
James Bell
James Bonnell
James Dorwart
James Dyer
James R. Crowder II
james surano
James Van Couwenburg
James Walther
James Y.
James"Tony"Hudson
Jane Jones
Janine Thon - Ingo Tuttaß - Jennifer Wernham
Jared Bravewater bani Hermeticum
Jared Tibbs
Jared Wadsworth
Jaron Kaplan-Parr
Jason & Amy Berteotti
Jason Dickerson
Jason Erb
Jason Ramboz
Jason Schindler
Jay Barnson
Jaye Sunsurn
JAYSON "the14thguest" TURNER

J-B Vlassoff, bani Flambeau, Primus of Radiations
Jeff Erwin
Jeff Robi
Jen Peters
Jen1701D
Jennifer Fuß
Jennifer Nelson
Jens "Spacejens" Rydholm
Jens Fitzenberger
Jeppe Nybo Jørgensen
Jeremey D. Walker
Jeremiah L. Schwennen
Jeremy "Xaren Hypr" Wildie
Jeremy and Tasha Cue
Jeremy Brown
Jeremy Korth
Jeremy Miller
Jeremy Putman
Jesse J Christy
Jessica Lilith Darke
Jim Urquhart
Jody Bowman
Joe Altepeter
Joe Blauberg
Joe Huntzinger
Joe McNamara
Joe 'Verbena' Burgos
Johan U
Johannes Jörgensen
John "Dade Thompson" Morris
John "Sarcastomancer" Mann
John A. David
John Braham
John Magn
John Murmello
John Olszewski
John P Weatherman
John Sorma
Johnathan Fii
Johnathan Giese
Johnny Snake Eyes.
Jon Catron
Jon Morrison
Jon Ruiz de Gopegi
Jonathan Gibbons and Stephanie Fuller
Jonathan Grimm
Jonathan Head
Jonathan M. Thompson
Jonci Aguillard
Jordan Neamon
Jörg Fick
Jose Manuel Caballero
Joseph A Hill
Josh Fohrman
Josh Heath
Juan Pablo Reyes Gómez
Julián Navarro
Julio Rodrigues
Junior "Madmenquill" Blais
Justin Bromberg
Justin Buckley
Justin F. Webb
Justin Frid
Justin W. Bryant
K Turley
K. Malu Castro
Kai Schiefer
Kaius
Kalícrates
Karl Hagen Mann
Kate Gryn
Katja S.
Katya Boestad
Keegan Clements-Housser
Keglevich Von Carcosa
Keith E. Hartman
Keith W. Davis
Kelly and Alex Beigh
Kelly J Clark
Kenneth W Hensley II
Kernel
Kerry Birmingham
Kevin "Helion died in 1561" Warmerdam
Kevin Landwehr
Kevin Miller
Kevin P Harris
Kevin W
Khaos Farbauti Ibn Oblivion
Kiernáin S.
Knights Fall
Kraig Blackwelder
Krazilec
Kristin Gulling-Smith
Krisztian Szarka, Seer of Shiivana Sahajiya the Goddess
Kyle Henderson
Kyle Rimmer
Kyle Sutton
Kyle Walker
KZA Parker
L. Determan
Lance "Ailon Rouge" Carter
Lance Hosaka
Lars Holgaard
Lau Bannenberg
Lauren Bardelli
Lee Moneta-Koehler
Lee Morrissey
Lee Nicholson
Leif Hassell
Leland Saunders
Leopold's Ghost
Leslie Wea
Lifestealer
Lightkeeper Camilla Royce
Lilia Martin
LiQUiD
Lisa Padol
Livia von Sucro
Logan Gill
Lord Lorenzo "Ether Ore" Cicchetti
Lord Nicholas Fox-Huntington
Lord Tempestus
Lord Terrance Rozanski
Lord Weber, Earl of Nottingham
Louis
Luca
Lucas van Toren
Luke M.
M Merlin Kostruba
M. Johansen
M. John Proehl
M. Marcondes
Maciek Maciak
Mads Madsen
MaGnUs
Magnus "KJR" Rock
Magnus Skallagrimsson
Magus
Magus Manjang
Mak Kakuk
Malcolm John Brown
Malcus Dorroga

Maleesha Thompson
Manuel Alfredo Moya
Mara Cardozo
Marcellus/Jacket Guy
Marci DeLeon
Marco Klomfas
Marcos Almeida Leite Bomfim
Marcos Slomp
Marcus and Leslie Arena
Marcus Welvy
Mario Breton
Mark 'Amergin' Zuiderwijk
Mark Azevedo
Mark Hobson
Mark Hope
Mark P. Redford
Mark Pryce
Mark Thompson
Mark W Roy
Markus Adair
Marlen Abu-Ghaza
Marsha "Mags The Axe" White
MARTIN RUDDY
Martin Strain
Martin Trudeau, Esq.
Martin V Ottesen
Maryanne Ravensley
Mathieu Guittard
Matt "Archon of Salt" Palmer
Matt Breece
Matt Roberts
Matthew Blanski
Matthew Finco
Matthew Gorsky
Matthew Lynn
Matthew M. Middleton
Matthew S Boren
Matthew Sanderson
Matthew Smith
Matthew Smithwick
Matthew Thompson
Matthew Webb
Maxim Parisee
Maxime Boucher
Maximo Grasmic
Maz Weaver
Meg Bullock
Melissa Marr
Merlin Moonshadow
Mette Arenkiel
Michael "Mickey" Barsness
Michael "Sanjay" Brosens
Michael Anderson
Michael Atalay
Michael B. Snapp
Michael Barker
Michael Bourbon
Michael Bowm
Michael Brewer
Michael Chen
Michael Coones
Michael Hawkins
Michael Hopkins
Michael Jacobson
Michael Laitinen
Michael Lamb
Michael O. Holland
Michael S. Thompson
Michael Scheu
Michael Solomon
Michael T. Rowlands
Michael W. Robins
Michał Dąbrowski
Michel Jean Renard
Michele Marie Arko
Michelle Mamer
Mike & Brian Goubeaux
Mike F
Mike Montgomery
Mike Nudd
Mike Ruch
Mirko Schroeder
Mizuho Shiraishi
Morrígan R
Mouseshadow
Mr. Anybody
Natali Sahir Gerani
Nathan Bjerke
Nathan Foxgrove
Nathan Nolan
Nathan Tamayo
Nathaniel 'Larzous' Bailey
Neil "Polk" Stevens
Ness_SfK
NICK CHAN
Nickolas Kik
Nicolas Villatte
Nigel "Nubz" Sanford
Nik May
Nikk Effingham
Ninik V.
Noah J. Nelson
Noam Y.
Noskavian
Odile Clio and Liander Cho
Oliver Hoffmann
Olivier Jobin
Ols Jonas Petter Olsson
Oumaru
Our hero AB
Pat Gunn
Patrick Carrick
Patrick Dunn
Patrick Eli Dunn
Patrick McCann
Patrick McNamara
Patrick VanDusen
Pau Aragonés Illanas
Paul "Reezel" Gilbert
Paul Clayton-Shawley
Paul Heron Record
Paul Huey Hubbard
Paul Robert Ring bani Verbena
Paul Stefko
Pedro Luiz Simonetti Filho
Per Stalby
Peter A Pena - Shadowstep6
Peter Carr
Peter D. Clark III
Peter De Kinder
Peter Engebos
Peter Merkel
peter pereti
Phil Broughton
Philip W Rogers Jr
Philip W Rogers Jr
Phillip S.
Pippin Carino
Prince Maxi
Professor Manheim
Prof. Isolda Whitespoon, Guild of Analytical Reckoners.
Professor Richard Kently, Survivor of the Trinity Lodge
Psychonau7

Purchaser of note
R. Lee
R. Randolph Callaway Rea III
Rabi Fiotto
Racheet Dave
Rae Alexa
Rafał Pośnik
Randall C.
Randall Flagg
Raphaël Mussard
RealityMasque
Rev. Phillip Malerich
Ricardo "Sardonis" Penteado
Rich Bream
Rich Warren
Richard Chilton
Richard J Badger
Richard Libera
Richard Stratton
Robber Baron Thomas Young
Robbie Soussan
Robert Applegate
Robert Beckett
Robert Biskin
Robert Guest
Robert Storms
Robert T. Sagris
Roberto Hoyle
Rodolphe Duhil
Rodrigo Moreira Fagundes
Ronald Conner
Roo Wetzel
Rowan of Hearths
Roy Berman
Roy MacInnis
Rüdiger Querfurth
Ryan Evans
Ryan Gracey
Ryan Hefley
Ryan Mowry
Ryan-O, Lord of the Thunderbats
Ryô Saeba
S. Alexander Gentry, PhD
S. Ervin
S. Rune Emerson
S. Westall
S.A. Wolf
Sabrina Horsley
Saleem Halabi
Sam Myatt
Sam Young
Samedarkclouds
Sanchez Nicolas
Sands and Moss
Sara "Catbimba" Milazzo
Sara Stewart
Sasha K. Morgann
Schaow Fang
Scott "Lyshote" Banks
Scott Kelly
Scott McIntosh
Sean A Jenson
Sean and Zog
Sean Ashcraft
Sean Gallagher
Sean Hamilton
Sean J. M. O'Connor
Sean McG
Sean P. Hassan
Sean Silva-Miramon
Sebastian Freeman
Seth Hartley
Shade
Shan "Shanathan" Morris
Shane "Asharon" Sylvia
Shane Rose
Shaun D. Burton
Shawn "Q-02" Bowman
Shawn P
Shawn Roberts, widdershawns
Shimon Klein
Shoshana Kessock
Sifu Dustin Rahn
Silas "Arden Mors" McDermott
Simo Levanto
Simon "The Vampire" Blackbourne
Simon Hunt
Simon Kristiansen
Simon Smith's Dancing Bear
Sir Basara
Spider na Taliesin
SRoyle
Stalks-the-Reef
StandaBear
Stefan Beate, Esq.
Stéphane "Je ne suis pas goth" Zuckerman
Stéphane Tirel-gomard
Stephen Joseph Ellis
Stephen Post
Sterling August
Steve Burnett
Steve Wolfy Scott
Steven C. Brown
Steven Collins
Steven Sauer
Strahd von Zarovich
Susan Annette Steele
Sven G.
Syal
Syn
T.C. Moore
Tart and Gen
Tay and Gary
Ted Pertzborn
Terry E Roberts
Terry from Mage the Podcast
The Alaskan Greywolfe
The Hoffmans
The Right Honorable Jason Place, Oracle of the Void
The Thrice-Great Hermes Pinto
Theanos Thrax
Thee Secret Chief
Thierry De Gagne
Thomas J. Egan
Thomas Martin
Thomas Maund
Three Kates
Tiffany Korta
Tiger Richardson
Tillan
Tim Hall
Tim-Oliver Cramer
Timothy & Mitzi Gousie
Timothy Blackstone
Timothy Mushel
Tobias Schulte-Krumpen
Tommy Svensson
Tony Conte
Tracy Pinkelton
Travis Bryant
Travis Legge
Tremal-Naik

Tristan Beck
Troy Lees
Troy Lenze
Turner M.
Tyler "Walrock" Reed
Tyler Bryan
Tyler Middleton
Tyler Sherkin
Uberbunk
Vegard Kivle
Velvet Alicia Lilith~Victoria Azshara Divine
Venomous Joy of Rainbows
Verossa
Victor J Kinzer
Vince Kindfuller
vincent furstenberger
Vincent Longobardi
Vincent Shadowlight
Vladimir "Walter Hieronymus Duncraig, Esq." Tierney
Vladimir Petrovich
Von Cotton
Vox Anteron
W0LV3RTR0N
Wade Wallace
waelcyrge
Walter B. Schirmacher
Walter S
Wayne seeger
Whismerhill
Wicked Nothing
William F Scrimsher III
William Franks
William Godlin
William M. Connelly
William Martin
Wouter Buijs
wstarter
Wyrdrune the Warlock
X&
Xapmat & Aleximoon
Xiu Tong
Yodo
Yzabel Ginsberg
Zachary Hills
Zachary Thomas Tyler, Ottoman Dream-Speaker/Taftâni Shaman
Zetos
Aᴡꟳ Kʟᴡʌᵬ

Timelost Technocracy Agents

The creation of the M20 Technocracy Reloaded hardcover book was a magickal act that created vast amounts of paradox, and some of the names of the agents that helped bring it into the world may have been lost in the æther as a result. We thank these timelost Technocracy agents for their support.

Aariea
Aaron McLaughlin
Adam J Faber
Adam Nathanson
Adam Whitcomb
Alan, Sinead and Matthew makes three
Alessandro S. Peres
Alex Context
ALEXANDER MASON
Alexandre Kerscher Souza
Alexandre Simard
Alvaro Madrigal
Alyssa Curby
Anders Holmström
Andres Ignacio Rodriguez Morales
Andrew Peregrine
Andy de Quesada
Anja Kraus
Annida Christofi-Clark
Antoine Malardé
B. Hill
Bael the Cruel
Ben Hollas
benjamin campbell
Benjamin S Ellingsworth
Benjamin Stoddard
Billy Trobbiani
Bracken McDaniel-Weissler
Brandon Steward
Bret Myers
Brett Anderson
Brian T Bly
Bridget Browder
Bryce Undy
Bud Ostberg
C Wojciak
Caden Kent
Calvin Ference
Carlos E Restrepo
Carol E Darnell
Charan DuFrançois
Charles Andrew Katz
Charles Childress
Charlotte E Wintersteen
Chris Bryson
Chris Cynefin
Chris Morrell
Chris Rubenstahl
Chris Tulach
Christian Lachance, esq.
Christopher Pinder
Claude Martel-Olivier
Clayton Freund
Colin Anderson
Colin Jessup
Colin Miller
Colin R. Jones
Conrad Julian White
Constance d'Yoire
Corwyn Alambar
Crazy knifes Mike C.
Curtis Nelson
Dale 'Clayton' Millward
Dale Wilson
Dan L. Nielsen
Daniel "Director" Haddon
DarkeFroste
Darren Stalder
David Connell Olsher
David Deats
David Thomas
David Viars
Dean Petty
delwyn
derekticon
Dirk Whitaker
Dominic Cossel
Donald Clarke
Doug Atkinson

Doug Seipel
Dr. Schneider
Dr. Taylor Hayden Wright
Dystopian nurse
Eben Lowe
Edouard Contesse
Eggers Chris
Eidan Rodriguez
Elethayn
Elzo Tovani Benzaquen
Eric Nathaniel M Henson
Erik Kemnitz
Ethan Flemming
Ethan Wilke
Euthanatos Of The Realm (M.I. VIII.)
Evan and Sarah Edwards
Felix J. Blinn III
Filip Danielsson
Francis Renault
Frank Pauxberger
Frank Precissi
Garon Niehaus
Gideon Nightshade
Gimble Gax
Glen R. Taylor
Grzegorz Zawadka
Guido Gerritzen
Harma Lever
Henry F. Bruckman Vargas
Henry R. Moore III
Hiromi Cota
Ian Nusskern
ipsi
Ivan R Olias
J. W. Bennett
Jame Freeman-Hargis
James Anderson
James High
James Walther
Jami Lukins
Jarrod Breeding
Jason Ramboz
Jason Robinson
Jeff Croft
Jens "Spacejens" Rydholm
Jens Fitzenberger
Jeremiah Pointer
Jeremiah Poppenbeck
Jeremy and Tasha Cue
Jeremy Miller
Jeremy R Roberts
Jerry Ozbun
Jesse J Christy
Jessica Lilith Darke
Jim Urquhart
Jocelyn Krueger
Jody Bowman
Joe Blauberg
John J. Berting
John Magn
John P Weatherman
John Watson
Jonathan Britton
José Berrocal Contreras
Joseph Schutte
Joseph Soloway
Josh Dillard
Josh Fohrman
Josh Heath
Joshua M Gorham
Joshua Roye
Joshua Sterns
Joshua Wilson
Joshua Wilson
Juan José López-Ayerbe Arroyo
Julián Navarro
Julio Fernandez
Julio Rodrigues
Justin Bromberg
Justin Triplett
Justin W. Bryant
K Turley
K Turley
K. Malu Castro
Kayla Mangen
Keglevich Von Carcosa
Kelli Briley
Kelly and Alex Beigh
Kenneth W Hensley II
Kevin Landwehr
Kevin P Faille
Kevin P Harris
Khaos Farbauti Ibn Oblivion
Kiera Sullivan
kyle piano
L. Determan
Leslie Wea
LIBBIE MILLER
Louis
Luca
Lucas Walker
MadMoses
Magus
Majdi Badri
Mak Kakuk
Malcolm John Brown
Malcus Dorroga
Mara Cardozo
Marc Blinn
Marcus and Leslie Arena
Mario Breton
Mark Hope
Mark Librizzi
Mark P. Redford
Martin Christensen
Matthew Casedonte
Matthew Elswick
Matthew Golden
Matthew S Boren
Matthew Sheahan
Melissa Krause
Michael "Sanjay" Brosens
Michael Atalay
Michael Brewer
Michael Hopkins
Michael Jacobson
Michael Marino
Michael W. Robins
Mike & Brian Goubeaux
Mike Leader
Mike Montgomery
Mike Ruch
Murilo Moura Sarno
Nanichi Aguado-Foy
Nathan Tamayo
Nicholas Matuzic
Nicolas April-Dufour
Nik May
Ninik V.
Orlando "Blue Rabbit" Soares
Pablo Pérez Gómez
Pat Gunn
Patrick Cossel
Patrick Mason

Patrick McCann
Paul Clayton-Shawley
Paul Robert Ring bani Verbena
Peter A Pena - Shadowstep6
Petri Wessman
Philip L Ranalli III
Philip W Rogers Jr
Philippe Fenarius
PHILLIP EDWARD BROUGHTON
Phillip J Brown
Pieter Moore
Prince Maxi
Professor Manheim
R. Randolph Callaway Rea III
R. Randolph Callaway Rea III
Randolph Meister
Riku Niukkanen
Robber Baron Thomas Young
Robert Leonard
Robert T. Sagris
Roman Lanzarotta
Rosa M Halcomb
Rose Chan
Roy Berman
Russel A Lee
S. Snyder
S.A. Wolf
Saleem Halabi
Sam Myatt
Samantha Jane Parker
Sands and Moss
SANTINO ANTHONY CRIVELLO
Scott A. Kendrick
Scott Andrews
Scott Bryant
Scott Edward Eck
Scott McFarlane
Scott Robinson
Sean J. M. O'Connor
Sean Riedinger
Shawn Campbell
Simo Levanto
Sparky Endicott
Stéphane Zuckerman
Sterling Lenheim
Steve Burnett
Steve S
T.C. Moore
T.R. Fullhart
Tahd Inskepp
The Right Honorable Jason Place, Oracle of the Void
The Thrice-Great Hermes Pinto
Theodore Strinz
Thiago Meyer
Thomas Martin
Tiger Richardson
Tim Dennie
Tim Everson
Tim Pillards
Timothy Blackstone
Timothy R Jay
Tommy Newcomer
Tony Bellegante
trance[end]
Tremal-Naik
Trollune
Verossa
Victor J Kinzer
Vitas Varnas
Wade Wallace
waelcyrge
Walter S
Wayne seeger
Whismerhill
William F Scrimsher III
William M. Connelly
Wong Kai Chung, James
Zachary Hills
Zachary Thomas Tyler, Ottoman Dream-Speaker

#

0th Guild House, 80. *See also* Guild of Analytical Reckoners.

A

Abeokuta, 256

Abilities, 16, **119-120**, 190-193, 196-197

Academics (Knowledges), 119-120, 163, 190, 192-193, 195, 199-201, 205, 208

Acrobatics, 196-197

Alertness, 186-187, 190-197, 199-200, 202, 204-205, 207-208 (Talents)

Archery, 191, 196

Area Knowledge, 186-187, 192, 194-196, 204

Art (Talents), 193, 202

Athletics (Talents), 187, 191-197, 199-200, 205, 208

Awareness (Talents), 186-187, 190-193, 196, 199-200, 202, 204-205

Blatancy, 119, 150

Brawl (Talents), 186-188, 191-197, 199, 202, 204-205, 207-208

Carousing, 187, 194, 199-200

Climbing, 196-197

Cooking, 193

Computer, 119-120

Cosmology (Knowledges), 202, 204

Crafts (Skills), 191-196, 200, 202

Cultural Savvy, 190, 199-200

Demolitions, 191, 194

Drive (Skills), 119

Empathy (Talents), 186, 196-197, 202, 205, 207-208

Enigmas (Knowledges), 190, 193, 195, 202, 204-205, 208

Esoterica (Knowledges), 120, 186, 195-196, 199

Etiquette (Skills), 190, 193, 195, 199-200, 202, 204, 208

Expression (Talents), 193, 202, 204-205, 208

Finance (Knowledges), 120, 199-200

Firearms (Skills), 170-171, 187, 191-192, 194, 196, 199-200

Gambling, 197

High Ritual, 120, 190

History, 204, 208

Hunting, 191, 196, 199, 205, 208

Intimidation (Talents), 186-187, 191-192, 195-196, 199-200, 204-205, 208

Investigation (Knowledges), 159, 187, 192, 195-196, 204-205

Law (Knowledges), 187, 192, 196, 199

Leadership (Talents), 187, 191, 199, 208

Lore: Vampires, 208

Martial Arts (Skills), 191

Medicine (Knowledges), 187, 191, 196, 200

Meditation (Skills), 190

Melee (Skills), 187-188, 191-197, 199-200, 205, 208

Networking, 195, 202

Occult (Knowledges), 186-187, 190, 193, 195, 199, 202, 204-205, 208

Politics (Knowledges), 194, 199-200

Research (Skills), 195, 199-200, 202, 208

Riding, 190-191, 193, 199-200

Science (Knowledges), 195, 200

Secondary Abilities, 119

Seduction, 193, 197, 199, 202, 207-208

Stealth (Skills), 186-187, 191-197, 202, 204-205, 208

Streetwise (Talents), 186-187, 199

Style, 199, 202, 208

Subterfuge (Talents), 187, 191-196, 199-200, 202, 204-205, 207

Survival (Skills), 186-187, 191-192, 195-197, 205

Technology (Skills), 194, 199-200

Torture, 187, 192, 199-200

Vice, 187, 193, 199

Abkhaz-Abaza, 225

Aboriginal Peoples, 218-219, 233

Abosom, 232, 256

Absinthe, 183, 193, 202

Acarya, 53. *See also* Chakravanti.

A Compilation of Systems. *See* Tantrasamgraha.

Actions, 121, 160, 163, 172-173. *See also* Challenge.

Act of the Union, 218

Adandozan (King), 257

Adepts, 91. *See also* Golden Guild.

Advantages, 121

Adyghe, 223-224

Affiliations, 26, 116, **118**, 126

Affinity Spheres, 48, 51, 53, 55, 57, 59, 61, 63, 81, 83, 85, 87, 89, 91, 93, 95, 97, 99, 104, 106, 108-113, 122, 127. *See also* Spheres.

Correspondence, 47-48, 83, 89, 99, 186-187, 199-200, 206-207

Entropy, 48, 53, 91, 93, 148, 186-187, 199, 218, 226

Ether, 87

Forces, 51, 57, 87, 95, 97, 108-109, 186-187, 199-200, 207

Life, 51, 120, 186-188, 199, 201, 206

Matter, 59, 108, 111-113, 186-188, 199-200, 207

Mind, 47, 91, 110, 186-187, 199-200, 205-206

Prime, 51, 55, 63, 85, 87, 89, 91, 93, 95, 110-111, 113, 186-188, 199-200, 222

Space, 109

Spirit, 30, 59, 109, 186, 199, 205, 207

Time, 81, 83, 93, 97, 140, 199-200, 245

Afghanistan, 58, 162, 261, 263, 266

Africa, 15, 24-26, 28, 40, 43, 47, 52, 56, 69-72, 94, 102-104, 110, 117, 142, 145, 148, 157, 163, 182, 189-190, 198, 203-204, 217, 219, 234, 236, 238, 242, 249-256

Age of Discovery, 67

Age of Enlightenment, 94

Age of Princes. *See* Zemene Mesafint.

Age of Science, 156

Age of Steam, 212

Age of the Vampyre, 208

Aghniat Alwahda, 40. *See also* Ahl-i-Batin *and* Sects.

Ahl-i-Batin, 24, 36, 40, **47-48**, 111, 146, 157, 213, 219-221, 223-224, 226-227, 230, 251-252, 261. *See also* Traditions.

Ainu People, 262

Akan People, 256

Akashayana, 24, 27, 36, 41-42, 47-48, **49-51**, 102, 107-108, 111-112, 148, 151, 217, 219, 223, 230, 254, 261, 263-264, 266. *See also* Traditions.

Alaska, 236

Albertan Reformation, **67**, 69, 77-78, 90, 94, 217-219

Albertan Reorganization. *See* Albertan Reformation.

Albertian Reforms. *See* Albertan Reformation.

Albert (Prince), **67-69**, 75, 77, 94, 157, 216-217

Alcohol, **183**, 188

Ali'i Priests, 108

Ali, Muhammad, 253

All-India Muslim League, 266

Al-Sharif, Hadiyah, 71

Alternate History, **158**, 163

Amand, Ishann, 40

American Civil War, 17, 23, 117, 150, 154-155, 157, 183, 218, 220, 234, 238-239

American Independence, 232

American Revolution, 218

American West, 46, 52, 92, 141, 192-193, 205, 212

Analytical Engine, 67, 71, 75, 80-81, 163

Anastagio's Olde Time Lunar Carnival, 223

Anatolia, 111, 227

Ancient Olympic Games, 229

Anderson, John, 233

Andong Kim Clan, 259
Anglo-Sikh Wars, 260, 263
Anglo-Zulu War, 71, 163
Ang, Mey, 260
Animals, 109, 125, 134, **185**, 223, 254
Annual Customs of Dahomey, 257
Antagonists. *See* Mortal Antagonists.
Anthony, Susan B., 156
Aoudaghost, 102, 110, 253
Aponte Slave Rebellion, 244
Apprentice, **26**, 32, 55, 86, 90, 97, 104, 119, 127, 172, 199, 240. *See also* Golden Guild *and* Voltarian Order.
Arabian Peninsula, 111
Arcanabula Victus, 37
Archetypes, 16, **118**, 173-174
  Corrupter (Villain), 174
  Hacker, 118
  Mastermind (Villain), 160, 167, 173-174, 249
  Monster (Villain), 174
Arctic Ocean, 165, 233
Arete, 122, 186, 187, 199-200
Argentina, 241, 245-249
Argentine Confederate, 245
Argos, 164
Ark of the Covenant, 252
Armor Rating, 186-187, 199-200, 202, 204-205, 207-208
Around the World in Eighty Days, 25
Ars Cupiditae, 77, 90
Ars Praeclarus, 97
Artificers, 66, 91, 199, 225
Artisans, 66, 78, 96-97, 112, 132, 199-200, 207. *See also* Brotherhood of Mechanicians.
Art of the One, 54
Asase Ya, 256
Ascension War, 24, 35, 38-40, 42, 44-45, 54, 63, 66, 109, 115-118, 136, 157, 211, 216-217, 240, 251-252
Ashanti Empire, **256**
Asia, 41, 47, 49-50, 52, 69, 112, 141-142, 145, 151, 154, 157-158, 162-163, 189-190, 213, 217, 219, 230, 235, 253, **257-264**
Assistant Professors, 80. *See also* Guild of Analytical Reckoners.
Atlantic Ocean, 102-103, 157, 163, 231, 256
Atlantis, 105, 165
Attacks, 163, 171, 182, 205, 207
Attributes, **119**, 186-188, 190-197, 199-200, 202, 204-205, 207-208
  Mental Traits. *See* Mental Traits.
  Physical Traits. *See* Physical Traits.
  Social Traits. *See* Social Traits.
Araucanía, **248-249**
Assam, 260
Australia, 32-33, 90, 106, **217-219**, 229, 260
Australian Outback, 219
Austria, 141, 220-221, 225, 227, 248
Austria-Hungary, 226, 264
Austrian Empire, 224
Autochthonia, **71-72**, 76, 80
Avatars, 38, 46, 62, 118, **122**, 124-125, 187-188, 199-200, 204
  Dynamic, 122
  Static, 122
Awakened Arts, 145, 208
Awakening, 22, 24, 27, 29, 46, 48, 51, 57-59, 62, 104, 118, 124-126, 187
Awalaye, 69-70
Ayers Rock, 38
Ayyaana, 252
Aztec, 242

B

Babbage, Charles, 67-68, 79-80, 163
Backgrounds, 16, **121-122**, 186-187, 190, 199-200
  Allies, 121-122, 187, 193, 199-200
  Alternate Identity, 122
  Arcane, 186
  Avatar, 186-187, 199-200
  Backup, 122, 187, 199-200
  Contacts, 121, 187, 199-200
  Cult, 122, 186-187, 193
  Demesne, 199
  Dream, 186
  Enhancements, 121-122
  Fame, 199
  Influence, 199
  Library, 199-200
  Node, 186, 199-200
  Rank, 199
  Requisitions, 121-122
  Resources, 187, 199-200
  Retainers, 199
  Sanctum, 186, 199-200
  Secret Weapons, 122
  Spies, 122, 186-187, 193, 199-200
  Status, 199
  Wonder(s), 199
Backlash. *See* Straits.
Baden, 225
Baghdad, 36
Baía de Guanabara, 245
Balkan Peninsula, 226
Balkans, 226
Bangkok, 48, 266
Bank of England, 248
Banshees, 232
Bantu Nations, 69, 117, 145
Baring Brothers, 248
Bata'a, 14, 16, 40, **102-104**, 109-110, 151, 157, 234-236, 251-252,255-256. *See also* Crafts.
Batini. *See* Ahl-i-Batin.
Battle of Balaclava, 220
Battle of Blood River, 113
Battle of Isandlwana, 113, 163
Battle of Königgrätz, 224
Battle of Sedan, 226
Bavaria, 146, 225
Baxley (Lady), 27
Bayer Pharmaceuticals, 183
Becquerel, Henri, 229
Bedlam, 185-186
Bedlamite Arts, 185
Bedlamites, 136, 146, **185-187**, 223. *See also* Marauders.
  Auld Muddy, 136, **186-187**
  Razor Jake, 136, **187-188**
Béhanzin (King), 256
Beijing, 48, 50, 108, 138, 141, 258, 261, 264
Bejo Samaal, 42. *See also* Dream-Speakers *and* Sects.
Belgian Congo, 18, 103, 106, 110
Belgium, 223, 227, 255
Bell, Alexander Graham, 71, 156
Bell, Billy, 186. *See also* Bedlamites, Auld Muddy.
Beltain, 63
Bengal, 260, 263, 266
Bengali Renaissance, 263
Benin, 102
Benz, Bertha, 229
Benz, Karl, 229
Berlin, 186, 222
Berlin Conference, 71, 255
Betancourt, Ana, 244
Bethlehem Royal Hospital. *See* Bedlam.
Bíobío River, 248
Birmingham, 24, 37-38, 215-216, 253
Birmingham School of Medicine and Surgery, 216
Black Forest, 222
Black Hawk (Chief), 234
Black Sea, 224
Black Ships, 27
Black Suits, 99. *See also* Skeleton Keys.
Black War of 1830, 219
Blavatsky, Helena, 105, 142
Blighted Skies of the Nephandi, 164
Blighty, 25, 31

Blocs, 16, **69-78**, 90, 92, 96, 98, 213, 219, 237, 245, 248, 253
Blue Ridge Tunnel, 236
Board of Inland Revenue, 24
Boers, 113, 254
Boer Wars, 254
Bohemian Movement, 61, 141, 146, 183, 193, 202
Bolivia, 246
Bombay, 121, 260
Bonacini, Carlotta, 29
Bonaparte, Napoleon, 155, 157
Bone Rhymes, 33
Bosnia-Herzegovina, 226
Boston Street Strangler, 215
Bourbon Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, 223
Boxer Rebellion, 14-15, 50, 108, 112, 264
Brazil, 103, 116, 145, 151, 241, 244-247, 257
Brazil, Vital, 245
Brisbane, 219
British Army, 113, 162-163, 220
British Crown, 21, 220, 233, 239, 260
British East India Company, 17, 21, 28, 118, 139, 157, 198, 219-220, 260, 263
British Empire, 17, 21, 35-36, 40, 42-46, 52, 54, 62, 77-78, 95, 162, 164, **212-221**, 232-234, 238, 254, 256-257
British Isles, 62
British Raj, 263
British Royal Engineers, 253
British Royal Navy, 162, 164-165, 218
British South Africa Company, 254
Britannia, 62, 136, 214, 218
Broken Wheel, 226-227. *See also* Chakravanti.
Brotherhood of Mechanicians, 66-67, 69, 76-77, 79, **96-97**, 99, 120, 157, 200, 253, 256. *See also* Order of Reason.
Brown, Lucretia, 237-238
Brujería, 247
Brussels, 223
Buckland Riots, 219
Bulgaria, 226, 264
Burma, 49, 108, 112, 163, 260
Burning Times, 34
Bygones, 52, 83, 89, 133, 212, 215, 219
Byron (Lord), 201, 212

C

Cabal of Pure Thought, 47, 66-67, 75, 86, 94, 259-260. *See also* Cabals *and* Lightkeepers *and* Order of Reason.
Cabals, 27, 29, 36, 39-40, 42, 44-46, 53, 55, 127, 216, 219, 242-243, 245-246, 250, 257
Cabral, Pedro Álvarez, 82
Caesar, 63
Caffeine, **183**
Caine's Childer. *See* Un-Dead Vampyres.
Cairn, 219
Cairo, 186, 196
California, 235-236, 238
Cambodia, 260, 263, 266
Cambridge University, 216
Canada, 56, 167, **217-218**, 231-234
Canadian Arctic Archipelago, 165
Cannabis, 183, 193
Cannae, 225
Capel Court, 92
Cape of Good Hope, 88
Capoeira, 104, 148
Captains of the Void, 87. *See also* Void Seekers.
Caraballo Mountains, 262
Cardiff, 80
Caribbean, 102-104, 145, 151, 198, 242, 248
Carnegie, Andrew, 155
Carpathian Mountains, 88
Carroll, Lewis, 141, 186
Caspian Sea, 224
Casta System, 243
Castle Garden, 235
Catechumen, 55
Caucasian War, **224**
Caucasus, 224
Cauls, 45, 251
Celebration of Hidden Communion, 126
Celestial Masters. *See* Society of Celestial Masters.
Center Party, 227
Central Africa, 21, 28, 69-70, 255
Central America, 102-103, 242-243
Central Asia, 258, 261, 264
Ceres, 156
Cervantes, Miguel, 54
Chakravanti, 25-28, 32, 35, 37, 39, 42, 44-45, **52-53**, 157, 164-165, 214, 217, 219-221, 223, 226-227, 230, 251-252, 254, 260, 263. *See also* Traditions.
Challenge, 153-154, 170
Chancellors, 55, 68-69, 225, 227. *See also* Chorus Celestial.
Chantries, 25-27, 31-32, 37-39, 44-46, 53, 55, 160, 163, 188, 219, 227, 240, 251, 253, 255, 262
  Cerberus Chantry, 226. *See also* Senex *and* Umbra, Deep Umbra.
  Chantry of Broken Mirrors, 38
  Umbral Chantries, 44
  Wayshrine, 37. *See also* Order of Hermes.
Chapter Houses, 27, 55. *See also* Chorus Celestial.
Charge of the Light Brigade, 147, 220
Charms, 62, 205-208
  Appear, 205-206
  Blast, 205-206
  Blast Flame, 207
  Cleanse the Blight, 208
  Create Fires, 207
  Create Wind, 205, 208
  Element Sense, 208
  Flee, 207
  Influence, 206-207
  Insight, 205-207
  Lightning Bolt, 208
  Materialize, 207-208
  Meld, 208
  Mirror Mimic, 207
  Mind Speech, 207
  Quake, 207-208
  Rebound, 207
  Reform, 207
  Shapeshift, 205
  Soul Reading, 206-207
  Terror, 204-205, 208
  Umbral Storm, 208
Chela, 53. *See also* Chakravanti.
Cheoljong (King), 259, 262
Chicago, 99, 106
Children of Rat, 186, 188
Chile, 241, **247-249**
China, 17, 27, 33, 40, 49-51, 77, 92, 101-102, 106-108, 112, 117, 119, 132, 136-137, 141, 144-145, 148, 158, 162, 183, 196, 235, 258-259, 261-265
Chinatown, 219, 238
Chin Woo Athletic Association, 230
Chōkyō, ōzato, 260
Choristers. *See* Chorus Celestial.
Chorus Celestial, 13, 24, 30, 36-37, 41-42, **54-55**, 102, 156-157, 213, 217, 220-221, 223, 226-228, 230, 232, 247, 252. *See also* Traditions.
Christ, 94, 103, 146
Christian Science, 237-238
Chulalongkorn (King), 49
Church. *See* Roman Catholic Church.
Church of England, 54
Cixi (Empress Dowager), 50, 264
Clerks, 77, 84, 90-91, 93, 104. *See also* Invisible Exchequers.
Coalition Powers, 155
Cocaine, **183**, 228
Cochinchina, 263, 266
Coincidental Magick. *See* Magick Rules, Elegant Magick.

College Invisible, 30-31
Colman-Smith, "Pixie," 146
Colombia, 103, 145
Colt, Samuel, 233
Columbus, Christopher, 242
Comanche People, 109, 137, 145, 179
Comanche Puha, **109**. *See also* Crafts.
Comancheria, 109
Communist League, 223
Complications, 171
Computer, 71
Concert of Europe, 67, 70, 222
Concordia, 35, 39, 44-45, 54, 62
Confederate States of America, 196
Congo, 24-26, 32, 162, 198
Congo Free State, **255-256**
Congress of Berlin, 226
Conquest of the Desert, 246, 249
Consensus of Hawai'i's Territory, 260
Consensus of Japan, 258
Constantinople. *See* Istanbul.
Consulting Detective, 17, 25, **167-168**. *See also* Genre Variants.
Convention of the Ivory Tower, 66
Conventions of the Victorian Reformation, 65. *See also* Order of Reason.
Copenhagen, 229
Cordis Legentibus, 54-55. *See also* Chorus Celestial *and* Sects.
Cosian Circle, 66
Cosian's Laws of Inheritance, 92
Council Chamber, 35
Council of Nine Mystick Traditions, 14, 16, 26, 31, **35-65**, 78, 101-102, 109, 118, 148-149, 157-158, 163-164, 198, 224, 226, 230, 232, 238, 244-245, 251
Court of Sacred Sciences. *See* Mübarek Maharet Meclisi.
Craftmason Council, 66
Craftmasons, **65-67**, 86, 90, 96, 146. *See also* Brotherhood of Mechanicians *and* Order of Reason.
Crafts, 13-14, 16, 23, 26, 39-40, 45, 47, 72, **102-116**, 118, 121, 127, 139, 221, 232, 239, 240, 242, 249-253, 256-257
Bata'a. *See* Bata'a.
Comanche Puha. *See* Comanche Puha.
Dalou'laoshi. *See* Dalou'laoshi.
Hollow Ones. *See* Hollow Ones.
Jidai. *See* Jidai.
Kopa Loei. *See* Kopa Loei.
Ngoma. *See* Ngoma.
Sisters of Hippolyta. *See* Sisters of Hippolyta.
Taftâni. *See* Taftâni.
Wulong. *See* Wulong.
Zulu Mechanists. *See* Zulu Mechanists.
Crew, 164
Crimean War, 155, 166, **220-221**, 224, 226, 261
Crisis of 1914, 70
Critical Tasks, 172-173. *See also* Epistolary Interludes.
Croesus on the Thames. *See* Croft, Edgar.
Croft, Edgar, **198-199**. *See also* Fallen Ones.
Crowley, Aleister, 142, 146, 190
Crown, 35, 75, 160-161, 220, 222
Crystal Palace, 217
Cuba, **244**
Cultus Ecstasis of the Nouvelle Nouveau. *See* Sahajiya.
Curia, 55. *See also* Chorus Celestial.
Cōn Annwn, 63. *See also* Sects *and* Verbenae.
Cyprus, 226
Czar of Ether. *See* Vargo, Andreas.

D

Daedaleans, 77-78, 96. *See also* Brotherhood of Mechanicians *and* Technocratic Union.
Dahomey Kingdom, 256-257
Dalou'laoshi, 50, 77, **112**, 259-261, 264-265. *See also* Crafts.
Dalton, John, 156
Damage, 120, 134, 164, 170-171, 180-182, 187-188, 205, 207, 209. *See also* Complications.
Aggravated Damage, 188
Bashing Damage, 182
Lethal Damage, 120, 134, 170, 187-188, 205, 207
Soak, 134, 170-171, 186-188, 199-200, 202, 205, 207
Damian (Professor), 31
Danube, 221
Dardanelles, 220
Dark Ages, 65, 135, 197
Darwin, Charles, 84, 144, 154, 156, 189, 198, 204, 216
Decadent Occultism, 146
Descension, 218
De Céspedes, Carlos Manuel, 244
Declaration of Independence, 233
Declaration of Sentiments, 233
De Coubertin, Pierre, 229
Defense, 170-171
De Lefebre, Alexandre, 199-200
Delhi, 163, 220, 260
De Martinville, Édouard-Léon Scott, 228
Demeanor, 118, 186-187, 199-200
Martyr, 186
Monster, 186-187
Visionary, 199
Dementia. *See* Quiet, Madness.
Demi-Hermetic Societies, **146**
Denmark, 223
De Rosas, Juan Manuel, 246
Deschamp, Jaqueline, 38
Desert Campaign, 246
De Sousa, Francisco Félix, 257
Devices, 127
Dharmachakra, 53. *See also* Chakravanti.
Advaita, 53
Dama, 53
Daya, 53
Kala, 53
Pravitra, 53
Punarjanman
Samsara, 53
Tapas, 53
Diaspora, 102-103, 224, 234, 237, 247
Díaz, Porfirio, 243
Dice Pool, 119, 171-172, 182. *See also* Challenge.
Dice Rolls, 119-120, 130-131, 134, 139, 153, 159, 161, 163-164, 168, 170-175, 177, 181-182, 205-207
Botch, 120, 130-131, 134, 161, 175, 181-182
Teamwork, 161
Dickens, Charles, 141, 158, 161, 197, 201, 212
Dickinson, Emily, 154
Difference Engine, 68, 81
Difference Engineers. *See* Guild of Analytical Reckoners.
Difficulty Modifiers, 119-120, 130-131, 138, 164, 170, 180-182, 205, 207. *See also* Challenge *and* Defense.
Diggers Rebellion, 66
Diksha, 53. *See also* Chakravanti.
Directors, 79, 83, 85, 92-93. *See also* Invisible Exchequers.
Disraeli, Benjamin, 226
Dissolute Mystery, 186
Divine, 48, 54-55, 132
Divinitatem Regius, 54-55. *See also* Chorus Celestial *and* Sects.
Djinn, 111
Doissetep, 30, 44, 59
Dominion of Canada. *See* Canada.
Donghak, 264-265
Donghak Rebellion, 265
Douglas, Frederick, 234
Dracula, 158, 174, 201, 208, 221
Dragon Throne, 258, 261
Dream of Hope, 39-40, 42, **44**

Dream-Speakers, 17, 23-24, 26, 35-37, 42, 44, 47, **56-57**, 109, 149, 151, 156-157, 160, 217, 219, 223-224, 232, 247-249, 251, 254. *See also* Traditions.
Drug Rules, **184**
Duels, 170-171
  Quickdraw Phase, 170-171
  Staredown Phase, 170
Dungan Revolt, 155, 261, 264
Durability, 164
Durham (Lord), 234

E

Earth Dragons, 258-259, 261-264
East Africa, 110, 117
East Asia, 49, 57, 75, 80, 104-105, 151, 258, 261-262, 264-265
East End, 187
Easter Island, 109
Eastern Europe, 145, 151
Eastern Thrace, 227
East India Trading Company, 117, 213
Eaters of the Weak. *See* Fallen Ones.
Ecstatics, 146, 148, 151, 217, 223, 230. *See also* Traditions.
Ecuador, 103
Eddy, Mary Baker, 237
Edison, Thomas, 141, 154, 156, 238
Edo Bay, 112
Edo Period, 116
Egypt, 24, 111, 142, 144, 146, **252-253**, 266-267
Eidolon, 118. *See also* Essence.
Eight-Spoked Wheel of Law. *See* Dharmachakra.
Elba, 155
El Dorado, 22
Electrodyne Engineers. *See* Guild of Electrodyne Engineers.
Elemental Dragons. *See* Five Elemental Dragons.
Ellis Island, 235
Emancipation Proclamation, 233
Emperor, 108. *See also* Wulong.
Empire of Brazil, 244-247. *See also* Brazil.
Empire of Punjab, 260
Empress, 108. *See also* Wulong.
Engels, Friedrich, 194, 223
English Channel, 66
Enlightened Arts, 129, 134, 138, **142**, 188, 199, 201, 207
Enlightened Economy, 78, 90-91
Enlightened Market, 78
Enlightened Sciences, 129, 208
Enlightened Technologies, 138, **142-144**. *See also* Practices.
Entente, 30, **32**
Epistolary Interludes, 172. *See also* Genre Variants.
Esquire, 86. *See also* Society of Ether.
Essence, 46, **118**, 186-187, 199-200, 206-208. *See also* Avatars.
  Dynamism, 46
  Questing, 46
  Pattern, 134, 199-200
  Primordial, 46, 186-187
Ether, 79, 81, 203
Etheric Sea, 86
Etherites. *See* Society of Ether.
Etherships, 72, 76-77, 86
Ethiopia, 138, 144, 189, 196, 249, **252**, 256
Ethiopianism, 104
Europe, 222-229
Euthanatoi. *See* Chakravanti.
Exeter Hall, 156
Experience Points, 127, 168, 172, 176
Exploratory Society, 22, 42, 69-70, **72-76**, 218, 236, 241, 246, 248, 264, 266. *See also* Blocs *and* Dream-Speakers *and* Sects.
Eye of the Sahara, 254
Ezo Island, 262. *See also* Territory of Ezo.

F

Fae. *See* Night Folk.
Fair Folk. *See* Night Folk.
Falcons of Gabriel, 94. *See also* Cabal of Pure Thought.
Fallen Ones, **197-198**, 251. *See also* Nephandi.
Faraday, Michael, 156
Feather of Ma'at, 52. *See also* Chakravanti.
February Revolution, 223
Federalists, 241, 246-247
Feral Mystique, 150
Ferdinand II (King), 223
Fetishes, 127
Fire Dragons, 262, 264
First Awakening, 238
First Nations, 26-27, 232, 239
First Opium War, 49, 106, 261
First War of Independence. *See* Sepoy Mutiny.
First World War, 155, 220
Five Elemental Dragons, **69**, 158, 258, 262, 264-266
Flambeau, Bartholomew Northman Bani, 32
Flashes of Genius, 79
Flaws, 16, **121-122**, 187, 190, 192-193
  Construct (Social), 122
  Enemy (Social), 122
  Surgical Side-Effects (Genetic), 121
Fleeting Word of the Maiden. *See* Palabra Fugaz de la Doncella.
Flinders Isle, 219
Focus, 45, 48, 51, 53, 55-56, 59, 61, 63, 81, 83, 85, 87, 89, 91, 93, 95, 97, 99, 104, 106, 108-113, 187-188, 199-200
Fon People, 257
Forbidden City, 108, 138
Force Publique, 255
Forces of Reason and Wonder, 228
Foreman, 86. *See also* Voltarian Order.
Founding Fathers, 233, 238
France, 30, 42, 55, 66, 68, 131, 192, 194, 199, 213, 217, 220-221, 223, 225-227, 234, 242-243, 246, 248, 256, 260-261, 263-264, 266
Franco-Prussian War, 225-226
Frankenstein, 136, 144, 158, 185, 201
Frankfurt, 186
Franklin, 86. *See also* Society of Ether.
Franklin, Benjamin, 238
Frederick VII (King), 223
Freemasonry, 58-59, 196
French Louisiana, 234
French Second Republic, 223
Freud, Sigmund, 147, 228
From Hell Flavor, 159
"From Hell" Letter, 154, **158-159**, 165
Frontier Electric, 86
Future Fates, 17, 50, 70-72, 86

G

Gabriel, 94
Gabrielites, 86, 94-95
Gaedcke, Freidrich, 183, 228
Galle, Johann, 156
Galvanic Order. *See* Voltarian Order.
Galvani, Luigi, 86
Gansu Province, 264
Ganvie, 256
Gaslit Mystery Era, 17, 129-131, 133-139, 144, 148-151, 184-185
Gauntlet, 21, 31, 56-57, 111, 219, 249
General, 94, 108. *See also* Wulong.
Generation of '80, **248-249**
Genius, 83, 88-89, 92-93, 96, **122**, 199
Genre Variants, **167-177**
Gentlefolk, 86. *See also* Society of Ether.
George I (King), 229
German Confederation, 68, 223
German Empire, 226
Germantown, 238
Germany, 68, 146, 186, 204, 222-223, 226-229, 248, 264
Ghana, 102

Ghezo (King), 257
Ghostly Phantoms, **203**
Ancestral Haunt, 204
Gilded Age, 147, 194, 197, **239-240**
Ginelli, Bianca, 35
Glasgow, 215-216
Gnosis, 206-208
Gojong (King), 262, 264
Golden Age, 239, 245
Golden Age of Ether, 70
Golden Bull, 200
Golden Door. *See* New York.
Golden Guild, 66-67, 69, 71, 73, 77, 79, **90-92**, 96, 99, 117, 198, 213, 259-260. *See also* East India Trading Company *and* Order of Reason.
Gold Rush, 219, 233, **235-238**
Gongju, 264
Gothenburg, 242
Gothic Antagonist, **173-175**. *See also* Genre Variants.
Gould, Jay, 155
Governor of the Central Fund, 92. *See also* Invisible Exchequers.
Grand Faculty, 43, 69-70, 72, **74-76**, 88, 95, 217, 237. *See also* Blocs.
Grand League of Science, 70
Grand Opera Hall, 60
Gray Suits, 99. *See also* Skeleton Keys.
Great Beast, 151
Great Britain, 15, 25, 40, 42-44, 49, 55, 58, 61, 63, 68, 75, 77, 79, 102-103, 111, 138, 155-157, 159, 169, 192, **214-220**, 226-227, 232, 234, 241, 246, 248, 260-261, 263-264, 266-267
Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations, 67-68, 77-78, 82, 90-92, 157, **217**
Great Game, 58, 160, 197, 263
Great Stink of 1858, 74
Great Western Railway, 75
Great Wheel, 52, 223, 227, 230
Cycle of the Great Wheel, 53
Great Zimbabwe, 110
Greece, 111, 132, 229
Greek Independence, 230
Greek Olympics, 229
Grey, Lucy, 191
Grey Tower, 157
Grimm Carnivale, 223
Grimmie. *See* Ghostly Phantoms, Ancestral Haunt.
Guangxu (Emperor), 264
Guangzhou, 163
Guild of Analytical Reckoners, 67-68, 74, 76-77, 79, **80-81**, 94, 96, 225. *See also* Order of Reason.
Guild of Apothecaries, 85, 216-217. *See also* Hippocratic Circle.
Guild of Electrodyne Engineers, 67, 74, 76, 79, **86-87**. *See also* Order of Reason.
Gwangmu Reform, 264

H

Hadrian, 63
Haiti, 14, 103, 151, **243**
Haitian Revolution of 1804, 102
Hamid, Abdul, 267
Hamid II, Abdul, 263
Havana Harbor, 244
Haven, 37. *See also* Chorus Celestial.
Hawai'i, 72-73, 109-110, 144, 235-236, 259-260, 262, 265
Hayashi, Akira, 259
Health Levels, 186-187, 190-197, 199-200, 202, 204-205, 207-208
Heavenly Paths, 33. *See also* Wu Lung.
Heirs of Caine. *See* Un-Dead Vampyres.
Helena, 227
Hem-ka Sobk, 251-252, 254
Henry, John, 134
Heonjong (King), 259
Heretics, 54, 94, 144-146, 148, 192
Hermetic House, 28, 208
Hermetic Order, 26, 48, 58-59, 65-67, 117, 120, 124, 139, 146, 148, 157, 223, 228, 230, 251. *See also* Orders.
Heroin, **184**
Herschel, William, 73
Hesse-Darmstadt, 225
High Guild, 67, 90, 92, 96, 150, 199, 223. *See also* Golden Guild.
Hill, 37. *See also* Dream-Speakers.
Himalayan Wars, 28
Hindu College, 260
Hippocratic Circle, 25, 44, 67, 70, 74, 76-77, 79, 83, **84-85**, 127, 216-217. *See also* Order of Reason.
Hippocratic Order, 69-70. *See also* Orders.
Hippolytoi, 149
Hispaniola, 242-243
HMS Dreadnought, 162
Hollow Ones, 16, 18, 27, 39-40, 102, **104-106**, 111, 146, 184, 223. *See also* Crafts.
Holmes, Sherlock, 99, 167-168, 183, 212
Holtzmann, Jakob, 223
Homestead Act, 235
Hong Kong, 41, 107, 167
Hong, Xiquan, 261
Honolulu Rifles Militia, 265
Horizon, 31, 38-39, 44, 164
Horizon Realms, 24, 26, 35, 46, 230
Three Grove, 35
House of Braganza, 244
Houses, 42-43, 59, 67, 90, 208, 230
House Bonisagus, 59, 160. *See also* Order of Hermes.
House Criamon, 59. *See also* Order of Hermes.
House Díedne, 24. *See also* Order of Hermes.
House Ex Miscellanea, 24, 59. *See also* Order of Hermes.
House Flambeau, 43, 59. *See also* Order of Hermes.
House Golo. *See* Society of Ether.
House Janissary, 59, 67, 160. *See also* Order of Hermes.
House Jerbiton, 59. *See also* Order of Hermes.
House Luxor, 59, 146. *See also* Order of Hermes.
House Mercere, 59. *See also* Order of Hermes.
House Merinita, 59. *See also* Order of Hermes.
House Quaesitori, 35, 59. *See also* Order of Hermes.
House Shaea, 37, 43, 59. *See also* Order of Hermes.
House Tharsis, 35, 38-39, 59. *See also* Order of Hermes.
House Thig, 59. *See also* Order of Hermes.
House Tytalus, 59. *See also* Order of Hermes.
House Verditius, 43. *See also* Order of Hermes.
Hui People, 258, 261, 264
Hunters Isle, 219
Hyde Park, 156

I

Iesada (Shogun), 259
Ieyoshi (Shogun), 259
Illinois, 234
Imbolc, 63
Imperial Academy of the Fine Arts, 245
Imperialism, **14-15**, 23-24, 28, 36, 40-42, 47-50, 54, 56, 58, 66, 69, 72, 102-103, 108, 116, 123-124, 154, 158-159, 161-163, 169, 212, 221, 226, 230, 242-243, 246, 248, 250, 255-256
Imperial Japanese Army, 205, 264
Imperial Navy of New Atlantis, 165
Inca, 242
India, 15, 21, 28, 37, 40, 42, 52, 77, 80, 82, 105-106, 117, 132, 141-142, 144-146, 148, 151, 157, 162, 183, 196, 213, **219–220**, 253-254, 259, 260-261, 263, 266
Indian National Congress, 266

Indian Rebellion of 1857, 15, 155
Indian Removal Act of 1830, 233
Indigenous Americans, 139, 142, 144-145, 149-151, 182, 203, 207-208, 232, 234, 239-240
Indigenous Peoples, 15, 74-75, 78, 103, 156, 169, 224, 232-234, 242-248, 262
Industrial Revolution, 43, 65, 79, 91, 104, 142, 148, 211-212, 214, 232, **239**
Initiates, 23, 26, 29, 55, 59, 62-63, 80, 83, 88-89, 91, 93, 97, 126, 235. *See also* Brotherhood of Mechanicians *and* Void Seekers.
Initiative, 170-171
Inkblood, 61. *See also* Sahajiya.
Inner Circle, 66-67, 86. *See also* Order of Reason.
Inuit, 56, 233
Investigators, 98-99. *See also* Skeleton Keys.
Invisible College, 69-70
Invisible Exchequers, 29, 67, 69, 71, 73, 77-79, **92-94**, 99, 213, 260-261, 263. *See also* Order of Reason.
Invisible World, 201
Ireland, 21, 62
Iroquois, 144, 232
Isabella II (Queen), 236
Island of Hy-Breasail, 22
Istanbul, 153, 221, 227
Italy, 29, 55, 68, 227, 264
Iteration 5, 71
Iteration X, 70-71, 77
Iterators, 74-75, 80. *See also* Guild of Analytical Reckoners.
International Brotherhood of Mechanicians. *See* Brotherhood of Mechanicians.
Ivory Pact, 198
Ivory Tower, 43, 69-70, 72, 74, **75-76**, 79, 94, 97-98, 217-218, 220, 246-247, 253, 264. *See also* Blocs.

J

Jackson, Andrew, 233
Jack the Ripper, 136, 141, 158, 198, 215
Jacobs, Harriet, 234
Jake's Edge, 187-188. *See also* Bedlamites, Razor Jake.
Japan, 17, 27-28, 40, 49, 111-113, 116, 119, 123, 137, 142, 144-145, 148, 179, 189, 192-193, 196, 235, **258-265**
Jesuits, 112, 262
Jh'dabal, 35
Jhor, 35, 37, 52-53
Jiaqing Emperor, 258
Jidai, **111-113**. *See also* Crafts.
Jim Crow Laws, 233
Jippensha, Ikku, 213
João VI (King), 244
Joseon. *See* Korea.
Journeyman, 86, 97. *See also* Brotherhood of Mechanicians *and* Voltarian Order.
Jurchen Tribes, 259

K

Kabul, 261, 263
Kalahari Desert, 254-255
Kalakaua (King), 262, 265
Kalika Rajas, 260
Kambula, 163
Kamehameha I (King), 259
Kamehameha III (King), 260
Kanpur, 220
KaSenzangakhona, Shaka, 254
Kashmir, 263
Kazakh, 258
Keeper of Horizon, 39
Keepers of the Cauldron, 63. *See also* Sects *and* Verbenae.
Kellogg Brothers, 121
Kensington, 45
Kensington Society, 156
Kepler (Archmaster), 71
Kerala, 82
Khayyam, Omar, 213
Kindred. *See* Un-Dead Vampyres.
King, Ada, 67-68, 79-80
Kingdom of Axum, 252
Kingdom of Kongo, **255**
Kipling, Rudyard, 58
Knights, 55, 146, 148. *See also* Chorus Celestial *and* Palabra Fugaz de la Doncella.
Knights of St. George and the Dragon, 42, 54. *See also* Chorus Celestial *and* Sects.
Knights of the Wand, 43. *See also* Order of Hermes.
Knights Templar, 35, 54, 259, 262, 266. *See also* Chorus Celestial *and* Orders *and* Sects.
Knowledges, 193, 195. *See also* Abilities.
    Secondary Knowledge, 120
Kopa Loei, 72, **109-110**, 260, 262, 265. *See also* Crafts.
Kopa Loei Kahunas, 109, 260, 265
Korea, 56, 145, 235, 259, 261-262, 264-265
Korean Army, 264
Korean Catholic Church, 262
Kriegsakademie, 225
Kroomen, 115
Ksirafai. *See* Razors of the Order.
Kulturkampf, **227-228**
Kumyks, 224
Kuril-Kamchatka Trench, 165

L

Lady of the Lake. *See* Dream of Hope.
Lagrange Points, 70
Lake Makgadikgadi, 254-255
Lake Nokoué, 256
Lambing Flats Riot, 219
Lammas, 63
La Morte, Francoise, 37
L'Ange Blanc, 200. *See also* Avatars *and* Reboul-Lachaux, Rose.
Languedoc-Roussillon, 66
Lanterns, 76, 94-95, 99. *See also* Lightkeepers.
Laos, 266
Lapland, 56
La Revue Athletique, 229
La Terreur, 199
Laudanum, **183**, 202
Laurentian Abyss, 165
Lautaro Lodge, 248
Law of Conservation of Energy, 156
League of Constructors, 69-70, 72, 74, **76-77**, 95-96, 217, 248, 253, 256. *See also* Blocs.
Leaves of Mate, 249
Legacies, 160
Leo XIII (Pope), 227
Leopold (King), 198, 255
Leopold II (King), 255
Lévi, Éliphas, 58, 141
Liberia, 157, 256
Library, 30, 121
Lighthouse, 69, 72, 95. *See also* Lightkeepers.
Lighthouse Methodology, 76. *See also* Lightkeepers.
Lightkeepers, 47, 67, 69, 74-77, 79, 92, **94-95**, 98-99, 157. *See also* Order of Reason.
Light of Reason, 65. *See also* Order of Reason.
Limehouse District, 90
Lime Street Golem, 215
Lincoln, Abraham, 99
Lister, Joseph, 156
Little Italy, 238
Liverpool, 215-216
Living Library, 29. *See also* Secret Societies, Elephant Society.
Loa, 131, 145, 151, 243
Loan Officers, 92-93. *See also* Invisible Exchequers.
Lodges, 24, 27, 36, 43, 75, 89-90, 98-99, 146, 231
London, 15-16, 21-22, 25, 27, 29-30, 32, 45, 48, 57, 59, 67, 74, 76, 79, 90, 94, 98-99, 106, 117-118, 120-121, 124, 133, 137, 141, 155-158, 161, 167-169, 184, 186-188, 191, 196-198, 252

Long Walk of the Navajo, 233
López, Narciso, 244
Lords, 32, 80, 89-90, 92, 97. *See also* Golden Guild *and* Invisible Exchequers *and* Society of Ether *and* Void Seekers.
Louis-Napoleon (President). *See* Napoleon III (Emperor).
Louis-Phillipe (King), 223
Lovelace (Lady). *See* King, Ada.
Luba Empire, **255**
Lumière Brothers, 75
Luminaries, 24, 30-31, 33, 40-41, 50, 65-66, 72, 77, 82, 88-92, 96, 106-107, 111, 116, 118-121, 126, 131-133, 136, 138, 140, 144, 160, 163, 185, 188, 192, 198-201, 204-205, 208, 212, 217-219, 221, 232, 235, 237-239, 242, 245, 247-250, 252-253, 255-256. *See also* Order of Reason.
Luminary Arts, 132. *See also* Luminaries.
Luminary Lodge, 146. *See also* Luminaries.
Luminary Order, 73, 90, 92. *See also* Luminaries *and* Orders.
Lunar New Year, 264
Lusk, George, 158
Luzon, 262

M

Mademoiselle de Sade, 146, 200. *See* Reboul-Lachaux, Rose.
Mad Ones. *See* Marauders.
Madras, 260, 263, 266
Madras Mahajana Sabha, 266
Magick Rules, **130-131**
Catastrophic Magick, 31, 98, **130-131**, 133-134, 137-139, 147-148, 150, 206-207, 218, 235, 265
Elegant Magick, 25, 50, 59, 113, 119-120, **130-131**, 137-138, 147-148, 150, 217
Uncanny Magick, 30-31, 33, 98, 119, **130-131**, 133-134, 137-138, 147-151, 160, 198, 218, 235
Mali, 102
Malling-Hansen, Rasmus, 229
Manchu, 106, 144, 258, 261
Manchuria, 265
Manhattan, 235
Manifest Destiny, 233, 235-236, **238-239**
Manifesto of the Communist Party, 223
Manila, 260
Mannheim, 229
Maori, 109-110, 260, 262, 266
Mapuche, 248-249
Marabele, 254
Marajoara, 115
Marauders, 16, 29, 38-39, 45, 52, 54, 136, 158, 163, 164, **185-188**, 223, 251
Marauds. *See* Marauders.
March Revolution, 223
Marx, Karl, 105, 154-155, 194, 223
Mason, Josiah, 216
Mason Science College, 216
Master Plans, **173-176**. *See also* Gothic Antagonist.
Mastery, 199
Matabele, 254
Maya Dream Zone, 27
Mechanicians. *See* Brotherhood of Mechanicians.
Medievalism, 144, 148-149
Mediterranean Sea, 144, 149, 157, 253
Meeting of Dragons, 69, 158, 264
Meiji Emperor, 262
Meiji Restoration, 80, 112, 258, 264
Melbourne, 219
Members of Parliament, 156
Menabrea, Luigi, 68
Mendeleev, Dmitri, 229
Mendel, Gregor, 228-229
Mental Traits, 173, 207-208. *See also* Attributes.
Intelligence, 120, 186-187, 190-197, 199-200, 202, 204-205, 208
Perception, 159, 186-187, 190-197, 199-200, 202, 204-205, 208
Wits, 163, 186-187, 190-197, 199-202, 204-205, 208
Merits, 16, 119, **122**, 150, 188, 190, 192-193, 196, 200
Innocuous Aura, 200
Language (Mental), 119, 122
Spirit Mentor, 150
Stormwarden (Supernatural), 122
Too Tough to Die, 196
Well-Rounded (Mental), 119
Meroe, 110
Messengers of Fire, 243
Metal Dragons, 27, 262, 266
Methodologies, 75-76, 78-79, 95, 99, 158, 232, 240
Métis, 233
Meucci, Antonio, 75
Mexican-American War, **236**, 239
Mexico, 109, 145, 236, 238, 243
Mfecane, 155, 254
Midas Key Society, 198
Middle East, 47-48, 58-59, 111, 141-142, 144-145, 151, 183, 190
Mill, John Stuart, 156
Mino, 256
Missa Misericordiam, 42. *See also* Chorus Celestial.
Mississippi River, 147, 233
Modern Age, 84
Mohists, 50-51. *See also* Akashayana.
Mokteshaf al Nour, 92
Moldavia, 223
Mongkut (King), 49, 112
Mongolia, 56, 261, 264
Mongols, 106, 258, 261, 264
Monists, 54. *See also* Chorus Celestial.
Montenegro, 226, 264
Moon, 71
Moonseekers. *See* Verbenae.
Moravia, 228-229
Morphine, 183
Morrigan, 204, 232
Mortal Antagonists, **188-197**
Arcane Practitioner, **190**
Blade in the Fog, **190-191**
Blooded Warrior, **191**
Constable of the Law, **191-192**. *See also* Peelers.
Costermonger, **192**
Decadent Demimonde, **192-193**
Domestic Servant, **193-194**
Fervent Revolutionary, **194**
Footpad, **194**
Gentleman Scholar, **194-195**
Resurrection Man, 188, **195**
Rough-Necked Hombre, **196**
Soldier, **196**
Street-Thief, **196-197**
Urchin, **197**
Mthethwa, 254
Mübarek Maharet Meclisi, 47
Mud March, 156
Muse. *See* Night Folk, Fae Enchantress.
Muslim Caliphates, 102
Mythic Threads, 141

N

Naga Societies, 260, 263-264, 266
Nanjing, 261
Napoleon III (Emperor), 223, 226
Napoleonic Wars, **155**, 157, 183, 203, 220, 244
Nassau, 165
National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies, 156
Native Americans. *See* Indigenous Americans.
Natural Philosophers' Guild. *See* Society of Ether.
Nature, 186-187, 199-200
Architect, 200
Monster, 186
Survivor, 187
Tycoon, 199
Ndwandwe, 254

Negation Men, 186. *See also* Marauders.
Neo-Paganism, 144, **148-149**
Nephandi, 16, 22, 24, 28-29, 31, 38, 45, 48, 52, 54, 146, 150-151, 160, 164, 185, **197-200**, 218, 223, 245, 250-251, 255-257
Nephandic Caul, 22
Neptune, 156
Never-Eyes, John, 38-39
New Atlantis, 163, 165
New Carbon, 164
New France, 234
New Jersey, 233-234
New Orleans, 40, 151, 236
New World, 27, 101, 103, 233-235, 241-242, 249, 257
New World Order, 70, 76, 99
New York, 106, 121, 149, 151, 161, 196, 235
New Zealand, 109, 162, 260, 262, 265-266
New Zealand Company, 260
New Zealand Maori King Movement, 262
New Zealand Wars, 109
Ngoma, 22, 28, 31, 40, **110**, 251-255. *See also* Crafts.
Nguni, 254
Nguyen Dynasty, 263
Nicholas the First (Tsar), 220
Niépce, Joseph Nicéphore, 75
Night Folk, 21, 24-25, 27, 30, 52, 83, 88, 162, 201-203
  Fae Enchantress, 146, **202-203**
  Fae-Ravaged Mortal Artist, **202**
Nightingale, Florence, 156
Nightmare Merchant. *See* De Lefebre, Alexandre.
Niketas, 227
Nile Valley, 252
Ni Lug, Brianna, 35
Nine Hunters, 44. *See also* Verbenae.
Nine Traditions. *See* Traditions.
Nizam, 260
Nobel, Alfred, 229
Nobel Prizes, 229
Nodes, 21, 37-39, 56, 139, 160, 216-217, 221-222, 224, 251
Norodom (King), 263, 266
North Africa, 141, 146
North America, 25, 27, 41, 52, 56, 102, 105, 123, 146, 149, 183, 198, 207, **230-240**, 242
Northern Europe, 144
North Pole, 163
Northwest Passage, 165
Nottingham, 66
Novi Pazar, 226
Nsamanfo, 232
Nyame, 256

O

Oba, Nobunaga, 112
Occupation of Araucanía, 249
Okinawa, 258, 260
Oklahoma, 109
Old Nick, 25
Old Ways, 39, 43, 57, 62-63, 138, 140, 144, 149
Old World, 40, 144, 234-235, 237, 246
Olympic Games, **229-230**
Olympic Hymn, 230
One, 41, 54-55
Operatives, 75, 79, 95, 99, 220-221, 253. *See also* Skeleton Keys.
Opiates, **183**
Opium Trade, 77, 90, 92, 106-107, 139, 198
Opium War, 17, 49, 77, 92, 106-107, 261, 263
Optional Rules, 119, 131, 133-134, 159, 161, 163, 164, 170
Oracles, 32, 40, 44
  Oracle of Entropy, 44
Order of Hermes, 13, 22-24, 26, 30, 36-37, 42-43, 47-48, **58-59**, 62, 65, 67, 102, 105, 111, 117, 120, 146, 157, 160, 164, 208, 216-217, 219, 223-224, 247, 251-252, 255. *See also* Orders *and* Traditions.
Order of Knights of the Last Temple, 54. *See also* Chorus Celestial *and* Orders *and* Sects.
Order of Reason, 13-17, 21-31, 33, 35-36, 38, 40-50, 52, 54, 56-63, **65-99**, 101-102, 104-105, 107-113, 116, 118, 120-122, 125, 127, 137, 139, 155-158, 161, 164, 195, 199, 203, 211-212, 216-221, 223-225, 231-232, 235-237, 239, 242-243, 245-256, 259-264, 266. *See also* Orders *and* Technocratic Union.
  Brotherhood of Mechanicians. *See* Brotherhood of Mechanicians.
  Golden Guild. *See* Golden Guild.
  Guild of Analytical Reckoners. *See* Guild of Analytical Reckoners.
  Guild of Electrodyne Engineers. *See* Guild of Electrodyne Engineers
  Hippocratic Circle. *See* Hippocratic Circle.
  Invisible Exchequers. *See* Invisible Exchequers.
  Lightkeepers. *See* Lightkeepers.
  Society of Celestial Masters. *See* Society of Celestial Masters.
  Void Seekers. *See* Void Seekers.
Order of the Black Widow, 52. *See also* Chakravanti *and* Orders.
Order of the Golden Dawn, 58-59, 146. *See also* Orders.
Orders, 40, 42-43, 54-55, 59-60, 67, 126, 146, 190, 216, 223, 226, 264
Origin of Species, 156
Orisha, 102-104, 256
Ostend Manifesto, 244
Ottoman Empire, 36, 40, 47-48, 59, 68, 111, 141, 220-221, 224, **226-227**, 253, 261, 263-264, 266-267
Ottoman Public Debt Administration, 226-227
Overseers, 95. *See also* Lightkeepers.
Oyo Empire, 256

P

Pacific Asia, 259-260, 262, 265-266
Pacific Ocean, 231, 263
Pacioli, Luca, 92
Page Act of 1875, 235
Paine, Thomas, 238
Palabra Fugaz de la Doncella, 54-55. *See also* Chorus Celestial.
Palace of the Viceroys, 244
Pale Mistress. *See* Reboul-Lachaux, Rose.
Pan-Africanism, 104
Panathenaic Stadium, 229
Panthay Rebellion, 155
Papal Choir, 54. *See also* Chorus Celestial *and* Sects.
Paracelsus, 183
Paradigms, 25, 33, 40, 46, 48-49, 51, 57, 59, 78, 118-120, 122, 127, 131, **139-145**, 150, 238
Paradox. *See* Straits.
Paradox Points, 121
Paradox Realms, 29, 134
  Hollow Earth, 134
  Mount Qaf, 47-48, 134
Paradox Spirits, 134
  Old Man Wrinkle, 134
Paradox Wheel, 133
Paraguayan War, 155
Parinaam ke Spinar, 42. *See also* Chakravanti *and* Sects.
Paris, 24, 48, 59, 106, 117, 141, 153, 163, 184, 186, 196, 222, 228-229
Paris Commune, 226
Parliament, 68, 156, 218, 224
Pashtun, 263
Pasteur, Louis, 156, 229
Pax Britannica, **162-163**
Pearl of the Antilles. *See* Hispaniola.
Pearl Harbor, 262
Pedro I (Emperor), 244
Pedro II (Emperor), 244-245
Peel, Robert, 191-192
Peelers, 24, 187, 191-192
Peers of the Realm, 209
Péluse, 253

Penumbra, 139, 207
Pequod, 165
Perry (Admiral), 17, 27, 112, 258, 260
Persia, 111, 145, 162, 253, 261
Peru, 103, 147
Pforzheim, 229
Petals, Jessie, 186. *See also* Bedlamites, Auld Muddy.
Phantasmagoria, 61. *See also* Sahajiya.
Philippines, 235, 260, 262, 266
Phoenix Brotherhood, 41. *See also* Akashayana *and* Sects.
Physical Traits, 173, 188, 204. *See also* Attributes.
Dexterity, 164, 170-171, 186-197, 199-200, 202, 204-205, 207-208
Stamina, 81, 186-187, 190-197, 199-200, 202, 204-205, 207-208
Strength, 186-187, 190-197, 199-200, 202, 204-205, 207-208
Piazzi, Giuseppe, 156
Pinkerton Detective Agency, 25, 99, 167
Pius IX (Pope), 227
Poe, Edgar Allan, 158
Poenitenti, 94. *See also* Cabal of Pure Thought.
Polk, James K., 236
Pontifex Maximus, 55. *See also* Chorus Celestial *and* Curia.
Port Arthur, 265
Portugal, 82, 157, 241, 244-245, 255
Portuguese Empire, 245
Potawatomi Trail of Death, 233
Powderbane. *See* Strait Apparitions, Incendio.
Practices, 27-28, 30, 35, 39-40, 43, 48-49, 51-53, 55-58, 63, 70, 101, 104-106, 108, 110-113, 118, 120, **142-145**, 148-151, 198-199, 218, 220, 231-232, 236, 238, 243, 246-247, 257
Alchemy, 48, 51, 59, 66, 108, 111-112, 138, 143-146, 186, 199
Animalism, 143-144, 150, 199
Art of Desire, 59, 67, 91, 111, 143, 146, 150, 198
Artwork, 146, 149
Bardism, 149-150
Craftwork, 51, 57, 110-113, 142-143, 145, 147, 150, 164
Crazy Wisdom, 48, 53, 57, 104, 106, 109, 111, 143, 146, 148, 184
Demonism, 143-146
Dominion, 59, 143-144, 148, 150, 199-200
Faith, 48, 51, 53-55, 106, 111, 143-145, 149-150
Feralism, 143-144, 149
Goetia, 143-144, 198-199
God-Bonding, 143-144, 188
Gutter Magick, 106, 146, 188
High Ritual Magick, 48, 59, 104, 108, 110-111
Hypertech, 112-113, 120, 139, 142, 146-147
Infernal Sciences, 142-143
Invigoration, 143-144, 148-150, 188, 199
Maleficia, 109, 143, 146
Martial Arts, 51, 53, 104, 109-110, 113, 143-144, **148**
Medicine Work, 57, 109-110, 113, 130, 136, 207-208
Mediumship, 143, 145, 149-150, 188, 199
Mystical Repetition, 55
Psionics, 143, 148-150
Psychotherapy, 142, **147-148**
Sex and Sensuality, 146, 149
Shamanism, **57**, 109, 143-144, 149
Social Manipulation, 24, 55, 174
Tantra, 143, 148, 151
True Alchemy, 198
True Magick, 146, 201, 208
Vamamarga, 143, 151
Voudoun, 104, 143, 145, 151, 199
Weird Science, 112-113, 142-143, **146-147**, 148, 150, 200
Witchcraft, 143-146, 149-150
Yoga, 51, 106, 142-146, 148, **151**
Preceptor, 55. *See also* Chorus Celestial.
Precepts of Damian, **30-31**. *See also* Order of Reason.
Prejudices, 14, 16, 18, 22-23, 26, 29, 141, **166**, 212
Presbyters, 55. *See also* Chorus Celestial *and* Curia.
Primordial Wehr-Beasts, **204-205**
Corvid Trickster, **204-205**
Prince of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. *See* Albert (Prince).
Princely States, 117, 260
Proctor, Reginald, 69-70, 98
Professor, 80. *See also* Guild of Analytical Reckoners.
Progenitors, 70
Protestant Church, 227, 237
Protocols, **30-32**. *See also* Traditions.
Proto-Technocracy, 117
Prussia, 157, 163, 222, 225-227
Punjab, 260, 263, 266
Pupils of Parmenides. *See* Society of Ether.

Q

Q Division, 70
Qing Dynasty, 77, 116, 157, 258-259, 261, 264
Qlippothic, 38, 45
Quatermain, Allan, 99
Queens College. *See* Birmingham School of Medicine and Surgery.
Quiet, 38-39, 45, **134-136**, 185, 188
Denial, **136**
Madness, **136**
Morbidity, **136**

R

Rage, 206-208
Rama IV (King), 261, 263
Rama V (King), 266
Rama the Great. *See* Rama V.
Raj, 144, 213, 220
Rajputana, 260
Rathbone (Inspector), 75, 98-99, 161
Rattanakosin Kingdom, 260-261, 263, 266
Raven Folk. *See* Primordial Wehr-Beasts, Corvid Trickster.
Razors of the Order, **66-67**. *See also* Order of Reason.
Reality Vortices, 186. *See also* Marauders.
Reality Zones. *See* Territories.
Reboul-Lachaux, Rose, **199-200**. *See also* Fallen Ones.
Red Lord. *See* Croft, Edgar.
Red Sea, 253
Reform Edict of 1856, 261
Reformers, 218
Renaissance, 65-66, 90
Renfield, R. M., 135, 158, 185
Research and Execution Division, 70. *See also* Grand League of Science.
Research Assistants, 80, 83, 95. *See also* Guild of Analytical Reckoners.
Resonance, 131, **133-135**, 139
Restless Dead, 149-150, 203-204
Restorer of the Laws. *See* De Rosas, Juan Manuel.
Revelers, 61. *See also* Sahajiya.
Reversals, 175. *See also* Gothic Antagonist.
Rhodesia, 254
Rio de Janeiro, 244
Río de la Plata, 245
Rockefeller, John D., 155
Rokea Colonies, 165
Roman Catholic Church, 24-25, 66, 94, 216, 227-228
Roman Empire, 94, 157, 253
Romania, 226, 228, 264

Romanticism, 237, 242, 253
Röntgen, Wilhelm, 229
Roots of Yggdrasil, 52. *See also* Chakravanti.
Royal Air Navy, 163
Royal Court of Justice for Ecclesiastic Affairs, 227
Royal Defense Council, 244-245
Rozvi Empire, 254
Rubaiyat, 213
Rule of Shade, 33. *See also* Precepts of Damian.
Rune, Cassius, 35
Russia, 36, 58, 111, 136, 144, 146, 155, 157, 189, 204, 220-221, 224, 226, 229, 236, 261, 263-265, 267
Russian Revolution, 17, 194
Russo-Japanese Conflict, 75
Russo-Turkish War, 226
Ryukyu Kingdom, 258, 260, 262-263

S

Sahajiya, 35, 37-38, 43, 52, **60-61**, 62, 216-217, 220, 230, 248, 253, 260, 263
Sahara Desert, 16, **253-254**
Saigon, 263
Saint Barthélemy, 242
Saint-Domingue. *See* Hispaniola.
Samhain, 63
Sami, 144, 223
San People, 254
Sanity Sinks, 186, 188. *See also* Marauders.
Santos-Dumont, Alberto, 245
Savage (Captain), 71
Scenes, 124-125, 160, 176
  Prelude Scenes, **124-125**
Schleswig, 223
Scions of Babel, 36. *See also* Ahl-i-Batin *and* Sects.
Scotland Yard, 98
Scourge of God. *See* Straits.
Scramble for Africa, 69-70
Scribbling, 37-38. *See also* Sahajiya.
Second Anglo-Afghan War, 263
Second French Empire, 220, 226
Second Great Awakening, 149, 237
Second Industrial Revolution, 154
Second Opium War, 107, 263
Second Salem Witch Trial, 238
Secret Societies, 16, 22, 24, **26-30**, 36, 40, 42-43, 45-46, 51, 59, 61, 66, 81, 98, 117, 120, 122, 124, 127, 129, 146, 148, 204, 248
  Abre-Mfalme, 26
  Blue Cog Cognate, 28-29
  Boston Twists, 27
  Children of Kabezya-Mpungu, 28
  Devil's Dancers, 27, 29-30
  Edgeworth Club, 27, 29-30
  Elephant School, 28
  Four Rings Society, 29
  Green Men of Norwich, 26
  House of Phantoms, 26
  Ivory Gentlemen of Hartford, 29
  Lion Society, 27-29
  Offenbach Continuum, 27, 29
  Parisian Mystic Diner's Club, 29
  Rainmaker Society, 27, 29
  Running Stream Lodge of the Great Plains, 26
  Society of Melancholy Inspiration, 29
  Society of the Moon Hare, 27
  Twilight Northerners, 27
  Two Shoe Society, 28
Sects, 36, 41, 45, 54-55, 74, 86, 139, 145-146, 224, 233, 237
Seelie. *See* Night Folk.
Seers of Chronos, 225, 230. *See also* Sahajiya.
Sending, 44
Senex (Archmagus), 226-227
Sepoy, 118, 220, 260
Sepoy Mutiny, **219-220**
Septarians, 54-55. *See also* Chorus Celestial.
Serbia, 226, 264
Seven Dragon Riddle, 36. *See also* Akashayana.
Seward, John, 158
Shadowlands, 150, 255
Shamans, 27, 44, 57, 130, 144, 184, 258, 262
Shamil of the Dagestan (Imam), 224
Shanghai, 261
Sheba (Queen), 252
Shelley, Mary, 158
Shi-ren, 41. *See also* Akashayana *and* Sects.
Shroud, 203-204
Shuja (Shah), 261
Siam, 13, **49**, 51, 108, 111-112, 260-261, 263, 266
Siberia, 56
Sicily, 222-223
Siege of Metz, 226
Siege of Paris, 163, 226
Signatures, 133
  Revolutionary, 133
  Stormy, 133
Sikhs, 260, 263
Sikh Empire, 260, 263
Sino-Japanese Conflict, 75, 80
Sino-Soviet Conflict, 75
Sister of Gabrielle. *See* Deschamp, Jaqueline.
Sisters Gabrielle, 54. *See also* Chorus Celestial *and* Sects.
Sisters of Hippolyta, 102, **110-111**, 230. *See also* Crafts.
Skeleton Keys, 69, 75-76, 79, 94, **98-99**, 127, 148, 161
Skills, 16, 119-120, 196, 207. *See also* Abilities.
  Biotech, 120
  Energy Weapons, 120
  Hypertech, 120
  Jetpack, 120
Sky Council, 164
Sleepers, 14-16, 22-27, 31-33, 43, 45, 48, 50-51, 54, 56-60, 66, 67-68, 74-76, 80, 84, 95, 102-106, 110-112, 120, 163, 164, 212, 216-217, 219, 235, 242-247, 249-250, 252-253, 255-256, 258, 264
SMS Vulcano, 225
Socialist Movement, 227-228
Social Traits, 173, 207-208. *See also* Attributes.
  Appearance, 186-187, 190-197, 199-200, 202, 204-205, 208
  Charisma, 186-187, 190-200, 202, 204-205, 208
  Manipulation, 119, 186-187, 190-197, 199-200, 202, 204-205, 208
Society for Psychical Research, 99
Society of Celestial Masters, 42, 44, 66-67, 69-70, 72-76, 79, **82-83**, 88-89, 94, 99, 117. *See also* Order of Reason.
Society of Ether, 17, 72, 79, 86, 146-147, 199. *See also* Guild of Electrodyne Engineers.
Solificati, 16, 39, 59, 66, 72, 146. *See also* Traditions.
Songhai, 102
Song of the Stones, 38. *See also* Verbenae.
Sons of Ether. *See* Society of Ether.
Sorbonne, 229
South America, 43, 56, 102-104, 142, 145, 151, 228, **241-248**
South Africa, 22, 31, 69, 110, 113, 155, 162, 254
South Asia, 104, 260, 263, 266
Southeast Asia, 49, 158, 260-261, 263, 266
South India, 263
South Sandwich Trench, 165
Soviet Union, 155
Spain, 54, 68, 157, 213, 244, 248, 262-263, 266
Spanish American Wars of Independence, 155
Spanish Empire, 242, 244
Spare, Austin Osman, 146
Spears of Lugh, 63. *See also* Sects *and* Verbenae.

Specialties, 119-120, 195
Herbalism, 120
Sphere Rank, 130-131
Spheres, 48, 122, 127, **130-131**, 138-139, 142, 151, 201, 205-206
Affinity Spheres. *See* Affinity Spheres.
Cosmologia Spheres, 130
Data Spheres, 131
Dimensional Science Spheres. *See* Spheres, Cosmologia Spheres.
Economic Essentialism Spheres, 130
Essentia Sphere. *See* Spheres, Economic Essentialism Spheres.
Primal Utility Spheres. *See* Spheres, Economic Essentialism Spheres.
Spiritualism, 24, 104-105, **149-150**, 203
Spitalfields Rector, 25
Spofford, Daniel, 238
Squires, 55. *See also* Chorus Celestial *and* Palabra Fugaz de la Doncella.
Stanton, Elizabeth Cady, 156
Steampunk, 17, 138, 147, 154, 156, **163-165**
Stoker, Bram, 158, 201, 207, 211
Stonehenge, 38
Story Hooks, 157-158, 160-161, 163-165
Strait Apparitions, **205-208**
Black Gunmen, **205-206**
Doppelgänger, 136, **206-207**
Incendio, **207**
Pastosiwew, **207-208**
Strait of Magellan, **249**
Straits, 35, 38, 40, 43, 45, 50-51, 62, 112-113, 121-122, **130-139**, 181, 185, 201, 205-207, 224, 227, 245-247, 252, 258
Straits Backlash Manifestations, **133**
Stunts, 148, 179
Subcultures, 136, 149
Decadent, 28, 136, 138, 144-146, 161, 183, 192, 194, 198
Nihilist, 136, 194
Romantic, 24, 136, 142, 144-146, 148-149, 185
Symbolist, 136
Submarine Warfare, **164**
Subtle Ones. *See* Ahl-i-Batin.
Suez Canal, **253**, 262
Suez Canal Company, 253
Sufi, 48, 264
Sunwon (Queen), 259
Sun, Yat-Sen, 49, 51, 112
Sutter's Mill, 236
Sweden, 92, 157, 242
Sweeny, Merry Jill, 22
Switzerland, 227
Syndicate, 43, 69-72, 75, **77-78**, 88, 90, 92, 120, 217, 220, 236, 238, 248, 264-265. *See also* Blocs.

T

Taftâni, 40, 261, 263-264. *See also* Crafts.
Tahiti, 109-110
Taiping Rebellion, 155, 261
Taiping Tianguo. *See* Taiping Rebellion.
Taiwan, 257, 262-263, 265
Talents. *See* Abilities.
Tamils, 263
Tantrasamgraha, 82
Tanzimat, 226, 261, 263
Tapestry, 45, 55, 131-132
Tappan's Mercantile Agency, 95
Tasmania, 13, 106, 219
Teaching Assistants, 80. *See also* Guild of Analytical Reckoners.
Technocracy, **70-72**, 74, 79, 102, 136, 139-140, 164
Technocratic Consensus, 147
Technocratic Union, 13-14, 17, 46, 49, 58, 65, 67-70, 72, 76-79, 94, 98, 104, 106-107, 136, 139-140, 158, 211-212, 218, 225-228, 232, 235, 251, 253, 256. *See also* Order of Reason.
Technocrats. *See* Technocratic Union.
Te Kooti (Chief), 266
Tell-Tale Heart, 158
Tellurian, 72, 82
Templar Orders. *See* Knights Templar.
Terms Phase, 170
Territories, 20, 33, 73, 130, 134, **137-141**, 148, 151, 219, 232, 246, 251
Earthly Foundations Zones, 137
Edges of Dominion, **138-139**
Flux States, **138-139**
Heartlands of the Empire, 43, 62, **137**, 242
Occult Underworld, **138**
Wild Lands, **139**
Territory of Ezo. *See* Territory of Hokkaido.
Territory of Hokkaido, 262
Tesla, Nikola, 154, 156, 238
Te Wherowhero, Potatau, 262
Tewodros II (Emperor), 252
Texas, 109, 236
Thames, 25, 136, 155, 170
Thanatoic Arts, 52
Thanatoics, 151. *See also* Chakravanti.
The Black Line, 219
The Great War, 70, 161
Theosophical Society, 105, 146. *See also* Hollow Ones.
The Slaughter Yard, 241, 247
Third French Republic, 226
Thompson (Lord), 73
Thomson, Joseph, 156
Thuggee, **148**
Tianming, 106
Tibet, 49-50, 144
Tientsin Convention, 264
Timbuktu, 102, 110
Time Table, 79, 94, 98. *See also* Conventions.
Tokugawa Shogunate, 262
Tongzhi Restoration, 261-262
Tools, 30, 39-40, 53, 55, 58, 61, 63, 65, 89, 95-96, 122, **141-146**, 150
Torches, 76, 95. *See also* Lightkeepers.
Tourane, 263
Traditions, 13, 16, 21, 24, 26-27, 29-33, 35-36, 38-40, **42-47**, 49, 52, 57-58, 63, 66, 72, 74, 76, 78, 95, 101-102, 105, 109, 116-117, 121, 127, 139, 148, 155-157, 164, 211, 214, 217-220, 223, 228-230, 232, 235, 237-239, 242, 245, 251-253. *See also* Council of Nine.
Ahl-i-Batin. *See* Ahl-i-Batin.
Akashayana. *See* Akashayana.
Chakravanti. *See* Chakravanti.
Chorus Celestial. *See* Chorus Celestial.
Dream-Speakers. *See* Dream-Speakers.
Ecstatics. *See* Ecstatics.
Order of Hermes. *See* Order of Hermes.
Solificati. *See* Solificati.
Verbenae. *See* Verbenae.
Trail of Tears, 233
Transcontinental Railroad, 88, 92, 239
Transvaal, 254
Transvaal Republic, 254
Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, **236**
Treaty of Nanking, 77
Treaty of Paris, 234
Treaty of Vienna, 220
Trevaine, William, 66
Trevanus, Stephen "Robin Hood," 66
Troubadours Exotique, 60. *See also* Sahajiya.
True Missionaria, 54. *See also* Chorus Celestial *and* Sects.
True Scientists, 67
Tuareg People, 253
Turkey, 162, 220
Twain, Mark, 75, 141, 154
Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea, 164
Tychoides (Archmaster), 71-72, 80, 82-83

U

Umbra, 22, 26-27, 37-40, 42, **44**, 56-57, 106, 207, 212, 219, 248, 251, 254-255
Astral Umbra, 39
Deep Umbra, 112, 227

Low Umbra, 204
Middle Umbra, 223
Umbral Realms, 23, 37
Dreamtime, 37
Infinite Tapestry, 44, 212
Umbrood, 21, 25, 27, 29-30, 32-33, 251, 255
Unbelief, 133
Un-Dead Vampyres, 184, **208-209**
Imperious Kindred, **208-209**
Underground Railroad, 103
Unitarian League of Argentina, 246
Unitarians, 246
United Kingdom, 80, 155, 242
United Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, 226
United Province of Canada, 218. *See also* Canada.
United States, 13, 17, 33, 46, 49, 71, 75, 77, 95, 99, 103-104, 111, 113, 117, 139, 155-157, 167, 229, 231-233, 235-236, 238-239, 243-244, 256-257, 264
Unity Church, 237
University of Birmingham, 216. *See also* Birmingham School of Medicine and Surgery *and* Mason Science College.
University of Cambridge, 68
Unseelie. *See* Night Folk.
Uranus, 73
Uruguay, 245
USS Maine, 244
Uyghur, 258, 261, 264

V

Vain Crown, 186. *See also* Dissolute Mystery.
Vajrapani, 41. *See also* Akashayana *and* Sects.
Van Gogh, Vincent, 154
Vargo, Andreas, 72, 86
Vatican, 221, 227
Vatra, 53. *See also* Chakravanti.
Venice, 224-225, 256
Venus, 73-74
Verbenae, 23-25, 27, 29, 31, 35-36, 38, 43-44, **62-63**, 117, 127, 146, 148-149, 151, 156-157, 216-217, 219, 222-224, 230, 238, 254. *See also* Traditions.
Verlaschi, Lizabeta, 45
Verne, Jules, 16, 147, 164-165
Viceroyalty of the Río de la Plata, 246
Victorian Craft, **164**
Victorian Labor Movement, 90-91
Victorian Reformation, **69-72**, 99
Victorian Trades Hall, 90
Victoria (Queen), 23, 30, 31, 43, 46, 67-71, 76, 78, 98, 113, 137, 154, 156-157, 211-212, 214, 216-218, 233, 236, 253, 263
Vidocq, Eugène François, 192
Vienna, 57, 229
Vienna Congress, 222
Vietnam, 49, 108, 112, 260-261, 263, 266
Vindication of the Rights of Woman, 110
Virtual Adepts, 68, 71, 74, 80. *See also* Guild of Analytical Reckoners *and* Sects.
Vision-Dance Prophecy, **150**
Vivekanada, 151
Vodun, 243, 251, **257**
Void Seekers, 42, 44, 66-67, 69-76, 79, 82, **88-89**, 94, 99, 259-263. *See also* Order of Reason.
Volta, Alessandro, 86
Voltarian Order, 67, 79, **86**, 164. *See also* Guild of Electrodyne Engineers *and* Orders.
Von Bismarck, Otto, 225, 227
Von Helmholtz, Hermann, 156
Von Moltke, Helmuth, 225
Von Vordenbruggen (Baron), 164
Voodoo, 27, 130, 145, 149, **151**, 236
Vulgar Magick Without Witnesses. *See* Magick Rules, Uncanny Magick.
Vulgar Magick With Witnesses. *See* Magick Rules, Catastrophic Magick.
Vulgate, 27

W

Waaqa, 252
Waaqeffanna, 252
Wales, 80
Wali (Khan), 258
Wallachia, 223
Wall Street, 92, 240
Wamukamwami, 70, 72
Wan Hu, 112
War for Reality. *See* Ascension War.
Water Dragons, 259, 261-262
Weapons, 14, 30, 51-52, 76, 83, 120, 122-123, 143-144, 149, 164, **179-182**, 191, 194, 196, 205, 224-225
Webley, Agatha, 25
Wellsprings, 139
Wenlock Olympian Games, 229
West Africa, 22, 102-104, 143, 145, 243, 256
West Asia, 77, 80, 261, 263-264, 266-267
Westenra, Albert, 25
Western Caribbean Zone, 242
Western Europe, 13-15, 47, 57-59, 94, 102, 104-106, 110-111, 113, 149, 154, 157, 189, 229
Whitechapel Vigilance Committee, 158
White Lotus Society, 144
"White Man's Burden," 58, 139, 189
White-Necked Ravens, 235. *See also* Bata'a.
White Suits, 99. *See also* Skeleton Keys.
White Tower of Mistridge, 66
Wiesloch, 229
Wilde, Oscar, 154
Wild West, 94, 131, 138, 141, 167, **169**, 211, 218. *See also* Genre Variants.
Willpower, 81, 122, 170, 186-187, 190-197, 199-200, 202, 204-208
Willworker, 23, 25, 32, 38, 45-46, 54, 67, 141, 160, 236, 250-251, 262, 265
Winchester, Oliver, 233
Winthrop, John, 238
Wisconsin, 234
Wizard's Twilight, 135. *See also* Quiet.
Wo Hu Shehui, 41. *See also* Akashayana *and* Sects.
Wollstonecraft, Mary, 110
Wonders, 127, 144
Wood Dragons, 264
Worcester, 216
World Government, 69-70, 75
World's Fair, 68
Wright, C. R. Alder, 183
Wulong, 16, 40, 49-51, 102, **106-108**, 112, 258-259, 261, 264-265. *See also* Crafts.
Wu Lung, 27, 33
Wunung, 261, 264
Württemberg, 225

X

Xiang Army, 261
Xinjiang Province, 258, 264

Y

Yoruba Magick. *See* Bata'a.
Young Bengal Movement, 260
Young Turk Party, 267
Yukon, 236
Yurei, 28

Z

Zappeion, 229
Zea, 229
Zemene Mesafint, 251-252
Zooterrorism, 186. *See also* Marauders.
Zulu Empire, 196, **254**
Zulu Mechanists, **113**. *See also* Crafts.
Zulu, Shaka. *See* KaSenzangakhona, Shaka.

Name: _____ Essence: _____ Affiliation: _____
Player: _____ Nature: _____ Sect: _____
Chronicle: _____ Demeanor: _____ Concept: _____

ATTRIBUTES

Physical

Strength ●OOOO
Dexterity ●OOOO
Stamina ●OOOO

Social

Charisma ●OOOO
Manipulation ●OOOO
Appearance ●OOOO

Mental

Perception ●OOOO
Intelligence ●OOOO
Wits ●OOOO

ABILITIES

Talents

Alertness OOOOO
Art OOOOO
Athletics OOOOO
Awareness OOOOO
Brawl OOOOO
Empathy OOOOO
Expression OOOOO
Intimidation OOOOO
Leadership OOOOO
Streetwise OOOOO
Subterfuge OOOOO

Skills

Crafts OOOOO
Drive OOOOO
Etiquette OOOOO
Firearms OOOOO
Martial Arts OOOOO
Meditation OOOOO
Melee OOOOO
Research OOOOO
Stealth OOOOO
Survival OOOOO
Technology OOOOO

Knowledges

Academics OOOOO
Cosmology OOOOO
Enigmas OOOOO
Esoterica OOOOO
Finance OOOOO
Investigation OOOOO
Law OOOOO
Medicine OOOOO
Occult OOOOO
Politics OOOOO
Science OOOOO

SPHERES

Correspondence OOOOO
Entropy OOOOO
Forces OOOOO
Life OOOOO
Matter OOOOO
Mind OOOOO
Prime OOOOO
Spirit OOOOO
Time OOOOO

ADVANTAGES

Backgrounds

_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO

Other Traits

_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO

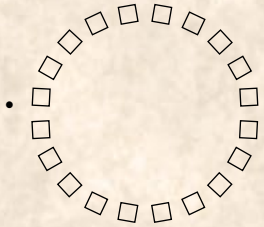
Arete

O O O O O O O O O O

Willpower

O O O O O O O O O O
☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Quintessence



Paths

Health

Bruised -0 ☐
Hurt -1 ☐
Injured -1 ☐
Wounded -2 ☐
Mauled -2 ☐
Crippled -5 ☐
Incapacitated ☐

Experience

Other Traits

_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO
_____ OOOOO

Rotes

Focus

Wonders

Name: _____
Description: _____

Name: _____
Description: _____

Name: _____
Description: _____

Merits and Flaws

Merit	Cost	Flaw	Cost

History

Goals/Destiny

Description

Age: _____ Hair: _____
Apparent Age: _____ Eyes: _____
Sex: _____ Height: _____
Ethnicity: _____ Weight: _____

Gear and Equipment

Combat

Weapon/Attack	Diff.	Damage	Range	Rate	Clip

The Order of Reason spreads its wings, and the world burns.

We tell ourselves this is for Enlightenment.

We tell ourselves this is for the greater good.

We tell ourselves this is for humanity.

We lie to ourselves.

The great engines of the Empire are all-consuming beasts,

heedless of anything but their own hunger —

for riches, for lives, for land.

Everything falls before their advance.

Nations are ground to dust. Histories torn apart and set aflame.

Treasures seized and their secrets plundered.

We will chain the world

and all its magickal wonders.

Who shall stop us?

Victorian Mage includes:

- Advice and material for running your Mage: The Ascension 20th Anniversary Edition chronicles amid the tumult of the Victorian era, as the Order of Reason rises to power and the Traditions falter.
- Details of the state of the great magickal powers in this era: the Order of Reason, preparing for their metamorphosis into the Technocratic Union and riding upon the great beast of Empire; the Council of Nine, now merely eight, caught amidst infighting and looking for a new peer; and the Crafts, the manifold practices of magick across the world, who fight to save their peoples from conquest and exploitation.
- Rules reflecting the difference in how magick works during this age, when the Consensus of the Technocracy has yet to enfold the globe.
- A gazetteer of the Victorian world, touching on cultures and conflicts across the globe as empires struggle for dominance and the masses struggle simply to survive.

20th Anniversary Edition

MAGE

THE ASCENSION

10

ONYX PATH PUBLISHING