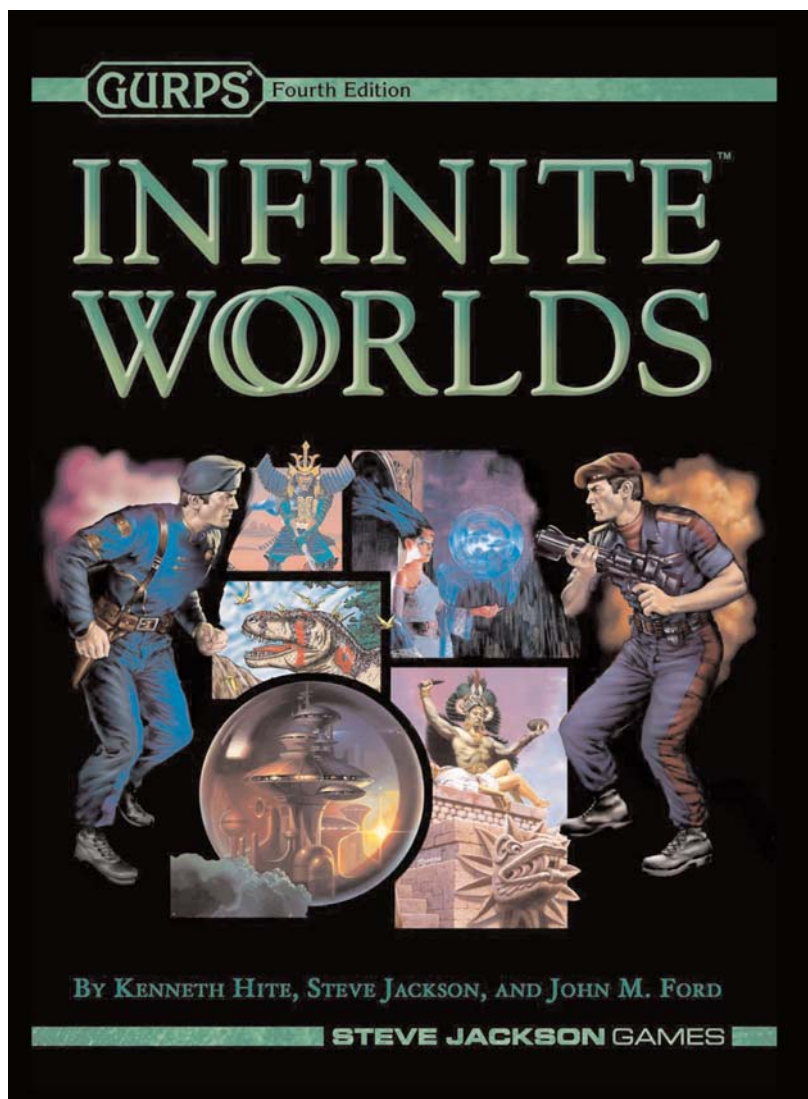


GURPS®



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GURPS

Fourth Edition

INFINITETM WORLDS



BY KENNETH HITE, STEVE JACKSON, AND JOHN M. FORD

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

GURPS®

Fourth Edition

INFINITETM WORLDS



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STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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About GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the **GURPS** system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by e-mail: info@sjgames.com. Resources include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid/). Our online magazine includes new **GURPS** rules and articles. It also covers the **d20** system, *Ars Magica*, *BESM*, *Call of Cthulhu*, and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *Illuminati*, *Car Wars*, *Transhuman Space*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also get opportunities to playtest new **GURPS** books!

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Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for errata, updates, Q&A, free webforums, and much more. The **GURPS Infinite Worlds** web page is www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/infinitemeworlds/.

Bibliographies. Many of our books have extensive bibliographies, and we're putting them online – with links to let you buy the books that interest you! Go to the book's web page and look for the "Bibliography" link.

GURPSnet. This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of **GURPS**. To join, point your web browser to mail.sjgames.com/mailman/listinfo/gurpsnet-l.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the **GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition**. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

WELCOME TO ANYWHEN

This book describes the Infinite Worlds, the “standard setting” for **GURPS Fourth Edition**. Here, history varied on other Earths; the Union Jack flutters over America, Mongol ponies graze in Britain, and zeppelins float unperturbed everywhere. The heroic Infinity Patrol, licensed by the corporation that discovered parachronic travel, keeps Homeline safe and improves life where it can. Between crosstime plagues, samurai with force swords, and unpredictable storms that blow people to other worlds, its work never ends.

Any kind of campaign, on any kind of world, fits here – in fact, it’s *already* here somewhere! You don’t have to play the Patrol or even obey them. You can steal alternate Monets, hunt werewolves in medieval Germany, or seek the Holy Grail across the worlds. You can treat this book like your own personal alternate Spanish Main and loot it for goodies and excitement to carry back to your own game world. You can even build a game world – an infinity of them – from scratch, using this book’s alternate Earth design systems and advice.

It’s only a short jump (as it were) from alternate histories to time travel. Time travel stories often become alternate Earth stories, as the plucky traveler wrenches history from its appointed course to save his adopted hometown in the past. Hence, this book also contains complete guidelines for time travel games, from using time machines to how to get away with killing your grandfather in the past. This book provides two different time-travel campaign frames for people who don’t want to go world-hopping . . . and allows the combination of time travel and parallel worlds for infinite possibilities, including some in the Infinite Worlds setting.

Add mutants, magicians, and world-hopping Nazis – you will need another Earth just to fit it all in.

So get to it – time’s a-wasting.

– Kenneth Hite

History is not merely what happened: it is what happened in the context of what might have happened. Therefore it must incorporate, as a necessary element, the alternatives, the might-have-beens.

– Sir Hugh Trevor-Roper,
“History and Imagination”

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kenneth Hite

On a close parallel Earth, Kenneth Hite’s first RPG publication credit was **GURPS Alternate Earths**. In all Earths he can access, he co-wrote that book and its sequel for Steve Jackson Games, as well as writing **GURPS Cabal** and the third edition of **GURPS Horror**, and compiling and co-authoring **GURPS WWII: Weird War Two**. His “Suppressed Transmission” column covers high strangeness for *Pyramid* magazine; on some Earths it is called “Thirteen O’Clock High.” On the most terrifying worldlines, it has been collected in two volumes to date.

He lives with his wife Sheila in Chicago, the center of all worlds worth visiting. In no Earth has his M.A. in International Relations proved at all useful, but one never knows.

Steve Jackson

Steve Jackson has been devouring time-travel and parallel-world science fiction since he was about seven years old, and jumped at the chance to inflict his own contribution on the field.

He is the founder and editor-in-chief of Steve Jackson Games, but, as shown by the present book, still gets to write something once in a while. He hopes to do it again someday.

Steve lives in Austin. He enjoys SF conventions, gardening, the Web, tropical fish, Lego, and – oh, yes – gaming.

John M. Ford

John M. Ford is the author of nine novels (so far), including the alternate history *The Dragon Waiting*. On the gaming front, he has done work for GDW, West End Games, and Steve Jackson Games. If he survives to finish his next novel, he’ll probably write an opera. With roleplaying in it. Somebody has to be the first.

PUBLICATION HISTORY

Much of the background in this book was drawn from the Third Edition books **GURPS Time Travel** and the two volumes of **GURPS Alternate Earths**.

The Origins Award-winning *Time Travel* was a collaboration between Steve Jackson and Mike Ford. Steve sketched out a parallel-world setting that owes a great deal to the works of H. Beam Piper. Mike fleshed it out with high-quality rubber science and added the whole “Time Corps” background, cut from whole cloth woven on the loom of Fritz Leiber. They respectfully acknowledge Those Who Went Before, and only wish they could go back and shake their hands.

David Pulver recast the material in *Time Travel* and other **GURPS** books for Fourth Edition, after which Kenneth Hite added yet more background, rearranged all the puzzle pieces, and fit the entire assemblage between two covers.

CHAPTER ONE

INFINITY

UNLIMITED



“ . . . to preserve and defend The Secret with my last breath.”

As Angela finished the oath, she felt something – just the weight of all those histories – settle on her shoulders. Before she could absorb the feeling, it was gone, jarred loose by a man shaking her elbow. “Agent Polk,” he began, Angela unconsciously looked around to see whom he was talking to, but then realized that as of 30 seconds ago, *she* was “Agent Polk,” and would be until, she supposed, her “last breath.”

“Agent Polk,” he said again, “let’s walk and talk.” “But my family – they’re here to see the ceremony . . .” “And they did see it, and it was lovely, and your mother cried. And now you’re on Patrol time, and your first leave isn’t until 2028, so let’s jump.” With almost no pressure on her arm, he had somehow steered her away from the crowds of new-minted Academy graduates, toward a bronze-colored, ungainly aircraft. “That’s a tiltrotor – Hell, that’s a Haussman-2 ornithopter! Those don’t even fly in our atmosphere!” “Good thing we’re

not staying in our atmosphere, then,” he responded. “And I’m glad to see your dossier accurately reported your aeronautical skills, since you’ll be flying it for us.”

Angela found herself clambering into the pilot’s seat and slapping the oddly familiar slats and busbars into the Lift configuration; she felt a stab of relief when she heard the *whhrrrrm* of a concealed ducted fan engage, almost blanketed by the increasingly rapid *crump-crump-crump* of the (so far purely decorative) wings. Her hijacker emerged from the back of the vehicle, wearing the (perfectly fitted) damask cape and riding boots of an Aerocorps Imperiale officer. He settled into the copilot’s bench and slotted a card into what seemed to be an ornate bomb-sight. “There’s a uniform for you in the back,” he said, as he tapped on a concealed keyboard that had folded out of the “bomb-sight’s” eyepiece. “Go change and I’ll keep her level – and when you get back, let’s hope the wings work.”

Pushing into the rear compartment, Angela saw four fellow cadets –

no, four fellow Patrolmen – changing into their own uniforms. She knew Dave Pownall and Trinh Sui from her Variant French classes, and had met Roger Giancarlo on the aerobatics range.

“So we have two other scouts and a backup pilot,” she said. ‘Carlo replied, “And apparently, we’re not going to Haussman-2 for the dancing, since Suleiman here was number one in our class in bladed weapons.” The Turk she didn’t recognize flashed her a quick smile and went back to adjusting his boots.

Nobody smiled for the next five minutes, as the ornithopter jolted and shuddered sickeningly. “Parachronic transition – the wings just caught hold,” ‘Carlo said. More jolts banged the craft around, and Trinh began “I don’t think that’s just the wings –” just as a bullet-hole appeared in the hull above Suleiman’s head.

Angela and ‘Carlo dove for the cockpit; even as the craft slopped into a dive, they kept their balance where the other three rolled and spun with the deck. Angela was first by a fraction and grabbed the yoke, wrestling the ‘thopter back into level flight. ‘Carlo was yammering something in her ear, but she was too busy keeping them from crashing to pay attention. Only after the aircraft had juddered back to something like normal did she look around and notice the dead man on the bench beside her. “I wonder what our mission was supposed to –” Angela began, but ‘Carlo cut her off. “I think,” he said tightly, “we’re about to find out.”

Three more ornithopters – these painted an ominous gray – appeared in the windscreen, and the flashes from their muzzles started the ship jolting and tilting again, spiraling down toward the parallel Lake Superior below them.

Thirty years ago, former Dartmouth physicist Paul Van Zandt changed the world. Actually, he changed hundreds of them. He invented a parachronic projector, a machine that could send matter into another dimension – another timeline. The first world he discovered was “Earth-Beta,” almost identical to his own world, which he dubbed “Homeline.” But as he improved his technology and his survey techniques, he began to discover worlds where Rome never fell, or where America was a feudal kingdom. Some worlds – those on the same “quantum level” as Homeline, Quantum 5 (Q5) – were easy to reach. Others, on Q4 and Q6, were slightly harder; Quantum 3 and Quantum 7 were downright difficult. However, Van Zandt persevered, and built up a small team of daring assistants who helped him map 23 more universes.

He funded further research with profits from trading between worlds, an undertaking he formalized with White Star Trading. In 1998, Van Zandt revealed his discovery of

We're jugglers . . . trying to keep our traders and sociological observers and tourists and plain idiots like the late Gavran Sarn out of trouble; trying to prevent panics and disturbances and dislocations of local economies as a result of our operations; trying to keep out of out-time politics – and, at all times, at all costs and hazards, by all means, guarding the secret of paratime transposition.

– H. Beam Piper, **Police Operation**

parachronic travel to the public, and revealed a secret to the U.N. Security Council. Whatever the secret was (p. B525), it halted demands for his technology to be nationalized, militarized, or destroyed. Instead, the Security Council established the United Nations Interworld Council (UNIC) from its own membership, which chartered a new corporation, Infinity Unlimited (often shortened to

“Infinity” by the media). Van Zandt became CEO of Infinity, and UNIC added its own bureaucrats to the board. The Interworld Treaty, which chartered Infinity, required that Infinity work to “better the lot” of the other worlds it explored and exploited. To that end – and possibly to counter the threat Van Zandt revealed to the Security Council – Van Zandt created the Infinity Patrol.



Infinite Worlds Glossary

alternate: Any timeline except the original Earth. Also “alternate world.”

anchor: An echo that does not experience a quantum shift when “history is changed.”

Armanen Order: The secret order in Reich-5’s SS that has discovered parachronics.

autochrones: Natives of a timeline, as opposed to out-time visitors or colonists; called “chrones” and “locals” in Patrol slang.

banestorm: A natural phenomenon that moves living beings between worlds.

Cabal, the: A secret organization of magicians and monsters using magical dimension travel.

Centrum: A rival civilization with the ability to travel between worlds. A “Centran” is a native or agent of Centrum.

cliodynamics: The scientific study of historical change, especially useful for altering histories in a desired direction.

conveyor: A self-propelled device for traveling between alternate worlds.

Continued on next page . . .

Infinite Worlds Glossary (Continued)

Coventry: An alternate world maintained by the Infinity Patrol as a prison for those – both Homeliners and outtimers – who Know Too Much.

dimensional highway: A road between worlds, natural, magical, or artificial.

echo: An alternate world which is – or appears to be – identical to ours, but at an earlier point in its history.

Eraser: A memory-affecting drug used by I-Cops and others to keep The Secret of parachronic travel.

Eyes, the: Patrol slang for Internal Affairs.

hell parallel: A worldline mostly or entirely emptied of humanity by a disaster or holocaust.

homeboy: In Patrol slang, anybody from one's own world of origin.

Homeline: The original Earth of Paul Van Zandt and the Infinity Patrol.

I-Cop: An agent of the Infinity Patrol's Intervention Service.

Infinity Patrol: The paramilitary arm of Infinity Unlimited.

Infinity Unlimited: Often just "Infinity"; private corporation that controls parachronic technology as a monopoly and governs access to alternate timelines.

Interworld Service: Also I.S., or "Interworld," the Centran equivalent to the Infinity Patrol.

Kern: From the German for "kernel," a safe-house used by Armanen Order operatives. Plural: Kerne.

local: In Patrol slang, native to the timeline.

memetics: The study of ideas and their transmission and change, a back-formation from "genetics." Not yet fully accepted as a science.

Mule: Armanen Order slang for a world-jumper; especially one created artificially by Nazi science.

Nexer: A Patrol agent from the Nexus Oversight Division.

nexus portal: A "natural" path between alternate worlds.

oneliner: Someone who never leaves his home timeline, especially a Homeline "civilian."

Outstairs: Patrol slang for Homeline higher-ups. "Those dimwits Outstairs expect us to stop the Visigoths with nothing but Scotch tape and puppet shows."

outtime: A world other than the speaker's own; usually means any other world besides Homeline.

outtimer: Anyone from a different world from the speaker; hence, a Patrol agent is an "outtimer" on Caliph, but a citizen of Caliph would be an "outtimer" on Homeline.

parachronics: The study of alternate worlds. More specifically, the study of why alternate worlds exist, and how travel between them is possible.

parachronozoid: A creature with a natural world-jumping ability.

parallel: An alternate world that differs from ours only in that its history has been different (some are *very* different). A "close parallel" is different as the result of one identifiable historical change.

Pile, the: Patrol Headquarters.

portal dimension: A location that connects to many (or even all) alternate worlds or dimensions.

projector: A device that can send a conveyor across quanta.

quantum: An "energy level" in 8-dimensional space that contains many alternate timelines. Quantum levels are often abbreviated; e.g., Q7 for Quantum 7.

quantum sargasso: A worldline that cannot be left using parachronics.

reality quake: A parachronic upheaval that buries some or all of an alternate's history beneath a new one.

reality shard: A fragment of a previous past thrown up by a reality quake.

Reality Vanish: The worldline that supposedly "eats" vanished probes and missions.

Scout: An agent of the Infinity Patrol's Penetration Service.

The Secret: The fact that technological crossworld travel is possible. Outtimers are not supposed to learn this, unless recruited by Infinity. Interworld doesn't bother keeping The Secret on primitive worlds.

shiftrealm: A location that travels between worldlines, from "ghost ships" to whole forests or islands.

skerry: A collection of nearby timelines sharing a common element (i.e., an ongoing WWII, a basis in the fiction of Robert Heinlein).

swagman: A member of a loose fraternity of crosstime grifters.

timeline: Another term for an alternate world.

trod: A magical dimensional highway, usually used by faeries. Most trods run between forests.

UNIC: United Nations Interworld Council, the U.N. body officially charged with overseeing parachronics and Infinity.

vanish it: Literally, "send it to a nonexistent reality"; Patrol slang expression meaning, roughly, "to Hell with it."

weird parallel: An alternate world that has many similarities to our own, but also has differences that make these similarities seem unbelievable (such as the world where intelligent reptiles speak English).

zero point: The term for a location that has been "zeroed" – properly calibrated – for a safe conveyor jump between two specific dimensions.

THE INFINITY PATROL

The Infinity Patrol, like all of Infinity, is specifically chartered by the U.N. Security Council. It has a unified command with an existence independent of any given mission, and so resembles a private security force more than a multinational peacekeeping task force. In practice, the Patrol is a supranational paramilitary agency under Infinity's control, dedicated to protecting Homeline, The Secret, Infinity, and the unknowing innocents of other worlds, in roughly that order. Patrol facilities, like all Infinity property, are considered "U.N. soil," and cannot be searched or seized without violating international law. By its charter, it must "keep the peace, and preserve the smooth operation of interdimensional travel for the good of all mankind." This translates, for Infinity Unlimited and the Patrol alike, as "ride herd on everyone else with a conveyor, keep Homeline problems on Homeline, and do well by doing good in the meantime."

This was hard enough when the Patrol thought itself alone in the continuum, but nine years ago, Corporate Security captured an intruder in a secret Infinity facility on the Quantum 6 world Turkana. He turned out to be from another cross-dimensional paramilitary organization, the Interworld Service, of a crosstime civilization called Centrum. Centrum was aggressive, competent, and devoted to spreading its own hierarchical system

across the worlds. Fortunately, Centrum was on Quantum 8; it could not reach Homeline and neither could Homeline reach Centrum. The quanta between became battlegrounds, especially the Q6 "echoes," worlds that mirrored Homeline history exactly. Centrum could, and did, shift many of those echoes out of Quantum 6 and into quanta inaccessible to Homeline! The infinity war had begun, and the Patrol had a new set of missions.

THE MISSION AND THE MINDSET

Technically, all parachronic equipment in existence is the property of Infinity Unlimited, and the Infinity Patrol has the right (and duty) to supervise its use. In theory, every conveyor from a two-ton "tramp trader" to a stealthed CIA insertion capsule falls under the Patrol's jurisdiction, and the Patrol can ask to see its hardwired service record (giving the time and parachronic coordinates of every jump a unit makes) without cause or reason. If something doesn't smell right, it can investigate – and if the investigation warrants, Infinity can revoke a parachronic license or even confiscate and destroy equipment. With conveyor and projector traffic approaching tens or even hundreds of thousands of trips per day, and with jealous national gov-

ernments, secretive corporations, and fuzzy-minded academics screaming about every imagined slight or misstep, the Patrol's job is never easy.

Dealing with Homeliners, whether aggrieved innocents or furtive diamond smugglers, requires good relations with Homeline institutions combined with an appearance of complete impartiality to Homeline conflicts. This is a difficult tightrope to walk under the best of circumstances. The Patrol does very active liaison work with Homeline government agencies and Interpol, turns a blind eye to the occasional MI6 or FSB operation, and hopes for the best. Infinity contributes vast sums to recognized global charities (and reelection campaigns) even while Patrol officers and agents stay ruthlessly apolitical. Infinity doesn't have anything quite so crude as a quota system, but it maintains an aggressive outreach program to enlist non-Americans. Although Infinity Unlimited acts like a typical American multinational corporation regardless of breezy "global" marketing campaigns, the Patrol emphasizes its multinationality – or even its transnationality – as befits a U.N. force. Many Patrolmen even renounce their own citizenship for U.N. passports as the Patrol Oath explicitly forswears all other allegiances.

That makes the Patrol's only loyalty to itself. At best, the Patrol sees itself as the "thin blue and black line" supporting all Homeline – all humanity – against the dangers from other worlds. At worst, some Patrolmen have internalized an "us vs. them" attitude, not only to outtimers (who don't get the benefit of Infinity's careful neutrality), but also to Homeline oneliners. Even innocent tourists trapped behind the lines at Alesia sometimes grate on professional dimensional police, to say nothing of nickel-dime Homeline hoods dealing heroin in a parallel Renaissance Italy. Such missions don't always help Patrolmen keep a broad perspective. And the missions never end; world after world must be surveyed, checked for plagues, searched for

With conveyor and projector traffic approaching tens or even hundreds of thousands of trips per day, and with jealous national governments, secretive corporations, and fuzzy-minded academics screaming about every imagined slight or misstep, the Patrol's job is never easy.

magic, classified, watched over, nurtured, exploited, saved, defended, sabotaged, and covertly policed.

HUMAN RESOURCES

These ever-expanding tasks strain Infinity's time and attention more than its pocketbook. Between off-the-books Consisting of Patrol slush funds (many kept in outtime banks), the vast scale of parachronic operations, and lucrative Homeline sublicenses, Infinity's finances are, for all practical purposes, unlimited. However, Infinity management still only has 24 hours in every day to attend to and supervise events on hundreds of worlds. Expert systems, streamlined decision making, and ruthless policy triage only go so far. Infinity has to allow Patrol agents broad discretion – they simply don't have the time to second-guess Patrolmen or make tactical decisions upstairs. The same time pressures work on the Patrol's 60,000 personnel (10,000 of whom are full-time field agents), forcing the Patrol to prize initiative, creativity, and independent problem-solving over all other factors. This irreducible fact of Infinity's parachronic operations makes Patrol service very attractive to ex-military and ex-police servicemen. From armies and police forces drowning in red tape and bureaucratic procedure, Patrol recruits enter a "sink or swim" world where one decision can save millions (even billions) of lives or dollars. Only true catastrophes result in active oversight – and disasters usually kill Patrolmen who make stupid decisions.

But even with the incentive of initiative, staffing remains an ongoing problem for the Patrol. In the rich and comfortable Homeline created by Infinity Unlimited, not a lot of people volunteer to risk their lives . . . much less spend years on end in backwater parallels without fusion power or dentistry, even for a fairly handsome paycheck. Increasingly, Infinity turns to outworld recruiting on those timelines where they can manage it without revealing The Secret. Outtimers, after all, are used to crummy working conditions, danger, and filth – they live there. In some worlds, it's as simple as

placing a carefully worded classified ad in the *Gazette Californien* or the *New Amsterdam Tribune*; in others, "adoption by a remote monastery" or "assignment overseas" can cover an extraction. One old standby is disaster recruitment – a local who shows pluck, resource, and skill during a volcanic eruption or cataclysmic battle can often "disappear in the wreckage" without endangering The Secret. Clever or daring Patrolmen can manipulate prison or POW camp records, hire mercenaries, or simply buy slaves (although this remains very controversial with Infinity higher-ups) to get prime Patrol recruits out of their dangerous native worldlines and onto the Infinity payroll.

HEADQUARTERS

New recruits almost always start their service with an induction ceremony at Patrol headquarters. While Infinity Unlimited runs its corporate empire from a skyscraper in Chicago (just far enough from the New York and Washington mindsets to discourage overzealous oversight), the Patrol works from an unassuming glass-and-ferrocrete complex outside Calgary in western Canada, well off the radar of even Infinity corporate bigwigs.

That low-profile complex spreads over several hundred acres, including firing ranges, proving grounds, airstrips, projector and conveyor barns, a small but secure prison facility, the fusion plant, and rooms full of molecular-memory supercomputers devoted to Patrol archives and analysis. (A backup facility exists at the same location on Smother, an uninhabited Quantum 5 worldline where Earth's atmosphere never oxygenated.) The main headquarters building (five stories of institutional blandness) is only slightly more imposing, and informal Patrol policy considers it a defeat if "the Pile" ever shows up on the evening news. (Patrolmen traditionally make press statements from the headquarters of whatever agency or police force they worked with on a given mission, or from the Infinity Tower in Chicago.) The whole area (including several miles of underground tunnels and laboratories) rests under the most comprehensive radar, satellite, and physical surveillance

possible. Ironically, the weakest spot in the coverage is, necessarily, the incoming parachronic transits, which could theoretically bring anyone, from anywhere, with any agenda or weapons. Fortunately, the Canadian prairies are fairly isolated places on most timelines, so the Patrol can keep security squads camped out on most parallel headquarters locations without endangering The Secret.

Besides guarding its own existence, Headquarters serves as command center, university, arsenal, motor pool, library, repair yard, and rear office for all Patrol divisions. Most importantly, however, it serves as a true home base for Patrolmen isolated from both the timelines they protect and the Homeline they enrich. Even more than cops or soldiers, Patrolmen can only talk meaningfully to each other and nobody else on a thousand Earths. Dormitories, recreation and sports facilities, cafeterias, and stables are all available to any Patrolman without charge. Whether it's relaxing in Harry's Crosstime Bar (run by a Patrolman who lost both legs keeping Napoleon out of a parallel Moscow) or meditating at the Patrol Cemetery on the slopes of Mt. Eisenhower, every Patrolman needs somewhere to connect to. Infinity fosters such connections by deliberately intermingling agents and rear-echelon staff from both Patrol branches, the Penetration Service (colloquially, the "Time Scouts" or just "Scouts") and the Intervention Service (the explicitly paramilitary "I-Cops"), in Headquarters assignments.

Infinity encourages a similar mix of experiences in its individual Patrolmen. Corporate policy favors Patrolmen with a broad, multi-branch background over "time-servers" and "stair-climbers" who move up the ranks in a single branch, or even a single service. Infinity's board refuses to consider candidates for Patrol Director, or any executive rank, without several years' experience in both the Scouts and the I-Cops. Although this creates discontinuities and duplication of effort, it prevents (or at least mitigates) bureaucratic empire-building and encourages well-rounded, lateral thinking at all levels of the Patrol.

INTERVENTION SERVICE

The “I-Cops” enforce the rules and keep out hostile strangers all over the continuum. They are the sword and shield of Homeline. The Intervention Service favors reliability over inspiration, resolution over communication, and speed over spread. Identify the task, overcome the obstacles, and accomplish the mission – don’t get distracted saving other worlds before you’ve saved your own first. An I-Cop makes his own luck by not sticking around waiting for lightning to strike. They throw the lightning themselves, and jump before the thunder stops rolling.

The Intervention Service has 10 divisions, the first of which may be the most important in the entire Patrol.

The Academy

Located on the shores of the glacial Lake Agassiz (in the equivalent of Homeline South Dakota), in the Pleistocene parallel Mammut-1, the Infinity Academy trains every new agent accepted into the Patrol. Each year’s class begins in mid-September with about 650 cadets (although the Academy has facilities for 1,000 students if necessary); the rigors of training whittle the average graduating class down to about 400. This is barely enough to stay ahead of the current death, retirement, injury, and disappearance rate of existing Patrolmen, but Commandant al-Wahid (a Special Ops veteran who lost her right arm to a dragon) refuses to ease up on the Academy regimen. The Academy trains both Intervention and Penetration Service agents, and although it is officially a division of Intervention, its faculty remains rigorously neutral in any turf wars between the services.

All cadets begin with a three-month “basic training” program emphasizing stamina, decision-making while fatigued or stressed, and basic Patrol combat and weapons drills. (These emphasize surprise, subtlety, and teamwork.) After dinner, coursework on the basics of parachronics, languages, and global history fills a cadet’s time until lights out. In their scanty free time, cadets

play intramural sports from a wide variety of worldlines, with winning teams getting better chow and other minor privileges. The unofficial line between “basic” and “advanced” training is Sleepout: an unannounced midnight alert that picks up four to seven cadets at a time (depending on class size) and drops them a couple of hundred miles away from the Academy to find their way back through saber-tooth country. With only what they were wearing and carrying five minutes after waking up. In December. In an Ice Age.

The Academy rewards survivors with a week around New Year’s (universally called “Spring Break” despite the timing) to do what they like in Johnson’s Rome or another freewheeling but primitive world – which is another test. Cadets who can’t adjust to other cultural mores, who treat out-timers with contempt or condescension, who reveal high-tech devices, or who are stupid enough to fall for the badger game get weeded out of the Academy upon their return. If a cadet makes it past Sleepout and Spring Break, he is considered a Patrolman. Perhaps not an agent yet – but someone worth investing more time and money in.

The rest of the winter is more physical training – long marches across the glacier, mammoth hunts with equipment from a variety of tech levels, pressure suit training and zero-gravity combat – interspersed with applied parachronics, the care and feeding of conveyors, and still more history and language courses. Weapons drill gets more complex, and there are “practice surveys” of mostly mapped (and mostly harmless) worldlines. The work keeps piling on, and the team sports take a break.

In the spring, “aptitude training” begins; the Patrol needs too many skills from too few people to build complete generalists. (This is part of why Patrol training emphasizes teamwork so much.) Infinity can hire the foremost experts on any topic: aikijutsu, wine tasting, archery, or dance. Team sports come back with the warm (well, warm for the Ice Age) weather, too – the traditional final blowout is “Homecoming” in early September, a showdown game of *ollamalitzli* (the brutal Aztec ball game) between the

best cadet teams in the Academy. The last week is “Finals,” during which the graduates prepare a lengthy, specific report analyzing shortcomings in the Academy and their training. No cadet can be flunked for his report – the only failing grade is for turning in nothing. On Graduation Day, the cadets parade in formation for the last time, receive their commissions and duty assignments, and ship out into the multiverse, entitled to wear the blue and black of the Patrol. A week later, the new class comes in.

A year at the Academy makes an excellent introductory mini-campaign, abstracting as much or as little of the drills and sports as the group wants. Such an introduction probably works best if each player takes two or three cadets as characters. The GM can then wash out PC cadets without worrying about wrecking the campaign – and the leftover graduates can show up later as NPCs, or be backup characters in case a player’s primary Patrolman gets vaporized by Nazi maser fire in Atlanta or crippled by toppling sarsens at Stonehenge.

Customs and Inspection

The Customs and Inspection Division officially guards every parachronic projector on Homeline, and has global authority to enter and search any location emitting detectable parachronic energies. Their thankless task is to keep things out of Homeline that don’t belong there, from dangerous plagues to smuggled Tyrian pendants to fanatical terrorists. Their second priority is to keep such things from going from Homeline out into the unpoliceable void of the infinite worlds. Screens at projector bays and conveyor havens continuously scan for fissionables, toxins, viruses, nanobots, and anything else the paranoid minds at Customs can suspect. (The sign in most projector bays is as accurate as it is concise: “Rule One: Declare Everything.”) Customs and Inspection tries desperately to get first priority on telepathic personnel, with sadly mixed success. Reliable telepaths can write their own ticket in the Patrol, and few of them covet boring jobs reading the minds of people coming back from vacation with “a souvenir hardly worth mentioning.”

CUSTOMS & INSPECTION



Patrolmen themselves delight in smuggling – usually low-key contraband like wine and knives, although the Patrol team that managed to smuggle an entire hover-panzer back from Reich-4 is still the topic of awed legend. This does little to endear “C & I-Cops” (or C & I duty) to other agents.

Although a team of Inspection agents tasked to investigate unlicensed parachronic emissions on Homeline probably has one of the most tense and nail-biting jobs in the Patrol, actually playing such a campaign would be a little too much like playing air traffic controllers. A roving Inspection team checking security on nearby Quantum 5 worlds might uncover plenty of exciting trouble, though, without even trying. For mixed parties, an individual Customs agent is a very plausible addition to any Patrol team heading into a world with valuables, or dangerous items, or suspicious outtime activity – which is to say, any of them.

Internal Affairs

Internal Affairs are the Patrolmen who patrol the Patrol. They hunt through currency records looking for bulging offworld accounts, check up on “friends from Bonaparte-4” with suspicious last names, and bring down the hammer on anyone, any time. This makes “the Eyes” even less popular among their fellow Patrolmen

than Customs and Inspection, if such a thing is possible. IA roots out Homeline corruption and favoritism in Infinity where it can, which earns the Division no friends in the UNIC bureaucracy or Infinity’s boardroom. However, Internal Affairs is always happy to look into reports about what some bureaucrat’s rival is up to, which helps IA play political hardball when necessary. Every Patrolman who has ever been left twisting in the wind by a rear-echelon type taking a bribe or abetting a coverup – and then seen the malefactor dispatched to count neutrons on Taft-3 – has to admit that IA may (just barely) be justified.

Internal Affairs officers might appear as the “bad guys” in either a freewheeling game of maverick I-Cops who just don’t play by the rules, or in a tense, shades-of-gray game in which Infinity higher-ups might not always be the white hats. Internal Affairs PCs might tag along on one or two missions, but are unlikely to fit well into an ongoing I-Cops campaign. Unless, of course, all the players take the role of IA officers, and play out “Infinite Ellroy” *L.A. Confidential*-style stories uncovering corruption and malfeasance inside Infinity itself.

Justice

Where Internal Affairs tracks down corruption inside the Patrol, the Justice Division solves crimes

involving Infinity personnel or property. (Command of overlapping investigations goes to the team with priority on the case – initiative gets results.) By one interpretation of the Interworld Treaty, this gives the Justice Division jurisdiction over any crime on Homeline involving an out-timer or an Infinity employee, or occurring in a parachronic facility of any kind, as well as any crime involving a Homeliner on any other Earth. “Crimes,” in this context, include genocide, mass slavery, environmental neglect, arms smuggling, and subversion, as well as old standbys like theft, fraud, and murder. Like the FBI or Scotland Yard, sometimes their involvement is requested, and sometimes it’s resented, and sometimes both at once. Unsurprisingly, neither the FBI nor Scotland Yard particularly welcomes nosy I-Cops horning into their own problems, nor do they usually appreciate the irony of the situation. Worse, despite lavish funding for facilities and top-flight training for its agents, the Justice Division doesn’t really have the institutional memory, the staff, or the footprint of a truly major criminal investigation department. Hence, Justice agents have to get by on intuition, flair, and a deep understanding of the “offworld angle,” whatever it may be.

A *Crime Scene: Infinity* campaign centered on the Justice Division might be very entertaining, but over a longer term it might tax the GM’s creativity (or the players’ patience) to unravel mystery after mystery. However, a single mystery makes a good “prologue” adventure, and a meaty crime can draw in agents from any other division as needed, as witnesses, experts, or even suspects. Then, if the real criminal escapes to another world (or is in cahoots with some larger conspiracy), the game is afoot, and a mixed team can set off on a campaign that (every so often) gets its man. An insidious GM might run a twist on this setup – draw agents in from various divisions, set up the mystery teams, and frame the PCs for the crime! Suddenly, they have to flee Homeline, and chase down the real criminals – it’s the *Infinite Fugitive*, and they’re chasing the one-armed Nazi across the continuum.

Infinite Justice, Inc.

Headquartered in an obsolete steel mill in Gary, Indiana, Infinite Justice, Inc., the largest bail bond, repossession, and “personnel reacquisition” agency licensed for crosstime operations, doesn’t spend a lot on office furniture or fancy wall screens. Infinite Justice, Inc., sells itself to its clients with its record (a success rate over 80%) and its personnel (95% with extensive outworld experience before joining the firm, mostly with the Infinity Patrol, Mounties, or other law enforcement agencies). Infinity Unlimited offers a minimum \$500,000 reward, payable to any licensed crosstime bounty hunter, for the return of any Homeliner hiding out on an alternate Earth; every one of these burglars, runaways, mobsters, and adulterers endangers The Secret. IJI leases its conveyors from Infinity on an extremely affordable plan, letting it mount more parachronic missions than most Homeline governments.

The hunt for a single fugitive may be one adventure long, or extend across an entire campaign, with a posse of bounty hunters (along with their pilot, “face man,” and so forth) involving themselves voluntarily or involuntarily in local problems from world to world along the trail of their quarry. The posse could also chase down different fugitives across the quanta from week to week and occasionally get sucked into the fringes of larger crises. Alternatively, a bounty hunter can be a recurring NPC (or a PC) who provides investigative skills, contacts, or muscle for Patrol missions “as a favor to the old outfit” while borrowing an “off-duty” I-Cop squad for his tougher jobs. (The large number of former Patrolmen in Infinite Justice helps smooth out any quibbles about regulations.)

The stereotypical bounty hunter mission is to track down a wanted fugitive, apprehend him, and turn him in to the authorities for a reward. The mission can, of course, go haywire anywhere along this path. For example, the fugitive might be falsely accused, or a Centrum agent, or hiding out on Merlin-1, or have powerful friends in UNIC. The authorities might be corrupt, brutal, mistaken, or otherwise distracted. The reward might be too small, or so big that it attracts a lot of freelance talent hunting the criminal “on spec.” And, of course, the reward might not get paid at all, depending on the suspect’s condition, legal status, or political protection. Fortunately, there’s this slave trader with a price on his head who just happened to stumble across your path . . .

Liaison

The Liaison Division handles relationships with other Homeline law-enforcement agencies or military units, especially those with parachronic investigation responsibilities. With the Patrol’s chronic shortage of time and manpower, unless an investigation truly endangers Infinity interests, the I-Cops are always happy to turn over work to outsiders. Liaison agents follow up information sharing, keep Homeliners in the loop on out-time investigations, and smooth any ruffled bureaucratic feathers. Liaison agents make likely NPCs in an I-Cop campaign, but might make interesting

PCs in a campaign centered around a Homeline group such as the FBI’s Parachronic Field Team or France’s *Légion d’Outretemps*.

I-Cop Liaison agents have a particularly warm relationship with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), who technically “host” any I-Cop operations on Homeline run out of Patrol Headquarters in Calgary. The Mounties’ traditions of integrity, self-sufficiency, professionalism, and determination resonate strongly with Patrolmen, and the Patrol seeks to emulate the best of the RCMP experience – bringing order without cruelty or destruction to a vast frontier – in its

own work across the timelines. The Patrol actively headhunts former Mounties for responsible postings, and the RCMP is the only Homeline outfit routinely invited on “ride-alongs” to other timelines when I-Cops need backup fast. RCMP characters can add an interesting dimension to an I-Cop campaign, serving as pipelines to the wider world of Homeline or merely lending another perspective.

Logistics

The unglamorous task of keeping conveyors fueled and ammunition sorted both by caliber and by world of origin falls to the Logistics Division. These hard-working perfectionists handle repairs, vehicles, supply, and maintenance for the entire Patrol. This includes supplies, fuel, ammunition, and spare parts for any outtime equipment in storage or rotation; Logistics Division works closely with the Penetration Service’s Technical Analysis Division (p. 17). One of Logistics’ key tasks is to keep track of every single parachronic device in Infinity’s inventory; if a conveyor (or, more subtly, a coordinate disk or spare set of field circuits) goes missing, they alert the closest Patrol team to its last known position. Often, that team is then ordered to drop whatever it was doing and chase down the missing dingus – everyone in the Patrol shares Logistics Division’s concern about vanishing equipment. After all, next week it could be bringing a division of fanatical Jamahiriya secularists from Caliph or slaving berserkers from Gotha-19 down on them.

Although essential for the smooth operation of the Patrol, Logistics officers are not particularly essential for the exciting operation of a game. They serve as information dumps, and as the source of weird equipment and urgent requests. A quintessential rear-area, support-staff NPC, a Logistics agent might enter the adventure with a one-time need to recover a particularly sensitive item. Once attached to a Patrol team, of course, his skill at repair and access to restricted or strange equipment could make him so valuable that he stays on for a series of adventures. A team of Logistics personnel might be tasked to establish a

maintenance and supply base on some almost-hospitable parallel, setting up a long-term series of adventures in a continuing setting. Having the prototypical paper-pushers save the universe (perhaps in spite of the condescending “real I-Cops”) could be an amusing running gag in a light (or even a silly) campaign.

Morale

Morale in the Patrol is actually better than in most police or military forces, although Infinity’s staff psychologists, chaplains, and bartenders all earn their stipends. The Morale Division doesn’t actually concern itself with Patrol morale very much, although that’s what all the job descriptions in the unit seem to imply in faultless 21st-century buzzword-speak. Its actual duties are propaganda, memetics, and psychological warfare – both on other worlds (convincing dictators to stand down, or the citizens to vote out Centrum puppets) and on Homeline. That last job is the most sensitive of all, but Van Zandt *really* didn’t want world opinion to shift and take Infinity away from him. So a goodly chunk of Infinity’s money goes into conventional advertising, public relations, and political contributions handled by Infinity’s corporate P.R. offices and their lobbyists. A bigger, but far more carefully concealed, amount goes into carefully conceived messages to play up the good things from Infinity (cheap fusion power, safety from Time Nazis) and dismiss the bad (toying with the lives of billions). It’s an exaggeration to say that Infinity guards that secret more assiduously than they guard The Secret of parachronics – but Van Zandt and his successors on the board seem to think that the one depends on the other.

Morale works closely with the Scouts as well, helping craft messages (verbal and heraldic) of peace and friendship (or at least “enemy of your enemy”) for first contact discussions and meetings, often accompanying Scouts into the field. On outworld operations, negotiation and communication is the Morale Division way, although often with the aim of more thoroughly eliminating an opponent. A Morale officer frequently acts in the

role of team leader on another world, or plays “face man” for a team of Patrolmen. A Morale team assigned to bring down some horrible government or end a war could be an interesting group to play. The result might resemble either *Ocean’s 11* or *A Fistful of Dollars*, depending on the tone of the game.

Nexus Oversight

Nexus Oversight, the “Highway Patrol” of the I-Cops, guards and charts known dimensional highways, nexus portals, and so forth. Relatively few such unconventional routes lead to Homeline proper, and Infinity bought up most of them (along with all the land for several miles around, where possible) long ago. However, the Patrol can’t depend on Infinity’s parachronic monopoly to keep the continuum safe. Moving along the back roads of the continuum, infiltrators, smugglers, or terrorists could wreak havoc in realities across the quanta, even if Homeline is (mostly) secure. And there are always tourists to gently redirect, squabbles over access to sort out, and the occasional ghastly crisis to avert. Nexus Oversight also tries to keep track of known banestorms, and its agents keep their hands in by killing anything nasty a banestorm leaves behind. In practice, Nexus Oversight sometimes serves as the I-Cops’ own in-house Scout service; the “Nexers” love to find out what’s over the next quantum barrier and who’s been driving tanks down the ley lines.

A roving Nexus Oversight team of this sort makes an ideal player group. Even if the worlds they’re patrolling are quiet now, anybody or anything could come out of the portal during the next new moon and stir things up. A single Nexer could fall in with any team anywhere in the continuum – an excellent way to bring in a new player or replacement character.

Security

Security Division monitors and prevents crosstime infiltration of Homeline. Working very closely with the Intelligence Division of the Scouts, they maintain frightening amounts of information on every

single licensee of parachronic technology, and on every outtimer known to have dealt with Homeliners in any capacity. Getting this information is the job of Security’s “runners,” who keep strings of informers and agents in both the security agencies of many parallels (they essentially command the Vigiles on Johnson’s Rome, for example) and inside every criminal or political group known to have a crossworld interest. Security Division works closely with the Penetration Service’s Intelligence Division to monitor all other timelines for breaches of The Secret, or of domestic parachronic research. On paper, Intelligence does the monitoring, and Security makes any “adjustments” necessary to fix things. In practice, this means that Security agents are usually tasked with “secret improvements” on other parallels as well: ending slave trades, preventing global wars, derailing atomic research programs in dictatorships, and so forth. Security Division runs the “prison parallel” Coventry (p. B524), as well as a few even more obscure detention facilities on remote worlds. Security also works closely with Logistics, following their lead when tracking missing conveyors, and with Liaison Division, partnering up with Homeline security agencies (especially the FBI, Shin Bet, and MI5) when tracking crosstime threats against national targets. The Security Division also maintains a low-simmering irritation with Infinity Unlimited’s Corporate Security Branch, which is theoretically in charge of Homeline threats to Infinity operations; with Homeliners who travel crosstime, jurisdiction gets blurry.

A Security team is another ideal player group. Every mission can be different, from smash-and-grab raids on Islamic Jihad cells on Homeline to following a string of clues to run down a plutonium smuggler across six or seven worldlines. The broad scope of Security missions means that Patrolmen from almost any other division can join up for a single operation, or help staff a full cross-divisional task force to monitor some developing (campaign-long) crisis.

Cover Stories

Given the conflicting imperatives of keeping The Secret and influencing outtime locals, much thought and effort goes into providing Infinity agents with solid cover while on operations in parallel worlds. Necessary documents, travel passes, forged currency, and so forth are the responsibility of the Document Section of the Penetration Service (a cross-divisional unit staffed by the Intelligence, Records and Research, and Technical Analysis divisions). Planting actual identities in offworld data banks, maintaining safe houses and bank accounts, and other local jobs fall to whichever Service runs the main Infinity station on the parallel (if the Scouts, usually the Intelligence Division; if the I-Cops, usually Security Division).

The actual nature of the cover varies by milieu and TL. In low-TL societies, up to TL2 or 3, agents can pass themselves off as travelers from a faraway kingdom, as magicians (this is harder on worlds where magic actually works), or as emissaries from the gods. Some of these stories also work in post-disaster milieus. In societies at TL4 or 5, Patrol personnel have to either invent secret societies to belong to, or suborn existing guilds, orders, or groups (or at least individual lodges or churches). Once nation-states have monopolized power, usually by TL5, Homeline agents have to begin the careful game of claiming to be spies or agents from different nations, hoping to avoid close cross-checking. This, however, makes getting the cooperation of a local government more difficult, and often forces Patrolmen to work through less-than-ideal local cutouts. Impersonating the home government's spies or secret police is the best possible cover, but is fraught with danger.

In *very* bureaucratic governments (which began by TL2 in China and Rome), Patrolmen can often claim to be from another government department or a far province . . . or from the capital, if they are operating in a far province. If they can present the right credentials, and use the right tone of voice, this is often sufficient for short-term operations. Over a longer term, such a cover is always in danger of collapsing. In some cases, it might be possible to claim to be time travelers, or even aliens – presenting advanced Homeline technology as “proof.”

Special Operations

The mission of Special Operations Division is the counterpunch. SpecOps (or SOD, to the less-impressed Patrolmen of other divisions) exists to drop onto a Centrum (or, increasingly, SS Raven Division) operation when subtlety is no longer an option. They train in crosstime assault tactics, doing the most damage with the least equipment possible in the shortest period of time. Special Operations does not (officially, anyway) launch operations against enemy targets; it is the “cavalry” called in to end a fight, not the “marines” sent in to start one. Of course, many rescues or counterstrikes require the tactical offensive, and sometimes that creeps up to “pre-emptive defense” against an Interworld task force that looks *almost*

ready to launch its own initiative. Special Operations has about 200 agents in three companies stationed on Homeline, Hideaway (a top-secret Quantum 6 “manor world” used exclusively by Infinity retirees and executives), and Habakkuk (a similarly secret Quantum 7 world where the Laurentide cooling snapped the Earth back into another Ice Age around 6000 B.C.). The company on Hideaway is double-strength, since more Centrum operations occur in Quantum 6 than the other two. Their conveyors are hardened subquantum models built into armored TL9 Icarus suborbital VTOL gunships each capable of carrying up to three squads (15-24 Patrolmen) of SpecOps anywhere on the Earths within four hours of an alert. (The Homeline company can, of

course, project to Quantum 3 or 4 if need be.) Their bases (in Canada on Homeline and Hideaway; in tropical Kenya on Habakkuk) have immense fuel-cracking stations, full support facilities, massive parachronic detector nets, and backups of most Patrol records of Interworld activity. Support staff (about 2,000 per base) usually consists of disabled Patrolmen from other divisions, civilian contractors, or specialists from Intelligence, Logistics, and Security.

A Special Operations Division campaign resembles a normal military “special ops” campaign, focusing on raids and assaults. Patrolmen from other divisions usually come along on specific missions only to lend specific knowledge or expertise; they aren't likely to join a SpecOps squad on a full-time basis. If the GM and players can come up with enough variations on the model to keep the game from getting stale, well and good. Otherwise, it may be necessary to mix things up. Players might have a “backup SpecOps PC.” Every so often, if the regular PCs uncover something that really needs a smackdown, the game can switch to “SpecOps mode” and the players can bring in their backup PC squad to deliver it. Or the GM can insert a small SpecOps unit into an anchor, or a shifted echo, for a long-term campaign against Centrum on that world. Covert high-tech warfare against Centrum while keeping The Secret, rescuing other Patrolmen (who might become PCs themselves), and recruiting local forces to the side of Homeline presents enough different challenges to keep the game fresh for some time.

PENETRATION SERVICE

The “Time Scouts” survey and open new timelines, and keep the flow of parachronic traffic running smoothly. The Scouts favor adaptability over discipline, openness over judgment, and breadth over depth. A modicum of knowledge and acceptance on 10 worlds is better than a doctorate on (or initiation into) one subculture – although Scouts will pump the professor (or initiate) for the three key details they need to find

a missing tourist in Nineveh or pass a message to a Patrol contact at the Reichschancellery.

The Penetration Service has eight divisions.

Communications

Whether it's riding camels across a parallel Mojave or burrowing a Trojan Horse into a Sinhalaraj submarine comm net, Communications gets the word out and the message through. Communications Division shares responsibility with Intelligence for cryptanalysis, and encodes even routine messages to the hilt. However, too many mysterious, unbreakable codes in a suspicious age themselves endanger The Secret, so often Communications has to encode the real message inside an enciphered cover message intended to be broken. It's headaches like this that make courier duty seem like a positive relief; all you have to do is get from Paris to Peking and dodge the Khaghan's All-Seeing Eyes along the way.

Communications agents can open the door to any kind of adventure – and may not even know what's in the message that causes everyone to hunt them down. A long-running game centered on the Communications Division can center on multiworld couriers, who “ride circuit” through a number of stations and parallels to pick up messages that can't be sent any other way. This provides plenty of setting variety, and each stop no doubt holds its own crisis that in some way threatens the delivery of the next message.

Contact

In many ways, Contact Division has the most difficult, delicate job in the entire Patrol. Once the Scouts discover a new timeline, a Contact field team has to learn its geopolitical, cultural, economic, and technical situation in as much detail and as little time as possible. All of this, of course, while checking for magic, psionics, or other potentially threatening anomalies in the local physics, establishing some sort of plausible cover for future Patrol missions, and keeping an eye out for Centrum or other outtime troublemakers. If the new timeline is an echo (which the Patrol can't always discern right away, especially with

more primitive Earths), making too overt a contact could shift the entire timeline! To make things even dicier, The Secret is never closer to exposure than in the first few months of contact with a new timeline. Agents don't yet know what clothing, behavior, or technology marks them as not just strangers but weird outsiders, and can't find out without wandering around risking death or worse.

All this makes a Contact team a perfect PC group. Every new timeline is a new set of challenges, the GM can tailor adventures (and whole worlds) to meet (or play with) player expectations, and the flavor can vary as widely or as little as desired. A Contact team often includes Scouts from other divisions, and even I-Cops if they provide specific skills (or warm bodies to fill mission requirements *right now*). This offers an excellent mix of starting characters, and return trips to HQ between missions even let players trade out crippled or dead Scouts for brash new replacements.

Echo Surveillance

Once a parallel has been classified as an echo – an exact duplicate of Homeline history vulnerable to timeline shifting – the Patrol turns it over to Echo Surveillance Division. This division has the unenviable task of monitoring all potential crisis points in the echo's current affairs for signs of Centrum involvement, or for other changes that might shift the echo out of place. Depending on the change

potential and TL of an echo, a given world might have one team (based in 1873 Liverpool, monitoring shipping news and telegraph cables for any microscopic divergence from Homeline records), a few teams (one in each major capital in 1942), or more. Most echoes really ought to have a global network of agents communicating by ultrawave – keeping tabs, for instance, on every minor kingdom and caravan stop from Chichen Itza to Chang'an and back again in 800 A.D. – but have to make do with overworked “circuit riders” who travel the Silk Road and other trade routes with a cargo of spices and an eye for the uncanny.

An Echo Surveillance team is most suitable for long-running campaigns set in a single echo. The agents can deal with local crises from wars to plagues to suspicious Inquisitors, chasing down every rumor of sorcery or angels that sounds like a Centrum cover. Eventually, of course, one of those rumors will pan out, and the game becomes one of cat-and-mouse as the two sides choose their pawns and begin the contest in earnest. On an echo with a lot of potential divergence points set close together in time or space (1453, 1789, or 1917, for example), the missions still have plenty of variety. For more variety still, the players can take the roles of a “flying squad” of Echo Surveillance agents spot-checking comfortably remote or stable echoes and solving any crises there as rapidly and silently as possible.



Intelligence

Intelligence Division monitors every known world (including a few that aren't very well known at all) for any threat to Homeline, Infinity, or The Secret. Contrary to the romantic image of Intel Scouts infiltrating Reich-5 deployment bases or stealing Centrum coordinate files, most Intelligence work involves combing

Patrolmen even outside Intel Division, or someone who can add hair-raising complications (or life-saving hints) to a seemingly conventional mission briefing. The Intelligence mission can turn out to be a red herring, an excuse for the real adventure, or one more round in a taut game of thrust and counterthrust against Centrum's Interworld Service.



the records of every other Patrol section. Intelligence Division agents have clearance to see any report from any division of Infinity, and through UNIC, can request intelligence data from most of the Homeline spy agencies as well. Although Intelligence Division gives lip service to compartmentalization of information, there are too many crises, too much data, too little time, and too few Intel personnel for that approach to be practical. Intelligence assigns field agents on "open-eyes" missions (which consist of visiting a seldom-seen world and looking for trouble) to scare up still more data, and many Intelligence Division Scouts visit 10 or 12 worlds in a single "circuit" looking for patterns that don't show up in the on-site reports.

An Intelligence Division agent can get added to any Patrol mission at the last minute, simply because someone wanted more information or thought that trouble might be brewing somewhere. Full Intelligence Division field teams go on (slightly) more organized survey, scouting, and investigation missions to various timelines as well. Intelligence Division PCs can therefore "solo" with a team of Patrolmen from other divisions, or make up an entire adventuring group. An Intelligence NPC makes an excellent "mission director" for a group of

Records and Research

This Division maintains every bit of data recovered or discovered on every mission, as well as the personnel jackets for the Infinity Patrol, dossiers on anyone ever encountered by the Patrol in any capacity, and the most complete historical database in the known worlds. Most of this material is fully computerized on molecular storage media, but Records and Research is always behind on transfers from more primitive sources, especially those from outtime. Thus, the Stacks (as the Division archives are called) also hold several million hardcopy books, miles upon miles of film and recording tape, and a few floors of unclassified stone tablets, cylinder seals, and oil paintings. This division also handles the administrative duties for the Intervention Service; only the most cynical I-Cops really believe that their requests always take two weeks longer to file than Scout paperwork ever seems to. Everyone knows that the best way to get a form approved is to submit it wrapped around a CD-ROM, papyrus scroll, or leatherbound folio that doesn't already appear in the Stacks.

With the best will in the world, it may be difficult to set a campaign entirely in the musty world of Records and Research, unless a somewhat outré "adventures in the Warehouse"

game appeals to everyone. A Records Division NPC makes a useful supporting player, however, always available to feed a clue or plot point to the perplexed I-Cops. On some missions, however (such as those to an unburnt Library of Alexandria, or hunting an eldritch tome through the bibliophile underground of Merlin-2's London), a Records and Research agent PC can bring a glittering eye and a head full of facts to the game.

Search and Rescue

When a researcher goes missing in Tenochtitlán, or a party of skiers gets trapped by raiding Helvetii, Search and Rescue Division gets them out. Search and Rescue teams, usually mounted on special conveyors with full ambulance and paramedical modules, remain on call in a number of Infinity stations around Homeline and on major tourist parallels. They can be scrambled and outbound within 20 minutes of getting a go-code, although most dispatches are triggered by "failures to report on time" or returning parties (or escaping survivors) bearing bad news rather than actual distress calls. Many conveyors have a sub-quantum "black box" drone that jumps to the closest S&R station on each quantum in an emergency, but this is hit-or-miss at best. Search and Rescue has the primary "first response" task for any conveyor or civilian missing on a "non-threat" worldline (in general, those not classed Z; see *Infinity's World Classes*, p. 83). They do not mount paramilitary or police missions – conveyors gone missing on the Reich parallels draw a response from Special Operations, for example. Unfortunately, the Search and Rescue team sometimes winds up being the first Patrolmen to discover that a mostly harmless worldline has suddenly become a deadly threat. Hence, Search and Rescue agents have to be able to take care of themselves in all kinds of situations, while saving lives and keeping an eye out for the next disaster.

A Search and Rescue team makes an excellent PC group for fast-paced adventures flickering between many different settings. Search and Rescue teams have to have a mix of specialists, ready for anything from

vampire bites to maser burns to flint arrow wounds, moving fast and staying ahead of the locals – or, worse, other dimension-travelers. A single Search and Rescue agent is unlikely to join a cross-disciplinary team, unless he has specialized knowledge (of a world, a danger, or a technique) needed for a mission. However, a tour in Search and Rescue makes an excellent background for a player character “medic” in any other division.

Survey

A Survey agent is what the average Homeliner thinks of when he thinks of the Scouts. Survey Division plans, organizes, and carries out “first in” missions to new worldlines, after as thorough a robotic reconnaissance as possible (see *Recon Procedures*, below). Drones can provide a surprising amount of hard data about a new world, but there are always strange holes and mysterious quirks that

require on-site human inspection. Survey Division field agents are trained in camouflage, stealth, and covert surveillance, as well as various scientific disciplines, rather than social interaction skills (those fall under Contact Division’s purview). An ideal Survey mission, from the perspective of many agents, is a long camping trip in the Appalachians spent monitoring radio broadcasts or tapping into computer cables without meeting a local. Unfortunately, as with any other Patrol division, no mission is ever ideal, and many Survey agents have to extract themselves from the clutches of local guards, double-talk their way past suspicious nomads, or personally discover monsters or magic on a seemingly normal worldline.

Since Survey Division teams are expected to stay out of the way of the locals, such a team might not seem like an ideal role for an active player group. Unless something goes wrong –

a Survey team that gets lost or cut off from Homeline (perhaps because the worldline shifted), and has to make its way in the new world regardless of procedure would be an excellent PC group for a medium- or long-term adventure set in a single worldline. Also, playing the initial Survey team as “guest star PCs” who scope out the situation first-hand and then turn the mission over to the regular heroes has much more immediacy and reward going for it than another GM briefing about “what Survey Division has determined.” In mixed groups, Survey agents bring useful talents to the table, and any given mission can add “the first agent to set foot on this worldline” to the team.

Technical Analysis

Technical Analysis Division exists to help Patrolmen blend in with, recognize, utilize, and if necessary counter technologies from other alternates. Their specific mission is to examine and evaluate, and ideally be able to duplicate, any and every technological artifact from any timeline, from sharpened bones to bioscanners. Tech Division works closely with Records and Research, and also prints forged currency, manufactures inconspicuous or fashionable clothing, and creates “pocket fillers” (keys, small idols, eating knives, roach clips, etc.) to help Patrolmen blend into any worldline they might have to enter. Although regulations discourage the inclusion of “secret agent” devices in costumes and personal items in case of loss, theft, or accidental discovery, Tech Division loves to add cameras, microphones, cutting saws, and similar “mission enhancers” to anything they build. They usually tell the agent who carries the item about such extras.

Like their kindred spirits in Records and Research, Technical Analysis Division agents are not ideal PCs, being quintessential rear-area personnel. A team of Tech agents would be hard-pressed to justify many outworld missions, except perhaps to worlds with a lot of very strange technology. However, adding a Technical Analysis expert to a given mission is far easier to justify, whether the worldline runs on immense analytical engines, bizarre Tesla devices, or dwarven steam boilers.

Recon Procedures

Before Survey Division teams ever enter a worldline, standard procedure calls for thorough robotic reconnaissance, using multiple drones, ideally in multiple locations around the world in question. Odd results at any stage prompt the insertion of more drones at other locations for cross-checking and correlation of the data; dangerous results prompt a reassessment by the Penetration Service as a whole.

First, Survey pops a small floating drone into the mid-Atlantic to check the atmosphere, radiation, gravity, salinity, plankton count, and other major environmental metrics on the parallel. If that survey comes back successfully (and informatively), a larger drone enters on land to monitor the electromagnetic spectrum for radio, television, or other signals, and to sniff the atmosphere and test the soil for pollutants and complex chemicals. This drone also checks the night sky, and determines the parallel’s local present date from the star patterns. (This usually happens in the Chilean Andes, to maximize seeing and minimize witnesses.) From these reports, Survey Division estimates the world’s TL.

On lines lower than TL7, a high-flying stealthed reconnaissance drone enters and takes aerial photos for several hundred miles around; where possible, multiple airphoto missions provide good coverage for key areas like the Mediterranean, the Chinese coastline, and eastern North America. If possible (or vital), Infinity orbits a stealthed satellite or two for surveillance and communications. On timelines TL7 or higher, submarine drones crawl up the shore in busy dockyards (disguised as wreckage or flotsam) and attempt to tap into local wireless computer networks, phone signals, or any other medium they can subtly sift for information. Any drone sent into a TL5 or higher worldline is equipped with a thermitic self-destruct system that activates if it is tampered with, if it is intrusively scanned, or if it misses its recall window.

Miracle Workers

Miracle Workers, the “do-gooder” nonprofit wing of Infinity, has a simple enough mission: save and improve lives across the Infinite Worlds. This encompasses famine relief, disaster recovery and repair, sanitation and health improvements, nutrition and agricultural support, control of plagues, and (in the direst situations) refugee relocation. Often, Miracle Workers teams show up to keep civilian locals safe (and safely out of the way) in case of a Centrum attack, reality quake, or other parachronic incident. Although their tents and vehicles usually display the red cross, caduceus, pelican, or other local “neutral healer” emblem, Miracle Workers personnel (except for those in deep cover) wear the dove-and-raven flash of their organization on their clothing or as jewelry.

Miracle Workers operations vary depending on the type of worldline where they take place. On some depopulated parallels, where Infinity has openly taken over (most Hell parallels, for example), Miracle Workers also operates openly. (On some mining parallels, Miracle Workers teams are introducing urban sanitation and the germ theory of disease to parallel Sumerian cities.) On many parallels, Miracle Workers is a chartered, licensed not-for-profit agency (just like White Star Trading is a legitimate import-export group) that works under its own name with the local Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, Knights of St. John, or whomever. On primitive worlds, they simply claim to be itinerant healers, priests of healing saints or gods, and so forth. Infinity looks the other way when Miracle Workers tries to spread medical techniques to the parallels – interference with parallels is allowed, as long as it doesn’t threaten The Secret. The major controversies involve worlds where the Patrol has taken a side in a war or worked to destroy some empire – I-Cops don’t appreciate seeing fellow Homeliners working to cure and stabilize the people they’re trying to defeat. Miracle Workers staff isn’t allowed onto echoes at all – the risk of some “humanitarian” intervention changing history is too great.

Playing a Miracle Workers team is a change from conventional Infinite Worlds gaming. Although the PCs would face their share of local warlords, outtime interference, and so on, many of the problems would not have human solutions – or any solutions! In most games, the Miracle Workers operation is just a setup that gets the PCs (Miracle Workers or otherwise) to the worldline just in time to coincidentally stop an entirely unrelated Centrum scheme.

ISWAT

Interworld Special Weapons and Tactics (ISWAT) doesn’t exist, at least officially. Its agents are all on the books as Patrolmen, assigned to various out-of-the-way parallels, extended training missions, or nebulous headquarters duties. Its Director isn’t even on the Infinity payroll, which is understandable – even a casual auditor would notice a name like “Otto Skorzeny.” Recruited from a Hapsburg prison camp on Aeolus (see

GURPS Alternate Earths 2 for further details), ISWAT’s Skorzeny combines his parallel selves’ genius for small-unit tactics and leadership with an astonishing degree of street-fighting political guile in the service of individual rights and opportunities. He has moved mountains to lift Infinity restrictions on outtime recruitment, at least for his own teams, and they remain fiercely loyal to him and ISWAT as a result. Well over half of ISWAT’s operatives (the total number is classified, but there

are probably fewer than 100 five-to-seven-man squads on the active duty list) are outtimers from all walks of life.

Some of them, like Skorzeny, are “résumé recruits” picked based on their parallel selves’ skills. Some are locals who come to the notice of Patrolmen in some way, usually involving meritorious service or astonishing ability. A few are outtimers who stumble onto ISWAT operations and manage to find their way to Homeline, or to one of the covert financial, military, or technical facilities ISWAT maintains across the parallels. To Skorzeny, such cleverness and drive far outweighs any possible damage to The Secret – anyone smart enough to find his people is someone to be recruited, not dumped on Coventry to waste their skills forever.

A solid cadre of ISWAT operatives are Patrolmen, of course – those with a record of toughness, creativity, flexibility, and (most importantly) luck. Skorzeny is fond of saying “I can train someone to do anything in the world – except be unlucky enough to find trouble, and lucky enough to survive it.” His record speaks for itself; ISWAT operatives receive training comparable to the most rigorous special ops units on Homeline – with the equivalent of a doctorate or two in history or anthropology on top of it. As it happens, a number of special ops soldiers, and not a few history professors, also find their way to ISWAT’s roster. Patrol rumor claims that ISWAT has gods, sorcerers, vampires, aliens, super-heroes, and angels in its ranks . . . but that’s just barracks gossip. Probably.

Missions and Training

ISWAT specializes in operations on closed worlds, weird parallels, and pocket multiverses, and routinely performs high-priority but deniable missions that can determine the fate of entire worlds. Many ISWAT operatives have magical, psionic, or other means of traveling between worlds – they don’t always like to announce themselves with a burst of parachronic energy. Some of the crises it faces are urgent and overwhelming: rogue AIs trying to undermine consensus reality, amphichronous invasions from anti-matter universes, kidnappers hijacking

Charon's boat and holding an entire Earth's afterlives hostage, and sentient psychoses spreading themselves through parallel worlds in dreams. Others are just plain *strange*. In the intervals between cosmos-threatening disasters, ISWAT takes on simpler tasks like overthrowing corrupt empires, stealing or destroying irreplaceable evil magic artifacts, killing immortals, and capturing invulnerable fortresses. When they're not doing that, they're training.

Training, where at all possible, happens in the field, on lower-priority "feel-good" missions. Skorzeny has a particular love of sabotaging, subverting, or otherwise hampering Nazi Germanies everywhere in the continuum. A fierce democrat and rugged individualist, the Director despises his Nazi "twins" and what he calls their "corrupt toadying cynicism," and even his "Teutonic efficiency" recoils at the inhuman waste that Nazi ideology represents. Hence, he prefers "live fire" training that just happens to take place on Reich-2 or any other world where "You five go destroy every vehicle in that Nazi airbase, and kill anyone who tries to stop you" can be a valid rule of engagement. Political corruption, social engineering, economic manipulation, and any other dirty trick Skorzeny or his brain trust can come up with gets tested to destruction against totalitarian regimes across the parallels on training mission after training mission. These

lengthy and repeated exposures to fascism from the inside also have the happy side effect of inspiring ISWAT recruits into an appreciation for individual freedom that they may not have had when they left their home parallel.

This appreciation sometimes extends, a little too rowdily, into their "shore leave." ISWAT personnel officers try to select cities and timelines where a week-long melee might actually improve things locally – parallel Port Royals or Cripple Creeks, for instance – and let an entire team take their leave together. Camaraderie forged on the battlefield is annealed in the barroom or brothel, and a minimum of harm is done to the peace-loving citizens of other parallels for whom ISWAT labors. Some teams prefer slightly more elevated shore leave policies; in general, initiative in selecting leave gets rewarded.

ISWAT in the Campaign

For a conventional Patrol campaign, ISWAT should be a mysterious force in the background, always doing something vital far away. A single ISWAT operative can be an excellent story trigger, but GMs should be careful about overshadowing the regular PCs with this glamorous "guest star." Ideally, the ISWAT op gives the Patrol team their mission along with compliments about why they were chosen,

and goes off to do something else impossibly dangerous off-screen. A mission to rescue a trapped (or besieged, or otherwise isolated) ISWAT operative, however, can feature the op as an on-screen NPC, and the use of his skills can be the "reward" the heroes get for defeating the opposition. In a dire emergency, of course, the GM can use ISWAT as a *deus ex machina*, dropping in from the clouds and rescuing the PCs when all looks most grim – but ISWAT should be on their way somewhere else, and leave the real protagonists of the story to tie up plenty of loose ends.

Of course, an ISWAT team makes an ideal player character group, for players with a yen for non-stop adventure with a big splash of strangeness. ISWAT operatives should begin at 200-250 points at least; teams of 1,000-point characters are totally appropriate for ISWAT campaigns. The GM should think big when designing ISWAT missions – major historical changes, the fates of empires, and immense reality quakes are all in a day's work for ISWAT. "Nazi turkey shoot" adventures should be *vacations* for an ISWAT team; thugs with machine guns are trivialities to such heroes.



PARACHRONIC LABORATORIES

Parachronic Laboratories, or "Paralabs," serves as Infinity's in-house "pure research and development" arm. Paralabs is not related to the "Patent Development Department" in Infinity Tower, which sifts other parallels' scientific developments and technologies for future operations, licensing, or theft. It concentrates on the physics of the Infinite Worlds, the nature of reality and physical law, and the practical mechanics of crossworld travel.

Paralabs has research facilities all over Homeline; almost every top-flight university physics department has a Paralabs laboratory attached,

sumptuously funded by Infinity grants. The main Paralabs facilities are in Geneva, Switzerland (as part of CERN); Batavia, Illinois (associated with the Argonne Labs accelerators); and Livermore, California. Paralabs shares its Geneva campus with UNIC, and its Livermore campus with the U.S. Department of Energy. Paralabs also has facilities on other worlds, which it shares with nobody. The three best-known are the "Clean Room" on Smother (where it puts really dangerous or mysterious objects and experiments), the "Farm" on Mammut-1's Madagascar (where Paralabs works on robotic conveyor design; the

Reserve Conveyor Fleet's hangar is there), and the "Wheel" on Turkana, a Quantum 6 world where the Earth's magnetic poles are seriously offset from the geographic ones. Here, Paralabs has built an accelerator around the magnetic pole (in the Gobi grassland) and drilled a hole into the Earth's mantle for power. The Wheel team is universally considered the craziest team in Paralabs; their rumored triumphs include artificial reality temblors, creating a banestorm inside a wind tunnel, and briefly altering Turkana's quantum level – and number of moons.

THEORY

In 1957, Dr. Hugh Everett III came up with the Many Worlds Interpretation of quantum mechanics, as a way to resolve the paradoxes of the Privileged Observer and such thought-experiments as Schrödinger's Cat. The Privileged Observer (according to the rival Copenhagen Interpretation) is the observer who causes the quantum wave function to "collapse" into particles with location and speed and other characteristics while under observation. Schrödinger's Cat is inside a box with a vial of deadly poison that will break when a given atom decays and releases an alpha particle, killing the cat. Since quantum-mechanically, the atom might or might not release a particle at the instant of decay, the cat is famously half-alive and half-dead in the Copenhagen Interpretation – until the Privileged Observer opens the box and "collapses" the cat into either the alive or dead state.

According to Everett's interpretation, every quantum "choice" creates two worlds, two timelines. In one, the observer sees a live cat. In the other, the observer sees a dead cat. There is no Privileged Observer, because both outcomes occurred – just not in the same universe. Every single decision, every single atomic flow or switch, creates another worldline. Initially, the Many Worlds Interpretation held that information (and therefore energy, and therefore, matter) could never pass between worlds. However, string theory in the 1960s, and strange experimental results showing seemingly instantaneous "dipole communication" in the next decades, made it seem theoretically possible.

Van Zandt's discoveries did not actually solve the question. Although he discovered many worlds, they weren't of the infinite "one photon displaced" variety the orthodox Many Worlds Interpretation predicts. Instead, they were like "knots" in the superstring – places where the potential fog of alternatives "collapses" into actual worlds. Further, these "knots" bunched up into different "energy levels" that Van Zandt dubbed the quantum levels, or quanta.

Thus, parachronics actually managed to combine Everett's theory with an empirical Privileged Observer – the

parachronic traveler. And that, with minor mathematical fillips, is where the theory remains even now, with nobody satisfied, and with some radical theorists proposing that a kind of Observer Effect (p. 159) holds for parallel worlds, or that the expectations of the traveler have some effect on his destination.

The Physics of Infinity

Precisely how the infinite worlds vary and interrelate remains a tangle. Most of the fundamental physical constants remain the same, but some differ wildly while somehow not reducing the universe to quantum fog. It's difficult to make valid crosstime theories work, in large part because physical laws don't seem to hold constant across the continuum. Not only are there worlds where magic works, or where the luminiferous ether exists,

second is much faster, but the "clock" only started ticking a few million years ago. This divergence has been true on all worldlines for approximately 3.5 billion years, roughly (and possibly randomly) coinciding with the emergence of organic life on Homeline.

Theoretical paraphysics is split between two schools, the "gradualist" and the "catastrophist," mirroring the intellectual divisions in the early history of geology and biology. In the gradualist or "naturalist" view, the alternate worlds were inevitable, or have always existed, or are a natural outgrowth of the Big Bang, which emitted all the alternate universes along with all the matter and energy in Homeline's universe. Gradualist theory depends on the Many Worlds Interpretation of quantum mechanics, in which quantum uncertainty is explained by postulating an infinity of worlds existing simultaneously at

Which World Is Ours?

Homeline obviously isn't "our" present-day world – our world doesn't have crosstime travel, for one thing. But Infinity has discovered a couple of early 21st-century Earths, just a couple of decades behind Homeline, which diverged by *not* inventing parachronics. There are certainly a few more out there. Since these worlds have technology only a few years away from that of Homeline, the policy is covert observation. If the GM wishes, *any* of these close parallels could be "our world, our time" – or at least one very close to it.

there are innumerable subtle variations down to the level of individual electrons. Other changes don't seem to make any real sense, or exist in isolation when they should affect the entire system of physical constants. For example, there are two worlds in which the speed of light is measurably greater by some half of a percent, and one in which it is less by almost a full percent.

The only universal difference is that the second is nanofractionally slower on all known inhabited worldlines except three: Homeline, Centrum, and Shikaku-Mon. (This implies that Shikaku-Mon could, if it discovered the theory, build parachronic projectors; see p. 146. This does nothing for Security Division's peace of mind.) On Blip (p. 140), the

every decision point down to the subatomic level. If this theory is true, then any seeming irregularities in the continuum must be observational. What Infinity calls "parallels," for instance, are merely clusters of historical or paraphysical probability; echoes are simply parallels with a different charge, and once their proper quantum is fully observed (in faultless Heisenbergian fashion), they "move" into it.

The catastrophist or "chaotic" viewpoint is almost obtusely Newtonian in a way. Something smashed into the universe, probably about 3.5 billion years ago, and broke it into many pieces. The quanta remain unstable, and entire physical realms can simply wink out of – or into – existence. Something (or things)

occasionally tears through the continuum and disarranges it; even the word “continuum” is a misnomer. Reality quakes are an example of this process occurring right now. Worlds change places, spin off alternates in inexplicable fashion, and shift quanta. Regardless of the “steady state” universe and smooth equations beloved of the naturalists, any Patrolman can tell you that there are more changes, more exceptions, and more just plain weirdness out in the infinite worlds than are dreamt of in any philosophy. Even the laws of physics deform from world to world; the notion of a unified theory, even a quantum-mechanical one, is simply perverse.

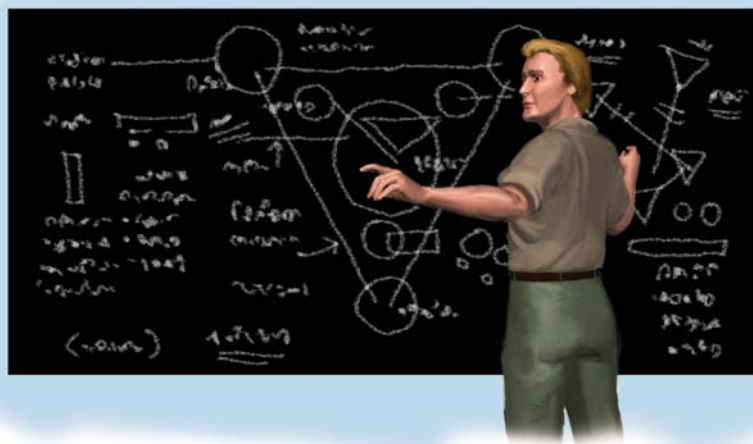
The Williams-Khor Hypothesis

In 2019, after the discovery of Sherlock-2, Professors Rena Williams and Gregory Khor proposed a radical explanation for the nature of worldline formation. According to the Williams-Khor Hypothesis (called the Super-Copenhagen by its detractors), quanta

are psychic constructs existing in the traveler’s mind. Belief, hope, and fear drive the formation of the various parallels; as more and more Homeliners learned about parallel worlds, the worlds encountered went from the fairly normal (Earth-Beta) to the extremely strange (Ezcalli). The Williams-Khor Hypothesis is one of the few parachronic theories to

explain myth parallels and the prevalence of “reality clumping” around events like the American Civil War, World War II, and so forth that played a major role in the cultural background of the first crosstime explorers. Exactly how this might work requires further research, but Williams and Khor suggest that myth parallels and similar phenomena are somehow “emergent properties” created by the intersection of Homeline and its echoes and close parallels (which well outnumber the other worldlines). The traveler/observer simply “steps up” into the parallel that resonates with (or is congruent with) his own psychological geometry, in a kind of “pantheistic solipsism.”

Both Williams and Khor wound up at the center of massive controversies after proposing their hypothesis. Khor was actually stripped of tenure by the University of California in 2021 after a terrific fight featuring accusations of forged research, academic witch-hunting, and embezzlement of grant funds. He announced his intention to construct a “syllogismobile” that would travel to any world he envisioned from any worldline regardless of quantum level, emigrated to Lysander (p. 32), and has not been heard from since. Williams managed to stave off her inquisitors at Cambridge, and has begun to research the nature of magic, which also deals with altering reality in conformity with the human will. She eagerly assists with Patrol debriefings of Cabalists wherever possible; unkind academic gossip hints that she has accepted Cabal membership.



Further Infinities

All of Infinity’s theories rest on Van Zandt’s original notion of an 8-dimensional superspace containing a single quantum “axis” and many, many worlds. However, this may just be “locally true,” like Newtonian physics. The topology of reality quakes (box, p. 75) presumes a 9-dimensional matrix, for example; the astral plane of the Cabalists (p. 68) also somehow exists “outside” conventional 8-space.

Rumors of completely alien travelers encountered during conveyor mishaps, the infamous “frog error” (p. B532) that seems to knot 8-space around on itself, and other weird empirical data such as the Möbius (p. 141) worldline also cast doubt on the “limited infinity” notion. Every so often, the parachronic detection antennae at Woomera pick up signals and pings from impossibly distant quanta – for four minutes in 2025, the computers all insisted that conveyors were arriving from Quantum 93!

Although Paralabs physicists have decided that echoes drift into the accessible band from other quanta, there’s less than no evidence for this thesis – there are no reports of echoes “passing through” Quanta 5 or 7, for example. Some radical mathematicians believe that the echoes (and possibly many high-inertia parallels such as Ezcalli) come from other worldline axes outside or “perpendicular to” the quantum field as understood.

Such axes may also intersect the Tree of Futures spoken of by some precognitives and UFBs (Unidentified Futuristic Beings). This theory holds that after a certain period, Homeline’s worldline will fracture (or “blossom,” in the more upbeat reading) into a myriad of interlocking futures, possibly joined by stargates or hyperspace.

RESEARCH

Psi

Unlike most Homeline researchers, Paralabs scientists never doubted the existence of psionic powers. They fit the existing string theory math on “instantaneous communication” too well to rule out, and when other worlds’ research began to pay off, Paralabs instantly moved the psi program to the front burner. Although most Homeline psi phenomena are too weak to study reliably, much less control, Paralabs has adapted some psychotronic technology from other worlds to create “amplifier chambers” that boost the psionic signal to readable levels.

Paralabs focuses on two main fields of psi research: security and psychoparachronics. Security covers all types of mind reading, ESP, clairvoyance, and anything else that might reveal The Secret to an outtimer. One early success of the Paralabs researchers was the Tenser Method, a subliminal, subvocal, subconscious system for masking the user’s thoughts. (This is the Mind Block skill from p. B210.) Psychotronic devices have also proven themselves on several worlds. In the wake of the Reich-5 breakout, the investigation of psionic world-jumping, both innate and assisted, has taken center stage. Paralabs is probably farther along theoretically than Reich-5’s Armanen Order, but lacks the depth of empirical experience that hands-on surgeries and human experimentation have given the Nazis.

UNIC takes a very intrusive part in Paralabs psi studies, demanding access to all labs and equipment, maintaining its own archive of Paralabs experimental data, and insisting on the maximum possible oversight. Some of the permanent undersecretariat within the Crisis Ministry (especially Moira van Deering, the Special Rapporteur for External Security) are lobbying for UNIC to take over Paralabs’ psionics work itself. Until then, the Crisis Ministry funds duplicate research, headhunts promising parapsychologists, and keeps a close eye on Paralabs results. It seems that Infinity isn’t the only one worried about keeping its secrets secure.

Magic

When the first Scouts returned with reports of worldlines where magic worked, the evidence was dismissed as local legend, or at best as misreported psi. Paralabs personnel visited some of these timelines to perform psionic experimentation, and accidentally wound up confirming many of the original Scout reports. Eventually, with the discovery of enough different “magical” parallels, Paralabs boffins and Infinity higher-ups alike grudgingly agreed that some “paranormal” faculty outside conventional psi existed.

Studying it, however, is a problem, and not least because using terms like “magic” still raises eyebrows at Paralabs. The current theory is a modified version of the crackpot (at least on Homeline) biochemist Rupert Sheldrake’s “morphogenetic field” concept. Every living thing (even whole ecologies like rivers or forests) possesses an inherent, transdimensional energy field that interacts with the fields of, and thus influences, similar beings or objects all over the world. (And possibly on parallel worlds as well, but the theoretical work on that concept is still in its infancy.) By altering, deforming, damaging, or recharging the morphogenetic field of some person, animal, plant, or place, a trained “morphogeneticist” can cause seemingly “unexplainable” phenomena at a distance in accordance with his intentions. Not all Paralabs technicians in the “Sheldrake Section” buy the entire theory (some of them, very quietly, are beginning to believe in demons and spirits and, well, magic), but it’s the best one they can come up with. But since Homeline is (as far as anyone at Paralabs can determine) a no-mana world, any Infinity experiments in magic (or morphogenetics) must occur in the field. Unfortunately, no “magical” but unpopulated world has yet been discovered, so field research involves visiting some parallel and asking the kinds of questions that can get careless morphogeneticists burned at the stake.

To add to Infinity’s headaches, further research has made it clear that there are significant variations in the way that magic actually works between various timelines. At first, these seemed to be limited to the extent to which innate human talent could influence spells’ energy

efficiency, or the mechanics of specific spells. However, later explorers discovered several worlds in which spells didn’t work well or at all, but lengthy ritual procedures could produce subtle but far-reaching supernatural effects. Paralabs generally classifies these worlds as having no or low mana, but those researchers who are prone to sloppy speculation and the use of borrowed magical jargon often speculate that they have “radically aspected” mana which responds to trained human will in completely different ways. (One curiosity is that such worlds often have especially extensive infestations of conscious immaterial “spirits.”) The only silver lining is that many Cabal members seem to have almost as much trouble with the concept as does Paralabs.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

The GM should feel free to provide Patrol characters with any TL8 gear imaginable from any **GURPS** sourcebook. TL9 gear is also available, on an experimental basis – primarily surveillance, communications, medical gear, and body armor. Costs are for TL8 Homeline; not all equipment is available outside the Patrol.

Technically, Paralabs doesn’t provide personal equipment for the Patrol – that’s the I-Cops’ Logistics Division, with support from the Scouts’ Technical Analysis Division. However, some of the equipment design does originate in Paralabs computer models, and it has become a Patrol truism that anything that breaks, or reveals your position, or interferes with a jump, is Paralabs’ fault, so it goes in this section anyhow.

All high-tech outtime equipment contains fingerprint locks keyed to the Patrol team (they can be reset in the field, but only by a pre-programmed user). Attempting to open or use such devices without fingerprint access activates a self-destruct charge that implodes and slags the device. Patrol radios can also send a “slag now” signal to any or all devices; they destroy themselves automatically after 48 hours without a “keep alive” signal. Some equipment has even more stringent security, as noted in the descriptions.

Homeline TL

For game purposes, Homeline is a mature TL8 with a few TL9 pockets. (This means you can outfit Patrolmen with any TL9 gadget you'd like, but it can break or malfunction as entertainingly as possible.) AIs, for example, remain purely theoretical, although several expert research systems exist to harvest, sort, and handle data. Homeline's space program is static, devoted to mining Earth-grazing asteroids rather than terraforming Mars or settling orbital space. Cars are safer, faster, more energy-efficient and better looking than 1998 models, but only their fuel cells (adapted from Lenin-3 models) are TL9. Fusion power, microtech factories, and genetic therapy are all TL9 in effect, but a very "safetech" TL9 that hasn't bled back into the society at large outside the hospital. Whole-body cloning, artificial wombs, designer babies, and even wide-scale bionics remain controversial and undeveloped. Organ and limb cloning, healing, and general medicine and trauma care can be considered TL9.

Weapons are still mature TL8. Laser rifles have yet to reliably outperform the M-23 assault rifle in testing, balky and experimental battlesuits are less practical than tanks, and the "smart spaceplane" remains on the drawing board thanks to the trillion-dollar cost of building the factories necessary to assemble its components. No nation except the United States has the resources to refit an entire military in the theoretical equipment used on other parallels, and the United States seems happy to stand pat for now (although rumors of TL9 weapons filter out from American special-forces bases and testing grounds). In the basic sciences, with the exception of psionics and parachronics, Homeline remains comfortably TL8.

Homeline Science

Technological development on Homeline diverged sharply from our own Earth when Van Zandt invented the parachronic transfer in 1998. How sharp that divergence was, and whether there were any other previous divergences, are unsolved questions. They will have to wait either until Infinity discovers our world, or until our world reaches 2027.

What even many Homeliners don't appreciate is the change made in basic scientific progress by the accessibility of other timelines. Almost all the innovations a Homeliner thinks of as "parachronic spinoffs" – fusion plants, wrist-top weblinks, the leukemia cure, and even Mango Spredd – are actually thefts (or, in the best cases, fraudulently obtained licenses) from other worlds' scientific establishments. The brilliant cancer and AIDS researchers of the 1990s, for example, took fat Infinity consulting contracts to vet other worlds' cures, only sporadically attempting to integrate decades of parallel researches into Homeline's own publications database. Similar effects occurred in almost every science; the sheer magnitude of the task discourages many scientists from even trying to master whole libraries of new scientific data, especially when other worlds may not quite have the same quantum setup Homeline does, so their results may not be reproducible. Finally, why bother working 15 years to perfect a vaccine or algorithm when Infinity could bring it home, already licensed and commercially proven, next week?

Almost all the really innovative thinkers in the sciences, except for a few eccentrics, have followed the money to either parachronic research and quantum physics (and related fields like cosmology and paleontology), or psionics research and brain-body biology. Here, at least, Homeline cannot harvest the poisoned honey of other worlds' technology, and remains forced to pioneer its own.

Energy and Power

Infinity Patrol facilities use standardized fusion reactors for power at their permanent facilities. Some research stations use quantum nucleonic or other cutting-edge technologies.

Power

Sending large power plants with all Patrol operations is not a practical use of conveyor resources, so agents must often adapt local resources or rely on smaller "portable" generators.

Fuel Cell: These electrochemical devices convert hydrogen and oxygen into water, producing electricity and heat in the process. For practical and safety reasons most use hydrocarbon or alcohol fuels, converted into hydrogen, in a replaceable cartridge. Fuel cell cartridges take three seconds to replace. A typical micro fuel cell used by Patrol agents generates 750 watts of power for 40 minutes before requiring a new fuel cartridge (\$1, 0.25 lbs.). \$75, 1 lb.

Solar Cells: The Patrol makes extensive use of TL9 flexible plastic photovoltaic cells that can be *painted* on many surfaces, including clothing and equipment. Each square foot of cells generates about 17 watts of power in full daylight, but accounting for nighttime and weather they usually generate an average of 3 watts. \$15 and 0.01 lbs. per square foot.

Energy

The Patrol has adopted a commercially available nanocomposite battery technology for most of its equipment as an interim step until Homeline industry can begin mass-producing room-temperature superconductor loops. To simplify an already onerous logistical burden, only two classes of cells are in normal use, and both are rechargeable.

C cell: These batteries are used to power most Patrol gear, and a smart agent takes several backups "just in case." \$2, 0.1 lb. Stores 90 kJ (25 watt-hours).

D cell: This larger battery is used in power-hungry electronics and sensors. \$20, 1 lb. Stores 900 kJ (250 watt-hours).

Communications and Information Gear

All Infinity Patrol electronics have a short-range ultra-wideband microcommunicator (100-yard range) for passing information between themselves and fellow Patrolmen. This can be disabled if there are concerns about signal emissions.

Hideout Radio: A short-range encrypted radio that fits in a small earpiece, with optional microfine antenna wires. A flesh-colored throat-mike patch picks up vibrations directly from the voice box, so a low murmur or whisper is clearly transmitted even when around heavy machinery, in the middle of combat, etc. One-mile range. Can operate for 250 hours if sending and receiving voice and text messages, but sending large amounts of data (video, programs, etc.) significantly reduces battery life. \$50, neg. weight.

Linguistic Prompt: The best available natural-language translation software provides three pre-programmed *spoken* languages at Broken proficiency; the Patrol does not possess “universal translators.” Complexity 7, \$70,000.

Mission Databases: Most Patrol agents have an extensive set of databases and expert systems tailored for their missions. This is sufficient to allow the use of most IQ-based technological skills (p. B168) that require software to function at full effectiveness. For tasks of TL7 or less, the databases provide enough information to cancel up to 3 points of TL modifiers (p. B512). The historical and linguistic databases, geological survey maps, etc. programmed for each mission add +5 to relevant skill rolls, with a successful Research roll. Complexity 3. \$36.

Palmtop: A rugged portable computer with built-in digital camera, voice recognition, pull-out floppy display screen, and augmented reality compatibility. For security it incorporates a fingerprint biometric scanner and a physical lock to deny unauthorized access. The computer uses a custom architecture to reduce the possibility of infection by novel computer viruses or other electronic hazards. Opening the casing requires a Traps-6 roll to disable the anti-tamper

devices; failure means all data is erased (unrecoverable without super-science technologies) and a tiny explosive charge destroys the most advanced computing and memory elements. Complexity 7, with 100 TB of usable data storage. \$200, 3 lbs, D/20W (12 hours).

Storage Chip: These solid-state information storage devices are keyed to only function when connected to “approved” palmtops or the primary Infinity Patrol systems. A typical example (about the size of a finger) stores 10 TB and can survive all but the most horrible abuse. \$10, 0.1 lb.

TacNet: This software helps a Patrolman by intelligently tracking and displaying his positions, firing arcs, blind spots, ammo counts, etc. The program gives a+2 bonus to Tactics if all parties are in communication. Complexity 4. \$480.

Sensors and Recon Equipment

Most Patrol agents do not have the benefit of well-developed surveillance infrastructures such as orbital spy satellites or high-altitude unmanned recon drones in their missions.

Bug Detector: A specialized emissions scanner and lidar that can detect nanobugs, smart dust, and other monitoring devices. Operation requires a Quick Contest of Electronics Operation/TL8 (Security Systems) against the bug’s TL. \$500, 1 lb.

Chemical Microsensor: A chemical sensor the size of a thick credit card, able to identify even trace amounts of any *known* airborne (aerosol or gas) chemical agents – including many types of drugs and chemical explosives – without operator intervention beyond removing it from its protective sleeve. Microsensors issued by Homeline monitor for dangerous chemical weapons and toxic industrial gases. \$100, 0.2 lb.

Homing Beacon: This small tracer (-11 to spot) can be set to activate when it receives a coded signal, or broadcast continuously. Provides a signal for one hour that can be picked up by radio emissions scanners up to 10 miles away. \$40, neg. weight.

MiniHUD: This heads-up display

projects full-color images directly onto the retina using lasers. The emitter clips to the frame of any glasses or goggles. Provides the user +1 to Piloting, Driving, and other skills that benefit from fast, hands-free display of information. \$50, neg. weight.

MicroNav: An atomic clock and inertial navigation system the size of a small watch. It is built to operate even in the absence of global positioning signals. Provides the benefit of Absolute Timing and +2 to Navigation. \$100, neg. weight.

Parachronic Detector: These devices can detect incoming jumps within their range, as per p. B532. Only barely man-portable, a detector requires a separate generator for power. They have a base range of 1,000 yards. Every doubling of range beyond that is at a cumulative -2 to skill. \$560,000, 56 lbs., 560W.

Parachronic Scanner: A “personal chronoscan” has a base range of 100 yards. \$56,000, 6 lbs., 4C/56W (2 hours).

Quantum Analyzer: This device can compare the local reality to its database and see if there is a match (used to verify a correct jump). Requires one day of readings to be collected and a successful Electronics Operation/TL8^ (Sensors) roll. This unit also detects major disturbances in quantum flow (reality quakes, banestorms, unshielded nexus portals) within 1,000 yards on a roll at -5 to skill. \$200,000, 25 lbs., 5D/25W (50 hours).

Sidereal Chronolog: Instrumentation package that can determine the exact local time and date relative to Homeline based on specific astronomical data. The package contains a central processor and database, plus three 8-inch optical telescopes for clear nights, and 40 square yards of radio-sensitive array fabric (in sections) for cloudy ones. The scopes (or the fabric sections) can be laid out in any position in line of sight with each other; only one scope or section needs to have line of sight with the CPU. Patrolmen usually spread the fabric on rooftops, or better yet hillsides, in five or six sections. Either unit requires at least one hour of observation. \$15,000; each scope weighs 25 lbs., the fabric weighs 80 lbs., and the CPU weighs 1 lb.



Tools and Supplies

Although every mission is different, the Patrol has standardized some equipment that can be easily disguised or is simply too handy to be without.

All-Purpose Treatment: A broad-spectrum series of drugs powerful enough to take on the toughest diseases in any of the hell parallels. However, the last thing that Infinity wants is even *more* drug-resistant super-diseases rampaging through its personnel and multiple timelines, so medical staff attempt to track the long-term consequences of their use. The user gains Resistant to Disease 3 for a week. Each pill is \$750.

Bandage Spray: A liquid spray-on, breathable, analgesic and antiseptic bandage. This reduces the time required for bandaging (p. B424) to 10 seconds. \$15, 0.1 lb.

Biomonitor: Placed near the heart, this sensor can monitor vital medical parameters such as cardiopulmonary functions, blood-oxygen and nitrogen levels, body temperature, and respiration rates. Can transmit medical information over the agent's hideout radio, allowing remote Diagnosis rolls without a penalty. \$100, neg. weight.

Climbing Gear: Three dozen "smart" memory-metal pitons and a tough biphasic web harness that keeps the wearer upright in the case of a fall. +1 to Climbing skill if used with rope. \$350, 5 lbs.

Cracker Tools: Specialized tool kits to aid in criminal enterprise. Sets are

available for Counterfeiting, Forgery, Lockpicking, and Traps. \$4,000, 10 lbs.

Crash Kit: A complete kit for treating serious injuries with TL9 medicine. +2 to First Aid skill and counts as improvised gear (-5) for Surgery. \$100, 10 lbs.

Crediline: A psychoactive drug used for interrogations and other nefarious purposes. The victim must roll HT-3 or suffer Gullibility (9) for (25 - HT) minutes. \$240 per dose. LC2 on Homeline, restricted to psychiatric professionals.

Cufftape: Looks like duct tape, but actually constructed of a memory polymer that tightens if the prisoner struggles. To break free, the prisoner must win a Quick Contest of ST against the cufftape's ST 20, or make an Escape roll at -6. The first attempt takes one minute; further attempts require 10 minutes' struggle. Failure causes 1 point of crushing damage to each restrained limb. Cufftape has DR 1; 6 points of cutting or fire damage severs it. A 2' strip is sufficient to restrain arms or legs. \$10, 0.5 lb. per 100' spool.

Diving Gear: Closed-circuit breathing system, diving jacket and programmable swim fins. Oxygen is recycled and mixed with inert gases, allowing three hours of diving independent of depth (decompression is still required). The jacket can provide 50 lbs. of flotation if the emergency inflation system is used, and the fins give the user +2 to Swimming Move. \$450, 13 lbs.

Eraser: When outtimers see visitors appear or disappear, or witness some use of Homeline technology, the preferred solution is to make them forget. "Eraser" is a sedative and amnesic drug used by both Infinity and Centrum. A recipient who fails a HT-3 roll falls unconscious. On awakening, his short-term memories – everything in the last 5d+45 minutes – will be gone. Eraser comes in pill, injection, and gas form. It appears to have no untoward side effects, even in massive overdoses. Eraser is not for sale on Homeline or Centrum; it is LC2 on both worlds.

Meal-in-a-Box: These ration packs come in dozens of variations, with randomly selected main courses, side dishes, and desserts. The meal packages are sealed and have an integral heater or cooler as appropriate. Popular barter item on primitive worlds. \$5, 1 lb.

Nanofiber Rope: A long ribbon or chain of nanotubes, coated with a protective polymer sheath. A 3/4" diameter rope supports 2 tons. \$30, 2 lbs. per 10 yards.

Pneumospray Hypo: Hand-held pneumatic-hypodermic instrument, about the size of a penlight. The hypo must be touching the patient to inject its drug. It can penetrate DR 1 or normal clothing. A pneumocharge cartridge holds one dose of a drug. \$20, 0.06 lbs.

Portable Laboratory: Basic field kits and expert systems for most TL8 science skills. Sets are available for Biology, Chemistry, Diagnosis, Forensics, Geology, Metallurgy, Meteorology, and Pharmacy. \$8,000, 10 lbs.

Portacam: Many agents smuggle personal video systems into their mission gear. A Homeline pocketcam fits in the palm of the hand, with a 50x digital zoom and a low-light mode that cancels up to four points of darkness penalties. Includes a programmable effects processor for quick on-the-spot editing (treat as *inadequate tools* for complicated video production), preview screen, and microphone with human-level discrimination. Records on digital media similar to storage chips (p. 24). \$100, 0.25 lbs, C/10W (2.5 hours).

Quick Shelter: A pre-fabricated shelter system that can be “snapped together” by four people in about six hours. Includes conduits for data cables and air conditioning;; simple instructions are printed right on the components. A set with enough components to build a 30-person shelter; complete with air conditioning and heating, is \$2,000 and 2 tons.

Sobriety Pill: This drug reduces the intoxicating effects of alcohol without nullifying its more pleasant sensations. The user gains +2 to all HT rolls related to drinking for (25 - HT)/4 hours. Each pill is \$10.

Surgical Instruments: Basic equipment for TL9 surgery when attempting to perform standard tasks: stabilizing mortal wounds (p. B423) or repairing lasting crippling injuries (p. B420). \$1,250, 15 lbs., 4C/40W (2 hours).

Spy Gear

The Logistics Division keeps a large number of surveillance and counter-surveillance devices on hand, ranging from magical amulets to nanomorphic body stockings. However, Patrolmen usually make do with conventional equipment, as exotic devices rely on magical, psychotronic, or superscientific principles that do not always hold true across the worlds.

Buzzbot: A small (-5 to spot) unmanned helicopter the size of a seagull. It has two shrouded counter-rotating rotors powered by a hydro-carbon-burning turbine, a cluster of simple sensors, and one manipulator arm (ST 3). It has a Complexity 5 onboard computer and thermographic sensors with 4x zoom. Communicates using a laser (50-mile

range) or radio communicator (10-mile range). Can fly at Move 10 for four hours on a few ounces of fuel. \$600, 2 lbs.

Chameleon Suit: This is a bulky full-body suit (can be worn over form-fitting armor) that uses dynamic smart materials and electrochromic metals to adjust its coloration and spectral emissions to match the surrounding environment. A chameleon systems adds +4 to Stealth skill when perfectly still, or +2 if moving. Effective against normal vision, Infravision, and Ultravision (and by extension, Hyperspectral Vision). \$12,800, 9 lbs., 2C/8W (6 hours).

Disguise Kit: An elaborate set of prosthetic devices, skin tinting chemicals, and hormone sprays for one person. Many components incorporate microelectromechanical systems that can mimic muscle twitches, realistic limps, and other key characteristics. Good quality equipment for the Disguise skill (+1 to skill). \$200, 10 lbs.

Nanobug: A tiny (-18 to spot) recording device with human-level hearing and vision. It can record what it sees and hears (up to 40 minutes worth of video) or transmit recorded data using short “burst” transmissions up to a mile away using tiny radio communicator (transmits about a minute of recorded video every second). The bug can run constantly, be activated remotely, listen for a specific voice before recording, scan at specific times of day, or begin recording when it detects light or motion nearby. Patrol nanobugs erase themselves and self-destruct either after 48 hours (if they do not receive periodic “keep alive” signals) or when their batteries fail (about 10 hours of recording and transmission). \$100, neg. weight.

Nanocleanser: Not widely available

in Homeline, these TL10 bioengineered bacteria remove dirt, grime, and organic waste products. Useful as a shampoo or detergent, the Patrol uses it to clean up biological forensic evidence such as bloodstains or skin flakes. Areas treated with nanocleanser impose a -3 skill penalty on any Criminology or Forensic attempts to locate or analyze such evidence. A spray bottle can treat up to 100 square feet. \$100, 1 lb.

Psi Shield: A network of charged platinum-iridium wires covering the scalp that “jams” mind-affecting psionics. Add +3 to the wearer’s IQ or Will when resisting an effect with the Telepathy modifier (p. B257), or to avoid detection through psionic means. It also *penalizes* any Telepathic abilities by the wearer, including Mind Shield, by -3. The shield electronics automatically warn the defender (through a beeper or HUD) when a telepath *fails* to penetrate the shields, but provides no warning if he succeeds. If built into a helmet or other headgear, any damage that penetrates DR breaks the psi circuit and deactivates the shield. \$3,000, 0.3 lb., 3W.

Armor

Patrolmen generally equip themselves with whatever they can con their respective logistics specialists into giving them, plus gear they buy on the civilian market. Generally, the GM should allow them to carry anything that would not blow The Secret right out of the water or get them shot on sight.

Armor and Uniforms

Agents rarely have the advantage of wearing the best armor available at their TL.

Armor Table

TL	Armor	Location	DR	Cost	Weight	LC	Notes
9	Armor Cuirass	torso, groin	50	\$1,200	20 lbs.	2	
9	Armored Uniform	arms, torso, groin, legs	3	\$240	1.6 lbs.	2	[1, 2]
9	Assault Boots	feet	12/6	\$53	0.89 lbs.	4	[1]
9	Ballistic Vest	torso, groin	20*	\$630	4.2 lbs.	4	[2]
9	Combat Helmet	skull, neck	20	\$120	4 lbs.	1	
	+ Visor	eyes, face	5	+\$72	+0.24 lbs.	4	
9	Mesh Cloth	full suit	4*	\$375	2.5 lbs.	4	[1, 2]

Notes

[1] Concealable *as* or *under* clothing.

[2] It has a split DR: it gets full DR vs. *piercing* and *cutting* attacks, but one-third DR (round up) against other damage types.

Armor Cuirass: A heavy set of torso armor worn in high-threat environments.

Assault Boots: Armored boots worn by soldiers.

Ballistic Vest: Lighter “bulletproof” vest that can sometimes be disguised as a bulky jacket.

Combat Helmet: High-threat headgear. Includes attachments for a pull-down faceplate or optics and integral bone mike (vibrates the skull to transmit sound).

Mesh Cloth: Layers of ballistic cloth woven into normal clothes.

PROJECTORS

A parachronic projector (p. B530) requires approximately 50 cubic yards of equipment to project one ton across the quanta. The equipment costs \$50 million per ton of capacity (although Infinity almost certainly pads those costs), and weighs approximately one ton per ton of capacity. The largest modern projectors can move up to 300 tons at once, and occupy most of a city block. An “average” projector requires enough hardware to fill a small auditorium, and can move two tons. Energy comes from the public grid, but is no more than a modern industrial plant requires; parachronic shipments are quite cost-effective, assuming they’re even reasonably lucrative.

Experimental Projectors

Paralabs is always working to improve, or better yet revolutionize, parachronic technology. Infinity understands all too well that parachronics is Homeline’s only real advantage over the other parallels. When *The Secret* gets out (as it seems that it inevitably must), Infinity wants to be well ahead of the pack. So far, none of these methods has worked well enough to go into production; some of them, although disastrous in themselves, do open up avenues for further research.

Long-Distance Projectors: Infinity suspects (correctly) that Centrum projectors can recall a conveyor at range (p. 52). Paralabs believes that by modifying the circuit geometry of Infinity projectors, they can both recall and transmit conveyors at line-of-sight distance (10 miles or so).

Standard Issue

Although every mission is different, the following gear can be considered “standard issue” for Penetration Service agents:

- Leather pack and boots
- Neutral-color dark cloak and cap
- Leather waterskin (with microfiltration and decontamination in inner surface)
- Firebox (flint and steel, supplemented with safety matches)
- Palmlight
- 20 yards of manila rope with braided aramid cable inside (supports 1 ton)
- Steel knife or survival tool
- Compass
- Silver ingots, 1 oz.
- TL9 first aid kit in TL4 disguise
- Hideout radio
- Palmtop with digital camera setting
- Mini-binoculars with night vision setting
- Nanobugs (keyed to hideout radio and palmtop screen)
- 10mm pistol and spare magazine
- 30 ampoules of Eraser and a spray hypo injector

The following items are standard Intervention Service gear, although the more obvious equipment (rifles and helmets) usually has to be left in the conveyor for emergencies:

- Suitable clothing and weapons for the worldline, including gloves, lined with ballistic cloth if possible
- Helmet with night vision and zoom optics, disguised as local helmet if possible
- Flashlight
- Climbing gear and 50 yards of rope
- Survival tool
- TL9 first aid kit in local disguise
- Hideout radio
- M-23 rifle and several spare magazines (grenade launcher if mission profile allows)
- 2-4 grenades (gas, smoke, flash-bang, etc.)
- Cufftape
- 30 ampoules of Eraser and a spray hypo injector

Services and divisions swap equipment all the time, to the despair of Logistics. The GM should allow Patrol characters to carry anything reasonable without endangering *The Secret* unduly. All Homeline high-tech equipment contains self-destruct thermite charges.

These improvements may be as little as a year from implementation, and certain design options may solve the problem sooner than that.

Wide-Field Projectors: By adjusting the geometry of the circuits as above, Paralabs also believes that it can drop conveyors across a wide field rather than lining them up at a point. This primarily has military applications, and has a lower priority at Paralabs,

although rumors persist of U.S. Defense Department experiments on the same technology at Sandia Labs.

The “Snatcher”: This very radical reworking of projector technology would be designed to detect and capture any parachronic emitter entering the quantum. With potentially revolutionary security implications, Infinity is accelerating research on this project.

Open-Circuit Projectors: Rather than create the jump field around a conveyor (a closed-circuit device), it should theoretically be possible to create an “open-circuit jump field” that simply rotates everything in the field across a hypercube into another worldline. This technology would require massive power (to make up for the absence of a conveyor power plant) and computer control (to modulate the energies to avoid frying the passengers). Although no recall mechanism had yet been designed, Project Hypercube was promising enough that Paralabs attempted a manned trial translation between the Kerguelen Islands of Homeline and Hideaway about six months ago. It went very badly wrong (see *In the Cube*, p. 29), but opened up two other promising research leads, the paraviewer and the artificial nexus portal.

Paraviewer: This device would allow observation of other timelines; it is essentially a projector that transmits or receives nothing but light. The first prototype could transmit only a single burst – a photograph. Later ones sent many bursts a second, allowing continuous (albeit silent) viewing. The operator can adjust the angle of view and move the point of view moved by a mile or so. Viewer connections are fickle and unreliable. Any given viewer link breaks for 1d hours at irregular intervals – but some links are better; and some are worse. Links between worlds in the same quantum are out an average of 9% of the time (when it’s important, roll 3d; on a 6 or less, the link is out). Those between adjacent quanta are out 26% of the time (i.e., on an 8 or less). Those between worlds two quanta apart are out 62% of the time – on an 11 or less! Current paraviewer prototypes cannot see across more than two quanta. Banestorms, reality quakes, and other disruptions can “feed back” into the viewer itself, slagging the components and starting fires on Homeline. Paraviewers are *not* standard issue, and Infinity only sporadically uses them for scouting new worlds.

Artificial Nexus Portals: This technology remains very dubious, but in theory it should be possible to open a stable “quantum tunnel” between worlds – an artificial nexus portal, or world-gate. (Reich-5 science has developed such a thing! See p. 66.)

The unpleasant part of the math indicates that unlike a true projector, any worldline with sufficiently advanced parachronic technology (TL9⁺) would theoretically be able to build such a portal.

CONVEYORS

Parachronic Field Generator

A conveyor’s generator may have *subquantum*, *quantum*, or *two-quantum* range. No one has yet developed a conveyor with greater range.

The generator also has a *mass capacity*: the maximum mass it can transport. The mass of the conveyor (including the generator) and its payload cannot safely exceed this limit.

The capabilities of the generator largely determine the cost of the conveyor, which is usually very high. This isn’t all for the circuitry – much of the cost is licensing fees!

Subquantum Conveyors: These can jump between destinations at the same quantum level. Base cost is \$10 million. Each ton of capacity adds \$10 million and 10 lbs. LC2.

Quantum Conveyors: These can jump between destinations at the same quantum level. With the help of a projector, they can jump to or from adjacent quantum levels as well. Base cost is \$20 million. Each ton of capacity adds \$150 million and 10 lbs. LC1.

Two-Quantum Conveyors: These work like quantum conveyors, but can jump up to two quantum levels with the aid of a projector. Two-quantum jumps are always tricky! Base cost is \$30 million. Each ton of capacity adds \$300 million and 30 lbs. LC0.

Power System

A jump requires 200 kJ of energy per ton of capacity – delivered in a single pulse. A typical pulsed power system for the field generator costs \$50 and weighs 5 lbs. per kJ.

Control System

A conveyor may have one of two types of control system:

Fixed: The conveyor can only jump between two specific realities, whose coordinates are hardwired.

The operator cannot change these settings. This type of conveyor is typical of those available to most corporations, private users, etc. who have proper licenses. LC2.

Programmable: The conveyor can jump to any reality within its range. To accomplish this, the operator must enter the coordinates into its guidance system manually. These units are much more tightly controlled. LC0.

Jury-Rigged Recharge

Normally, a fuel cell charges the pulsed power system in the conveyor. This fuel cell replenishes the energy banks in the system in about 30 minutes – unless something goes wrong. Without a working fuel cell, a traveler must draw power from local energy sources. The contacts on the power system are remarkably robust, and all Patrol conveyors carry a backup electric motor that can (with an Electrician roll at the lower of TL8 or the power source TL) be hooked up to almost any source of mechanical energy. An Engineer roll at the proper TL (and with the proper specialization) may be necessary to design and construct the machinery and the power transmission system (pulleys, turbines, pistons, etc.) to hook it up to the electric motor. At TL6 or higher, of course, electrical power plants exist already – hooking the motor up becomes a straight Electrician roll at either TL.

For each ton of conveyor mass, the bank needs 200 kW of energy. The motor (a mature TL8 model) operates at 90% efficiency under most circumstances, but the power transmission system varies widely. As a rule of thumb, assume an efficiency equal to TL×5%: a TL1 rope pulley system would have 5%, a TL2 screw would have 10%, and so forth. Between the motor and the transmission, then, for each 100 kW generated by a TL2 watermill, 9 kW (10% of 90% of 100 kW) contributes to the charge, the rest being waste heat or friction. (At the GM’s discretion, a critical success on the Engineer roll can increase efficiency to TL×10%.)

Typical power outputs for various pre-electrical power sources (including some atypical ones) are as follows, along with the time needed to recharge the energy banks of a 5-ton conveyor (1,000 kW, or .28 kWh):

Treadmill (TL1): Treader's ST×20 W; a ST 10 treader will take 61.7 hours. A ST 27 ox will take 10.2 hours. Horses can turn treadmills efficiently at TL3 with the invention of the horse-collar;

at TL3 efficiencies, a ST 25 horse-powered treadmill takes 4.1 hours. The 50 oarsmen of a TL2 penteconter (p. B464) produce 6,000 W at a sprint; a traveler lucky enough to have 50

trained oarsmen (and a Rube Goldberg machine capable of translating angular oar momentum into torque for the motor) could recharge his energy bank in a little under an hour!

In the Cube

This campaign frame is a quintessential "lost in infinity" game. The PCs are the unfortunate lab assistants ("the Wanderers") flung hither and yon through the worlds by Project Hypercube (p. 28). The Infinity Base Team can see the Wanderers and their immediate surroundings, and communicate with them (players might even have "backup" Team PCs), giving advice, research information, and even useful items. But the Team can only shift the Wanderers at random, hoping against hope to bring them all home alive.

All these functions require a "fix" on the Wanderers. Every time a transfer takes place, the fix is lost and must be reestablished. This requires a Electronics Operation (Parachronic)/TL9⁺ roll by the Team. If the roll succeeds, subtract the margin of success from 12; the result is the number of hours required to make contact (minimum one hour). If the roll fails, another may be made in 12 hours. A critical failure requires an immediate Electronics Repair (Parachronic)/TL9⁺ roll to avoid a burnout (see below).

Once the fix is established, the Team can see the Wanderers as through a window. They may rotate the view, but not leave the characters; essentially, they cannot see anything the Wanderers cannot see. They also have two-way voice communications, and can hear anything the Wanderers can hear. Due to a quirk of quantum flow, the Team's messages come through very softly: under normal circumstances only the Wanderers can hear them. This of course requires that the Wanderers talk to the air when they need information, which could be embarrassing if overheard; they can also write notes, which the Team can read.

If the Wanderers split up, the portal view follows any of them the Team wishes; to switch from one subgroup to another requires another Electronics Operation roll. A failure requires 1d×10 minutes before another attempt; critical failure requires an Electronics Repair roll to avoid burnout. The Hypercube has three power levels, set by the Team:

Level I: Fix and communications. Normal setting, can be maintained indefinitely.

Level II: Preparation to transfer. It requires six hours to build up from Level I to II; Level II can be maintained only for 2d×5 minutes before dropping back to Level I. Faster power buildup, or extending the maintenance time, require Engineer (Parachronic)/TL9⁺ rolls.

Level III: Transfer. To go from Level II to III, transferring the Wanderers to another timeline, takes

only 1d minutes (which could be a long time in the middle of a battle) and a successful Electronics Operation roll. It takes a critical success, or a kindly GM, to bring the Wanderers home. At Level III, the Team can send up to 200 lbs. of matter to the Wanderers (shoving it through the Cube with a long stick) instead of trying to jump them, with a successful Electronics Operation roll. Failure means the package is lost; critical failure causes burnout and possibly drags more people into the past (though at least the package goes too).

After each successful transfer, contact is lost for 1d+1 hours.

The power system is not stable. Critical failures may cause a burnout, dropping power to zero. This breaks communication and loses the temporal fix. There is also a chance, known only to the GM, that a burnout will duplicate the original accident, yanking more members of the Team into the quanta to join the Wanderers!

Restoring power to Level I after a burnout takes 12 hours, plus or minus the result of an Electrical Repair roll. Then the Team must reestablish a fix in the usual fashion.

The other thing the Team does is look up useful information for the Wanderers, as Mission Control (p. 210).

Campaign Parameters

Scale: By default, prosaic "survival scale." Individual adventures may have any stakes.

Scope: Varies by adventure or campaign; a *Quantum Leap*-style game might deal with small groups, while a *Time Tunnel*-style game might see major crises develop around the PCs.

Boundaries: Anywhere and anywhen. Keeping the boundaries broad makes up for the narrow scope and prosaic scale.

Paraphysics: Either parallel-worlds or time travel with no paradoxes. Two-way voice communication, one-way visual communication; Linearity Principle (p. 156) applies.

Characters: 100-point (or lower) lab assistants, free to interfere but traveling uncontrollably; no magic or psi; TL variable.

Genre: Varies by adventure or campaign. Cinematic, Hollywood history, and investigative (in a *Quantum Leap*-type game) modes probably fit best.

See Chapter 7 for parameter explanations.

Water wheel (TL2): A simple Roman vertical wheel produces 1,800 W; recharge would take 1.7 hours. The cascade of 16 Roman watermills at Barbegal in Gaul produced 30 kW; recharge would take 6.2 minutes. The most powerful watermill complex ever built, at Greenock, Scotland in 1841 (TL5), produced 1,500 kW; assuming 25% efficiency for TL5 turbines, it could recharge the energy bank in about three seconds!

Windmill (TL3): A small Persian windmill produces 30 W; it could recharge the energy bank in 68.6 hours. A TL4 German post windmill produces 6,500 W and recharges the bank in 14.2 minutes; a large TL5 Dutch windmill produces 12 kW, which would recharge the bank in 6.2 minutes.

Steam Engines (TL5): The very first steam engines, in the 1690s, produced 750 W at less than 1% efficiency. Newcomen's engine in 1712 produced 3.75 kW, but still wasted 99.3% of that energy. Watt's improvements beginning in the 1760s averaged 20 kW at 4% efficiency; such a steam engine would recharge the bank in about 23 minutes. (Watt's largest steam engine, in 1800, produced 100 kW!) Once Corliss invented the regulating valve in 1849, steam efficiency could increase to the 25% of our formula; a late TL5 locomotive engine at full blast produces 850 kW, which replenishes the energy bank in 5.2 seconds!

And, of course, in an emergency, there's always the possibility of spreading out a collection antenna, tying it to a lightning rod, and waiting for a convenient thunderstorm . . .

Variant Conveyors

Drones: Although one-way drone jumps from Homeline to the field are relatively easy, getting the drone back is another matter. The AI needed to adjust quantum settings is finicky, and even for a 100-lb. drone, the parachronic generator is 10-30 lbs. and the power system fills another 50 lbs., leaving only 20-40 lbs. for the drone, its engine (if any), and its sensors. Although drones are standard "first look" recon tools (p. 17) where possible, one in six drones doesn't return at all and is forced to slag itself to avoid exposing The Secret. At

Conveyor Loadout

Although every mission is different, and conveyors have varying cargo capacities, you can count on finding the following equipment in the back of any Patrol conveyor:

- One M-23 or electrolaser rifle for each Patrolman
- One machete, broadsword, or axe for each Patrolman
- Shotgun
- One psi shield for each Patrolman
- Camping and climbing gear, including grapnel
- 1,000 yards of rope
- Binoculars with night vision enhancement
- Digital camcorder
- Handcuffs
- Disguise kit
- Laptop
- Sidereal chronolog
- Maps
- Mixed gold and silver coins from many eras littering the floor
- Horseshoes
- Crash kit
- Small searchlight
- Grenades (2-4 flash-bang or tear gas per Patrolman)
- Tent or tents (enough for crew)
- Basic toolkit including bolt-cutters and sledgehammer
- Extra trail rations and meal packs
- Jerrycans of water
- Bottle of bourbon or brandy
- Flares, thermite, and other "sudden heat" devices, including spare self-destruct tabs
- Fire extinguisher

At the GM's discretion, a Scrounging roll may turn up small or easily missed items left over from previous missions or teams.

\$400,000 and up per drone (\$1.2 million for a two-quantum jumper), even Infinity doesn't want to use too many of them!

Quantum Stealth: This technology is intended to mask a parachronic signature, allowing covert insertions to evade Centrum's scarily efficient detectors. So far, the experimental systems available penalize skill rolls to detect the conveyor by -2, cost \$500,000, and weigh 100 lbs. They also penalize the conveyor operator's skill by -2, since the "quantum hash" they kick up distorts the conveyor's path as well!

Paraconveyor: This experiment does not exist. If you have a high enough clearance in UNIC or Infinity to know that it does exist, you can read the detailed records of its total

failure. If you are the CEO of Infinity, or one of the seven Paralabs scientists who built the *Alea*, you hope those forgeries hold. The *Alea* is a conveyor that can make single-quantum hops without a projector. It can go from Homeline to a parallel in Quantum 4 and from there to a worldline in Quantum 3. Upon arriving at a world, it must remain at rest for 1d days to recalibrate itself from local quantum fields. In theory, it could cross the "quantum barrier" at Q0, but nobody wants to risk the prototype on such a journey. Based on technology "borrowed" from several other timelines, with cutting-edge AI and parachronic detector systems, its design is entirely revolutionary. Hopefully nobody else is even close.

THE UNITED NATIONS INTERWORLD COUNCIL

If you ask Infinity, it's a private company chartered by the U.N. Security Council, with "understandable, and welcome, levels of international government oversight." If you ask the U.N. Secretariat, Infinity Unlimited is "a valued U.N. office in the important work of peace and development." Where those two world views meet is the United Nations Interworld Council, a special body made up of five Special Representatives of the five permanent U.N. Security Council members: China, France, Great Britain, Russia, and the United States. The chairmanship of the Council rotates among the five Councilors, but the real power lies with the two Permanent Ministers of UNIC: the Commerce Minister and the Crisis Minister. Each is elected by the Councilors for a staggered seven-year term. Usually, the United States and the United Kingdom vote together, as do China and France, with Russia as the swing vote. This most often results in a Commerce Minister from an English-speaking country or strong U.S. ally, and a Crisis Minister from an Asian or African country suspicious of the United States.

INFINITY DEVELOPMENT

The Commerce Minister oversees Infinity Development (ID), which establishes economic and commercial guidelines for trade, mining, colonization, or other Homeline activity on other Earths. When the Patrol opens a new timeline for commercial exploitation, interested parties must submit bids for territories (or the whole world) to ID. Cash is just one consideration; bidders must also show how they will protect the local environment and population, keep security, and so forth. Outtime installations are always subject to inspection by ID bureaucrats, I-Cops, or both. Officially under UNIC direction, Infinity Development is almost entirely Infinity-staffed; to begin with, they

have almost all the qualified or experienced personnel for the job. Infinity Unlimited also has formal representation on the ID board. This actually gives the Commerce Minister some plausible deniability when ID rejects a particularly grandiose plan (or obvious looting scheme) proposed by a U.N. member nation or other group. It means more work for Infinity Public Relations, but that's why they draw the big bonus.

For Infinity Development to approve a plan, the applicant needs to submit environmental, cultural, and population impact statements, security waivers and regulations, threat assessments, and business plans. To submit a full plan package with all required legal material, computer profiles and models, and projections can cost millions of dollars. Since bribing the Commerce Ministry also costs millions of dollars, most applicants go the legal route.

ALTERNATE OUTCOMES, INC.

For those special occasions where whole worlds need to be changed to fit UNIC plans, the Council keeps its options open in the foggiest possible double-blind deniability. Alternate Outcomes, Incorporated is a mercenary outfit based in Massawa, Eritrea, with offices in New York, Budapest, Singapore, and Panama City. Although it takes a few of the dwindling available Homeline jobs – election security in Zimbabwe, rooting out diehard Khmer Rouge from the Cambodian border – it keeps its market niche by being the only mercenary company licensed by Infinity for outtime operations. In actuality, Alternate Outcomes is a secret unit responsible only to the UNIC Crisis Minister, tasked to interfere covertly – or, sometimes, overtly – in wars on other worlds.



Crosstime Colonies

In legal theory, Infinity Unlimited holds all parallel worlds “in trust for the human race.” This high-minded language means that when Infinity Development declares a world open to Homeline settlement, UNIC determines who settles there, and under what charter. Major crossworld colonies (all on Quantum 5 Earths) include:

Communauté: This experimental colony, sponsored by the French government, proclaims itself a truly communist society, and has dedicated itself to using the utmost in technical progress to create a classless utopia. Its 40,000 people are currently divided into two mutually hostile camps on either side of the Loire River.

Bhuvarlok: Occupying the southeastern third of the Asian continent, Bhuvarlok is officially a territorial province of the Republic of India on Homeline. The Indian government encourages emigration to Bhuvarlok with cash bonuses; its population is in the hundreds of thousands and growing rapidly.

Lysander: A libertarian utopia sponsored by a few eccentric American and British billionaires and chartered by both governments jointly, its population is roughly 45,000 (although it loudly refuses to conduct a census) scattered along the California coastline. A slow trickle of writers, artists, and designers moves there each year for the tax advantages, gradually eroding Lysander’s ideological purity.

New Colorado: This entire Earth is open to settlement by American citizens. It is theoretically administered from the territorial capital in Denver, but its 150,000 residents (who can vote in the elections of their home state by absentee ballot) generally ignore the local government or move farther away. New Colorado is the Earth most thoroughly exploited by mining companies, and many of its settlements have quite a Wild West boomtown feeling.

Sanctuary: The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees administers this Earth, using it to house

intractable refugee populations unwanted by, or unable to return to, their homelands. Established as a stopgap measure in 1999, its population has grown to over four million in the last 30 years. Rumors of corruption, mistreatment, and senseless squalor occasionally filter back to Homeline, but nobody ever seems interested enough to intervene.

Tebuguo: What Sanctuary accomplishes by neglect, this parallel accomplishes by policy. China has chartered two entire Earths for “surplus populations.” One of them, Dai Zhongguo, is a thriving colony with a population just over two million. Tebuguo, however, is an exile parallel, to which the Chinese government is forcibly moving its entire Tibetan population, as well as a number of dissidents and other minorities. Although the Chinese government restricts all access to Tebuguo, rumors leak out that it has offered other dictatorships “dumping rights” there for their own troublesome minorities.

Tecumseh: Located on the same Earth as Bhuvarlok, Tecumseh is sponsored by the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, and occupies the North American continent on that world. Only U.S. and Canadian citizens of provable American Indian descent may travel to Tecumseh, but they may do so absolutely free of charge. So far, only a few thousand people have settled there permanently, though tourism to “the Big Rez” is quite popular.

Uhuru: Established as a Black Nationalist colony by African-American radicals, and initially sponsored by the U.S. government, Uhuru allows anyone of “Black African” descent, who can afford the conveyor trip, to settle there. Uhuru has two main population centers, 25,000 in Ghana and 90,000 along the northern coast of the Gulf of Mexico. Uhuru’s Council of Chiefs declared the colony independent of the United States in a vote in 2016; Congress ratified the decision and abjured formal American sponsorship of the timeline. Uhuru is a member state of the U.N., and the only one entirely based on an alternate Earth.

The Battalion

Its troopers never refer to themselves as “Alternate Outcomes” – that’s marketing talk for civilians. They’re “the Battalion,” no other identifier necessary. Colonel Singh commands 479 men and women (according to the T.O.), organized in nine regular companies, each led by a captain. Under each captain are four platoons, each led by a master sergeant. (There are no lieutenants in the Battalion, which most enlisted men agree is the single best thing about the outfit.) Two

squads make up each platoon. A squad nominally has six men – four privates, a corporal and a sergeant. This is flexible; some squads, at least temporarily, have as many as nine men, or as few as four or five. Generally each squad has one attached specialist such as a sniper, an engineer or heavy weapons expert, or a scout. Many troopers are TL8 Homeliners, but a surprising number are recruited from battlefields across the alternate Earths, with skills ranging from Cro-Magnon axe-throwing to

orbital parachuting. Only Colonel Singh, and probably Lieutenant Colonel Stafford, his executive officer, know how many have magical or psionic talents as well as their more obvious martial skills.

Missions and Rules of Engagement

Missions can range from a single squad to the whole Battalion, dispatched in one of the Alternative Outcomes conveyors. (Through UNIC machinations, these trips never show

up in conveyor use reports to Infinity.) The conveyors are fully modular, and can be inserted into any number of “skins” from a sod hut to a C-135 cargo plane, depending on the mission requirements. However, the unit seldom has anything in the way of air cover or vehicle support, unless they steal it themselves at the destination – the risk of getting a conveyor blown out of the sky or hulled by a land mine is too great.

The Colonel selects the teams. Some missions are harder than others, of course, and green troops get easy assignments – or careful supervision – until the Colonel is sure of them. Some troopers retain loyalty, or at least a feeling of fondness, for their old nation or old unit. Any soldier in the outfit can turn down a mission assignment that he’s not comfortable with. The Colonel only rarely orders a trooper to go against a parallel of his original nation, at least within a century of his own time. Usually, when this happens, it’s a relatively nonviolent mission, such as a theft or a prison break.

Briefings are as full and complete as the Colonel can make them – UNIC makes sure he has access to regular military intelligence on the worldlines from the Patrol and any other recent visitors. Of course, the fog of war is even foggier on parallel Earths. Briefings also provide the rules of engagement for an operation, which vary widely depending on UNIC’s competing needs for certainty, speed, subtlety, or power. Some typical sets of rules might be:

(a) Wear uniforms appropriate to the timeline; use weapons of the timeline; do nothing to reveal yourself as intruders, and remove anyone who witnesses an anachronistic act. (Using anachronistic tactics is a gray area in such cases, but the Colonel usually doesn’t enforce historically accurate idiocy on troopers impersonating, say, French knights at Agincourt.)

(b) Wear whatever you want, carry any weapon or other device up to TL9 black technology, and don’t worry about witnesses. This always makes the veterans nervous, because it means the job is so urgent and dangerous that everything has to be sacrificed to overwhelming success.

There are no lieutenants in the Battalion, which most enlisted men agree is the single best thing about the outfit.

(c) Use period equipment, plus sonic stunners disguised as ordinary period weapons, and don’t kill anybody – but stun anyone who witnesses your arrival or otherwise detects an anachronism, and inject them with a 24-hour knockout drug and Eraser (p. 25).

Leave No Man Behind

When the mission is finished, it’s not finished. The unit makes rendezvous at their stashed conveyor – emphasis on “the unit.” No survivor is ever left behind on an alternate world unless urgent military necessity demands it. This can mean prisoner rescues, battlefield searches, and long stretcher hauls. (It can also mean ethical decisions about shooting badly wounded comrades, but that’s a matter for the GM and players to work out among themselves.) If troops are genuinely MIA (missing in action), it’s up to the ranking officer to decide when to give up and call for a pickup. Leaving MIA behind is not good for your chances of promotion, or for your reputation among your fellow troops. The Colonel’s very next mission is always “Go back there and get our guys,” and the unfortunate officer had better come back with them or die trying. Dead soldiers may be abandoned and security maintained with a thermite grenade or genetic liquefier, but the troopers frown on it.

As a general rule, the Battalion doesn’t take prisoners, unless that’s a specific mission objective. When masquerading as local troops, of course, they follow local policy. That can be pretty brutal if they’re impersonating the Comanche, but it comes with the territory. Troopers are also expected not to be taken prisoner, because that means they miss pickup. A trooper taken by the enemy is expected to

escape by any means possible – including giving his parole and breaking it – in order to make pickup. Mission plans always include emergency rendezvous points.

Objectives

Mission briefings emphasize specific objectives. Sometimes the instructions are very specific indeed: “Kidnap Nobunaga and bring him back for pickup here by 0800 local time,” or “Enter the Wehrmacht headquarters between 1900 and 2300 Wednesday, recover all the contents of the safe, and make pickup ASAP,” or even “Proceed immediately to coordinate Theta and join the Brazilian troops rendezvousing there; when you see two green flares, use your laser weapons to kill everyone not in the Battalion, and bug out when you’re done.” This last job doesn’t make an especially challenging adventure, but there are missions like that. There are a lot more that seem like turkey shoots until something goes wrong, which it always does.

Very often the goal is simply “make sure that side X wins this battle,” with the team given considerable freedom of action in making that happen. The best way to tip the scales might be a quick skirmish at a key point, or the assassination of a commander (or a messenger), or a precisely timed raid on a strongpoint. Note that the players don’t have to be military geniuses to enjoy this. The GM should require them to make the best plan they can, complete with maps and contingency plans. But the leader’s Strategy or Tactics roll, made by the GM, determines how good the leader’s plan really is. The GM then adjusts the roll from -3 to +3 based on the excellence of the players’ plan.

Limitations

The Battalion often uses advanced equipment – far more advanced than that of its foes – and they often know exactly who and what they are facing. This doesn't mean that their adventures are simple turkey shoots, where PCs with automatic weapons mow down Roman legionaries just for the heck of it. There are several other points to keep the squad thinking in the field:



Numbers: No matter how many shots you can fire compared to your enemy, he still only has to hit once to bring you down. Even in a “small” battle, the local forces vastly outnumber the troopers. While the burst from an M-60 would indeed startle Renaissance troops, and perhaps even put the fear of magic into them, a determined or panicky charge could still bring the gunner down. A brief jam, or a fumble while changing magazines, could be fatal. Should a PC forget that the local “primitives” outnumber him by potentially millions to one, the GM should deliver a painful reminder.

Allies: Sometimes it's possible to get effective assistance from the army the Battalion is supposedly helping. Sometimes the rules of engagement make that impossible. But even under the best of conditions, dealing with local allies requires a little finesse. Men in the middle of a battle tend not to be interested in crazy ideas, unless

they're desperate, and sometimes not even then. It may be necessary for troopers to conceal their weapons, their knowledge of the battle, and even their objective, until the last moment. If the rules of engagement specify “don't reveal yourselves as outsiders,”

they have to rely on persuasiveness, intimidation, good example and an occasional discreet fragging.

Pickup: And, again: The team hasn't done its job until it makes rendezvous for pickup. Sometimes that's the biggest challenge of all.

“Eternity's Rangers”

Alternate Outcomes can serve as the basis for an independent campaign frame. Rather than UNIC and Homeline, mysterious Recruiters (Aliens? Future men? Transhumans?) deploy the Battalion for their own unguessable purposes. The Battalion, “Eternity's Rangers,” is stationed at “Port Shanghai,” a wooded stretch of what might be Sicily in what might be the year 3800 A.D., if the night sky is anything to go by.

Port Shanghai can regrow Rangers' limbs and organs (“if you're breathing and make pickup, you won't be on sick call tomorrow”), provide instant language training (although the Recruiters are stingy with that for some reason), and send the Rangers elsewhere to fight. The Rangers enter a large empty hangar; a golden glow fills the room, and they arrive at the drop zone. When the highest-ranking surviving Ranger (but only him) bites down on his jaw implant, the golden glow comes back and brings every Ranger (and any prisoners in physical contact) back to Port Shanghai. Sometimes, the Rangers go on Leave – which is usually hard on the locals chosen, as the rules of engagement are the same as any other mission: “Make pickup.” Port Royal in 1690 is popular, as are fourth-century Rome, 1950s Las Vegas, and Renaissance Italy.

For a professional soldier, the Rangers are a dream unit. Military discipline and military honors; clear, simple orders; tough missions but not impossible ones; good troops and good officers. Travel to strange places, meet interesting people, and kill them. If you make pickup, you'll be healed to fight another day. It's Valhalla with automatic weapons.

As a result, the Rangers have high morale, and don't worry too much about their mysterious employers. They don't really fight for the Recruiters; they fight for their Regiment.

This is a frame for those who want to run commando adventures with historical (or parahistorical) backgrounds, but not worry about accuracy. The Rangers can be given any equipment the GM wishes, without fear of upsetting the balance of the past – there isn't any such balance. Or perhaps there is – whatever the Rangers do to change history is undone by other time travelers or the “blind forces of history.” The point is not to worry about it; the Rangers don't.

Campaign Parameters

Scale: Usually prosaic “foxhole” level; not knowing the true stakes adds to the frisson and intended “world-weary soldier” feel.

Scope: Individual battles and missions.

Boundaries: Anywhere and anywhen. Keeping the boundaries broad makes up for the narrow scope and prosaic scale.

Paraphysics: Either parallel-worlds or time travel with no paradoxes. Limited forward communication (recall signals) and Linearity Principle (p. 156) apply.

Characters: 200- to 250-point Rangers from any historical or alternate era under military discipline. Magic or psi are rare; standard kit is TL8+.

Genre: Technothriller war stories; other modes can vary but likely center near gritty action.

See Chapter 7 for parameter explanations.

CORPORATE STRUCTURE

In the 30 years since Van Zandt's revelation, the sheer scope of its work has ballooned Infinity's payroll into hundreds of thousands of employees, despite a firm policy of outsourcing everything possible. This rapid growth has so far not tangled the Table of Organization too badly. In most respects except size, Infinity resembles a loose, early 21st-century multinational; if anything, its corporate structure seems more transparent than those of its peers.

CEO and Board

Tadeshi Z. Carter is only the second CEO of Infinity, after Van Zandt retired a decade ago. Like most corporate executives, he is answerable to the board of directors. Infinity's board is half elected shareholder representatives – mostly American, European, and Japanese business executives and white-shoe lawyers from other banks and corporations – and half political appointees chosen by UNIC. Like the shareholder representatives, many of these appointees hold other jobs (the U.S. representatives on the board

include two U.S. senators and the president of Stanford University), and leave their day-to-day board duties to deputies and assistants. What this means, specifically, is that Infinity upper management is free to go about its day-to-day job while its theoretical overseers pad their résumés and pocketbooks and interfere only when a specific emergency or political agenda (which is to say, the GM's story line) demands it.

Upper Management

Below the CEO are the other senior officers such as the Chief Information Officer, Chief Financial Officer, and so forth. In theory, like the CEO, they serve at the pleasure of the board; in reality, they are usually picked by the CEO from within the company or from top corporations around the world. In some companies, these senior officers represent factions within the corporation that the CEO needs to placate or visibly support for internal political reasons. The strongly elitist, almost tribal, corporate culture of Infinity

tends to aim upper management's political shenanigans outward, toward their theoretical overseers on the board and at UNIC. Partisan empire-builders are rare – or get sent off to build actual empires on a parallel world for the benefit of the company! The fact that Van Zandt hand-picked Carter and many of his subordinates also helps unify senior managers around their chief.

Beneath senior management, the ranks of vice presidents fill top slots in Infinity's "conventional" departments. Accounting, sales and marketing, public relations, legal, personnel and payroll, information systems, and so forth each have their own little fiefdom in the Infinity Tower's 154 stories (Infinity headquarters occupies the tallest building in Chicago, though not the world) or in the various Infinity "corporate branch offices" in smaller skyscrapers in London, Paris, Shanghai, and St. Petersburg. These branches run like their equivalents in major corporations anywhere, although with a much bigger budget and at least some attempts made at "best practices" management.

Corporate Security

The only major difference between Infinity and a "regular" megacorp like BP or Daewoo is the much more stringent security screening and testing procedure Infinity employees undergo. Infinity is painfully aware that even a back-office drone in the accounting department can uncover a lot of secrets about (or even sabotage) outtime operations. Nobody, least of all Infinity upper management, believes that screening keeps out every government spook (not all of them from our world!), corporate spy, would-be thief, or fixated monkeywrencher. But the damage such infiltrators cause can be – *must* be – kept to a minimum by any means necessary.

Office-based campaigns centering on Infinity Unlimited can chase such spies through the warren of corporate politics and accounting double-blinds – or task a group of player characters with spoofing Infinity security and "liberating" a parachronic conveyor (or a few billion dollars) for their own ends. Infinity's Corporate Security Department is heavy-handed, but grimly efficient, in either scenario, even if the protagonists are CorpSec investigators themselves. No doubt CorpSec PCs are "dangerous mavericks who just don't play by the book." Infinity's Corporate Security Department should not be confused with its rivals, the Security Division of the Infinity Patrol (p. 13).

Cash Flow

Infinity owns, and has the right to police, *all* parachronic equipment. When others build such equipment, they do so by permission. Any use of projectors is under Infinity's direct supervision, and requires stiff licensing fees. Infinity has the power to confiscate or destroy any unauthorized conveyor or projector. In practice, this right is limited when the device is in the hands of major powers operating on Homeline. Nonetheless, simply licensing parachronics, specialized cartage and travel services, and charging for jump programs (from \$500 for a pre-plotted jump from a commercial, zeroed I-Port to \$20 million for a customized all-conditions departure program from specified coordinates) makes Infinity quite a lot of money. Patents and spinoffs from Paralabs research further fatten the bottom line.

The fortunes Infinity makes from outtime technologies dwarf even that hefty sum. Deuterium-fusion plants, room-temperature superconductors, energy-efficient seawater desalinization, hybrid pest-proof grains, cures for some cancers, and many other minor technological miracles trawled from high-tech parallel worlds are only some of the higher earners. Where possible, Infinity legally licenses outtime technology through a dummy corporation. If outtime conditions prevent such actions (if licensing would endanger The Secret, or if the patent is held by an odious totalitarian government), Infinity steals the technology and reverse-engineers it on Homeline. In many nations, Infinity is required to pay royalties to the inventor's (or corporation's) Homeline "twin" or his heirs. A Trenton food chemist was startled to discover that on Gallatin her parallel self had accidentally created the most popular snack spread in history, but delighted when the first million-dollar check arrived. Similar rulings apply to art, literature, and other cultural goods imported from other worlds and sold on Homeline by Infinity or its licensors. For example, Infinity is strictly enjoined from simply pirating Francis Ford Coppola's *The Empire Strikes Back*, even though it's not available on DVD yet on any Earth. Still, it's a drop in the bucket compared to the vast sums that such imports have earned for Infinity.

But it doesn't stop there. Through UNIC and Infinity Development (p. 31), Infinity takes a share of all the resources extracted from low-tech and uninhabited Earths. Oceans of crude oil pumped from parallel Texas, mountains of chromium mined from Africas where mankind never evolved, acres of coffee harvested from Jamaicas that have never known air pollution or pesticide runoff – even given the bottlenecks of crossworld shipping, the sheer amount of *stuff* a company can reap from even one empty Earth easily reaches the trillions of dollars. Infinite worlds means infinite wealth. Trade, tourism, and research add yet more markets to the balance sheet, although Infinity can afford to take a stern line on Homeline interactions with parallel societies above the hunter-gatherer stage.

Infinite Darkness

Of course, nothing says that Infinity has to be the good guys. If power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely, infinite power breeds infinite corruption. With all that money flowing through the ultimate "offshore" account, someone's going to get greedy – and start killing to cover up his secret. With the potential to remake society to the whim of outside sociologists immune to any bad effects (but wielding unstoppable technology), Infinity can create inhuman tyrannies accidentally – or on purpose. Rather than expose and overthrow their own creations, they might sweep the victims under the rug and leave them to rot in obscurity. Simple paternalistic neglect, even by a "good" Infinity Council, can abet or create misery, starvation, and cruelty on unheard-of scales rivaling the Irish famines or the U.N.-backed suppression of Biafra.

Infinity can be a mysterious force in a conventional single-world campaign, where the PCs don't even know parachronic travel is possible. Who shuts down the heroes' schemes? Who kidnaps their patrons or steals their secrets? Who supplies their foes with advanced weaponry? As a shadowy villain, Infinity can lurk in the background of a campaign, advancing its own agenda without any concern for this world's justice or this world's defenders.

Infinity can be the enemy, or at least the Other Side, in a multi-world campaign using a different set of protagonists. A PC party of "swagmen" (p. 71) fighting for the freedom of all worlds to interact on a basis of equality would see even a "good" Infinity as the bureaucratic hand of legal repression. Recasting Centrum as an altruistic, evangelizing meritocracy (such as "Centrum Light" on p. 56) might present even the default Infinity as selfish, paranoid meddlers, and such a Centrum Light would even more sternly oppose a corrupt or incompetent "Infinity Dark." Infinity could similarly meddle in the affairs of another worthy crosstime organization.

Finally, of course, Infinity can be the bad guys in an all-Infinity campaign focusing on the massive potential for corruption, exploitation, and downright evil available to Infinity upper management. The PCs might be idealistic heroes, recruited to the Patrol to help chart the worldlines or kill alternate Hitlers, who gradually discover the true nature of their employer. Such a "hall of mirrors" campaign would combine the tricky turnabouts of a classic espionage story and the investigative thrills of a police procedural, on the infinite canvas of crossworld adventure. Do the Patrolmen defect to another, possibly equally dangerous, side in the struggle? Do they join an underground, working to subvert Infinity and destroy it? Or do they rise in Infinity's ranks, helping where they can and taking out the worst elements when they won't get caught, hoping to restore the dream of infinite possibilities that they swore to protect?

The sheer amount of stuff a company can reap from even one empty Earth easily reaches the trillions of dollars.

OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS

Although technically separate from Infinity Unlimited, most of the major companies doing parachronic business turn out to have overlapping boards of directors, substantial stock holdings, and even murkier financial strings tying them back to Van Zandt and his organization. Infinity finds it hard to really let go of anything, and officially independent corporations provide useful deniability and “off the books” resources. However, this remote control also lets some of Infinity’s “corporate partners” develop their own agendas away from the prying eyes of the Patrol.

CLIODYNE RESEARCH GROUP

This select firm, based in an elegant Danish Modern campus in Orange County, California, began as Infinity’s in-house historical consulting team. The staff of historians, sociologists, and communications theorists developed marketing strategies for White Star with an eye toward “minimum interference” in other Earths. Gradually, the group brought cutting-edge memetics, population and game theories, and macroeconomics into their analysis (along with experts in all those fields). As crosstime travel expanded, other corporations needed the kinds of “cliodynamic” (the word combines Clio, the Greek Muse of History, with dynamics, the study of motion and change) analysis that only Infinity’s team could provide. Infinity spun off the group into a separate business for murky corporate reasons some time ago, but Cliodyne clearly considers Infinity its premier client. The Patrol has begun developing its own in-house team for cliodynamics, recruiting from former psychological warfare experts and intelligence analysts.

In the corporate world, Cliodyne’s major rivals are GeTS (*Geschichte-TechnikStiftung*), a German consortium of academic researchers, and Tombak & Chang, a Singapore-based international marketing firm with a strong crosstime presence.

CONSOLIDATED MINES, UNLTD.

This is either the greatest idea Infinity ever had, or the worst. The constant problems with operating mines on the various parallels are security and staff. How do you run a TL8 mining camp in the fourth century B.C. Transvaal without attracting undue attention? And how do you make any money off the mines, if you have to pay three crews of Homeliners TL8 salaries plus benefits and overtime and hazard pay and outtime duty bonuses and . . . ? Robotics can only solve so many staffing problems, and it makes security even worse.

The answer came by serendipity: in 2019, a Scout team exploring Rustic (p. 141) via nexus portal wound up involved in a prison break from a Hessian concentration camp in South Africa. Among the escapees was that worldline’s Cecil Rhodes, interned for illegal mining activity on Hessian claims. The Patrolmen brought him back with them, and rather than drop him in Coventry, Infinity offered him a job running outtime mining operations. (Nobody involved will discuss whose idea this was; it’s not impossible that Rhodes came up with it and sold his erstwhile jailers on it during his debriefing.) Rhodes brought his substantial low-tech mining experience and intimate knowledge of South Africa to bear; within a year, he had opened nine mines on nine parallels for less than one percent of their rated cost, and with only a 50% loss in production for low-tech methods. Rhodes proved a fast study, rapidly developing methods of integrating covert high-tech mining into low-tech frameworks, as well as rotating teams of foremen and straw bosses who could drop into the high veldt with five tons of standard gear and have a platinum mine in operation within two months.

Rhodes also brought his natural gift for empire-building to bear; Consolidated Mines, Unlimited soon became a major Infinity division, and Rhodes began to make noises about running for the Infinity corporate board. Panicked at the potential

reaction from the U.N.’s African members, Infinity offered him a hefty separation package and the presidency of his own firm instead. Rhodes accepted with (perhaps feigned) regret, and CMU became an independent company with a convoluted profit-sharing system in place. (Infinity has sole options and rights to CMU’s mining and development techniques and consulting, as well.) Only in recent years has it dawned on Infinity upper management that they turned Cecil Rhodes loose on infinite Africas with parachronic technology and no close supervision – and continue to pay him handsomely for the privilege.



TIME TOURS, LTD.

The largest and most prestigious of the crosstime tourist companies, Time Tours, Limited (TTL) is big business; Disney, Viacom, and other major entertainment conglomerates come sniffing around for mergers every couple of years. Time Tours also runs flourishing sidelines in costume design and location scouting (and surreptitious second-unit filming) for movie studios, manor worlds (p. 85) time-share and resorts, and colorful, “infotaining” docu-dramas (*This Is . . . 1492!*) for people who can’t afford the trips. But the bottom line is the tourist experience. Infinity, of course, piles restrictions on Time Tours in the echoes, but trips to alternate worlds are where the big bucks are anyway. The past, for better or worse, is a specialty interest; the market for The Way Things Should Have Been is limitless.

Scheduling and Fees

Time Tours doesn't accept reservations too far in advance, and charges what the market will bear. After all, even in the infinite worlds, there are only so many times that Lincoln will deliver the Gettysburg Address, or Bugsy Siegel will dedicate the Flamingo, or *Star Wars* will premiere in the theater (starring Dirk Benedict!). Time Tours can't re-run popular events, after all; they have to build demand for Renaissance trips during the 10 years the Medicis will rule a parallel Florence (and they have been accused of committing the odd knifing to keep the Medicis in power long enough to sell all the tickets). There are always more customers than available slots; Infinity views the tourist trade as a necessary evil, and isn't always generous with the travel permissions it grants Time Tours and the other tour companies. Time Tours does have a "personal leisure consultancy" for very rich clients looking for privacy and history, and caters to almost any request, where possible – for the right customer.

If the cost of a tour ever matters in the specific campaign, the GM is free to set it as he likes – even a short tour has a price in four figures. In a continuing campaign, the PCs are likely to be Time Tours employees, rather than tourists. In a one-shot adventure, they might be tourists, but Homeline wealth doesn't really matter in a one-shot.

Rules and Regulations

All Time Tours clients sign a very strict waiver before the trip. TTL does *not* guarantee to bring them back, let alone bring them back alive, and is *not* responsible for their health, sanity, or enjoyment of the trip.

Time Tours also reserves the right to do absolutely anything required in order to prevent "cultural contamination" (i.e., telling The Secret) or to correct contamination once it has occurred . . . up to and including a complete abort of the trip.

With that out of the way, note that Time Tours bends over backward to make sure that a trip goes well. Satisfied customers are the best advertisement; unsatisfied customers are Bad Publicity. Someone who has a

Johnson Crosstime Incorporated

The biggest of Time Tours' competitors, Johnson Crosstime began as another tourist outfit. Its founder, Alex A. Johnson, soon realized that he could never compete with TTL in the tourist business, and decided to go into the *resort* business instead. One of his tour scouts found a likely timeline in Rome-2, still cheerfully decadent and clearly "Roman" but with better food and less resin in the wine. Johnson amassed venture capital, bought gold on a downswing in the market, and moved to Rome-2 on an extremely poorly worded "business license" from Infinity. By the time the Patrol came around again, Johnson was procurator of Pannonia and Numidia, and had bribed every member of the Roman bureaucracy, introduced fluoride toothpaste and telegraphs, and single-handedly driven off a Pecheneg invasion.

Realizing the situation was already unsalvageable, the Patrol let Johnson go ahead and salvage it. Infinity confirmed his title to his Rome-2 property (in exchange for a "supervisory share" of stock in Johnson Crosstime), helped stabilize the inflation spiral he had unwittingly caused with his Homeline gold, and signed a lucrative conveyor leasing agreement with him. Johnson opened "Johnson's Rome" for business in 2016, and has drawn tens of thousands of tourists every year since. Industry gossip whispers that Johnson has been increasingly absent from his offices on Homeline and Rome-2 for the last two years – could he have another timeline under development?

serious gripe can usually be bought off – often by an extra-special extended trip to one of the more sybaritic timelines.

But *during* a trip, the Guides have total authority. Time Tours will fire a Guide for a total foul-up, and (in public) back them to the hilt on anything less. Part of the Time Tours mystique is the supposed super-competence of the Guides. "Do what you have to, and let Customer Relations sort it out" is the motto.

What Can We Take On a Time Tour?

Anything you want, as long as it's not obviously alien to the timeline being visited. Time Tours does a big business in disguised cameras of all sorts, for instance.

Weapons regulations depend on the trip. Hunting parties go loaded for dinosaur. Tourists in historical parallels can carry whatever weapons are appropriate for their costumes. (If the guide doesn't trust them with weapons, they don't carry them – or they don't come on the trip.) Disguised stunners may be permitted; this is up

to the guide. In general, a tourist who seems stable and competent is allowed such a weapon if the world is one where it might really be necessary for self-defense, and not otherwise. And still, a few guides get stunned from behind every year, for reasons ranging from spiteful whim to international espionage.

Gadgets and gewgaws "for trade with the natives" are permitted, but they must be native-authentic and bought from TTL's own supplies (at a slight markup). A tourist can buy all the cowrie shells he wants before visiting 17th-century Tahiti, but he can't take a cigarette lighter to impress the natives!

The rules are looser for a trip in which no interaction with the natives is expected. Time Tours does a regular (and very expensive) business in trips to actual echoes, to observe historical battles of the 16th through 19th centuries. But all these observations are made from a few thousand feet up, in stealthy sky-blue dirigibles. (If one of those dirigibles ever goes down, an immense troubleshooting mission will be needed!)

What Can We Bring Back?

Unless the trip is to a historical echo (and ordinary tourist trips aren't, unless the echo becomes an anchor), a little discreet collection of mementos is perfectly all right. The Guides do not permit outright thuggery, because it attracts attention and gives Time Tours a bad name on Homeline. But tourists are given the opportunity to buy native money at the beginning of their trip (at a healthy discount), and they can spend it as they want. The I-Cops run an official "customs check" when each tour returns, but unless the outtime world is known to contain some specific danger, it's mostly a formality.

However, any souvenir that could be mistaken for a "real" Homeline antique, fossil, etc., is supposed to be photographed for reference and marked in an inconspicuous way. These precautions don't make later fraud, or scientific confusion, entirely impossible – but at least it's an attempt.

Time Tours in the Campaign

Played seriously, the dramatic conflicts are going to be of the unplanned variety: the tour group stumbles across (or inadvertently creates) a situation not described on the website. The party gets scattered, and must be rounded up or rescued before going home; the big lizards prove to be not such easy targets after all; a careless word or action threatens to reveal The Secret and the guides have to fix things; there turns out to be a crosstime war going on that the Company doesn't know about, or maybe just a bit of industrial sabotage from a competitor.

In such straight adventures, the tourists should be at least normally competent characters (with some disadvantages not usually found among heroes, such as Cowardice); they may even all be player characters.

Time Tours can also be played for laughs. In this version, the tourists are Innocents (or maybe Idiots) Abroad: bumbler who can't manage the clothes or the language, but will walk right into the Charge of the

Time Tours in the Time Campaign

The GM of a time-traveling campaign may be tempted to include a time-tour adventure. Go ahead . . . but if you're playing with real history, Time Tours requires special attention to the mechanics of time travel. Ordinary tour agencies take their clients to popular places, but at different times. TTL is offering a visit to an interesting moment in time. Sooner or later all those little groups of temporal visitors, plus the multiple copies of their guides, are going to add up, and perhaps outnumber the natives.

There are several ways to cope with this:

Ignore it. Tour groups just don't run into each other, unless the GM wants to do something interesting with the encounter. This lends itself best to a comedy game – imagine two groups of tourists in the marketplace at Alexandria, haggling over the same souvenir, while their guides try to decide whether to intervene or sneak away for a drink.

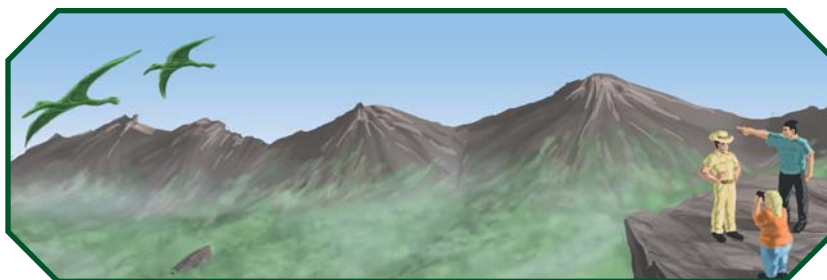
Ignore it, but make some excuses. The tour groups are small, the world (and the past) is big, and TTL Mission Control makes elaborate plans for traffic control. Not many people can crowd into the No. 10 Saloon in Deadwood for the shooting of Wild Bill Hickok without attracting attention; a dozen little groups, moving carefully, could probably hide out around Gettysburg; the Normandy invasion might swallow hundreds. This is stretching the point, but gamers are used to that.

The point can stretch farther if Time Tours Ltd. sends its clients to general eras rather than specific important dates. Elizabethan London or 1920s Chicago can no doubt absorb as many Time Tourists as the Company can send, meeting only when it's dramatically useful. The guides would be instructed to keep the tourists away from important moments their presence might upset; naturally, it's not possible to predict what all those moments might be, and the tourists (who would probably not be aware of the Not Too Much Excitement policy) might have to be kept away from trouble rather firmly.

Provide a mechanical solution. New Timelines (p. 156) works well here, since the main action involves running around in the historical period, not changing it. In a comedy game, this works almost too well, since the intruders may safely make any sorts of crazy changes they wish, up to and including a Marx Brothers bring-the-house-down finale (*A Night at the Fall of Rome?*). This may, of course, be exactly what the campaign needs.

Light Brigade to get a good snapshot for the folks back home. These are likely NPCs, though a player with a talent for comedy can have a field day. The conveyors never work right,

the historical figures are boobs being prompted or bribed by the Guides, and any crosstime marauders look and talk scary but couldn't conquer a prairie dog village.



Our Corporate Rivals

Yugorovsky Group: This Russian mining conglomerate has a reputation for being unscrupulous and deadly, and tied into both the Russian Mafiya and the Russian government. Reports filter back of low-level proxy wars between Yugorovsky and CMU on some primitive worlds. The Russian councilor on UNIC protects the Group from full reprisals or formal Infinity sanction.

KMP Petroleum: Founded in a series of desperate mergers after the fusion economy cratered Homeline's oil industry, KMP concentrates its efforts on filling the insatiable demand for oil on less-developed parallels. Their standard practice is to buy a "tapped out" field on such a worldline and ship oil from other timelines into it in conveyor tankers – or build a pipeline through a nexus portal, if they are lucky enough to find one in an oil patch somewhere. They also practice mature TL8 petroleum engineering (and social engineering with recalcitrant sheikhs) to genuinely open fields closed to TL6-7 exploration. The Patrol worries that KMP's wildcat, cowboy habits will endanger The Secret – and that KMP has far too cozy a relationship to the CIA.

Denarius Capital Holdings: Infinity initially founded this brokerage group to keep the economy of Johnson's Rome from collapsing under overtime stresses by subtly introducing liquidity reforms. Denarius' managers somehow wound up in control of the entire Roman gold reserve, bought out their contract, and relocated their corporate headquarters to Lysander. (They retain a Palau incorporation for Homeline tax purposes.) Denarius Capital now runs large-scale financial and market operations on many, many worlds. (Denarius also gives rather generously to some Miracle Workers operations.) On some parallels, it causes accidental runaway busts and booms – on others, it may cause them on purpose.

Duncorne Foundation: This secretive but influential academic foundation funds archaeological and historical research on a wide variety of parallels, especially those showing evidence of reality quakes or the supernatural. Its grants focus on the medieval period and earlier, with a strong emphasis on religion, history, and legendry. The Duncorne Collections in New Haven and Oxford will always handsomely reward the copying, transcribing, and (according to rumor) theft of rare and lost books (of any era) from other worlds. It may also be a major player in the gray market in crossworld art and antiquities smuggling – many major museums and universities find Duncorne's connections quite helpful in making that one crucial acquisition.

WHITE STAR TRADING

White Star is the original crosstime import-export company – and still the largest. Van Zandt financed most of his original development by trading with a single parallel. Its offices now span hundreds of Earths ranging from mud-brick caravanserais in Attila's Iran, to faultlessly legitimate venture capital firms in Reich-2 America, to a movie studio in Campbell making a slowly increasing fortune by remaking Homeline fantasy movies. Some small

White Star offices only transship a few hundred pounds of rarities; for example, a carton of DVDs from Gallatin, or a breeding pair of Tasmanian tigers. Others ship hundreds of tons of cocoa or chromium daily, loading the cargo onto barges that go out of sight of land and then jump between worlds. All of them have the "sign of the White Star" somewhere in the corporate logo, or hanging on a painted sign out front, as suits their environment.

Not even Infinity knows what every branch of White Star is up to; it's possible that not even the White

Star corporate higher-ups in Boston do. Imposing any kind of "corporate culture" across such a system is worse than useless, but White Star headquarters enforces some standards. White Star merchants are expected to give value for value, follow all local laws (with a minimum of bribery), and support good causes in their local community. Beyond that, White Star follows general trade practices, hopes for the best, and counts its mounting profits.

General Trade Practices

White Star's trade with other timelines, whether open or covert, tends to follow broadly similar guidelines broken down by the world's degree of technical, economic, and financial development. Wherever possible, the local operations of crossworld traders such as White Star double as purely local, profitable business operations with a share of the profits earmarked to support the Infinity Patrol and other overhead. Given the distressing amount of smuggling carried on through White Star outlets (perhaps as a consequence of the Infinity rake-off), this section also addresses such informal arrangements.

Uncivilized (TL0): Because bulk resources come from uninhabited worlds, White Star trades with these parallels mainly for curios. In some worlds, White Star exchanges low-tech bulk trinkets (e.g., gold from uninhabited worlds, high-quality but local-TL weapons and tools, etc.) for unskilled labor for the mass production of goods too high above the local TL to be comprehensible. However, this practice is not widespread, as White Star is uncertain whether it is entirely safe or ethical, and it makes the Patrol jittery about endangering The Secret. Smugglers often make use of these worlds as bases and sources of slave labor.

Civilized, Pre-Scientific (TL1-4): In these worlds, traders often utilize a triangular trading method, exchanging gold and resources from uninhabited worlds for works of art and for labor-intensive or specialized agricultural products such as Falernian wine or Incan blue potatoes. Smugglers have been known to buy or steal

duplicates of valuable Homeline artworks. (One enterprising smuggler bought several Raphael works for a case of child's pastels.) One large specialty market on these worlds is books: hand-copied scrolls of Aristophanes' lost plays, or Mayan codices burnt in Homeline's inquisitorial bonfires, command substantial sums from Homeline collectors and academics alike.

Civilized, Scientific (TL5-8): The I-Cops consider such worlds potentially dangerous should they get The Secret. Permitted trade includes introducing moderate technological improvements and literary ideas, or exchanging small quantities of portable wealth (e.g., gems or gold) for artworks and curios. "Parallel works" are particularly prized: Shakespeare's *Historie of Robert the Bruce*, Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the American Uprising*, and so forth. Homeline publishers especially like the classics, because they don't have to pay royalties on them (although Infinity usually holds the copyright). Some worlds actually produce consumer goods that Homeline values, such as the stylish men's fedoras available on Gernsback.

Advanced, Scientific (TL9+): The Infinity Patrol watches, most carefully, all worlds with science advanced enough to reproduce parachronics, and a single unauthorized incursion is punishable by Coventry. If it is even

The Alternate Best Sellers List

The House of the Worm, by H.P. Lovecraft

Target: Tokyo! A History of the Invasion, by Robert A. Heinlein, Adm., USN (Ret.)

Campaigns of Alexander, by Ptolemy

Hardraada in Vinland, by Snorri Sturlasson

The Hauntings of Sherlock Holmes, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

Summa Astrologia, by Isaac Newton

Sanditon, by Jane Austen

Cuban Southpaw: My Life in the American League, by Fidel "Red" Castro

Fear and Loathing in Tycho Crater, by Hunter S. Thompson

The Gospel According to Peter

Hornblower at the Crisis, by C.S. Forester

The Complete Mystery of Edwin Drood, by Charles Dickens

licensed to travel to them, White Star uses every available method in these worlds to discover the principles upon which these worlds' higher technology is based, in order to patent and utilize it on Homeline. However, it is hampered by the fact that these worlds usually have sophisticated identification and surveillance technologies, so that a small misstep might imperil The Secret. Smuggling technology and artifacts from these worlds can carry lucrative rewards, but also brings danger from both the alternate's local authorities and the Patrol.

Para-Scientific (any TL): Infinity treats worlds with variant physical

laws with similar care. If magic works, for instance, even a low-technology world becomes a potential danger. GMs have to decide if items from such worlds continue to function elsewhere; if enchantments continue to function in non-magical worlds, it's hard to imagine any sanctions which keep smugglers out. Psis endanger both The Secret and smugglers; everyone avoids worlds with globally available psionics. Worlds with supers pose similar problems; smugglers have enough trouble dodging ordinary police without having to deal with grim avengers of the night.

THE PUBLIC SECTOR

THE UNITED NATIONS

Outside UNIC, the U.N. has no more control over crosstime operations than any other group, and less than some. This irritates agencies like UNESCO, UNICEF, and so forth, who throw up political obstacles for UNIC, and thus contribute further to their own marginalization. Infinity refuses to take sides in such disputes, essentially passing the buck back to UNIC. (The main exception is Miracle Workers' close relationship with the World Health Organization.) Every so often, a U.N. agency gets a lead role in some crosstime development, or an

entire world to administer. It seldom works any better than the UNHCR's Sanctuary colony (p. 32).

The Interworld Treaty

What ties the U.N.'s hands is, ironically, the very document that seemingly granted it sovereignty over the infinite worlds, the Interworld Treaty. The main articles of the Treaty (and their actual effects) are as follows:

1. *Parallel Earths should be explored for the good of mankind*: In practice, this lets Infinity Development reject any proposed crosstime venture that doesn't "improve conditions on Homeline and the parallel." The treaty

does not proclaim the other Earths the property of Infinity, Homeline, or even of mankind.

2. *Infinity Unlimited receives a U.N. charter, and formal supranational status*: This article also sets up UNIC as Infinity's official governing agency, and restructures Infinity's board to add multinational control. In practice, this removes Infinity from any national jurisdiction or oversight, allowing it to focus its bribery, pressure, or institutional capture on just UNIC instead of many different agencies.

3. *All parachronic technology remains the property of Infinity*: This allows the Patrol to enter and inspect any parachronic facility in the world.

4. *An Infinity (or UNIC) license is required for all parachronic travel:* This is honored in the breach; Infinity grants licenses for year-long terms (or longer) to favored clients, prime subsidiaries, and Security Council veto powers. It does, however, give Infinity legal recourse to sue national governments in the World Court if they misuse the license to, say, conquer another world.

5. *Infinity must bear all costs of parachronic research and crosstime security:* This cleverly drafted article makes Infinity entirely independent of any Homeline control; it pays for its own army, technology, and security rather than depending on national governments. This article also forms the basis for Infinity's claim on patents derived from other Earths' technology. Japanese and American companies have both challenged it successfully in some cases, and Infinity now pays generous license fees to keep the issue from coming up.

Of the U.N.'s 197 members, all but 10 have ratified the Interworld Treaty. The holdouts are Afghanistan, Burma, Iran, Iraq, Israel (which refuses to surrender the right to crosstime operation in self-defense), Malawi, North Korea, Palau (a popular incorporation site for companies that want to dodge Infinity regulations), Palestine (which refuses to sign until Israel does), and Turkmenistan. Venezuela threatens to "de-ratify" the treaty every so often to protest "Infinity neo-colonialism," and one or two right-wing U.S. senators campaign to get the treaty junked as "infringing American sovereignty." U.N. non-member Taiwan has signed an "Agreement of Understanding" with Infinity Unlimited, basically recognizing Infinity's jurisdiction over crosstime travel and development.

NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

One significant downside of UNIC oversight of Infinity is that all five permanent Security Council powers can theoretically "license" any amount of Infinity's parachronic technology to themselves. Infinity tries to keep a handle on the equipment, or at least its location and licensing body, but it's very difficult to monitor an entire

national government if it doesn't wish something tracked. Patrol officials assume that all five powers have one or more completely "off-the-books" conveyors buried somewhere in the maze of records, transfers, and sublicenses that is the UNIC bureaucracy. Worse yet, sufficiently wealthy or skilled nations can build (and almost certainly have built) their own parachronic equipment.

The United States

America is by far the leading nation in parachronic exploration and exploitation, both public and private. With Infinity corporate headquarters in Chicago, and a large base of experienced crosstime workers, American companies and government agencies can easily staff most "civilian" projects either with or without Infinity. With the world's largest economy and foremost university system, America can afford plenty of crosstime travel, and has plenty of ideas for it. The CIA, FBI, and even some state law-enforcement agencies have standing crosstime task forces; the FBI keeps officers on duty on Johnson's Rome and other popular parallels, and there is a U.S. Marshal's office on New Colorado.



Although official policies vary depending on the administration in power, every President since Clinton has sent U.S. forces into action on other timelines, usually to protect American citizens in danger. The most controversial such exercise was President McConnell's pre-emptive involvement on Gallatin in 2022.

Ranger Force Tau overthrew that world's Algerian government before it could deploy its nuclear missiles, sending the entire Middle East on two worlds into a year of turmoil.

The Russian Federation

Russia concentrates its outtime operations on two fronts: mining, and propping up the various off-world Russias against their foes. As one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, Russia gets one-fifth of the mining permits doled out by Infinity Development. Unlike other nations, which either auction them off or use them as diplomatic chips when bargaining with other countries, the Russians simply take the maximum allowed mining license and turn it over to a domestic mining company such as the Yugorovsky Group. Thus, even in the cheap-mineral Homeline made possible by crosstime exploration, Russia is able to manipulate spot prices and keep its position as a leading mineral exporter intact.

Offworld operations usually involve Spetsnaz strikes on Nazi (or Kaiserene, or Bonapartist, or Swedish) rear areas, logistics, and

communications centers. Such a live-fire "partisans from nowhere" exercise on another worldline is now a standard part of Spetsnaz training, despite Infinity's strong objections. (Evading the Patrol has, itself, become a standard part of such exercises.) A tacit understanding with the Communist Party opposition prevents the Kremlin

from using such strikes to intervene in purely Russian civil wars on other worlds, however. Although popular novels fill other timelines with SVR and GRU agents, Russia does relatively little pure espionage (aside from massive technology theft) on other parallels.

The United Kingdom

British crosstime travel is mostly academic. Infinity lavishly funds Oxford, Cambridge, and many smaller universities' history departments to the extent that American history graduate students have a better chance of crosstime research at British universities than they do their own! (Perhaps coincidentally, there is rather less academic criticism of Infinity in Britain, and the British delegates can be counted on as strong supporters of the Patrol.) However, Britain punches above its weight in crosstime military and economic interventions. The Special Conveyor Service is probably the most efficient crosstime special ops force, with a special mastery of "in and out" attacks involving parachronic attacks on Homeline targets. British

companies like Universal Exports and Hari & Boyle can find markets and sources where even White Star Trading fails.

France

Although Britain is still part of the EU, it does not take any great role in the ECCCCP (European Common Cross-Chronal Project), which is dominated by French planners. Germany usually follows the French lead, but digs in its heels when France gets too carried away with *la mission civilatrice*. The official policy of the French government is that the timelines are the common property of all mankind, and that Infinity has no particular rights or control over their access, which is exclusively a UNIC matter. The Patrol strongly suspects that the French government is trying to satellitize offworld governments (usually of France, but not always) and build a kind of crossworld super-France capable of independent action in any sphere without American or Infinity involvement. France makes a great show of inviting other countries, both within Europe and in the Third World,

to contribute personnel to crosstime ventures; the Elysée Palace practice of plowing the profits into its crosstime network of bribes and influence-peddling somehow stays out of the coverage in *Le Monde*. The *Légion d'Outretemps* has racked up more crosstime interventions (usually to overthrow some minor African or South American government) than any other unit except the Spetsnaz. An attempt by the *Légion* to overthrow the government of South Carolina on Britannica-1 almost led to outright conflict between French and U.S. special forces.

China

China, by contrast, appears to be a model of crosstime respectability. Its 3rd Special Warfare Group exists mostly on paper, having launched only minor raids onto Reich-5 before the closing of that worldline in 2022. It leases much of its outtime exploitation rights to other companies, especially Korean, Filipino, and Thai firms, taking only reasonable kickbacks and royalties. It alternately blocks and cooperates with American policy crosstime, but aside from its two colony worlds and consular staff on popular Chinese tourist parallels, has little outtime presence. This, of course, has the more paranoid staff officers at the Pentagon and the Pile certain that China is planning some "Great Leap Outward" that will drastically rearrange the global (and crosstime) balance of power.

Non-Veto Nations

Of the non-veto nations, India and Japan have the most active crosstime programs. India's program closely resembles the American one, with substantial academic, corporate, and intelligence operations crosstime. India's "White Cats" train with the SCS for "in and out" operations against Kashmiri and Tamil rebels and terrorists. India's "Bollywood" movie studios also film on exotic outtime locations, and (according to rumor) recruit younger versions of popular movie stars from close parallels to replace stars who get too old or too independent-minded.

Israel and the Alternity Exodus

It is an open secret that Israel refuses to accept Infinity's rules about outtime immigration. Although the Israeli census ministry returns bland assurances to UNIC questioners, the standing policy of the Israeli government is to offer sanctuary on Homeline to any Jews threatened with death anywhere in the Infinite Worlds. Although they do leave echoes alone, Mossad shows little compunction about operations on any other parallel. Following a full Mossad reconnaissance, Sayeret Geburah troops drop into the parallel, kill any guards, and remove the Jewish prisoners to Homeline. These operations run from small-scale rescues of prominent physicists or engineers, to "train robberies" hijacking a deportation shipment, to full-blown liberations of whole concentration camps or gulags. The largest such operation was the Kolyar Raid in 2014, which seized control of a Silesian town on Cornwallis for six days, and removed 25,000 Jewish and Gypsy prisoners from a Prussian camp, resettling them all in Homeline's Israel and West Bank. (for more on Cornwallis, see *GURPS Alternate Earths 2*).

Arab governments complain that Israel is "artificially Judaizing" the region with "outtime illegals." Since this accurately summarizes Israeli government policy, the Israelis simply issue bland denials and get on with rescuing more victims. Domestic opinion in America is firmly behind the "Alternity Exodus," and the United States regularly vetoes any U.N. condemnation of such rescues.

Japan's crosstime operations are more like British ones, although the IDF has only a token outtime capability. Japanese companies very successfully trade with parallel Japans, and are among the leading Homeline firms in incorporating their crosstime versions' best practices and technologies. The result is that they can wind up patenting a superior version of something Infinity stole a year ago and rapidly take the lead in global market share.

Non-Governmental Organizations

A vast panoply of other groups, from Boy Scout troops to whole religions, have outtime activities – or opinions about outtime activities – that they are seldom shy about sharing. Some groups lease their own conveyors and pursue their goals without pestering Infinity too much: the Nature Conservancy, for example, brings breeding stock for endangered species on Homeline from other worlds where the species are plentiful. Others believe that pressuring Infinity, or UNIC member governments, is the most efficient way to see their goals realized.

Amnesty Unlimited

A sister organization to Amnesty International, Amnesty Unlimited publicizes the fates of political prisoners, slaves, and other unfortunates on other timelines. They pressure Infinity (or, less often, Homeline governments) to intervene on those worldlines to improve conditions, call for White Star boycotts of odious crosstime regimes, and work tirelessly to promote anti-slavery agitation on other Earths.

Every so often, an AU field team travels to another world to try applying their own leverage, but the results have been spotty. The best result, arguably, occurred when the Patrol mounted a rescue mission that snatched an AU observer team from a prison in Earth-Beta's Iran and accidentally overthrew the theocratic government there in the process. Amnesty Unlimited usually draws the line at

advocating such violent regime change, but some factions are beginning to question whether "pacifism of the word" is enough.

Greenpeace

This environmental organization indefatigably opposes crosstime mining operations, even on empty Earths, as "ecological rapes of unsuspecting worlds." Some members of Greenpeace go so far as to chain themselves to projector doors, disrupt surveys, and sabotage mining equipment (usually before it's shipped outtime). Their support comes from college campuses and (less openly) from corporations frozen out of the crosstime bonanza . . . especially Homeline oil companies.

The Vatican

The official position of the Roman Catholic Church is that God's plan applies to all Earths with human races. The devil, needless to say, is in the details: Are all the parallel Christs the same Christ, or did God have one son per Earth? Are worldlines in which there was no Jesus of Nazareth awaiting their own Messiah, and if so,

will he be Christ as well? Or does the Church's evangelizing mission call upon it to teach those worldlines about Homeline's Christ? Did Homeline's Jesus die for the sins of all the Earths? The Curia has been working on definitive answers to all of the above questions since 1998, and Vatican speculation is that the next Pope will have to call a general church council on the topic.

In the interim, Jesuits and other scholarly orders have contributed greatly to the study of reality physics, and Catholic mission groups work closely with Miracle Workers, especially on worlds with an established Roman Church. The Pope calls on Infinity to "respect human dignity in all worlds," and aligns the Vatican with reformist and progressive "out-timer rights" groups such as Amnesty Unlimited. Some influential monsignors and orders have even called for Infinity to abandon The Secret, and "share the Truth with all mankind as equals." The Patrol becomes very nervous indeed when devotees of such philosophies travel to parallel Earths, even for the ostensibly saintliest purposes.

Rogue States

North Korea, Libya, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Cuba, and Burma all reject the international order to one extent or another. Such rogue nations support terrorism and international crime, foment revolution abroad, and try to develop weapons of mass destruction and domestic parachronics. They may have support from arms dealers and physicists overseas, working in parallel to build individual components that can get passed along the smugglers' routes from Marseilles to Karachi to Rangoon until whole bombs or conveyors take shape in some terror camp in Afghanistan, Sudan, or Yemen.

Infinity's great fear is that some rogue state will provide a conveyor (and possibly a nuclear weapon) to some terrorist organization. In the worst case scenario, this terror strike hits a technologically advanced parallel, which discovers parachronics in the most traumatic and horrifying way possible, and blames Homeline. In the second-worst case scenario, the terrorists do an "in and out" attack on Homeline America, killing thousands (or millions, if the nuke is big enough) and enrage the United States enough for it to pull out of UNIC, nationalize Infinity, and strike out unilaterally across the worlds. The Intelligence Branch works overtime to infiltrate terror groups, using Patrol language and cultural skills to blend into the terrorist ranks. So far, the Patrol agents have rolled up whole networks (with CIA or MI6 assistance) and beheaded such plans before they start, including an al-Qaeda plot in early 2001 – but they only have to fail once.

CHAPTER TWO

ENEMIES

EVERYWHEN



"Grade 3 Chang, reporting a message intercept, Sir!" The new entry's uniform was creased and pressed until it looked like a recruiting brochure.

"At ease, Chang." The duty officer, secure in her exalted Grade 4 status, had unbuttoned her own neck stock, and there was a distinct shininess to the crimson cuffs of her midnight uniform coat. Chang strode forward the regulation four steps, came to attention again, and handed over a flimsy and a data cartridge.

Popping the cartridge into the Records computer (there were some regulations it didn't do to ignore), the duty officer scanned the flimsy for a few minutes, looking for anything out of the ordinary. Dinosaur smugglers – alchemical methods in Argentine platinum mines – assassination attempt on the King of North Carolina – here it was, "Nazis" again. "Infinity can't get panicked enough about these 'Nazis,' Chang."

"Sir." She looked up to see Chang still at attention.

"I said 'At ease,' Chang." The younger officer marginally relaxed. "I'd invite you to sit down, but there's only one chair in these confounded bridges."

"Isometric posture does not require chairs, Sir." Right out of the book again. Still, she thought, I'd better try, or this new kid is going to drive me crazy.

"Chang, what's your first name?"

"Mohammed, Sir."

"That's unusual for a Chinese, isn't it, Chang?"

"Sir, all names are Centrum names. The Centrum embraces all bloodlines."

"Chang, I'm not trying to trap you in Error, I'm trying to make conversation so that you don't hover there like a constipated goshawk."

Chang relaxed another breath. "My family is from Tajikistan, Sir. Lots of hybridity there, even before the Centrum saved us." The duty officer nodded; history wasn't her strong point, even Centrum history, but the Central Asian tribes were traditionally very grateful to the scientific elite that had saved them from famine, warlords, and plague.

"Understandable then, border vigor and all that. Use those ancestral border skills, Chang, and see what jumps out at you from this."

Chang took the flimsy and ran his eyes down it. "Secundus – er, Infinity – seems more worried about these 'Nazis' than they do three other threats on the same Wave that objectively pose a far greater danger to their operations. Sir."

"My thoughts exactly. I've been monitoring Infinity transmissions here for eight months, and despite four global wars and a Force Seven reality quake, these 'Nazis' still draw 18% of the decision band, when it ought to be more like four. And they're not even on this bloody Wave! They're way the Hell and gone out on Wave Minus Five!"

"What did the Records say, Sir?"

"Nothing useful; they were an Irrationalist sect in Bavaria in a number of timelines; on Secundus they seem to have triggered a global war, and on one world on Wave Minus Two, they won. Rum lot, but not the foaming anarchists that you'd expect from Infinity's paranoia. More orderly than bloody Infinity, that's for sure. But according to Intercept Branch, Infinity has more agents, and more ongoing operations, on this 'Reich-2' than on any comparable parallel. Again, despite greater threats, and much greater opportunities, on at least six other worldlines I could name."

"Sounds like a perfect opportunity for us, Sir. If we could somehow use them as a stalking horse, we could distract the ruddy Patrol from anything we did. We could have our run of the echoes, as long as we could get some Nazis to pop up somewhere else while we did it."

Candide, amazed, terrified, confounded, astonished, all bloody, and trembling from head to foot, said to himself, "If this is the best of all possible worlds, what are the others like?"

– Voltaire, *Candide*

"Sadly for us, Chang, the only ones with parachronics seem to be out where we can't go."

"Unless we find a tunnel. It's been known to happen, Sir."

"Precisely. That's what I want you to start sifting these surveys for. I mean to find a tunnel to their Wave and start feeding these Nazis anything they want, as long as it will keep Infinity busy."

"That could alter the whole complexion of the War, Sir. The Forum will be handing out promotions like candy on Rebirth Day."

"Well, we're not supposed to think about our promotions, Chang. It's the good of the Service, and of Centrum, that counts."

"Of course, Sir. I'm sorry, Sir." Chang, abashed, hunched over a stack of surveys and avoided his superior's eyes.

But doctrine aside, the duty officer was thinking about promotions. She could easily make Grade 5 for something like this, or even higher, if it became a major Interworld priority. Yes, "Grade 6 Goldstein" had a

nice ring to it, she told herself, and punched up her own stack of surveys to sift.

Between cometary fallout, angry Visigoths, and mutant smallpox, the infinite worlds hold enough danger to keep the Infinity Patrol infinitely busy. However, the Patrol has taken a dark comfort from the fact that you can't save every world: they do what they can, where they can. Unfortunately, some of those worlds – including Homeline – hold dangers that can spread to other worlds – also including Homeline. The Patrol can't afford to sleep, or to take any comfort, no matter how dark, in just doing what they can for those worlds. An "acceptable risk" when it's some barbarian parallel two quanta out becomes a deadly crisis when it threatens your world and the ideals you hold dear. You have to do anything to stop such a danger, or die trying.

Of course, on some of those worlds, the Patrol – and Homeline – represent just such a danger . . .

CENTRUM

Centrum is the only human timeline other than Homeline to independently develop parachronic technology. It is also Homeline's fiercest enemy. Centran agents intrigue against the Infinity Patrol across the dimensions, and will settle for nothing less than total domination of the infinite

worlds. Only in unity, Centrum believes, is there safety and order.

The origin and focus of a paratemporal empire, Centrum has spent the last century sending explorers, spies, businessmen, and occasionally soldiers to dozens of parallel timelines. Having rebuilt and re-unified its home

Earth after a cataclysmic war, Centrum was poised for major changes even before the recent discovery of another world of parachronic travelers. Today, in 2027, the conflict with Secundus (which calls itself "Homeline") is Centrum's primary concern.

The Language Barrier

The official language of Centrum is English, which sounds like a heavily accented version of Homeline English, with a rather larger number of French loan-words. As part of the drive to global cultural unity, the Centrum deliberately wiped out all other languages (a project which had begun, to some extent, under the old Imperial dynasty). If any families have retained fluency, they have certainly learned to hide it. The only exceptions are Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, still studied by classical scholars and theologians. Apart from such specialized cul-de-sacs, Centrum never even developed a true science of linguistics – an omission that has hampered Centrum operations almost as much as the lack of native speakers.

Centrum is working on broadening its language base . . . indeed, that's one of the main reasons for recruiting outtimers. The Education Service has been dragging its feet, but many timelines know fairly effective techniques for teaching languages swiftly (usually based on immersion). It shouldn't be too long before the Interworld Service overcomes its prejudice against outtime ideas and starts to use them. For now, however, a fluent Japanese speaker, for example, is *probably* not working for Centrum . . . at least not *directly*.

Although their society encompasses settlements on many timelines, the vast majority of Centrants still live on their home line, also called Centrum. World and government are seldom distinguished, and there is no distinction between government and society. The contemporary world-state is actually fairly recent, not much more than a century old, but its roots go deep into history.

HISTORY

Centrum perceives itself as a radical break with its past, and really cares about history only because of parachronics – for which purpose the histories of other timelines matter at least as much as its own. A typical Centran knows rather less about his own history than a typical 21st-century American (agents of the Interworld Service are somewhat better informed, but only in the context of changing other histories). If they compared textbooks, the two would eventually discover that their worlds diverged in 1120, when the heir to the throne of England was or was not drowned. Shifting royal marriages and wars rapidly changed every detail of history. The English monarchs made themselves masters of northern and western France before the Hundred Years' War could even begin.

To Unity

The Anglo-French Empire was perhaps the strongest realm in Europe, but that barely allowed it to escape conquest when the Mongols arrived, less than a century after its formation. Unable to expand into Mongol-dominated Central Europe, they turned to the reports of a far western country brought by a Norwegian princess, sending ships across the Atlantic to explore a vast New World, which they named Terranova.

The superior Asian technology brought by the Mongols, combined with the royal patronage of the early scientist Roger Bacon, enhanced the brilliant culture of the High Middle Ages. Like its age of exploration, Centrum's scientific and industrial revolutions progressed more slowly than ours, but began so early that technology remained 100-150 years ahead down to the 20th century.

Anglo-French hegemony in Europe took centuries to achieve. The Empire's French subjects joined in the power politics of Europe, the English preferred to concentrate on the sea. After the War of Lily and Rose nearly broke the Empire apart, the crown tried to bind together the Empire's disparate components using new techniques such as steam transport, mass education, and

drawing all the noble families to the fabulous imperial palace at Kensington. As merchants and industrialists rose to prominence, they were encouraged to join the nobility by the crown practice of granting new titles associated with huge fiefs overseas – a practice that led to “freelance imperialism” legitimated from London after the fact. By the mid-19th century, the Empire encompassed the globe, and its literally unrivaled power and wealth disguised internal divisions growing beneath the unified façade.

To Destruction

In 1902, it all went to hell. Opinions are still split on how a bid for full independence by a few provincial magnates could have spiraled so thoroughly out of control. The atomic destruction of London and a few dozen other cities paled in comparison with the tailored bioweapons unleashed against Asiatic peoples by an imperial pretender. After ravaging China and India, the plagues mutated, turned back west, finished off the global economy, and depopulated much of Eurasia.

The only region left unscathed was the southern continent of Terraustralis (much more densely populated than our Australia), where a military-technical cabal, “the Centrum,” took control. They used their isolation to withdraw from the conflict, and imposed draconian social controls to stop the spread of disease and maintain food distribution. By 1913, once their scientists had devised protections against the bioweapons, they ventured out into a shattered world. They were appalled at what they saw: two-thirds of the Earth's population was dead, and pestilence ran rampant among the survivors, killing one in every two children. Nuclear and bioweapons had shattered the ecosystem, especially in the fragile tropics; famines and desertification threatened to starve anyone who the plagues did not carry off. Technology was dropping back to pre-industrial levels everywhere, leading to filth and decay and warlord feudalism of the worst kind.

The Centrum resolved to rebuild, and to prevent future wars, by imposing a single, rational culture under a single authority. The Centrum knew that disunity caused the war, and nearly destroyed mankind. Therefore, it would bring unity: every surviving human would speak English, go to the same schools, get enough food, and become an equal part of the Centrum. Most of Earth's surviving inhabitants, starving and disease-ridden, were happy to accept the alternative the Centrum offered – just as well, since they had no choice.

To Other Worlds

Linda Minott was the first Centran scientist to investigate anomalies in exotic experiments with high energy densities (known since the previous century). Her papers were published in 1908 and languished for a time, but the potential was clear. By 1922, Centran scientists had built their first conveyor and gone exploring. Parachronics gave the Centrum access to the untapped resources of Earths where humanity had never evolved – and, in the early years, the opportunity to buy or steal goods from many parallel cultures. The Centrum became as wealthy in its own way as Infinity Unlimited – wealthier, because it had fewer scruples – but it poured its wealth back into global reconstruction.

In 1934, after a few early mishaps, the Centrum officially adopted the Lockridge Protocols, a strict hands-off policy toward inhabited timelines (almost all of which were technologically primitive, anyway), and concentrated on mining and colonizing the empty worlds. It had more than enough to do on its own Earth: curing the war plagues, halting the famines, deposing the local warlords, and generally forestalling a descent into barbarism.

After completing the reclamation of its Earth, Centrum (which dropped the “the” in 1958 after formally completing global reunification) has reconsidered its attitude toward other timelines. Some wanted to spread the benefits of their civilization, bringing superior technology and organization to less-developed timelines and saving the advanced ones from suffering

Secundus: Homeline as Centrum Sees It

From Centrum's perspective, Secundus is a chaotic, irrational mess of a world. So many groups have parachronic technology, and they barely coordinate their efforts. Centrum cannot understand why the United States and other leading nations aren't fighting for dominance.

Centrum sees democracy as a primitive form of government associated with Greek and Italian city-states. Itself intensely Spartan, it keeps trying to understand Secundus as a variation of Centrum, looking for the people who *really* run things. Infinity Unlimited was the major candidate (Centrum is run more like a corporation in some ways than a constitutional republic), until Centrum realized how small Infinity was. Now it looks like a central power too weak to control Secundus' struggling factions, and the apparent stability of the system bewilders and frightens Centrum.

Secundus seems to be a group of dangerous amateurs not prepared to confront the true implications of parachronics. Some Interworld scientists even view them as a literal threat to the universe, arguing that the echoes, reality quakes, and some of the anomalous timelines around Secundus (especially the puzzle worlds, pp. 140-142) are signs that Secundus' parachronic technology damages the local fabric of the continuum. Ironically, Centrum sees Infinity's policy on The Secret as paranoia – it understands caution on advanced worldlines, but the idea of protecting less-advanced cultures doesn't really exist in its mental universe.

their own Last War. Others believed continued expansion was needed for Centrum's own health, or were simply ambitious for new fields of action. The discovery of Secundus (which Centrum sees as a dangerously disunited near-anarchy) in 2015 awoke deep-rooted fears and silenced the objectors.

CENTRUM TODAY

Modern Centrum has fulfilled the dreams of its founders. It is a self-consciously rational society that offers every citizen a decent life and a chance to fulfill a useful function. Everyone can rise as high as their talents and drive take them, regardless of race, gender, or ancestry. On the other hand, Centrum does not place a high value on notions of liberty or human rights, which it tends to consider superstitions. Society may exist for the sake of individuals, but no individual matters much in comparison with it.

Politics

Centrum is a regimented meritocracy: all citizens enter the Service for which they have most aptitude and

inclination, to be promoted strictly by talent and achievement. Each adult citizen belongs to one of seven grades, corresponding to a specific rank within his Service. Everyone starts as a Grade 1 citizen, and nepotism is discouraged by common opinion (as well as being illegal); people are supposed to rise on their own merits.

The Services have individual regulations about the meanings of the different grades: some are more overtly hierarchical than others. Command privileges never cross Service lines, but lower-grade citizens generally defer to higher ones socially. (The exception: any Grade 7 can command someone not of his Service as though he were a Grade 5 in that Service.) All citizens must display a badge giving their name, grade, Service, and personal ID number. Most Services also have a uniform their members wear while on duty; Interworld's are crimson and midnight blue.

There are hundreds of Services, some of which employ only a few hundred thousand people. The most powerful Services are Agriculture, Education, Energy, Health, Interworld, Justice, and Logistics. The Military

Service is poised to become more important with Centrum's new interventionism, as is the new Uplift Service (p. 54).

At the top, the Grade 7 coordinators compete to set policy, working through their general assembly, the Forum, which holds supreme power. Unofficial factions determine broad policy: the *Interventionists* dominate at the moment. They introduced the new policies permitting exploration of and (largely covert) interference in inhabited timelines. The discovery of Secundus vindicated them in the eyes of the *Pragmatics*, whose main goal is protecting Centrum from external threats or domestic disturbances. The main opposition group today is the *Progressives*, who want further improvements to Centrum's resource base and technology and a general increase in global wealth and living allowances before taking on large-scale projects.

Security

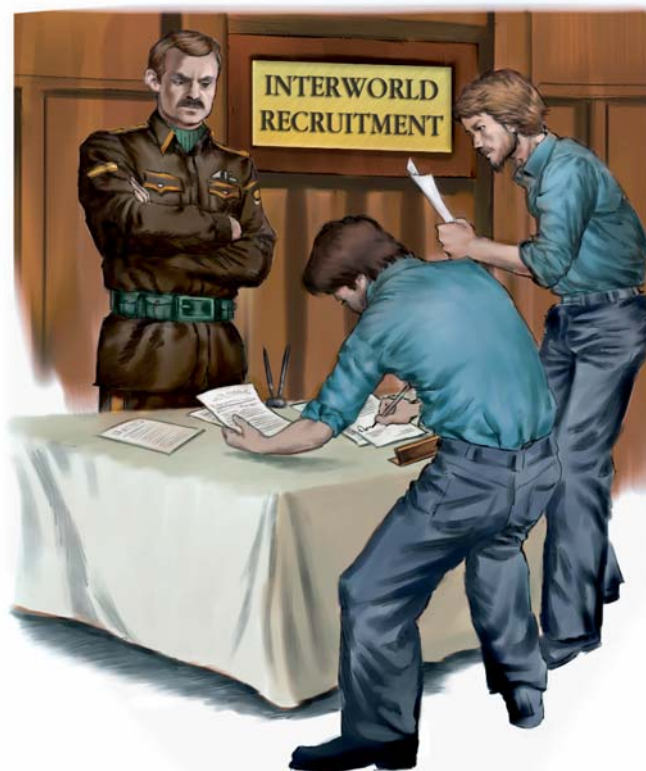
There is no single "Security Service." The Justice Service handles crime – and trespassing or possession of unauthorized items is a crime – but each Service handles its own building and equipment security and many don't like to call in Justice. Service complexes have the usual building security systems – ID checks, cameras, and so forth.

The Logistics Service has software that tracks purchases and compares them with grade income, so the black market has to work in kind rather than using money. There is no paper or coined money anyway: credits only exist electronically.

Citizen IDs contain encoded retinal patterns and DNA sequences; they are *extremely* difficult to forge at TL8 or below. The computer network which keeps track of authorizations, on the other hand, is not as secure as Centrum thinks it is. Hackers who have familiarity with Centran systems and an access terminal (both admittedly difficult to acquire) never experience a penalty higher than -5, and -2 is more common.

Education

Younger children are educated in a variety of schools, and older ones go to



Service Colleges, but every citizen attends a Lyceum from ages 10 to 16. The keystone of the powerful Education Service, Lyceums are boarding schools (home visits are allowed bimonthly), which teach basic skills (p. 191) and inculcate correct attitudes. During their time at the Lyceums, students are repeatedly tested; the Education Service is skilled at identifying aptitudes of all sorts. Students are subtly, or sometimes blatantly, encouraged to join particular Services based on the results. Anyone

showing psionic aptitude is channeled into a special program run by several Services – the Interworld Service essentially drafts world-jumpers, along with teleporters and astral projectors. Lyceums also use attention- and memory-enhancing drugs and TL8 sleep teachers, among other advanced educational protocols. The Education Service has tried outright mental conditioning, but it found that such imposed thought patterns tend to fade over a few months or years.

Indentureds

Centrum's population is small enough to have a rough time supporting its civilization, let alone making efficient use of all the other worlds within reach. One answer is automation, and Centrum does make fairly extensive use of TL8 robots – but many tasks require too much flexibility for machines.

Human workers from other timelines are an increasingly popular solution. These are not Service recruits; they are not citizens at all. Rather, Centrum offers contracts of indenture: standard terms are 30 years of labor with paid upkeep and settlement on a colony world at the end. Indentureds have few rights, and cannot become citizens (although their children can) unless a Service official buys out their contract and sponsors them. It is illegal to coerce anyone into signing a contract of indenture, but perfectly acceptable to recruit, say, political prisoners from Reich-2 (p. 142) or future sacrifices from the Tenochca Empire on Ezcalli (p. 122).

Values and Morality

Centrum's basic values are order, rationality, and success. Order is identified with the unified state, and its natural opposites are anarchy and war. Most Centrans even view technological progress with suspicion, because of its potential for social disruption. Rationality means facing reality, and is manifest in successfully accomplishing one's goals. Centrum admires unclouded vision and unflinching will, of the sort that rebuilt the world after the Last War; thus, ruthlessness is very nearly a *virtue* to them.

Centrum does ascribe value to human life, and prefers to avoid killing people. It has no patience with discrimination on any grounds except talent. The good of society is assumed to outweigh the good of any single member, and a major cause for concern is the recent growth of personal ambition, and even corruption, in the upper ranks.

Living in a culturally uniform society, Centrans are generally narrow-minded, and tend to blame disagreements on irrationality in their opponents. Even Centrans of opposing philosophies have trouble coming to grips with each other's arguments, and they all find it difficult to conceive of a viewpoint that does not share most of their assumptions.

Centrans are expansionist for different reasons: some see gaining control of other worlds as a pre-emptive strike against any possible threat, some see it as a humanitarian intervention, and some think any increase of power is its own justification. All prefer to concentrate on the more advanced worlds: those are the ones which might discover parachronics, the ones in danger of having their own Last War, and the ones that are richest if they can only be organized properly. In any case, the logic of Centran expansion has no limits: only an undivided sovereign power is adequate safeguard against a repeat of the Last War. Some coordinators despair at this – there are, in theory, an infinity of worlds, and there is no physical reason that the number of accessible ones should not keep growing without bound.



Lifestyles

Personal wealth plays little role in Centran society, and the complexities of the economy have no effect on daily life. Citizens get basic needs free, although they only become really comfortable (by 21st-century American standards) around Grade 3 – a deliberate policy to encourage aspiration to higher rank. Furthermore, many types of equipment are illegal for personal use. If you need a stun gun, an airplane, or a general-purpose computer professionally, your Service assigns it to you; if you don't, you have no business buying one. Centrum's Control Rating is 5. The Justice Service is commendably devoted, but it sees no point in legal niceties that might stop them from quick apprehension and punishment of criminals; e.g., interrogation under drugs is routine. Personal freedoms are permitted where they don't interfere with public order: for example, there is free speech, but the Services control all publishing and broadcasting. Centrans work an eight-hour day six days out of seven; they get Sunday off as a holdover from official Christianity. (Centrum does not acknowledge religion publicly; practice is free but not organized. Radical preaching against Centrum is considered treasonous disunity, just like any radical threat.) TV is monotonous, but the music, mostly imported from other timelines, is extremely varied and surprisingly high in quality.

Recreational drugs of several varieties are legal and common, though frowned upon by the upper grades.

Technology

Centrum is basically TL8, with a few TL9 devices. Not valuing rapid technological progress, it has been at TL8 for almost a century, and its machines bear the marks of decades of slow improvement: they are reliable and rugged rather than flashy and "cutting-edge." Standardized power cells are used for all equipment that doesn't connect to the electricity grid. Computers are very common, but usually limited-program; there are lots of special-purpose networks, but no Internet. Aside from communications and weather satellites, Centrum has no space program worth mentioning; astrophysics is useful solely for what it reveals about parachronics or high-energy physics, and Centrum has plenty of resources on other Earths that don't require vacuum suits.

Centrum is extremely rich as a society and has access to phenomenal amounts of raw materials. It disposes of trash, and much industrial waste, on the lifeless Q8 world Omega. Nuclear fission is perhaps the most common source of electricity, since the Energy Service doesn't need to worry about waste disposal. Some heavy industry has been relocated to the colony worlds, but ecological controls are in effect in all the worlds Centrans inhabit.

Most Centrants live in the cities and use public rail systems to commute between their apartment buildings and Service complexes. Although old-style districts still exist in many towns, modern Centran architecture tends heavily toward gigantic glass-and-concrete boxes. The cities are linked by air, since the Transport Service deemed rebuilding the passenger rail network inefficient and ecologically unsound. Hydrogen fuel-cell automobiles are common in the countryside, but few are privately owned; the Services, especially Agriculture, assign them for appropriate uses. Cargo transport is by GEV truck and ship, many of them equipped with parachronic field generators programmed to travel to one other worldline.

Medicine

Centran medicine is basically TL8, with TL9 treatments against contagious diseases thanks to decades of experience against wild bioweapons. Centrants who travel to other worlds get panimmunity treatments (Resistant to Disease +8) as a matter of routine. Centrum is capable of human cloning but lacks forced-growth tanks, so clones are only created as a special privilege for sterile citizens, public heroes, or unusually successful coordinators. The Progressives support large-scale cloning to increase Centrum's demographic base, but have failed to win the necessary commitment of resources to rear so many parentless children. Bionic implants are available in Centrum, but most citizens don't have any need for them (they are, of course, legally restricted) aside from pacemakers and the like. Centrum's scientists have not yet cracked the neural interface problem, though they can manage prosthetics with simple, reflexive controls. Implanted communicators and hold-out weapons are common among I.S. personnel who travel in dangerous Zones.

CENTRUM PARACHRONICS

According to current Centrum theory, an uncountable number of alternate timelines are arrayed in

Centrum World Classification

Centrum classifies worlds in two fashions: by Wave and by Zone. The Wave is equivalent to Homeline's "Quantum," although Centrum calls its own level (Quantum 8) Wave Zero, and Homeline's (Quantum 5), for example, Wave Minus Three. Centrum can reach Waves Minus Two (Q6) through Two (Q10). (For the sake of clarity, even this section uses Homeline terminology.) Centrum also classifies all parallel worlds relative to themselves politically, for purposes of travel and other permitted activities.

Zone Violet: The original homeworld.

Zone Indigo: Colony worlds with no other humans. Unlimited access available to any Centrum citizen. There are three Indigo lines on Q8 and one on Q9; each has a few million people.

Zone Blue: Empty worlds, including those naturally inimical to human life. Access restricted by Interworld Service for safety reasons. One Blue worldline on Q8, Omega, is the official "waste disposal" worldline. There are also Q6, Q7, and Q10 Blue lines that could be colonies but have not yet been exploited.

Zone Green: Worlds with natives under adequate control. Travel restricted to Interworld and Uplift Service, and Grade 5s of any Service.

Zone Yellow: Worlds without established control, with natives too primitive to pose a serious threat. This category includes the five known post-holocaust worlds on Q8. Access limited to Interworld and Uplift Service agents of Grade 3 or higher, or to licensed Mining Service agents under I.S. supervision.

Zone Orange: Worlds without established control, with natives who have or could soon develop technology sufficient for parachronics (TL7+). Access restricted to I.S. agents with authorization from an I.S. Grade 5 or higher.

Zone Red: Hostile worlds, and those with capabilities (TL8+, psionics, or parachronics) which make them a potential danger. Access restricted to I.S. agents with authorization from an I.S. Grade 6 or higher.

Nomenclature

Until recently, Centrum used Greek-letter designations for the empty worlds that were its major concern: the three colony worlds in Zone Indigo are Alpha, Beta, and Gamma, for instance. The I.S. now officially uses a number/letter/number code that gives Wave, Zone, and date of first contact. For example, Homeline is Minus Three/R/2015.16.3. In practice, I.S. agents use and imitate Infinity's system of names based on the historical point of divergence or notable features in the present.

9-dimensional space – but parachronic travel can reach only a small number. Active parachronic technology induces a polarization effect, so that travelers from the originating world can only reach the timelines in an 8-space band. Within this band, the timelines condense into waves ("quanta" to Homeliners), becoming increasingly difficult to reach.

The timelines are configured in a mathematically predictable pattern that changes slightly over time,

though parachronic travel to a timeline tends to restrict its movements. Worlds can even switch quantum, or wander into the accessible band from outside – a "new" timeline appears every few years. Events within a timeline also affect its configuration, so that timelines move fractionally closer with historical events that are "similar" (a word with a precise scientific meaning to parachronic physicists), or farther apart with events that are "dissimilar."

Timelines can theoretically have very different physical laws, but only fairly similar ones can ever be accessible. Most of them have *slightly* different physical laws, usually on the sub-particulate stage. Centrum can reach a few worlds with significantly different natural laws, and a few timelines with science so advanced that it's hard to tell if they have the same laws. Centrum believed parachronic physics to be a mature science until the late 1990s, when a flood of anomalous data from more sensitive detectors called everything into question. In 2015, the Interworld Service discovered the existence of Secundus, another timeline of crossworld travelers. Parachronic technology is so sensitive to minute variations in physical law that it should only function in a few timelines, and Centrum's paraphysicists were confident that these lines would repel each other: none could be closer than Q1 or Q15. So what else are they wrong about?

Centrum Parachronic Technology

Like Infinity, Centrum uses conveyors (which it calls shuttles) and projectors (which it calls stations) to transport people and goods across the worldlines. Like Infinity, Centrum can only send an unassisted conveyor between worlds in the same quantum. Like Infinity, their conveyors need a parachronic generator (also about 1/200 of the conveyor's mass) and a pulsed power system to provide energy for the jump. Infinity conveyors need 200 kJ of energy per ton, but the more efficient and mature Centrum designs require only 100 kJ per ton. Like Infinity designs, however, the power system costs \$50 and weighs 5 lbs. per kJ. Centrum parachronics are more reliable than Infinity systems; add +2 to Electronics Operation (Parachronic) skill for a Centrum-built conveyor or projector.

Jumps across quanta require stations. Centrum has almost a thousand stations scattered over its surface, mostly around urban centers. It even has four seaborne stations that can be towed to any point in the oceans. In addition to serving as transport hubs, these stations monitor the timelines: from these main stations, Centrum

Parachronic Communications

To send messages between worlds, Centrum uses 10-lb. message-capsule conveyors, often equipped with radio transmitters and a ducted-fan engine to carry them to a safe height for the jump. Manned conveyors have an independent internal "mailbox" that they use when out-quantum, exchanging it regularly with a corresponding mailbox at home (as long as they are still in range of a station). Message drones are not used as often on Q6 and Q7 missions: Centrum isn't sure how good Infinity's scanning techniques are, but it's best to err on the side of caution.

can reliably detect parachronic jumps among all accessible quanta. (Homeline can only detect jumps within the same worldline.) After 10 minutes and a successful Physics (Parachronic) roll, an operator at such a station (or examining its data) can tell the type of jump – projector, conveyor, banestorm, etc. – and its quantum of origin. After an hour's analysis and a second successful roll, he can determine the specific worldline of origin (or its parachronic coordinates, if it's an unfamiliar line), and the physical location of the jump (within a few miles). On a critical success, he can determine the mass of the jump.

Centrum also uses parachronic detectors on other worldlines, but they can only detect jumps into the same worldline in which the detector is located, assuming the operator makes an Electronics Operation (Sensors) roll. They can only detect type and direction; to get a specific quantum, worldline, or jump location requires two or more detectors to "triangulate" on a reading. Local detectors take three times as long to determine specific information (so determining the jump's type and quantum requires half an hour of work), and determining specific worldlines and jump locations requires a Physics (Parachronic) roll at -3. A local detector can fit into a bulky backpack; it costs \$600,000, weighs 45 lbs. and has a 1,000-yard range. If the operator has time to set up antennas at least 12 feet away from the detector unit in all directions, range is expanded to two miles. Larger units weigh 125 lbs. and cost \$1.2 million for each extra two miles of range.

Centrum parachronic stations can retrieve shuttles within a half-mile of their relative location in space, except for two-quantum jumps, which

require spatial identity within 200 yards. Two-quantum jumps are difficult at the best of times; they can only occur during a quantum "window" about an hour long. Centrum computers can predict windows about four days in advance, but are wrong about the last day about one time in six.

THE INTERWORLD SERVICE

All parachronic travel is technically the province of the Interworld Service, and it runs all of Centrum's parachronic stations. In practice it delegates much of the routine transport among the safe zones to the various industrial Services, but otherwise jealously guards its monopoly. Calling in the Military Service, although sometimes necessary, is a serious black mark against an I.S. agent; this can give a bad situation a chance to get far out of control.

The Interworld Service maintains its own enforcers in order to avoid such embarrassments, and trains its scouts and covert agents for combat. (That said, the main I.S. weapons are the stunner and the needler; there is a strong cultural predisposition toward subtlety within Interworld.) The I.S. values finesse as well as ordinary success, and encourages the use of local resources. Its agents are supposed to take a long view, which accounts for their preference for secrecy and infiltration over quick-and-dirty interference: they want to maintain maximum freedom of action.

Interworld has millions of personnel – it is far larger than its Secundan analog, the Infinity Patrol. However, agents considered adequately trained

to plan or complete missions on uncontrolled timelines are uncommon, and those teams make it worse by competing for the limited missions available. Harsh internal criticism does insure that every mission is thoroughly planned, with fail-safes and backups, but it also cuts down the total number of operations.

Recruiting in Other Worlds

Centrum respects talent, and Interworld is painfully aware of how narrow its skill base can be. Under a 2012 amendment to the Lockridge Protocols, the Interworld Service has the right to invite “especially worthy” outtimers to sign up as Grade 1 trainees. Candidates then endure a battery of tests for existing abilities, potential, and reliability, so the Service knows what to do with them. Testing poorly probably means being stuck in unimportant roles; failing the loyalty test brings either restricted movements and close monitoring (for those too valuable to lose) or exile – or even execution, if the candidate is viewed as a potential danger. (The agent who recruited an executed candidate can count on nuclear waste disposal duty for the rest of his career, at best.) Testing well, officially, can qualify an outtimer for probationary citizenship.

Outtimers are the only group who suffer from widespread social prejudice on Centrum. Officially, recruits have the same chance for promotion as anyone else; unofficially, the I.S. is likely to peg them to mid-level positions without much chance of advancement, especially if they were chosen in the first place because of a special talent for science, languages, or psionics.

Interworld Policies

The Interworld Service has no way of investigating timelines besides sending people in to take a look. Normally the first survey plants several teams in sites where most timelines have important cities (Jericho, Constantinople, London, Nanking, New Orleans). After that, they use aerial surveys in Zones Blue and Yellow, lots more agents in Zone Orange, and a few hand-picked agents in Zone Red.

It is important to note that

Centrum has no general policy of secrecy about parachronics. In Zone Yellow, agents usually pose as “visitors from afar,” and use high-tech equipment almost freely; Centrum doesn’t really care what the natives think as long as they’re not a threat. In at least two low-tech worlds (including Arachne, a Quantum 7 former echo in the 16th century) the Uplift Service has deliberately revealed the existence of Centrum in the process of creating puppet governments.

In Zones Orange and Red, the I.S. is much more cautious, and strictly forbids revelation of parachronic travel to anyone who might conceivably build their own conveyors. If they know enough about how the locals think, they will have a cover story planned to fit the local conspiracy mythology in case of exposure. For a late-20th-century echo, they would bring in a UFO or black helicopter. Centrum’s primary goal is always to attain a level of influence sufficient to block the development of parachronics. But most I.S. personnel also want to be in a position to save any other timeline from a Last War, which strengthens their general preference for timelines with a hegemonic power over those with competing states. Centrum usually picks one side (the one they think they can infiltrate and modify most easily) and subtly builds it up while undercutting its rivals. If Infinity shows up on the other side, Interworld weighs the options – going deep underground to sabotage the Patrol, openly providing one side with high-tech weapons and advisers, or something in between.

Interworld and the Echoes

Almost 300 Quantum 6 timelines duplicate Secundus at some earlier point in its history. Parachronic physicists believe that having Secundus’ parachronics operating so close to Centrum’s is creating an interference effect attracting these timelines from outside the accessible band. Granted, these are the same scientists who were certain Secundus could not exist, but there is still evidence for their new theory: the echoes go through predictable periods of *paratemporal instability*. During such periods (about a third of the time), an echo can shift configuration very easily, and outtimers’ interference in their histories can cause them to shift to another quantum – sometimes across several at once! (See *Timeline Shifting*, p. 104.) After a major change to local history the timeline tends to stabilize in place, whether it shifted or not.

As a result, the echoes have become the major “front” in the war with Secundus. Most scientists agree that shifting enough of the echoes into higher quanta will eventually cause Secundus itself to shift to a lower quantum via an action-reaction principle, possibly even out of the accessible band altogether. Centrum is also attracted by the idea of adding to the worlds available for eventual exploitation. Operations on many Q9 and Q10 timelines have been put on hold while the Interworld Service concentrates on the echoes: if Centrum doesn’t seize them now, it may never be able to.

Interworld Thinking

Field agents of the Interworld Service are often more broad-minded than their coordinators, but they still have trouble understanding radically different viewpoints like democracy or fundamentalist religion. Secundus confuses them terribly because of Infinity’s leasing parachronics to governments and corporations. Even those coordinators who might favor negotiation with Secundus see it as an anarchy – between Infinity, the U.N., and powerful national governments, there’s no one to sign a treaty *with*!

Interworld Service agents are trained to take a long view, which is one reason they prefer infiltration to visible intervention. The other is that massive force means losing control of local affairs to the Military or Uplift Service.

At present, Centrum has shifted nine echoes to Q7 and six to Q8 or higher; two were sent to Q5 by mistaken calculations. Four more have accidentally been shifted to a higher quantum by Secundus, which has also moved three to lower quanta (and one back to Q6 from Q7): Infinity can rarely judge the effects of an intervention.

The Uplift Service

Split off from the Interworld Service in 2012, with some personnel from several other Services, the Uplift Service is assigned the job of civilizing the less developed timelines where Centrum has acquired control. With recent policy changes and the war against Secundus, there are many more such worlds than in the past, and Centrum is finding the task more of a strain than anticipated.

Uplift is essentially divided into private fiefs of small coordinator groups, each with its own idea of how best to modify a world for immediate exploitation and long-term absorption. They are being given an unusually free hand: the consensus is that the only rational way to proceed is to try many different systems and check back in a generation to see how successful they have been. Rather hard on the natives, but their current chaotic squalor is not very attractive either.

CENTRUM CAMPAIGNS

The most obvious use of Centrum is as a villain in the default Infinite Worlds campaign. The home world generally remains offstage, but Infinity Unlimited would dearly love to know more about its enemy. Patrolmen who prove exceptionally good at infiltration (or at ticking off their superiors) may find themselves assigned to visit Quantum 8 via a nexus portal or psionic world-jumper and report back. The odds of survival, let alone success, are not good unless the recon team has an edge – a rogue Centran to train or even guide them, at least, and perhaps also special resources like psionics, magic, or strange technology. Centrum seems very vulnerable to magic; it just doesn't fit *at all* in their technocratic,

rational worldview. Although Centrum is a no-mana world, the Patrol could always find a mana-enhancing reality shard somewhere to help bring the fun in. The prize for success would be information: how Centrum thinks in general, how they calculate timeline shifts, or perhaps news of a major Centrum operation to stop just in the nick of time (see *Centrum Plots to Foil*, below).

The Infinity War

Generally, however, Centrants show up on other timelines. Quantum 6 is the major focus of the struggle, but the Interworld Service operates everywhere. Centrum has a lot less trouble infiltrating a relatively open society like Homeline than vice versa, so they might even show up in low-quantum worlds, although they would need a special reason to risk it. No such reason is necessary on Q7 or even Q6: Centrum gives the Interworld Service all the resources needed to operate within its natural sphere of influence.

Centrum can also appear as an adversary in other crossworld campaigns: it would probably just try to recruit any independent travelers, but

it would be remorselessly opposed to any threat to its parachronic monopoly. (But make sure that it can't invade directly, to keep the campaign a war of influence instead of just a war.) Although the Military Service is small compared to Homeline armies (only half a million men), it is expert at blitzkrieg-style strikes on lower-tech foes, and with its TL9 weaponry, it would be a mouthful even for some high-tech armies.

In either case, Centrants can fit any "secret agent" character type. It is often difficult to fit continuing NPCs into a crossworld campaign, but a Centran could be the mastermind whose schemes the players cross, the shadowy contact who gives them information but has a private agenda, or the misguided professional rival (usually of the opposite sex) who tries to recruit the PCs . . . or at least the most attractive one.

Playing Centrants

Players could also participate in the infinity war from the other side. Some groups may like to play the villains now and then. Or they could play outtimers recruited from situations

Centrum Plots to Foil

Infinity Unlimited has no idea that one of Centrum's reasons for "stealing" echo timelines is to try and shift Homeline into a lower quantum. In fact, Centrum is trying to adjust timeline configurations to shift it from Quantum 5 all the way to Quantum 3. Not only would that strand all the Homeliners unlucky enough to be on Q6 and Q7, it would make Homeline easily accessible by conveyor from the dangerous Q3 lines such as Merlin-1 (p. 134), Reich-5, and Shikaku-mon (p. 146).

A group of Pragmatics and Progressives has been arguing for a different approach: build a large conveyor-equipped armada on one of the echoes shifted to Q8, then deliberately shift it through Q6 into Q5 and invade Homeline directly. The main argument against this tactic has been the expense: although the Infinity Patrol is fairly small, the collective armed forces of Homeline dwarf the Military Service. But if Centrum were to gain more advanced weaponry (say, from Caliph, p. 117) or find allies among Homeline terrorists, it might try it.

A small faction of coordinators favor offering parachronic technology to worlds in other quanta, calculating that a partnership could control the other worlds more easily than Centrum alone. This viewpoint is unlikely to gain much popularity in the Forum, but if some setback panicked Centrum badly enough they might try to create a second front for Infinity on Q3 or Q4. (Reich-5 makes a spookily tempting target for such an offer.) Centran renegades are more likely to try this, since breaking secrecy would be one way to win high position in a parallel world!

horrible enough for Centrum to seem like a savior. If they want to try fixing up their home timeline or timelines, the Interworld Service allows them to implement any plan that leaves Centrum in charge. If they are really successful, they may be transferred to the Uplift Service, and told to do it again!

Alternatively, the GM can make Centrum nicer, and perhaps get rid of the dimension war entirely. There is still a basic difference in approach: while the Infinity Patrol spends most of its time cleaning up other people's messes, the Interworld Service places more emphasis on making messes of their own.

If the players are going to try "stealing" an echo, the stereotypical Centrum mission, they need a historical change: the GM can assign one, or, if the players know their history, they can try to figure something out themselves. Anything that makes Homeline history more like Centrum is fair game (see *Putting a Little English On It*, p. 87) – but the direction of shift usually can't be calculated for nuking cities and similar gross shifts. Players should also remember to have a back-up plan in case their first try doesn't work.

The most common Interworld Service mission, actually, is long-term infiltration, building up Centrum's power structure on a given timeline or acquiring knowledge as safely as they possibly can. Player groups are more likely to be assigned brief support missions, brought in to provide expertise that the infiltrators need to improve their position – often through illegal

Alternate Infinite Wars

The dimension war can be a very stable setting: neither side really has the resources to exclude the other completely, and they are immune to direct attack. But GMs who want to upset the applecart have several options, too. First, another timeline could get parachronics and try to carve out its own (single-quantum) sphere of influence; Reich-5 is on the cusp of being just such a threat, and if the Chronobahn (p. 79) extends outside Q3, it could be an even worse one. To alter the current balance even farther, perhaps some unexplained shift knocks Reich-5 into Quantum 6, right between Homeline and Centrum!

For a major change to the existing setting, have the echo shifts finally create the backlash Centran scientists theorize and shift Homeline to Quantum 4 or Quantum 3. Or have it work, but not quite as expected: shift Secundus to Quantum 6 and turn the game into an open war. Or shift Homeline out of the accessible band entirely – a victory! Of course, then Centrum has to deal with the Infinity personnel left behind, who suddenly have a *lot* less incentive to keep parachronics secret, and a reason for revenge on a *massive* scale. Or shift *Centrum* to Q9 or Q10 ("whoops, inverted the sign in that equation") and give it a whole new set of worlds to worry about.

A technological breakthrough is another possibility. Psionic world-jumpers can travel between quanta indefinitely far from Centrum or Secundus: that would let the "Infinite Worlds" live up to their name. If the technique (or some other that ignores quantum restrictions) gets brought from outside by another crossworld culture, the dimension war would gain a participant that might even force Centrum into alliance with Infinity.

means like breaking and entering, theft, or "vanishing" some individual.

Investigation missions are another possibility: Centrum is continually on the alert for Infinity's influence, and in the process has frequently uncovered anomalies in worlds they thought they understood. There are also straightforward survey missions, either to newly appeared timelines or to worlds Centrum is only now getting around

to examining in depth (usually because they now have someone who can stumble through the local languages). Some Zone Yellow worlds surely have undiscovered features – a barbarian world might turn out to be post-holocaust, with remnants of the old high culture still around, or a local superstition about magic might turn out to be rooted in some sort of fact.



Centrum Dark, Centrum Light

Centrans as presented in the default Infinite Worlds setting are *not* nice people. While not especially corrupt, they are faintly paranoid, often narrow-minded, and definitely ruthless. (Or, in their eyes: concerned with defense, impatient with archaic or senseless practices, and pragmatic in their determination to accomplish their goals.) It's easy enough to make them even more villainous; all they need is a suitably vicious ideology. Although that ecological niche would seem well filled by Reich-5, perhaps Centrum is an atheist, Communist technocracy full of gulags for recalcitrant Arabic-speakers. This can set up a nice "WWII, Again" scenario as Infinity has to ally with its mortal foes to defeat a different batch of mortal foes.

GMs who want a nicer Centrum, perhaps as a home base for PCs, can transform it without too much trouble. Credit it with genuine good intentions towards other timelines (of course, it may still have trouble understanding foreign viewpoints), and give Centrum Light more regard for individuals in place of their end-justifies-the-means communitarianism. Play up their genuine abhorrence of racism and sexism, and their devout concern for the ecology and for equality of opportunity. Centrum Light could even have a democratically elected Parliament in place of the Forum, although it would be fun to play with variant democracy. Perhaps everyone has votes equal to their citizenship grade, and actual candidacy for office is restricted to Grade 7s. Homeline can be replaced with a more villainous timeline, removed from the setting altogether, or even kept the same, with both sides coming to see past the nasty stereotypes each has of the other.

Perhaps this can lead to true evolution in Centrum, letting it accept partners instead of rivals or subjects. Centrum and Homeline could anchor a Federation of Worlds, spread across hundreds of parallel Earths, pooling their technology and resources, planting colonies, and sending diplomats and scholars to more primitive worlds. The Interworld Service and Infinity could become multi-world institutions handling exploration – and defense against a fully mobilized Reich-5 and its Thousand-World Dream.

Playing the Uplift Service

One possible campaign could involve a team of Uplift Service coordinators assigned to "civilize" a Zone Yellow (or possibly Orange) world. In order to absorb the worldline eventually, long-term cultural changes will likely be needed (see *Try to Change the World*, p. 105). The basic goals are political unity, meritocratic hierarchy,

and technical progress (up to a stable TL5 or 6, anyway); it would be a nice bonus to make them English-speaking. The means used are completely up to the players: they have a large budget and a few hundred personnel, but are unlikely to get much more help without impressive intermediate results. The GM should be generous with equipment requested at the beginning of the campaign, but stingy

with afterthoughts. ("You *do* have an entire world of your *own*; surely you can find a tank-killing robot *somewhere*.")

Such a campaign features a lot of player freedom and a more reactive GM role – but plan on some surprises, and don't forget that Infinity is likely to interfere if they can. Consult *Worldline Conquest Made (Relatively) Easy* on p. 208 for more suggestions. Centrans are likely to underestimate the natives, confusing primitive with stupid, and being confused whenever they don't act "rationally" – which is to say, like Centrans. Centrum's leaders also underestimate the danger that an Uplift team, in learning to understand the natives, might come to identify with them. This could lead to some interesting moral conflicts among the PCs themselves (or the players!) or with their superiors and subordinates.



Renegades

A campaign could also be built around a team that breaks away from Centrum. The game could start with renegades, or with an agent group that slowly becomes disillusioned with their superiors and decides to strike out on their own. If they go over to Infinity Unlimited, they might tip the balance of power. Finding a niche for themselves in some other timeline ought to be possible, but would not make for very good gaming unless they were trying to carve out an empire, ran across something unexpected, or both. Creating a new group of crossworld travelers is also a possibility, but would bring down the wrath of Centrum and Infinity together.

REICH-5

This parallel diverged from Homeline with the assassination of President-elect Franklin Roosevelt by Giuseppe Zangara in 1933, and the return of the United States to isolationism. While America sank further into depression and despair, Hitler's Germany and Imperial Japan destroyed the Western Allies. Emboldened by this victory, the fascist Union Party swept to power in the United States under William Dudley Pelley (leader of the Silver Shirts paramilitary organization he modeled on the Brownshirts) in 1944.

After German troops and atomic weapons crushed the American anti-fascist movement, the United States became a partner in the World-Axis along with Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. America slowly crumbled, never quite able to shoulder its share of the totalitarian burden, but never quite able to throw off the fascist yoke. Germany pursued the iron dream into space, and Japan retreated ever further into its bushido fantasies, the two powers dimly aware that they only had each other to blame, to conquer, and to learn from. Corrupt governors and generals began to pursue their own ends as ideologies born in war and conquest softened and decayed in the endless peace.

Then came the *Ausbruch*, the "breakout" into other worlds. Suddenly, the Reich had new worlds to conquer – and the destiny of the Aryan race to mold on a thousand timelines. Fortunately, the Reich as a whole doesn't know it . . . yet.

HISTORY

Hitler Victorious

The Great Depression spawned demagogues in all the world's Great Powers, from pacifists in Britain to socialists in France and fascists in Germany. All three types were active in the United States. FDR's assassination left the country adrift, and it moved from the well-meaning liberalism of President John Nance Garner to the "strong hand" of Republican President Charles Lindbergh, who

publicly proclaimed that fascism was the "wave of the future." America's socialists and communists opposed him, and when the Depression continued to deepen, Lindbergh was voted out in 1940 in favor of the socialist Democrat Henry Wallace.

By then, Hitler's blitzkrieg had swallowed Poland and toppled France in weeks. Had the United States sent aid, Britain might have survived, but without FDR, America remained trapped in isolationism and depression. With the fall of Britain to unrestricted submarine warfare in October, Hitler was free to turn on his ally Stalin, launching "Operation Barbarossa" in May, 1941. By September, Moscow had fallen to the panzers of the Third Reich. Operating on interior lines, the Nazis easily withstood the uncoordinated counterattacks of the primitive Red Army, and by the end of 1942, the Soviet Union had been conquered and incorporated by Germany as the Reichsostland. The Second World War was over.

As Germany swallowed Europe (and by extension, Africa), Japan conquered the East, from the invasion of Manchuria in 1931 to the fall of Australia in 1943. China ground down the Japanese Army in guerrilla warfare, and the invasion of India stalled in Bengal, but the Japanese military commanded virtually the entire Pacific rim. Its only obstacle was depression-ridden, unstable, isolationist America. On September 2, 1944, the Japanese struck the American bases in the Philippines, Guam, and Hawaii simultaneously. The Japanese attack was the deathblow to American democracy.

America Destroyed

America's fascist movements, created by the Depression and energized by Hitler's victories, had grown steadily for over a decade. Their leader was William Dudley Pelley of North Carolina, whose Silver Shirt brigade was modeled on Hitler's brownshirted SA. Pelley and other American fascists, including the anti-Semitic "radio priest" Father Charles Coughlin, Lawrence Dennis, G.S. Viereck, and

Seward Collins, formed the Union Party in 1936 to bring fascism to America. Wallace's economic radicalism proved unworkable, and along with his increasing tendency to rule by the mob, he succeeded only in driving increasing numbers of Americans into the Union Party. Pelley joined Lindbergh's Republicans as the Vice-Presidential candidate in the 1944 election on a "unity ticket" that raced ahead of Wallace in the polls.

Wallace was unable to gain the support of industry or the military, which he had thoroughly alienated during his term. An unknown gunman shot and killed Lindbergh on October 22, 1944, and Pelley was swept into the Presidency amidst rioting and chaos while Japanese carrier forces bombed Los Angeles and Seattle and blocked the Panama Canal. The German invasion of Canada in 1945 only added to the chaos, and Pelley declared martial law and a state of emergency. Republicans and Democrats alike rejected Pelley's seizure of dictatorial powers, and Pelley called on Germany to help "restore order" in the United States. Senator Robert Taft of Ohio emerged as the leader of the anti-Pelley opposition, and was nominated by both the Democrats and the Republicans in 1948. Pelley's Union Party thugs, the so-called "Union Army," were more interested in battling the U.S. Army and lynching blacks and Jews than in defending the country, and only Japan's continuing meat-grinder in China and India prevented an actual Japanese invasion. When Pelley blatantly stole the election from Taft, it escalated the situation into wholesale civil warfare and the Germans sent 40 divisions into America on Pelley's side.

Even the slightest chance of success for the anti-Pelley forces evaporated when Werner Heisenberg invented the atomic bomb in 1950. After secret tests in the Reichsostland, the bomb was used on four American cities on June 27, 1950. Resistance collapsed abruptly, and Nazi Germany was the master of three continents when Adolf Hitler died on October 31, 1951.

Deutschland Über Alles

Following a brief behind-the-scenes power struggle, Reinhard Heydrich, the second-in-command of the SS, became the Nazi Führer and set about consolidating Germany's gains, formalizing the division of India with Japan, completing the pacification of America and Russia, and beginning the German conquest of space. When Japan and America signed the Washington-Tokyo Axis in 1961, Heydrich established the World-Axis to cement the three great fascist powers' alliance, increasing the role of fascist America to balance Imperial Japan. In 1965, Germany transferred Canada to American administration to compensate for the loss of Alaska, Hawaii, and the Philippines to Japan. When Heydrich died in 1975, German jackboots had walked on the moon and Mars, and America's dictators were fully integrated into the German world system.

Resistance to the World-Axis was sporadic, the most serious being the "Uprising of '76" in America, which the SS only put down after leveling five cities and decimating the population in rebel areas. Führer Viktor Alchsneiss followed that victory with the destruction of rebels in Afghanistan and Peru; saturation bombing with neutron warheads wiped them out in 1983. Since then, the rule of the Third Reich over an enslaved world has run ever more smoothly with the orbiting of global spy satellites, the invention of sophisticated computer surveillance technology, and the slow but steady expansion of Hitler's dream to the stars.

GEOPOLITIK

Although fascist Italy and Argentina still maintain some freedom of action, dominating satellite states of their own such as Turkey and Peru, they remain essentially appendages of German imperial policy and economics. Finland, Suid-Afrika, and Spain are nearly independent, with their own corporate cartels, no Gestapo presence to speak of in their cities, and no Luftwaffe or Kriegsmarine bases on their soil. (The same could be said for the Central Asian khanates, or fascist Eire, Mexico, and Brazil, but these marginal states are barely able to keep



their own populations under the heel.) However, they keep their domestic independence only by slavishly following Germany's lead in all external matters, no better than the German puppet states like Vichy France, Hungary, Rumania, Sweden, or Bulgaria. Essentially, the world has three great powers – Germany, Japan, and America – and only two superpowers.

Greater Germany and the Third Reich

Stretching from the mouth of the Rhine to the borders of the Ukraine and from the Baltic Sea to the Alps, *Grossdeutschland* (Greater Germany) adds Denmark, Holland, Switzerland, Austria, Lithuania, Poland, and parts of Belgium and Czechoslovakia to pre-war Germany. Only "true Germans" are allowed to become citizens of Greater Germany, and the 140 million citizens who live in the Nazi heartland lord it over the 35 million Slavs (primarily Czechs and Poles) who perform all the menial labor and household duties in the Reich. German citizens (generally loyal and patriotic; Germany is CR4 for Germans) have the highest standard of living in the world, paid for by immense slave labor factories in the Reichsostland.

Germany's massive autobahns speed agricultural produce, coal, and

iron from the General-Gouvernement-Poland in the east to the industrial furnaces of the Ruhr in the west. Germany's factories, the cleanest and most advanced in the world, turn out enormous quantities of aircraft, motor vehicles, armaments, chemicals, plastics, advanced composites, and optics. Germany resembles a gigantic industrial park, with enormous green spaces and forest belts even in the middle of industrial cities like Munich, Düsseldorf, Breslau, and Brunn. The state scrupulously maintains wildlife refuges and keeps a cradle-to-grave welfare state firmly in place. Giant stadiums, hospitals, and concert halls dominate the skylines of the clean, orderly cities of the Reich.

Behind these Albert Speer marble and granite facades, however, the Reich's internal politics have curdled to poison. Heydrich seized power so completely and effectively upon Hitler's death that he was able to purge his rivals and enforce compliance and discipline throughout the Party. He even managed to bring the SS to heel, thanks to his own network within it. Heydrich was confident enough in his own power to formally nominate a successor, the Baltic German Viktor Alchsneiss, and let him build a power base first as Ostminister, and then as Reichsführer-SS. When Führer Alchsneiss died in 2001, his own hand-picked successor,

Gunther Wallraff, had no such base, having been shuffled from job to job, winding up as Propaganda Minister. Führer Wallraff retains the loyalty of the “Balts” promoted by Alchsneiss (who realize that they will all be purged if someone else becomes Führer), but without the SS, the Wehrmacht, the Luftwaffe, or the Party machinery solidly behind him, Nazi politics have begun to seize up. Individual ministers spend more time spying on each other and jockeying for power than they do moving the Reich forward, and rumors persist of secret murders within the Reichschancellery and bodies dropped silently into the Spree River.

Reichsostland and the Colonies

It is another story in the conquered territories: the murders are no secret, and the bodies are left in piles. Although occupied Paris is almost civilized, and the French farmers have not felt a killing famine in almost 20 years, to the east and south the gloves are off the Nazi fist. (The Reichsostland and the colonies are CR6 for all non-German inhabitants.) The inhabitants of the former Soviet Union (except for the Far Eastern provinces annexed to Manchukuo by Japan) are all slave laborers, the property of the *Ostministerium* (Eastern Ministry) of the Reich. The Reichsostland is divided into five *Reichskommissariate* (Ostland, Ukraine, Caucasus, Muscovy, and Siberia), each under a *Reichskommissar*. Each Reichskommissar is a Nazi Party official, assisted by the overall military commander and the SS commander for the district. Over two million Germans have settled in the Reichsostland (especially in the Ukraine) drawn by the immense supply of free land and slave labor available to German colonists. Many large German cartels maintain immense factories in the East, where the strict environmental and worker-safety laws of Greater Germany do not apply. The cartels dump nuclear, chemical, and other wastes in Siberia, especially in areas already strip-mined of their mineral deposits.

If possible, things are even worse in Africa and India, where the *Reichskolonialamt* (RKA) maintains

order with brutality and massacres, while working millions of slaves to death in uranium mines and coffee plantations. The RKA is a civilian office under the Party, and its security troops are low-class thugs and bullies unfit for either the military or the SS. India is a much-preferred posting for RKA administrators due to its better climate and more sophisticated urban life. Although Nazi rule over India is harsh, resistance to the Reich is far less common there than in Africa. Gangs of Indians work vast textile factories and plantations under native overseers, who report to the RKA. The sizable Wehrmacht garrison in India both keeps order and watches the border of Japanese-run Bengal.

Reichsprotektorat

Reichsprotektorat are nations that exercise some independence in local affairs, but are garrisoned by Wehrmacht troops and have internal order kept by the SS and local secret police. (Most of them are CR5 for good citizens, CR6 for Kurds, Irish, or other troublesome minorities.) Usually, the head of the local fascist party governs a *Reichsprotektorat*, supervised by a German Nazi Party Reichsleiter. The major Reichsprotektorat are Britain, Norway, Egypt, Persia, Arabia, and Mesopotamia. Local fascist parties (Union Fascist and Nasjonal Samling, respectively) run Britain and Norway as national socialist states, with small detachments of Gestapo and large Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine bases. The German military and IG Farben, the chemical cartel responsible for oil production, dominate Egypt, Persia, Arabia, and Mesopotamia.

SS Burgundy

Heinrich Himmler carved the most bizarre state in Europe out of eastern France in 1944. The State of Burgundy, with its capital at Bisanz (in the original French, Besançon), is essentially a feudal fief belonging to the SS, comprising the old provinces of Burgundy and Champagne in France. Governed solely by the SS, Burgundy operates under SS law and outside German governmental jurisdiction. (Its crazy quilt of laws averages out to CR5.) Himmler dreamed of a rebirth of the medieval Teutonic Order's *Ordensstaat*, a crusading state

devoted solely to the SS. Himmler intended Burgundy to provide a pure Aryan homeland for the SS to recruit from, where from cradle to grave no thought but SS orthodoxy would exist. Himmler's mystical beliefs received full play there, and slave laborers rebuilt many medieval castles of the Teutonic Order stone by stone.

Following Himmler's sudden death and the rise of his deputy Heydrich to the position of Führer, Burgundy became a dumping ground for the “occult Aryan” mystics who were preventing useful research into nuclear physics or rocketry. Heydrich promoted the head of the *Ahnenerbe* (the division of the SS concerned with “Ancestral Heritage” and racial-cultural research, including research into parapsychology and occultism) from Reichsmanager to Ordenführer and placed the Ahnenerbe in charge of administering the Ordensstaat of Burgundy, subject only to the Reichsführer-SS. By the 1980s, the SS was running Burgundy as a tourist center for propaganda purposes and using its mountains and forests as a training ground for SS cadets. Since the late 1960s, Burgundy has also held the secret bank accounts of many high officials of the Reich who avoid German taxation by paying discreet bribes to the corrupt overlords of the SS State.

The Japanese Empire

The Japanese Empire rules nearly half the world's population, either directly or through its network of satellite states and colonies. The Empire proper includes the Japanese Home Islands, the smaller islands of the Pacific from Okinawa to Tahiti, Korea, Taiwan, Hainan, Sakhalin, and Hawaii. (The Home Islands are CR4 for Japanese citizens and CR6 for Koreans and other foreigners, including Hawaiian natives.) China, Australia, New Zealand, and Alaska are the “Outer Empire,” which remains considerably more militarized than the Home Islands (CR6). The Emperor Naruhito is the divine embodiment of the sun god, and rules the Empire through a network of aristocratic bureaucrats, interlinked by family and career loyalties with the *keiretsu* cartels and the military.

The Home Islands are slowly returning to a more traditional economy of small rice farms as the heavy industries move to Korea, Manchukuo, or the Outer Empire. Many Japanese have also begun commercial fish farming and whale ranching in the vast waters of the Pacific, operating from huge floating factories. Japan's increasing isolation empties its parks, gardens, and Shinto shrines (except for students and the occasional tourist) as its population ages. With the real work handled by "invisible" foreign slaves and robots, the domestic population has leisure to grow rice, read classic poetry, and (for those with the right connections) plug into increasingly violent and pornographic holographic simulations. A network of fast maglev trains and hydrofoils connects virtually all cities in Japan; private use of automobiles is severely restricted. Non-Japanese airlines (Lufthansa, Pan Am, Aerolineas, Alitalia) are restricted to Nagasaki Airport, on the western end of Kyushu.

The Kempei Tai, the Japanese military secret police, have gone over the last generation from one of the most dangerous intelligence agencies in the world to a bureaucratized homeland security service. Obsessed with counting foreigners, tracking the slaves and keeping the others out of Japan, it has allowed other operations to drift. Kempei Tai agents overseas have mostly cast their lot in with the corrupt generals and *keiretsu* bosses who really run the colonies, filing pro forma reports to a Tokyo headquarters increasingly concerned with court fashion and decreasingly engaged with anything else. With no intelligence-gathering competition, nobody at the Imperial Court has noticed.

The Outer Empire

The Japanese military runs China as a feudal empire, with various generals leasing slave labor and factories in their fiefdoms to Japan's immense *keiretsu* industrial combines. Japanese rule in China is particularly brutal, with massacres of the Chinese population a matter of routine for the slightest sign of rebellion. Famines are commonplace, as the produce from China's farms is sent to Japan or the satellite states. Japan also tests its

atomic weapons in the Gansu desert in northern China, and, like the Germans in Siberia, dumps its toxic wastes in the Chinese interior.

Australia, Alaska, and New Zealand, collectively known as the *Shinryodo* (New Territories), are being turned into Japanese colonies as millions of native Japanese emigrate from their crowded cities to these wide open spaces. Following the wholesale executions of the former military, economic, and political leadership, Japan deported the white population of these areas to America or Britain, where they drifted into crime or joined the security forces. Many emigrated to Suid-Afrika, which was in great need of white settlers to police its newly acquired African territories.

Daitoa Koei Han'i

The entire Pacific Rim from Vancouver to Vladivostok and from Calcutta to Honolulu is tied into a vast economic union coordinated from Tokyo, the *Daitoa Koei Han'i* (Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere). Japanese *keiretsu* are the engine of this economy, operating freely throughout the Co-Prosperity Sphere and selling their manufactured goods to a billion-person captive market behind a maze of tariff and import regulations.

The satellite states provide raw materials and cheap labor for the *keiretsu* – rubber from Malaya, oil from Borneo and Java, minerals from

Sumatra and Burma. Some of the satellites, such as Manchukuo and the Philippines, have moved into heavy manufacturing, primarily producing textiles, chemicals, and steel. Others, such as Bengal, Indochina, and Java, remain predominantly agricultural, but Calcutta, Saigon, and Batavia are as industrialized as any Chinese corporate hell-city. All of the satellite states have extensive Japanese military bases. However, as the Japanese government continues to drift into stasis, more and more of these bases have taken over local industries – first to feed themselves, and then to claim their share of the *keiretsu* profits – and cut their own deals with local crime lords or ethnic chiefs. The satellites are slowly becoming warlord states outside the sight of the Emperor.

Fascist Amerika

The United States has been on the verge of a "complete recovery" for the last 40 years. Things are better than they were in the 1950s, when President Pelley dictated spiritual channelings over the radio to a country occupied by the Wehrmacht and smoldering after atomic bombardment and civil war. Under President George Lincoln Rockwell, America grew to be one of the three Great Powers in the World-Axis. This was due not so much to Rockwell's largely indolent Presidency as to its large base of educated, skilled labor, its high level



The American Resistance

The American Resistance was badly hurt following the Uprising of '76. Carefully hoarded weapons stocks were expended, most Resistance fighters were killed, and sympathizers and moles within the government (most notably Governor John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts, son of Ambassador to Germany Joseph Kennedy) were exposed and executed. Finally, the extreme brutality with which the SS and the Union Party put down the revolt sent the American population back into a state of numbed shell-shock reminiscent of the post-War era. Most Americans simply wished to return to what could be salvaged of their lives.

By the early 21st century, after a generation's passage, the Resistance has managed to rebuild a loose network of cells across the country, strongest in the Yukon and the intermountain West, New England, and the rural South. Its activities are restricted to infiltrating the security apparatus, inserting bogus data into the national computer network, once again attempting to build up arms caches, hiding the occasional refugee, drug trafficking, and stirring up resentment against the SS "advisers" still present in the country. The Resistance has learned from long experience that any more-overt action brings massive retribution in the form of hostage-taking and blanket executions. Also, any large-scale action runs the very real risk of being betrayed by NBSS informers or ordinary people who covet the \$100,000 standing reward for turning in a Resistance cell.

of industrial and technological development before the War, and substantial aid and assistance from Germany, which saw America as a white counterweight to Japanese Asia.

Rockwell was badly shaken by the Uprising of '76, and came close to losing both his nerve and his Presidency before National Bureau of State Security (NBSS) director Roy Cohn assumed control of the situation and called in the SS. Cohn supervised the final stages of the mass deportation of blacks to Africa (and RKA slave camps) and the Final Solution for America's Jews and homosexuals. Cohn was President in all but name until his death in 1988. That same year (and perhaps not coincidentally), Rockwell died and was succeeded by David Duke, the Governor of Louisiana and Grand Dragon of the KKK. Duke has actually attempted to run the country, but finds that with the SS and NBSS handling real security (the CR in the United States remains 5), and the American military riddled with Resistance cells, his only real power is to dispense government patronage to people who can't get good jobs with German or American cartels.

Beginning in the 1960s, many German cartels formed partnerships with American corporations such as BMW-Ford, Farben-DuPont, Heinkel-Boeing or Siemens-Westinghouse. American oil corporations also gained a powerful role in the German-dominated economy, and their favored American banks brimmed with German investment capital. The Eastern seaboard remains the center of German investment and influence. Domestic industries, such as oil and film, center in Houston and Los Angeles, respectively. Oklahoma City became a transportation and manufacturing hub, with a spaceplane port (Lindbergh Field) that is a center for high-tech industrial research. A steady "brain drain" of America's best and brightest to those cartels – and then to Germany – matches the flow of American services, oil, and manufactures to Europe, paid for in dollars pegged embarrassingly low to the Reichsmark.

The remaining population of roughly 220 million (including Canada) rebuilds autobahns and maglevs, and clears rubble from the bombed-out centers of Calgary, San Antonio, and Atlanta. "Cartel stores"

in most cities stock a wide variety of American and European goods priced in Reichsmarks. Those without corporate connections, such as the workers in the immense Ring Cities around the radioactive ruins of Omaha, St. Louis, and Dallas, shop in "open stores" for shoddy goods often re-imported (at a fat markup) from German slave factories in the Reichsostland. Most of the brave new America seems threadbare and drab to a German (or Homeline) visitor.

TECHNOLOGY ON REICH-5

Reich-5's technology is more advanced than that of the Homeline 2010s, well into TL8 in most areas, and early TL9 in many military applications. Reich-5's greatest advances are in those areas involving the space program: not only in aerodynamics, metallurgy, physics, radionics, and chemistry but in "spinoff" areas as well. Zero-G chemistry, medicine, computers, ecology, biochemistry, materials science, and other fields are also highly advanced. The benefits of these advances are, of course, restricted to German and Japanese cartels and citizens and to the elites of America. Most of the rest of the world remains mired in TL7 or lower.

Transportation

In Germany and America, the personal automobile is still the king, at least for middle- and upper-class citizens. Advanced computer-controlled carburetors, ceramic and polymer engine parts, and multistroke engines allow smaller, lighter cars such as Fords or Volkswagens to retain the "feel" of a V8 muscle car while drastically lowering gasoline usage and pollution. Higher-class citizens still drive pure V8 and V12 Mercedes and Cadillac sedans, and the autobahns have no speed limits in the lefthand lanes. Porsche sports cars are also quite common, as are Ferraris and Mitsubishis. Automobiles are routinely equipped with satellite location systems for navigation, cellular telephone/TV systems, and computer route-and-speed controls and mini-radar for night and all-weather driving capacity.

Over longer distances, maglev trains have almost totally replaced the old-fashioned *Kugelbahnen* (bullet trains) of the 1960s and 1970s thanks to warm-temperature superconductors developed by the German space program. The rail network covers virtually the entire Northern Hemisphere, due to close coordination between the Axis powers, although transfers on the Trans-Siberian and Great Indian Railways between Japanese- and German-dominated territories require switching onto other tracks and recalibrating electromagnetic potentials. The Berlin-to-Capetown and Pan-American Railways extend the network to the southern ends of the Earth.

In the air, giant suborbital Lufthansa scramjets cross oceans and continents in two or three hours. More conventional superjumbo jets carry less-well-heeled or well-connected tourists and business travelers, and many vacationers still ride the ZLF helium airships that make the tourist runs from Germany and the United States to Brazil and Spain. Such trips take four or five days, but the airship lines can successfully compete with the ocean liners in luxury and romance.

Space

German exploration and exploitation of outer space began in the 1920s, and continued with Wernher von Braun in the 1930s and 1940s. When the military and security applications of satellites became fully understood, Germany immediately launched a full-fledged space program. The Luftwaffe orbited the first space station, *Hitler*, in 1959; it is now the core of a permanent geosynchronous orbital settlement. The Luftwaffe has maintained control over the German space program ever since, although many cartels and *keiretsu* have launched their own satellites or added research or engineering modules onto *Hitler*. Japan, Italy, Germany, Argentina, Suid-Afrika, and the United States have all launched LEO (low Earth orbit) stations. Activity at *Hitler* centers on completing the Neues Essen space factory and permanent colony constructed from the hollowed-out

earth-grazer asteroid Neuruhr, moved into orbit by Heinkel-Boeing and Krupp in 1979. Mass mining has moved to Neusilesien and Neumesabi, two new asteroids drawn into slightly higher orbits.

Military transport from Earth to orbit is still handled by A-20 *Engel* spaceplanes taking off from Oklahoma City, Lublin, or Tsitsihar. Cargo transport, formerly launched in high-payload orbiters from Kamerun or Singapore, now runs along the *Bifrost* skyhook completed in 1994. *Bifrost*, named for the bridge connecting heaven to Earth in Teutonic myth, is a 31,000-mile-long cable which serves as a giant "elevator" from the Earth to an orbital station, *Asgard*, 22,000 miles along its length. The cable is tethered at its far end to Eisengard, another mining asteroid that holds the Kepler Space Telescope and a Luftwaffe base. *Bifrost* is anchored to Mt. Kirinyaga, Kenya, which has become the center of a huge Luftwaffe research station connected to the Berlin-to-Capetown maglev line. The security of Kirinyaga is so important that the SS oversees the slave laborers who maintain the facility. Bulk cargo and passengers travel up and down *Bifrost* in "elevator cars" which take five days to go between *Asgard* and Kirinyaga.

The German bases on the Moon and Mars are theoretically bases of the World-Axis as a whole, and many Italian, Japanese, Argentine, Croatian, or British scientists work at Tycho or Descartes bases on the Moon or at the Cydonia research station on Mars. However, the Luftwaffe controls all base security and access, and German scientists and cartels have priority in all research or mining activities. The German colony on Mars is currently implementing the initial stages of *Projekt Ymir*, which involves terraforming Mars into a livable world by the end of the 21st century, expanding the *lebensraum* of the Master Race to a whole new planet.

Computers and Networks

Computer technology, which began in the 1940s in England and America, has continued to be an English-speaker's field. Although many German and

Japanese firms have mastered the most state-of-the-art hardware requirements for supercomputers or handheld minicomputers, software engineering remains one of the few areas where Americans hold the lead. This is probably because the German cartels consistently refused to invest in software improvements, believing in large, centralized mainframe systems modeled after the German state economy. American companies, desperate for a competitive edge against the overwhelming power of the cartels, were willing to take more risks. Also, the destruction of much of the American mainframe network in the Uprising of '76 led almost by accident to the advent of the minicomputer and the development of redundant computer networks.

Both the security forces and the cartels needed to transfer vast amounts of data to widely scattered sites, and the computer network of fiber optic cables that grew up in the late 1970s and early 1980s soon began linking universities, the space program, and research corporations. In 1984, the *Völkische Beobachter* established an informational service by computer link. The *New York Times* and *Asahi Shimbun* soon followed, as did many other news organizations. The Information Ministries of the various Axis powers strictly control access to computer systems, and secret police forces armed with increasingly sophisticated and powerful AIs monitor transmissions. Most private citizens still do not own personal computers due to their expense and to the delays in getting clearances. Even powerful cartel executives or scientific personnel usually lease their computer from the cartel or university that employs them.

Computers in Reich-5 range from the Complexity 2 personal computers of the cartel vice presidents to the Complexity 6 mainframes in the telemetry centers of Von Braun Spaceport in Kamerun and the cellars of the Gestapo in Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse.

Medicine and Genetics

Although the German space program has accelerated medical progress (like most other scientific



progress), the official ideology of “race science” has left German genetic technology peculiarly retrograde. Although German biologists have perfected the full cloning of human beings, only scientists vetted by the SS-RuSHA for Party loyalty may conduct such sensitive research, under the tightest possible security. Currently, cloning techniques are restricted to military hospitals and trauma centers for “regrowing” limbs and organs, including eyes and hearts (generally a period of weeks for major regrowth). Brain tissue can be regrown if damaged, but the patient must undergo physical therapy and re-education to “relearn” skills and memories.

The greatest advances in genetic engineering have come from the laboratories of the Japanese *keiretsu*. Japanese corporate scientists and engineers have already created petroleum-eating bacteria to clean up oil spills, disease-resistant strains of rice and corn, and new breeds of tuna, bluefin, and salmon for their fish farms. Genetic alteration of humans is becoming more common as well, although it is still too expensive for “cosmetic” purposes. Some small, elite squads are composed of “enhanced” super-soldiers called *ten-shi* (literally, “heavenly warriors”) trained from birth to serve their superiors and the Emperor. Japanese obstetricians routinely test for genes tied to birth defects, hemophilia, retardation, or homosexuality, and genetically alter fetuses that show any of these.

The German medical community has not yet begun genetically altering

fetuses, due to a shortage of trained personnel, and prefers simply to abort “imperfect” fetuses. German obstetricians also abort fetuses showing “Jewish” genes such as the Tay-Sachs marker. The American Eugenics Board also encourages abortion of “undesirables,” but has far too few trained geneticists to engage in any wholesale testing policy. All Axis nations routinely practice euthanasia on mental patients, the terminally ill, Alzheimer’s victims, and elderly slave populations. In America, the Eugenics Board also sterilizes criminals (especially including Resistance members), as does the SS in Germany. In Japan, sterilization is reserved for the Chinese and Korean populations. Japanese authorities routinely sterilize women after the first child (in China) or the second (in Korea). The Germans similarly sterilize the Slav populations of Greater Germany and the Reichsostland.

(See *GURPS Alternate Earths* for further details of Reich-5.)

OUTTIME DISCOVERIES

When the Infinity Patrol discovered Reich-5 16 years ago, in its local year 1994, they clamped a security lock on not just the worldline’s coordinates, but also its very existence. Of the five known parallels at the time with a victorious Nazi Germany (see *Reich-2*, p. 142), Reich-5 was the most horrifying. The Third Reich firmly controlled their third of the world, and through their American puppet state, dominated the Western Hemisphere

as well. Imperial Japan, although less stable, was no less cruel; there were no “friendly powers” to work through on this parallel.

The Patrol and UNIC actually mapped out plans for a global mobilization against Reich-5. Operation Firefall called for a full-scale invasion of Reich-5, using the armies of the Security Council nations, Germany, and Israel to conquer that worldline after a surprise decapitating parachronic atomic strike against Tokyo, Washington, and Berlin. (A second version of Firefall, Operation Dandelion, called for provoking a German-Japanese nuclear war before mounting an invasion.) NATO’s planning staff, the Russian and Chinese armies, and (as a courtesy) the Japanese IDF drew up operational plans calling for simultaneous jumps into Reich-5’s Urals, Appalachians, and Szechuan province by a total of half a million men with heavy equipment and cutting-edge air support.

Two main objections finally scuttled Firefall planning. First, in the chaos of an invasion, it was almost certain that some Nazi or Imperial Japanese unit would both maintain cohesion and capture a conveyor. Thus, the strategic goal of the war – preventing a Reich-5 breakout into the continuum – would be compromised fatally by the war itself. Second, the appalled general staffs wargamed the invasion and discovered not only that Homeline would suffer at least 250,000 casualties in the first year (to say nothing of the millions dead on Reich-5 in the opening bombardment), but that there was a nontrivial chance that the Wehrmacht (and possibly the Japanese military) would throw back the invaders. What was planned as a short, surgical war could become a replay of World War II, lasting years and killing tens or even hundreds of millions of people on both worlds. After costing trillions of dollars, the war would leave Homeline economically smashed, dangerously remilitarized, and possibly under threat from rogue Nazis with nuclear weapons and revenge on their minds.

For now, UNIC and Infinity have shelved Firefall (although it gets updated regularly, just in case) in favor of lower-profile operations or (better yet) none at all.

The Infinity Patrol on Reich-5

The Infinity Patrol, stretched thin as it is, concentrates on preventing other Homeliners from reaching Reich-5. With Reich-5's computer networks more centralized, detection technology more advanced, and governments more powerful, the I-Cops do not have the resources to mount a major operation here. The few I-Cops operatives that have been planted here concentrate on infiltrating German and Japanese technical laboratories to steal technical secrets for Homeline and sound the alarm should Reich-5 researchers get too close to the parachronic Secret.

Another headache for the I-Cops working Reich-5 is the occasional attempt by Homeline racists or fascists to steal a conveyor and bring it to Reich-5. The Patrol's Security and Liaison Divisions work closely with the FBI, South African CID, Japanese PSIA, and German BfV to infiltrate any fascist group that seems to be planning a parachronic theft. Most fascist groups, fortunately, have neither the resources nor the know-how to mount a conveyor theft, much less sneak into Reich-5. A more serious threat is the possibility that radical terrorists such as the Hezbollah or Hamas might steal a conveyor and attempt to elicit Nazi aid in destroying Israel on Homeline. So far, these threats have been more potential than actual, but the Patrol has had one or two close shaves. Additionally, only high-level Infinity personnel and one or two people in the major national intelligence services know the parachronic coordinates of Reich-5. However, a rogue group with a conveyor *could* find Reich-5 by random hunting – that is, after all, how Infinity found it in the first place.

Homeline National Governments on Reich-5

The United States, Russia, Israel, and China have all mounted covert operations on Reich-5. The four nations launched more and more ambitious plans, opposed by I-Cops both on Homeline and on Reich-5. UNIC pressure, and Patrol maneuvering, stopped most of those plans politically, with only the occasional

recon patrol sneaking through. In 2022 (Reich-5 local year 2001) a Russian Spetsnaz special forces team got through I-Cop security and was loose in Reich-5 for four days before it was wiped out by the Waffen-SS near Vorkuta. Two scouts went to ground and evaded the German sweep; six months later they made contact with an Israeli recon mission in Poland. They reported that at least two of their comrades had been taken alive, and not all of their parachronic equipment had been destroyed.

This “near miss,” and the possibility that the SS was now aware of other timelines, led to a reduction in scale of national operations. For now, a tentative arrangement has been worked out between the I-Cops and the CIA, Mossad, the GRU, and the Chinese CCI. The I-Cops allows “dead drops” of gold, personal weapons, and micro-electronics to the resistance forces in the United States, China, or the Reichsostland on the condition that the source remains untraceable and unknown even to the recipients. In return, the United States, Russia, Israel, and China refrain from mounting any further operations in Reich-5.

Unfortunately, that agreement came too late.

The Ausbruch

One of the Spetsnaz team on the 2022 mission, Evgeny Karashkin, had a genetically linked psionic world-jumping ability. He had gone through early to reconnoiter the landing zone, and an Ahnenerbe psychic had detected his “anomalous vibrations” while in a drugged stupor. Brigadeführer Karl Fest, the Waffen-SS commander in the region, happened to be a believer in the occult (who had, in fact, been assigned to Siberia to keep him out of any important posting), and he actually read the Ahnenerbe code-flash warning him to look out for anything unusual in the area. Thus, the Waffen-SS was waiting when the Spetsnaz came through, and attacked the Russian team instantly, harrying it for four days until the final stand at Vorkuta. Karashkin was killed in the first exchange of fire, but one of the four survivors captured by the SS knew of his ability, and revealed it to his questioners before dying.

Brigadeführer Fest then made his second fateful decision in as many months. He offered to turn the whole case over to the Ahnenerbe in exchange for a transfer out of Siberia, and to not report anything unusual to his superiors, describing the encounter as a simple run-in with local partisans. The Ahnenerbe agreed, with the stipulation that he uncover and bring along their world's Evgeny Karashkin (who, if he existed, would be a 10-year-old boy). Fest not only found Karashkin; he arrested his entire bloodline in a major sweep of “subversive elements” across the Reichsostland. With 72 prisoners (three of them surviving Homeliners), 82 Spetsnaz corpses, and the wreckage of a troop-carrying worldline conveyor, Brigadeführer Fest transferred his command to a new division, headquartered in Bisanz.

SS RAVEN DIVISION

The Armanen Order

With the discovery that parallel worlds existed – and could be found by at least some psychics – the Ahnenerbe found a new role for itself. Although some wanted to bring the find to Berlin, as justification for all the hundreds of billions of Reichsmarks spent on their seemingly lunatic programs, wiser heads prevailed. Führer Alchsneiss was a Heydrich man who despised the Ahnenerbe; he would merely have taken over the parachronic program and had everyone shot to maintain security. Ordenführer Mattern realized that security had to be his priority, too. He, Fest, and Doktor Professor Emil Pauder (the head of the parapsychology program in Dijon) formed a secret society within the Ahnenerbe. They named it for the Armanen, mythical warrior-priests who served the Aesir – the gods, not the kings, of the ancient Germanic tribes. Mattern and the others likewise believed that they served the Aryan race and the Reich, not any specific agency or person, even the Führer.

This Armanen Order (which was also the name of a prominent Runic society before WWI, for extra

confusion and secrecy) reached out to other influential people with connections in the Waffen-SS, the Gestapo, and elsewhere, using the lure of secret Burgundian bank accounts as bait. Slowly it built itself operating room in the increasingly Byzantine structure of the Third Reich. Slowly, Pauder's team made progress in unlocking the parachronic secrets held in the subconscious minds of the three surviving Spetsnaz troopers, and (some said) from the dead ones as well.

Breeding: The Order was able to find a suitably pure Aryan who carried the marker for the psionic world-jumping gene: Per Havig, a fisherman from rural Denmark. He had no living relatives, so they didn't need to risk a "Karashkin sweep" inside Greater Germany itself. The Order used their contacts in the Gestapo to have his fishing boat "disappear at sea." The SS took Havig to an isolated manor in Burgundy, and put him out to stud with Karashkin's female relatives and

disadvantages as listed on p. 194. In most cases, the Mule still needs to take a blood-cell stimulant to trigger the ability. Recently, Armanen scientists have made progress with fetal injections into Aryan babies, although many of the mothers die giving birth to the baby Mule. The Armanen also raise baby Mules in Lebensborn creches, except for visibly deformed ones, who they raise at the hospital.

Brain Surgery: In some cases, although the brain accepts the new genetic material, the body dies during the procedure. The "waste not, want not" response: graft those brain tissues into another volunteer Mule. This is a two-week surgical process, and although the brain-blood barrier means that rejection per se is not a problem, the neurons may still fail to knit. The subject must make a HT-1 roll to avoid failure (HT+2 if using fetal brain tissue from the experiments in the previous paragraph), and takes -1 IQ per point the roll failed by. Critical failure results in brain death within 1d days.

Glandular Implantation: On further examination of various corpses, Pauder discovered that especially for some animal parachronozoids (p. 73), the world-jumping ability is glandular and sex-linked. Rather than rewrite the Mule's genetic structure, it's almost as simple to implant a cloned jumper gland into his groin and wire an electrical trigger to the relevant brain centers. (Injections of jumper hormone, sadly, seem to have no effect, although experiments continue.) This requires a week in the hospital, along with a regimen of immunosuppressant drugs. In this case, the subject must *fail* a HT roll at HT-8. Subjects with Resistant to Disease add half their bonus (round down) to HT for this roll. A *successful* roll means the gland and trigger mechanism is rejected; the subject must make a HT-2 roll every day or lose 1 point of ST and 1 HP (1d HP on a critical failure). Apply none of the modifiers above to this roll; these rolls continue until the subject dies, or the implant is removed. A *failed* roll means the subject gains the Jumper (World) advantage, becomes Susceptible to Disease (HT-3), and gains further concomitant disadvantages as indicated on p. 195.



Making World-Jumpers

Pauder also dissected Karashkin thoroughly, submitting him to top-of-the-line stolen Japanese genetic disassemblers and a full battery of psychometric, magical, and cultic tests and rituals. The Armanen found the genetic marker for psionic world-jumping after a year of study, and some of the other parascientific researchers also reported promising results. One of the psychics in the Dijon Research Hospital turned out to have been dreaming of other worlds; her brain chemistry was added to the study list (although she was kept alive as a lucid dreamer and scout for future invasions) and advanced other lines of inquiry.

A few of the methods Pauder and the Armanen Order use to cross the worlds or create a world-jumper (derisively called a *Maulesel*, or "Mule") follow:

a selection of other genetically promising mates. Of his 14 children from the program, two (one by a Karashkin and one by a Frenchwoman) bear the world-jumping gene; they have been taken from him to be raised in SS *Lebensborn* creches elsewhere in Burgundy. The Order has only told Havig that his blood contains "the future of the Reich"; Havig seems never to have unlocked his psionic powers.

Drugs: The simplest, almost routine, method is a battery of subdural drug injections into the brain, bone marrow, and spinal fluid of the subject. This stimulates brain hormone production and retrovirally implants a copy of the Havig-Karashkin world-jumping genes into the Mule. The subject spends three days running a dangerous fever (104°) and gets a HT-6 roll to resist the retroviruses; if he fails, he receives the Jumper (World) advantage and concomitant

Demonic Seeding: This method is a triumph for the Armanen occultists, who tracked down the world-jumping “demon” known as Tychiron in various crumbling tomes. A Raven Division team found it in a Transylvanian mountain pass in the Friedrich worldline (p. 124) and captured it using a thorn web woven into a many-knotted sphere. After bringing it back to Bisanz, the Order immured it in the crypt beneath a Teutonic Order castle, in a chamber lined with thorns, runes, and mirrors according to the ritual developed by Armanen researchers. When prospective Mules are brought to the chamber, Tychiron rapes them (Will-6 to resist), leaving its egg-spawn roiling in their spine and pelvic nerves. (Resisted or not, the experience causes a Fright Check, also at -6; Tychiron might try to rape a stunned character who resisted it at first.) The Mule can’t technically world-jump, but the Tychiron spawn can, and brings the Mule along. Mules who undergo this treatment need to take regular herbal supplements to keep the Tychiron spawn infantile and subservient; without them, the advantage becomes essentially Uncontrollable. As long as the herbs hold out, though, the Mule has the Jumper (World) advantage with the disadvantages as set out on p. 174. He is also mindlinked with every other spawn or carrier of Tychiron across the worlds; since most of them have gone mad, this is not necessarily a bonus.

Psibernetics: Not all the Mules are sent out with the Division to the new worlds. Some of them remain behind in Bisanz and Dijon for various purposes. A few, who are reduced to immobility or idiocy by the drugs, become human gene banks and tissue tanks, doped into stupor and drained of blood every day by the doctors of Pauder’s lab. Others (especially those with the Mass Jumper enhancement) are wired into psibernetic linkages that expand their powers to allow light aircraft (such as helicopter gunships) and small vehicles up to 4 tons or so to travel between the worlds. These psibernetic linkages also have a chance of rejection, as with surgery; the roll is not modified for Resistant, however, and the procedure does not convey Susceptible to Disease.

Still others (those who displease the Order, or violate procedure on other worlds, or show signs of trying to escape) are locked into stalls in the Bisanz world-gate. This doorway, powered by a fission reactor and focused using the renegade Mules’ brains, cycles between Reich-5 and its duplicate on the Nostradamus parallel (p. 138) every six hours. It was completed in 2009 after four years of construction; many of the delicate parts had to be re-machined on site many times as the local quantum flow changed, and it requires almost daily maintenance. (It also requires 21 Mules, one or two of whom die every few months.) It can send 10 tons through at a time, mostly components and spare parts in trucks (all more easily fudged on inventories than self-propelled howitzers or attack drones). The Mules are fatted – and penned – like veal calves, with their brains tubed together in a psionic circuit tuning the gate.



Pauder’s next project is to use hundreds of cloned fetuses from Havig’s sperm as batteries in a much larger gate, one able to send panzers and perhaps even heavy transport aircraft through. This master gate is 18 months away from completion, unless Pauder has a theoretical breakthrough that allows him to develop parts capable of adjusting to quantum flow alteration, or if the Ahnenerbe occultists discover a ritual to keep the gate magically tuned.

The Raven Has Flown

While the energies of Nazi science and occultism worked to open the way to new worlds, the subtleties of Nazi politics and blackmail built an army to invade them. Ordenführer Mattern expanded the training cadre at the SS academies in Burgundy, adding more men and more facilities, spending his

own administrative funds to improve and fully staff the bases. The Waffen-SS command, possibly amazed to find something actually militarily useful being done in Burgundy, put up no objections. He then began to siphon off a few men at a time into a new unit with its own training and barracks facilities, which he grandly called SS Raven Division. Believing this new division (actually closer to regimental strength) merely an overblown “headquarters guard” to feed Mattern’s ego, Waffen-SS command again signed off.

In 2007, after years of test runs and reconnaissance jumps, Raven Division launched its first full-scale crossworld invasion, from the Mesopotamia *Reichsprotektorat* into Nostradamus (p. 138). Local resistance was fierce (especially from the Kurdish cavalry), but fruitless against the high-tech weapons of the SS, which rapidly took control of the Euphrates Valley. The Armanen had selected Nostradamus because of the unanimous verdict of all precognitives that victory was assured; they discovered that Nostradamus also sat at a dimensional highway junction. This “Chronobahn” (p. 79) directed the Armanen to their next target, Friedrich, where rather than mount an invasion, the Order decided to strengthen the local First Reich (the German-Roman Empire) into a pure Aryan state.

Between the Nostradamus garrison, the recon squads along the Chronobahn, and the advisers in Friedrich, the Raven Division is stretched to its limits. Brigadeführer Fest plans to recruit and train pure Aryan soldiers in Friedrich, and arm them with weapons from the factories the Armanen have been secretly building in Nostradamus for the last three years. Until these plans can come together (the first fully outtime Raven Division regiment will finish its training in a few months, but their heavy equipment has been delayed by sabotage in Nostradamus), the Division has to draw its strength from its Reich-5 base.

Training and Doctrine

The Raven Division trains as *gebirgsjäger*s, mountain light infantry tailored for extended patrol operations with minimal support and a heavy

concentration on force multipliers. None of Pauder's Mules are able to transport panzers across worlds, for instance. The largest load that the Order can send outtime is a 10-ton *Spähpanzer* APC, along with its crew and passengers (six men in all), and it can't send many of those without filling out some very creative paperwork to explain how it "lost" the vehicles. Perforce, then, Raven Division has to strike fast, light, and hard. To avoid such hassles, the Division keeps a large number of light civilian vehicles (motorcycles, off-road trucks, etc.) on hand.

Training emphasizes mobility without the use of mechanized or air-mobile support, and the Division ensures that all troops receive special training in "antiquated" tasks such as handling horses and mules. In theory the Division gets by with a very light baggage train, prioritizing ammunition and foraging in the operations area (i.e., pillaging the locals) where possible. As a practical matter, the Division tends to accumulate additional animals to hold more ammo, parts, and loot as time goes on.

Compared to troops in front-line SS and Wehrmacht units, Raven Division troops are horribly under-equipped. Logistics is king, and the limited Mule capacity cannot be spent on the large amounts of consumables that are required for TL8 and TL9 military equipment (notably batteries). Transport must prioritize the troops themselves, medical supplies, small-arms ammunition and support weapons.

Weapons: A typical trooper carries a loaded StG 03 rifle (p. 200) and 10 extra clips at all times. Accuracy is at a premium, so all troops receive the best sights money can buy – these light battlesights are +2 Acc and provide both Infravision and Telescopic Vision 2 (2 lbs.). Officers carry 9mm Luger pistols; all Raven Division soldiers carry bayonets, grenades, and additional ammunition for the squad light machinegun.

Uniform: The basic *feldgrau* armored uniform includes adaptive camouflage (+2 to Stealth when motionless, +1 when moving) and a microclimate system to keep the wearer comfortable even in unusually

Glorious Goals

Where Centrum actively plans to impede the Patrol and, eventually, remove Homeline from the board entirely, the Raven Division follows its own purposes. The Armanen have no interest in going out and picking a fight with the Patrol; they are content to wait and build their strength while they pursue goals such as:

Find Hitler: Not just any Hitler will do, of course. On some worlds, he never had his wondrous insights; on others, he became a drugged-out shambling wreck; on still others, he lost the War and is obviously an unfit specimen. The Order wants to find the True Hitler, the one who bears the spirit of Reich-5's departed Führer.

Find the Ark of the Covenant: Or the Holy Grail, or the Spear of Destiny. The Spear at Wewelsburg doesn't seem to work as promised, but somewhere in the worlds there must be one that will guarantee victory to the Aryan race. Actually, the Order takes any reality shard (p. 76) it can, since some may allow their users to jump across worlds.

Find the True Aryan Homeland: Although Friedrich is an excellent start, even the Aryans there have suffered the taint of mixed breeding and seem puny and querulous compared to the mighty warriors of Himmlerian legend. Somewhere among the worlds is the original world where the original Aryan race was born. That holy place will be an impregnable fortress and a boundless source of warriors for the Reich!

hot or cold weather. In high-threat situations he can put on an armor cuirass (p. 27). Completing the uniform is a pair of assault jackboots and a coalscuttle combat helmet. See the *Armor Table* on p. 26 for additional information. Every trooper has the equivalent of a hideout radio (p. 24) in the helmet.

Field Pack: When moving to a new operations area each trooper carries a full pack, freeing up the animals for heavy and bulky equipment (mortar baseplates, fuel cans, ammo boxes, etc.). This includes, at a minimum, an entrenching tool, lightweight shelter, compressible sleeping bag, two mortar rounds, first-aid kit, extra uniform, personal basics (p. B288), rain gear, 3-gallon water bladder, climbing gear (p. 25), 20 yards of nanofiber rope (p. 25), and a weeks worth of rations (see *Meals-in-a-Box*, p. 25). Troopers with special missions (e.g., the radioman) carry a bit less as they must haul around the large tactical radios used in Reich-5 (they do not benefit from the software radios used in Homeline and Centrum). Troopers also tend to carry around knickknacks from home and small trinkets that caught their eye.

Kerne

To prepare the way for future Raven Division assaults, and to steal technology and valuables from other worlds, the Armanen have established *Kerne* ("kernels"), self-sufficient bases throughout the nearby worlds and all along the Chronobahn. Each *Kern* is commanded by a Gestapo agent from *Amt Z* ("Office Z"), the secret office of the Gestapo created by the Armanen conspiracy, and staffed by a minimum of one Mule and three to five Raven Division troopers for security. It has a stand of weapons, both local and SS issue, suitable for 20 men, and supplies (food, medicine, etc.) to sustain that many men for a year, roughly eight tons of equipment all told. Ideally, the *Kern* has an encrypted radio, micro-computer, and other useful electronics. As much of this as possible is bought locally using gold stolen or counterfeited on site; transporting gold across the worlds takes up a lot of room that could go to TL8+ weapons and intrusion gear, which can bring any Gestapo agent worth his salt plenty of gold.

THE CABAL

Somewhere among the quanta there is an Earth under the shadow of a vast conspiracy of monsters, sorcerers, and psionic masters. That conspiracy claims to date back to the first wars of gods and men that splintered the magical cosmos and hurled fragments of existence across the universes on plumes of magic and the blood of gods. It claims to have eyes that can see across the planes to the remotest Earth and talons that can catch the unwary between universes. It is the Cabal, those who bowed before the mad Pharaoh Khaibitu-na-Khonsu before he led them into battle against Ra, the Unconquered Sun, when the Pyramids were new.

TRUTH AND LIES

So much for what the Cabal claims. (See **GURPS Cabal** for further details.) What the Patrol knows doesn't immediately contradict any of the above – in the infinite worlds, after all, stranger things have proven to be true, and the Patrol doesn't *think* it's found the Earth the Cabal originates on.

If there *is* only one such Earth: Baron Janos Telkozep (p. B320), a vampire who works for ISWAT, says he left the Cabal's home world one step ahead of the Cabal, but his description doesn't match other information available to the Patrol. The Cabal, like some other conspiracies, may be "native to" a number of worldlines at once, parallel Cabals to go with the parallel Egypts and John Dees of the alternate histories. On the other hand, the parallel Cabals may all spring from one ur-Cabal founded before a great reality quake or quantaclysm destroyed their original Earth and left shadow Cabals across a score of worlds.

Vast Conspiracies

However many Cabals there are, they all seem to have roughly the same agenda: the secret accumulation of magical power and knowledge in the name of self-defense and self-aggrandizement. Even on worlds with open magic, the Cabal operates in the shadows; on worlds without it, the Cabal

takes extreme pains to keep it that way. The existence of multiple Cabals, each claiming to be the original, might also explain why so many of the magi, parachronozoids, and undead who claim to be Cabalists seem, on further examination, to be mainly bent on doing some unspecified but no doubt gory harm to some other Cabalist in an endless cycle of magical vendetta and coup-counting.

If its larger organization is a matter of theory and contested allegiance, however, on the local level the Cabal can be ferociously loyal to its own. Each Cabalist has two members whose death he is honor-bound to avenge, his *passers* (from the Latin for "sparrow," as in the Biblical verse "Not a sparrow shall fall without his sight"). He, in turn, has two *ultors* (Latin for "avengers") who are sworn to avenge his death. This strict pattern of vengeance may be why so many of the Cabalists plotting against each other seem to do so out on isolated worlds or shiftrealms on the Patrol's beat.

Cabalists organize themselves into quasi-independent Lodges of 10 to 20 Cabalists under the leadership of an Adept. If the local Lodge runs into something it can't handle, it calls in its Adept's allies in the upper ranks of the Cabal, who can be very powerful and scary indeed. At the top of the pyramid are the Grand Masters, who are vampire lords, werewolf queens, deposed gods, billionaire

conspirators, psionic mandarins, and powerful magi such as John Dee or Marie Laveau. Some Lodges are organized into Grand Lodges with chapters across the world (or worlds). A few of the more commonly encountered Grand Lodges include:

Amonis Albioni: This lodge is centered on various Englands, and voraciously accumulates maps and charts of the planes and the infinite worlds. The Amonis Albioni also has a great deal of experience at infiltrating demonic cults – either to destroy them, or to add their power to the Lodge.

Blind Haroeris Lodge: This lodge is devoted to quests, seeking out the Fountain of Youth, the Golden Fleece, the Philosopher's Stone, and other wondrous items. One special interest of the Lodge is tarot decks; it will kill an impressive number of people for a unique Boccaccio Deck or a Lombardy Second. Its members seldom have a fixed base, preferring to operate out of sailing ships (especially "ghost ship" shiftrealms, see p. 79) or airships. Some of its members are swagmen (p. 71).

Golden Lodge of Asten: The Golden Lodge operates primarily "east of Suez" in Singapores, Djakartas, Angkors, Shanghais, and Amboynas on many worlds. Its golden "monkey paw" sign hangs discreetly in twisty Chinatowns and glasteel skyscrapers

Active Gods

While roaming across the Infinite Worlds, both Cabalists and harder-headed Patrolmen have encountered all manner of "gods," from sentient defense computers to immortal pranksters to crashed aliens. Every so often, they meet a god who meets the more traditional definition – a transcendent entity of immense supernatural power.

Patrol and Cabal protocol is identical in these cases: polite agreement without committing to anything, especially worship. Fortunately, only a very few gods seem to have the desire (and even fewer have the ability) to leave their home worldline or pocket universe. For some reason, such gods are seldom the kindly and benevolent sort. Even if they are, their divine paths are strewn with banestorms, reality quakes, and other signs and wonders. These rogue gods pose grave threats to the continuum; ISWAT and the Cabal both give such outbreaks their highest priority.

alike. It seems to be in the occult artifact acquisition and disposition business, and has cordial (if necessarily discreet) relations with White Star Trading representatives on many worlds.

Lodge of the Midwinter Aton: This lodge of Bavarian sorcerers exists on a few worlds, led by the fearsome were-wolf-mage Léonard du Sarrazin. Its emblem is a black left-handed swastika in a white disk, and the Patrol strongly suspects it of having ties to the Nazi Parties of various worlds and possibly to the Armanen Order of Reich-5. It seeks political power bolstered by magical force; its experiments triggered the Hellstorm on Merlin-3 (p. 135).

Sons of Imhotep: These freaks scare even their fellow Cabalists. Devoted to



the blackest of ancient Egypt's necromantic cults, the Sons of Imhotep build magical pyramid chambers in the worst districts of teeming cities. Clad in robes that (it is said) hide horrible animalistic deformities, the Sons of Imhotep stalk archaeologists (both local and outtime) to steal idols or papyri needed for their blasphemous ceremonies.

Wheel of Ptah: This lodge traces the fault lines and subtle craquelure of reality quakes across the infinite worlds. Occasionally, a Paralabs

researcher who provides a Wheelman with fresh data or the location of a potential banestorm upwelling receives an emerald the size of a fist, or the death of a rival, in return. Every once in a while, he gets something he actually wanted, too.

Across the Planes

According to the Cabal's cosmology, there may be infinite worlds, but there are only four Realms that matter. The Cabal more usually uses the names shown in parentheses, which are drawn from Jewish mysticism.

Material Realm (Assiah): The Material Realm contains all the infinite Earths and Marses and so forth, like pebbles in a beach or knots in a rug. Although Cabalists spend plenty of time in the Material, they don't usually consider it the source of wisdom. The mana level of Assiah varies from world to world, and sometimes varies within a given world.

Astral Realm (Yetzirah): The Astral Realm is "above" or "inside" the Material Realm, touching all worlds equally. It holds flocks of spirits both malevolent and benevolent, and whole cities and planets of its own. Cabalists consider the shiftrealm of Faërie (p. 80) to be part of Yetzirah, even though its elves seem material enough to Patrolmen who (cautiously) visit. The Astral Realm has normal mana.

Iconic Realm (Briah): Separated from Yetzirah by an enormous spiritual ocean, Briah is the home of gods, archangels, and similarly iconic figures. Some Patrolmen claim to have seen Batman or Mao in the Iconic Realm; the boundaries to Briah may be more porous than the traditionalist Cabal would like to believe. The Iconic Realm has very high mana.

Realm of Pure Spirit (Atziluth): No Cabalists except the Grand Masters have ever visited Atziluth, the Godhead at the Center of Everything, and there is some reason to believe that the Grand Masters are lying.

The Cabal in the Campaign

As written, the Cabal plays second fiddle in an Infinite Worlds campaign. Consumed with infighting and with its own arcane and abstruse researches, it takes no sides in the great contest between Infinity and Centrum. Its goal of keeping magic and the supernatural secret keeps it from threatening Infinity's Secret. So how can the GM use it if he'd like to?

Variety: The Cabal adds a strange Hammer Films flavor to the straightforward SF of the Infinity Patrol. If the GM wants to add something magical to the game, the Cabal can let him do it without creating a full-fledged fantasy world.

Unpredictability: Even if the Cabal picked a side, not all the Lodges would go along. In a setting with two villainous villains, the Cabal makes an ambiguous one. Patrolmen are more likely to cooperate with a not obviously deranged Cabalist than with a world-hopping Nazi or a ruthless Centrum agent. Any Cabal encounter, therefore, might potentially be a social encounter, one about building the game world rather than shooting off chunks of it.

Flexibility: Anything the GM could possibly want to send the Patrol after, the Cabal might want to steal, break, or shift from world to world. The Cabal might have its own unguessable reasons for shifting echoes, summoning banestorms, kidnapping time tourists, killing Centrum agents, or any other adventure-creating action.

Ubiquity: Anyone might be a member of the Cabal, on any world. This gives the GM a "Trojan Horse" to hook some NPC into the adventure, a fun source for player paranoia, and plenty of possibilities for character drama. Between the Gates of Thoth and the astral plane, a Cabalist can show up on any world, in any era.

Power: The Cabal can be a big hammer to smash something the GM wants smashed, a barely trustworthy ally to help deal with a menace, or a source for world-jumping abilities outside the control of Infinity or Centrum. If the GM wants it brought, the Cabal can bring it.

LESSER THREATS

ORGANIZED CRIME

Although plenty of small-time grifters hang out on the fringes, real connections across the worlds require juice. That's where the Mob comes in; for a price, it can get you your old high-school girlfriend from another Earth, or sneak you into an illegal dinosaur-poaching expedition. But that's just constituent relations, small-time stuff. What the big picture is like depends on the mob in question; not all Mafias are created equal.

The Outfit

For the Chicago Outfit and its various national affiliates, going to other worlds was just business as usual. When White Star Trading needed to spin off its waste-hauling business, the trucking firm it called in was already an Outfit front. The Outfit slipped into crossworld crime by signing on the dotted line in Infinity Tower. Using Interworld Waste Transport as the licensor of record, the Outfit was able to divert a small fleet of conveyor trucks to its own use. With bribed and blackmailed programmers, the supposedly hardwired systems could get hacked (albeit with a permanent -2 penalty to all Electronics Operation (Parachronic) skill rolls on those vehicles) to allow free subquantum operation. Diverting a projector is beyond the Outfit's capacity (so far), but there's little need for one right now. Like the Patrol, the Outfit's "East Side Express" has more work than it can handle, even restricted to Quantum 5.

The biggest business is drugs. From Gallatin, an alternate Earth where the Midwest is a libertarian anarchy, the Outfit buys cheap, legal, guaranteed pure heroin and cocaine – and ships it by the ton to Homeline. The most difficult part is laundering the drug shipments on Homeline so that the FBI and the Patrol don't trace them back to the supplier. A close second is prostitution and the flesh trade; Gallatin is oddly bad at pornography (making it acceptable seems to have spoiled the thrill), and far too

well-armed to run kidnap rings in, but there are other Earths with starving girls willing to go anywhere as long as it's away. One or two Outfit operators have been working to take over the Chicago mobs in parallel Earths, to rake off some of their take for the benefit of Homeline, but the technological advantage isn't as helpful when everyone is still using baseball bats and flick-knives anyway.

Finally, of course, the various blasted, frozen, hell-scarred Earths to which Interworld Waste Transport actually delivers its legitimate cargoes of spent plutonium, tetradoxin, and beryllium dust make excellent dumping grounds for inconvenient corpses – including a few from the Patrol's Justice Division.

The Russian Mafiya

Like the Chicago boys, the Russian Mafiya simply transferred its standards and practices offworld. In this case, it was their connections with the Russian government and mining

industry that gained them their entrée to the parallels. With Russia jealously guarding its 20% share of offworld mining licenses, and with the Mafiya working hand in glove with all the major oligarchs and their paid governors, the result was a foregone conclusion. One State Department paper estimates that 80% of the Russian offworld mining operations are carried out by Mafiya-owned or -connected firms, and billions of rubles flow right into the gangs' bank accounts in Switzerland and Johnson's Rome. The Mafiya mostly uses these vast rakeoffs to fund its Homeline operations in computer crime, racketeering, and extortion, rather than expand to other worldlines. They do heavily "recruit" soldiers from various battlefields across the alternate Russias; there is no shortage of desperate, brave, doomed warriors willing to get high pay and modern dental care in exchange for only having to shoot unarmed civilians.



Swagmen

A crosstime extended “family” of grifters, the swagmen take their name from the Australian slang term for wandering bums. The Australian Outback sprouted boomtowns on Homeline in the early 21st, as miners came through to dig opals and gold on their own, and uranium for Infinity, on alternate Australias across the quantum. Where fast money and greed come together, so do confidence men and gamblers. One crew of such outlaws managed to coalesce with a series of grifts that wound up stranding a Consolidated Mining representative in Coventry, and leaving them on their own with a conveyor and a book of coordinates.

They had the same problem every other ambitious crosstimer faces; too many marks and not enough men. Rather than dummy up, they reached out to friends of friends and connections from every dive bar on three continents. From the Irish Travelers and the Romany, they took the codes of trust and insularity that kept con games going for decades; from the grifters and sharps they took the newest cons and the flair to reach beyond the pigeon drop and driveway game to big takedowns.

As their contacts expanded, so did their options. Swagmen often take jobs on crosstime mining operations, or simply bribe personnel clerks to put their names on the roster. As the miners go from world to world, the swagmen go with them. Con games can raise the fare for a Time Tours trip, and glib operators can hook onto an academic team as guides or translators. There are plenty of ways to get from world to world if you’re good at the grift, and the swagmen are among the best.

With an infinity of marks, they can afford to hit only the richest and most deserving. They’ve run the Spanish Prisoner on a world where the Armada won, and the Two-Ring Gambit with the Bonaparte crown jewels. They’ve conned a parallel Howard Hughes before the Mob could, and accidentally-on-purpose gained Australian independence for Ned Kelly on Britannica-6 (and a fortune in gold for themselves).

Every year on April Fool’s Day, all the swagmen who can make it will hook up for a big party on some rural worldline. There they swap stories and trade techniques, keeping their options open and their sense of solidarity intact.

An alarming number of Russian mafiosi decide to go “play czar” on the primitive worlds their supposedly secret mines exploit. Since many Russian mining operations are misfiled, with “accidental transpositions” in the coordinate field for example, it can be months before reports of black SUVs loaded with gunmen looting the ziggurat at Lagash filter back to the Patrol. So far, one or another wave of barbarian invasions have swallowed up the outrages, but the danger to The Secret remains ever-present.

The Triads

The various Asian crime families around the Pacific have found their way across the worlds as well. Usually, they travel on forged papers to a parallel with a large Chinese diaspora.

When the “historical researcher” or “import consultant” on the passport vanishes, the Triad member surfaces and makes contact with the local Triads in the parallel. Although a certain amount of turf war is inevitable, the combination of access to crossworld travel and connections with high technology proves too tempting to the outtimers. The locals then ambush a different conveyor in a different area – the Patrol doesn’t know how many “vanished surveys” are actually sitting at the bottom of the Haiphong harbor or a quarry in Guangdong on some parallel, but it’s more than one or two.

The Triads concentrate on building redundant crossworld connections and allies; they heavily recruit Chinese world-jumpers, especially in overseas and outtime Chinese communities

outside the reach of the Communist government on Homeline. They shift things of great rarity but low weight – pirated software and movies, industrial secrets, and powdered dinosaur penis. The Triads do a brisk business in crossworld poaching, as well – the rhinoceros is endangered on four or five more worlds, and the sabertooth has been hunted to extinction in Asia on Mammut-3. The I-Cops have begun cracking down on the crosstime Triads.

FREELANCE CRIMINALS

There’s plenty of room in the infinite worlds for freelancers in crime, as well. If one version of Miami gets too hot for you, try the next world over! The real bottleneck is access to a conveyor; if it’s not under the watchful eye of the Patrol or some government or U.N. agency, it’s probably under the watchful eye of the local mob. Even the free spirits listed below, therefore, probably need at least one “connected” street Contact to operate, unless they have some non-parachronic means of world-jumping. (These same criminal types, and most of the same assumptions, apply in a time-travel campaign as well.)

Crosstime Thieves

These criminals use their knowledge of the other world (or the past) and/or their advanced technology to steal gold, gems, and other highly negotiable goods. Time thieves are often clever but unsubtle. A Spanish treasure galleon, for instance, is an easy target for an armed hovercraft, or even a few men with body armor and submachine guns in a native sloop. When the gold is secured, the pirates burn the ship and send it to the bottom, with no survivors and nobody the wiser.

Scavengers

Many items are quite ordinary in their own time or place, but priceless in today’s world. Almost any ancient weapon, for instance, becomes a valuable antique a few centuries down the line. Likewise, ordinary coins, stamps, mechanical devices, and publications can all become very valuable with the passing of time.

The scavenger acquires such items when and where they are new. He might then bury them for proper “aging,” or just bring them directly to Homeline (or, in a time travel campaign, the future). The existence of scavengers can drive a collector mad. Is this Four-Penny Black stamp a “real” one from Homeline, or is it from an alternate world? And if it is an alternate, does that make it a forgery?

Of course, in some campaigns scavenging might be legal. In others, it might be illegal – not because it is wicked in itself, but because of the danger that any unauthorized time or dimension travel might pose to the continuum. On Homeline, scavenging is strictly licensed (LC2), for “museum replicas only,” but in practice is almost impossible to control.

Looters

Looters are also thieves, but instead of “ordinary” valuables, they look for unique ones. They may raid art galleries, libraries, palaces, and mansions for the masterpieces of other worlds. Or they may be souvenir hunters, picking up interesting relics. Some looters are connoisseurs, treasuring their

acquisitions for their own sake. Most simply sell to collectors.

Depending on the game background and the laws, some sorts of “looting” may be perfectly legal. If the goods are obtained honestly, and there is no chance of upsetting history or changing the structure of a parallel world, it may be all right to “import” valuables. (And some worlds take a more “Elgin Marbles” approach to other timelines’ artifacts, tacitly condoning looting artifacts from “barbarous” timelines or cultures to bring such masterpieces into the light of “civilization.”) In a time-travel game (or even on an echo), “stealing” treasures about to be destroyed, if done carefully, might be a praiseworthy rescue mission rather than a crime!

Timenappers

Timenappers visit a historical alternate world (or the past, in a time travel setting), and kidnap victims from there, bringing them to the criminals’ own homeworld. The object might be ransom – just another way of getting rich in the past. But more likely, it’s because someone on the timenappers’ home world wants that victim.

Past times and alternate worlds could be an inexhaustible source of slaves and other victims. A crossworld trading organization might easily turn into a slave trade, taking prisoners on one obscure alternate world and moving them to another in exchange for valuable goods.

Individuals – famous people from history, or their alternate versions – might also be kidnapped for any number of reasons. People might also be timenapped for research purposes, legitimate or otherwise.

If the timenapper’s “home world” has biotechnology at TL8 or better, *human genetic material* can be stolen with rather less fuss than kidnapping. There might be a thriving underground market, driven by men who want to own a clone of Cleopatra or of Marilyn Monroe and by women who want to bear a natural child of Elvis Presley or Alexander the Great. Another advantage of gene-napping is that clones can usually be further altered to the buyer’s specifications – get a baby Alexander without the gene for alcoholism, or a naturally platinum-blond Marilyn Monroe.

Where Are the Starships?

So far no one from Homeline has reported a parallel Earth with reliable, technological faster than light travel. (Although Azoth-7 (p. 112) has its own strange alchemical starships, they don’t seem to operate in any normal cosmos at all, being closer to Cabalistic planar travel than anything else.) Paralabs physicists have two main theories on the subject, neither of them anything like experimentally proven:

Delay: Although seemingly unlikely, it might just be that no parallel Earth has invented FTL travel at all. Since Homeline is among the most technically advanced Earths, and FTL hasn’t been invented there, maybe it just takes another century or two of progress. Caliph (p. 117) may be getting close.

Distortion: Another theory postulates that the local quantum field can only deform in one direction, either “timeward” or “spaceward.” Since parachronics came first (on Earth, anyway), no Earth-based FTL is possible at all – unless the parachronic distortion can somehow be filtered out.

No, Really, Where Are They?

Like reliable, technological time travel (*Can of Infinite Worms* box, p. 153), interstellar campaign settings don’t mesh well with crosstime gaming. The causality and time-dilation paradoxes alone will drive GMs crazy, and any realistic advanced, interstellar, high-tech civilization is just not going to accidentally overlook Infinity agents sneaking into its universe in parachronic conveyors, emitting all kinds of quantum radiation. The Secret would last about an hour and a half, and then your campaign would be over.

Finally, the canvas is quite simply a little too vast for this book. What about all the parallels where the divergence point happens on Tau Ceti IV? What about armadas of crosstime alien invaders? What if every one of the billions of worlds has its own quantum cloud of echoes and parallels? One of the fundamental assumptions of a crosstime game is that Earth (or one of them, anyway) is central and important. The vastness of the Galaxy mitigates against that. Add FTL to the Infinite Worlds if you wish, but – be careful out there.

PARACHRONOZOIDS

Parachronozoids are creatures with natural world-jumping abilities. They range widely in form, disposition, and nature. Some look like normal animals, while some are talking, bipedal beasts. Some seem human or ghostly. A few are simply indescribable – beautiful (or horrible) beyond comprehension.

All parachronozoids possess the Jumper (World) advantage (p. 174). Most have the Tunnel enhancement, allowing them to create interdimensional paths that can be followed. Often, these paths close behind them after a time, with potentially drastic consequences for the unwary follower. Many parachronozoids also have the Warp advantage (p. B97), giving them the ability to jump across space as well as the dimensions.

Some parachronozoids seem drawn to those with latent or active psionic abilities (most often ESP or Teleportation). Others seek mana-rich areas, and there are rumors of ways to magically summon or lure them. Certainly, wizards have trapped and tamed such entities, using them as mounts or harnessing them to create world-jumping chariots.

There are almost as many different kinds of parachronozoids as there are worlds for them to hail from. This mere smattering includes two unique beings and one fairly common (and unpleasant) species.

“Aaron”

Aaron is the name most often given by a man in dark glasses who appears on lonely roads driving a black automobile. Sometimes it's a hearse, sometimes it's a coach and four, and sometimes it's the iconic black Cadillac Seville. He only appears to travelers on foot, and only at night or noon. Aaron shows up at the moment when the walker's spirits are at their lowest . . . when they have received some deadening setback that crushes what little hope they had.

Aaron begins by offering a ride and, if accepted, conversation. He talks in generalities, but they center on the importance of love and virtue. Occasionally he tells a story of some-

thing he saw on his travels, or some anecdote about his family. (He is especially fond of stories about his twin brother, who apparently has done everything from serving in the Army as a buck private to dancing with movie starlets.) At the end of the journey, Aaron has dropped his passenger or passengers wherever they were going, and left them with a gift of some sort. Sometimes it's just money or jewelry, but sometimes the story he told holds a crucial clue to the problem waiting for the traveler. And sometimes, the traveler finds a key ally waiting for him, or his true love, or both.

Aaron may be a ghost, or a tulpa created by psionic projection or mass wish-fulfillment, or he may just be a world-jumping bodhisattva with an idiosyncratic personal style. Nobody has ever tried to harm Aaron in his own car, and he has never offered harm to anyone, even the deserving.

Gargoyles

Gargoyles are either the pigeons or the rats of the parallels. Possibly both. They are slightly smarter than chimpanzees, with the aggression and trooping instincts of baboons. They have widely varying facial and body structures, but all have wings and talons.

Gargoyles have a gray, shifting complexion that blends well with old stone (rather less well with concrete). They prefer to flock in the older sections of cities, especially old churches. They can roost stock-still for hours at

a time, merging with the roofline and waiting for prey.

They prefer world-jumpers, but will attack anything with a strange parachronic “smell.” Failing that, they will attack anyone alone who looks like he would spray blood for a very great distance. They love to sadistically dangle foes in midair, hang them from church spires, or attack them in mid-climb, knocking them onto narrow ledges or rooflines for extra fun.

Some Cabalists are reputed to have trained gargoyles as coursing hounds or “carrier pigeons.”



Gargoyles

ST 20+; **DX** 16-18; **IQ** 7; **HT** 16.

Will 10; **Per** 16; **Speed** 8; **Dodge** 11;

Move 8 (Ground).

SM 0; 200-300 lbs.

Traits: Automaton; Body of Stone; Chameleon 5 (Stone only); Enhanced Move 1 (Air Speed 32); Flight (Winged; Air Move 16); Jumper (World); Long Talons; Magery 0; Silence 5.

Skills: Brawling-14; Stealth-18.

His voice had risen to a scream. “Frank, Frank, a terrible and unspeakable deed was done in the beginning. Before time, the deed, and from the deed –” He had risen and was hysterically pacing the room. “The deeds of the dead move through angles in the dim recesses of time. They are hungry and athirst!”

*– Frank Belknap Long,
The Hounds of Tindalos*

The White Stag

The White Stag has romped through the mythic history of many an Earth. It led Magor and Hunor to the steppes of Scythia to found the tribes of Hungary. It tried to warn Pwyll away from the lands of Annwn, and led Peredur to the Grail Castle. It launched quests by Sir Geraint and other Arthurian knights. And it has appeared every so often to Patrolmen on leave or otherwise not on duty.

Unfortunately, it has yet to appear to a Patrolman with any great skill at woodcraft (it requires at least Tracking-16 to follow successfully), so nobody knows where it's trying to lead him. It creates a trod (p. 79) under its hooves; anyone who can track it can follow it to another world with no other roll needed. Anemones spring up along its trail three days after it passes by.

Spoor and Stigmata

Although parachronozoids vary widely in form and feature, there are one or two ways to identify many of them, and a few reliable indicators that something has walked through worlds nearby.

Parachronozoid spoor includes:

- Odd bare patches in the shape of footprints, especially cloven hooves or canine tracks. Sometimes they appear in naked rock.
- Unusual growth of crossworld plants such as Puck's Cap mushrooms, tradescantia creeper, and Queen Marie's clover. Rings or lines of more normal mushrooms and flowers sometimes indicate a jump or running landing by a parachronozoid.
- People near the entry or exit point often have dreams of large black cats. This can happen even when the parachronozoid is small, pale, and non-feline.

Signs that a creature may be a world-walker include:

- Pure white fur, without other albino features.
- Violet or mismatched eyes.
- Unusual perception or intelligence for its species or, on worlds where it's not normal for the species, human speech.
- An unusual appetite for oats or strawberries.

OTHER HAZARDS

Not all the dangers between the worlds are human, or even sentient. Simply traveling the continuum can be a harrowing experience, especially without a handy conveyor. Even nexus portals don't always open onto the same place twice, and dimensional highways thread through some uncanny turf indeed. The continuum doesn't stay the same from place to place or time to time; banestorms and reality quakes shift even the scenery that doesn't shift by itself.

Charting these hazards and their effects remains an inexact science. Surveyors can determine deformations of the physical landscape, and map them to field strengths of various quantum energies. Paraphysicists, meteorologists, and geologists find their disciplines merging as the connections between physical and paraphysical phenomena teasingly flit through the available theories and data. Pure mathematicians offer helpful comments on catastrophe and chaos theory, and rather less helpful comments about "nonbirational mappings."

THE SPACES BETWEEN

Although the worlds vary widely, they are all still worlds, and usually Earths. The spaces between the worlds, however, can be anything at all – or nothing at all.

Nothingness

The most common experience of the space between Earths, for the Infinity Patrol anyway, is nothing. (For which they are profoundly thankful.) If it's working correctly, a conveyor simply vanishes from one point and reappears instantaneously at the same point on another Earth. Whether it travels through a micro-wormhole at billions of times the speed of light, or simply transposes itself like an electron when nobody's looking, or ravel down the superstrings that knot the Earths together beneath even the quantum level, nobody knows for sure. The math explains it all three ways, depending on which figures you emphasize. If

the "jump space" that conveyors transit has any characteristics, they don't show up on Infinity's instruments.

The Current

The other type of space between the Earths that the Patrol has encountered so far is "the Current," a rushing flow of charged particles that runs "back" from Homeline through all other worlds. (Centrum may also generate a Current of its own.) Paralabs calls these "oz particles," after the twister that took Dorothy Gale to another world (which, unnervingly, exists on Quantum 4) in *The Wizard of Oz*. Powerful eddies of the Current roil around Merlin-3 (p. 134) and some other worlds; travel to or from those worlds by any means is always at -1 or more to skill.

The Current mostly appears on the various Earths in the form of banestorms (p. 75), which are properties of its much more massive and dangerous flow. Although only a few especially hardened Patrol conveyors have breached the Current (entering

through larger and more stable banestorms), it may be possible for other vehicles (like the Time Sphere on p. 163) to somehow ride it between the worlds. With conveyors so much easier and less dangerous, Paralabs hasn't put too much effort into designing an "oz ship," although the threat of some barbarian crosstime culture descending onto Homeline in oz-riding pirate vessels does preoccupy a few UNIC planners.

Exposure to oz particles works like radiation exposure (see pp. B435-436), with "oz" instead of "rads." Some oz sources include:

Unprotected (no conveyor) time or dimension travel: 1 oz per trip.

Downwind from a banestorm: 1-6 oz per minute, depending on storm strength. After a banestorm, oz levels in the air and water drop to 1-6 oz per hour over the next day, and 1-6 oz per day over the next month.

Inside a banestorm: 300-1,800 oz per hour, depending on storm strength. A twin-charged banestorm (p. B534), however, delivers little or no (1-6 oz per hour) oz charge to those inside it.

Oz effects are as follows, using the Radiation Effects Table on p. B436:

–: No effect, but doses continue to accumulate.

A: Minor fortune or misfortune, at quirk-level. Roll 1d to determine good (1-3) or bad (4-6) luck. Something goes right (or wrong) for no reason. Superstitious activity (rubbing a white rabbit's foot, for example) can "positively spin" the effect.

B: Major fortune or misfortune. You gain 15-point Luck, or Unluckiness *plus* Ham-Fisted. Roll as before. Superstitious activity (as a Compulsive Behavior) can affect the random roll by +1 or -1. These effects last until the oz dosage decays.

C: Temporal decay. Make daily aging rolls (p. B154). On a critical success, you "age backward." You also have Magic Susceptibility 3 until the aging stops; your ears may also get points, your hair turn green, etc.

D: Rapid temporal decay. Roll as C, above. The charged particles begin to do actual physical damage. Even on a successful roll, you suffer 1 point of injury; on a failure, 2 points; on a

critical failure, 1d points. Your features may turn monstrous or ethereally beautiful and strange.

E: Overwhelming temporal decay. Make hourly aging rolls; double above damage.

Some materials grant oz shielding. Unlike radiation shielding, the wearer does not usually need to cover all exposed areas to gain the benefit of its Protection Factor (p. B436), merely have a few ounces of the material exposed to the oz field between the field and the wearer. Silk or amber has PF 7, steel has PF 10, silver or hawthorn has PF 32, and cold iron has PF 100. Also unlike radiation shielding, not all materials grant the same protection against every banestorm; individual oz frequencies may vary tremendously.

BANESTORMS

A "banestorm" is a localized event that transports everyone within a certain area to another dimension or worldline. Most often circular, banestorms range in size from a few yards to a few miles across. Within an atmosphere, a banestorm tends to manifest as a thick fog bank, mysterious thundercloud, or heavy electrical storm that builds up slowly and vanishes suddenly. When the banestorm vanishes, so does everyone within its radius. These "passengers" reappear . . . elsewhere. Banestorms do not necessarily send their passengers to the equivalent spot in their world.

With the oz charge they carry, banestorms often have a major effect not only on the unfortunates caught up in them and the countryside through which they plow, but the quantum field around the Earth they strike. A banestorm interferes with quantum jump windows, giving a penalty to Electronics Operation (Projector) skill from -1 to -6! Some Patrolmen still risk it, because a banestorm also masks parachronic detection, drowning out the jump signal in an ocean of parachronic "noise." The banestorm gives the same penalty to the Electronics Operation (Sensors) skill to detect a jump and half that penalty to any Physics (Parachronic) skill roll to analyze data gathered during a banestorm.

Vortices

These daring Patrolmen seek out vortices, points on the Earth's surface which, for some reason, tend to attract or manifest banestorms more frequently. Nobody quite knows why vortices appear, or even if they actually exist outside Patrol superstition – banestorm surveying is a necessarily difficult job. Patrolmen often notice their compasses begin to spin around when a banestorm is brewing up, and other anomalous readings begin to hash delicate sensors. The best Paralabs guess is that vortices appear where the Earth's magnetic field fluctuates more than usual; such fluctuations may have a geological or tectonic component.

Commonly appearing vortices include the Bermuda Triangle, the Devil's Sea (a triangular stretch of ocean centered on Iwo Jima), the Hoggar Desert in central Algeria, Lake Erie, the mouth of the Indus River, the interior of Madagascar, the Kermadec Islands north of New Zealand, and the two magnetic poles. On mana-positive worlds, vortices tend to show up near ley line junctions or at sites such as Stonehenge or the Pyramids.

REALITY QUAKES

A reality quake (or, as Paralabs prefers to call it, an "ontoclysm") creates such an upheaval in the path of time or worlds that history itself is upthrust and overturned, leaving a new past in its wake. Not just history can change in a reality quake, of course. The laws of nature and physics can alter; worlds can go from high mana to no mana (or the reverse), gods can die or be born, and new stars and planets appear in the heavens. One good sign of reality quakes in progress is an anomalous eclipse, unpredicted comet, or other strange astronomical (or astrological) portent. Another effect of imminent reality quakes is to "blank out" precognitive or psychometric abilities, since history literally "doesn't exist" on the far side of the quake. Volcanism and conventional earthquakes also seem to follow or precede reality quakes; Paralabs nervously admits that on some Earths, they might *cause* reality quakes!

Much as an earthquake leaves breaks in the strata and fractures in the geology, or flings up material from deep in the earth onto the surface, a reality quake leaves breaks in civilization or fractures in the historical record. It can also and fling up anomalous fragments of other realities – “reality shards” – into the new/old past. After each shift, only the reality shards remain, and the fossilized traces of the previous reality survive only in the subconscious mind and myths of surviving cultures, and in the strange artifacts rejected by the inhabitants as oddities or forgeries. Many reality shards show up in multiple versions on more than one Earth.

Reality Shards

Patrolmen who find reality shards are supposed to bring them to Paralabs for study. However, given their weird, anomalous effects on conveyors (and Patrolmen!), they are often “accidentally” left behind in hidden caches, or (if seemingly lucky or useful) “accidentally” left off the incident report.

Reality shards tend to give anomalous readings under scientific testing, especially carbon-14 or thermoluminescence dating. Many seem to be palpable forgeries, “given away” by their anachronistic composition, construction, or artistic technique. Of the reality shards known to Paralabs, a notable percentage are made of crystal, or have some sort of glaze on them. Whether this is a function of crystal’s general ruggedness or of the meta-geometry of reality tectonics remains unknown.

Sample reality shards include the following, most of which have Homeline equivalents:

Nineveh Lens: An optically ground crystal lens initially discovered in the ruins of Nineveh in 1853. The Nineveh Lens predates by millennia other known lenses; archaeologists have discovered it (or a lens very similar to it) in Nineveh in many different years on a number of Earths. Looking through it lets the viewer see invisible Akkadian demons, or reality quake stresses, or an imprinted recording of August 12, 605 B.C.

Glozel Fragments: In 1923 a farmer dug up hundreds of enigmatic artifacts

in a field near Glozel, France. Mostly strange stones, brick, and bones, they bore carvings in an unknown alphabet. That same alphabet is used as a Phoenecian creole in Ezcalli, and on one or two other worlds. Some fragments show signs of sudden, intense heat; some Cabalists in the Wheel of Ptah throw Glozel fragments for divination.

Shroud of Turin: Thought to be both the winding cloth of Jesus Christ and a pious forgery from the 14th century, the Shroud of Turin remains an enigma. The presence of Palestinian pollen grains and the afterimage of Roman coins over the eyes of the figure contrast sharply with radiocarbon dating demonstrating the Shroud’s creation around 1350. Although the Vatican refuses to allow further tests on the Homeline version of the Shroud, the one in Turin Cathedral on Ariane (p. 128) gives every sign of being a major reality shard. Eerie lights, the smell of incense, and frequent nexus portals to first-century Jerusalem pervade the Shroud’s home

on that world, which is under the care of the conservative Catholic Opus Dei.

Vinland Map: In 1957, a curator at Yale University bought a handwritten tome known as the Tartar Relation. In it, a map, dated to 1440, showed the east coast of North America, labeled “Vinland.” Various analyses have revealed it as authentic, or as a mid-20th-century forgery. The original of the map is now in the Duncorne Foundation collection. Under the right wavelengths, it is rumored to show the dimensional highway to a pocket universe of Norse gods and an “eternal Vinland the Brave.”

Magic Bullet: The 6.5 mm bullet that passed through John F. Kennedy and John Connally appeared, almost completely intact and unscathed, on the gurney at Parkland Hospital in Dallas. Conspiracy theorists call it the “magic bullet.” Some conspiracy-minded Paralabs analysts think that Oswald (or whoever) might have triggered a reality microquake, recreating the 535 A.D. event (see below) and sending shadow bullets winging

Mathematical Bafflegab

For GMs and players who crave technobabble and jargon for the full roleplaying experience, we proudly present this excerpt from *An Introduction to Ontophysics*, by Dr. Joseph Franecki (University of Wisconsin Press, 2026, third edition, revised). The topic of the learned doctor’s disquisition is the mathematics of reality quakes, but it can apply to echoes, puzzle worlds, and other paraphysical phenomena with equal facility.

Pioneered by Margaret Steed in 2004, quantum combinatoric geometry relates directly to the parachronic upheavals, which may occur when two or more realities are brought too quickly into proximity (as determined by the L_8 metric).

Steed’s equations themselves are an invaluable basis for the calculation of the intersection indices of Leinster co-bundles in hemi-projective varieties, which may not seem relevant, until one appreciates that our current model of the 8-dimensional meta-space in which the known alternate worlds reside is an 8-dimensional projection of the compactification of a generally positioned smooth 9-dimensional hemi-plane, and individual vector chains in the Leinster co-bundles correspond to the conditions under which parachronically stable worlds can (and did) develop (our own included).

Intersections, then, would indicate locations in meta-space and time where the probability of nonbirational mappings between worlds or quasi-worlds is maximized, leading to a real possibility that information (in the form of history-changing events, cultures, concepts, or individuals) can be destroyed or erroneously created, that is, transported from no real antecedent in this or any world.

across the continuum. If loaded into a rifle, a magic bullet supposedly grants an instant kill (a critical hit to the brain) when fired at a king.

In game terms, reality shards almost always act as Mana Enhancers (p. B68), and may grant other advantages (with the Can Be Stolen and Unique modifiers, perhaps) such as Doesn't Eat or Drink, Doesn't Sleep, Extraordinary Luck, Omen, Jumper, Unaging, or Blessed. (They make excellent "origin items" for world-jumping supers.) Of course, they might also carry disadvantages, such as Delusions ("I am rightwise King of England!"), Flashbacks, Cursed, or Unluckiness. Any reality shard is guaranteed to be a Weirdness Magnet. The GM is free to introduce his favorite artifact or enigma as a reality shard – the Piltown Man skull on Homeline may be a forgery, but that doesn't mean there's not a "real" shard just like it out in the continuum somewhere.

Fracture Zones

The fracture zone is the "epicenter" of the reality quake, a location in space-time usually a few square miles and around six days in extent. After the quake, it technically becomes a "reality subduction zone" where the old reality is "sucked under" the new one. In practice, everyone calls the area a fracture zone regardless, issues of chronology being what they often are around reality quakes.

A few space-time locations seem to be especially vulnerable to reality quakes, such as:

Ajalon, c. 1400 B.C.?: According to Joshua 10:12, during a battle against the Gibeonites at Ajalon in Canaan, the sun stood still for an entire day. This is either pious myth, miracle, or prima facie reality quake evidence. The battle, interestingly, has yet to be convincingly dated – or even mentioned in other local chronicles. Estimates range from 1439 to 1131 B.C.

Troy, c. 1200 B.C.: An earthquake may have caused the "fall of Troy," and the *Odyssey* reports that the Greeks ceased to honor the gods after their victory. The traditional date for the fall of Troy is 1179 B.C.; shortly thereafter,

Greek history simply disappears into a Dark Age for 300 years until Homer writes the *Iliad* about the siege of Troy. Did his song "knit together" a reality fracture?

Etruria, c. 750 B.C.: The legendary founding of Rome takes place here and now, with the customary accretion of omens and signs from the gods. A "shield of Mars" fell to Earth during the reign of Rome's legendary second king Numa Pompilius – was it a reality shard? Interestingly, magnetic analysis of pottery from the region seems to indicate a reversal of the Earth's magnetic field around the time of Numa's reign.

Corfu and Jerusalem, 29 A.D.: Off the Adriatic island of Corfu, Plutarch records that passengers heard a "great howl" announcing the death of the Great God Pan. This date also roughly matches the date of Jesus' crucifixion, which was accompanied, according to the Bible, by an anomalous eclipse.

Britain or Java, 535 A.D.: The volcanic island Krakatoa may have erupted cataclysmically around the time of the death of King Arthur. The century after that date was almost a global Dark Age; the Byzantine Empire lost a third of its population in the Plague of Justinian, Rome lay in ruins, China and India descended into chaos and civil war, and even Teotihuacan and the Maya states collapsed. Famines and storms swept over the world.

Armageddon: At the natural choke point between Egypt and Asia, the plain of Megiddo in Israel sees battles in all eras in almost all Earths. (On Homeline, they range from Pharaonic campaigns in 2350 B.C. to the Yom Kippur War in 1973.) This may be enough to twist it permanently out of space-time; soldiers missing after these battles may have fallen into a "reality sinkhole" to emerge on some other field, or recruited into a cross-world brigade.

Quantaclysms

The 535 A.D. event (which may also have involved a mysterious comet) is one possible quantaclysm, a reality quake so severe that it actually obliterates the worldline on which it takes place, and flings reality shards to tens or even hundreds of other Earths in its wake. The Holy Grail, in all its myriad

forms, may be such a reality shard, as might the wizard Merlin, who according to the stories lived backward from his senescence (in which he was frozen in time by Nimue) to his youth in Britain. Another such quantaclysm may have blown a world of evolved, technologically advanced dinosaurs to pieces, and sent the survivors hurtling deep into the past. Such an event might have left almost all Earths with legends of "talking snakes" or "dragons" who bring wisdom and knowledge from "under the earth," and the U.S.L. worldline (p. 148) as the only remnant.

Reality Quakes and Time Travel

Reality quakes would also be quite dangerous for time travelers. Of course, in a sense, any time traveler who changes the past causes a reality quake, but (in the commonly understood versions of temporal physics), time "pastward" of his change remains unaffected. A true reality quake, on the other hand, changes the past as well; it more often *only* changes the past, leaving history after the fracture unaltered, but historians unaware that their past is now different. Such a reality quake could change the past while a traveler was still in it, trapping him in a reality cyst with literally no future. Some eras of the past might be ontically unstable, especially in fracture zones, leading to time-slips or chrontal storms.

GOING ELSEWHERE

Nexus Portals

A "nexus portal" (see pp. B534) is a hole leading from one dimension to another. It is usually circular and less than 10 yards across, and allows light to pass through from both ends (that is, you can see its destination). Like a conveyor, a portal crosses realities without crossing space. Portals can be one-way or two-way; open all the time, or accessible only on Durin's Day or to those with the Key of Time, or summonable by the person who knows which kabbalistic sequence of elevator buttons to push. Some portals go a lot

Reality Quakes in the Game

In essence, reality quakes are a GM's tool to allow things to happen outside the normal rules of the setting. Want to massively retcon your campaign? Reality quake. Want to put the Holy Grail into a resolutely hard-SF setting? Reality quake. Want to have a world where ancient Romans fight the Confederacy? Reality quake. This also happens to be the explanation used by most "flung into the past" stories, no matter how they may gussy it up with lightning bolts or Druidic curses – it happened because it's just too neat for reality to get in the way. Providing hard and fast rules for reality quakes, therefore, would seem to be beside the point.

But, if you want to have a game centered on the quakes – their cause, their cure, their uses – here are some rules mechanics to govern their appearance, all neatly tied into the existing paraphysics of the setting.

Reality Stress Level

Compute the basic Reality Stress Level as follows: add 1 for every level of local mana above no mana (low is +1, normal is +2, etc.). Add the SL modifiers for cosmic energies, historical murk, and magic use (though not magically significant days) from the *Chronal Storms* section (p. 164), as written. If the area has been a fracture zone in other worlds, add from 1 to 5 points (from a minor slip to Armageddon). Add 1 or 2 points if the area is on a geological fault line.

Reality Quake Roll

The GM should make the Quake Roll when local conditions seem to threaten a quake, usually due to one or more of the modifiers below. Take the total RSL and divide it by 5 (round down). Apply that as a modifier on the Quake Roll; roll 3d and apply the results as follows:

- 6 or less – Pressure relief stabilizes zone.
- 7-9 – No result, but add 1 to any further roll made within a week if stimulus continues.
- 10-11 – No result, but add 2 to any further roll made within a week if stimulus continues.

12-13 – No immediate result, but if the zone is not stabilized, roll again in 1d×10 hours, at +2.

This modifier is cumulative if rolled more than once.

14-15 – Reality temblor in 2d hours; a banestorm may blow up, 1d reality shards appear, or 3d beings from another reality emerge (possibly hostile and supernatural).

16-17 – Reality quake will occur in 2d days; reality temblor will occur as above.

18 or more – Reality quake will occur in 2d hours; reality temblor will occur immediately.

Further local modifiers to the Quake Roll are at the GM's discretion but might include: +1 or more for a cult devoted to the zone's previous (or coming) reality (+1 for 100 members, +2 for 1,000 members, etc.) in the area; +1 or more for a being from another reality becoming known to the local population (gruesome murder spree, strange lecture tour, etc.); battlefield modifiers for a battle going on during a potential quake; +1 or more for a reality shard in use; +1 to +3 for strange eclipses, astrological conjunctions, etc. visible in the area.

Stress Relief

Immediately after a Quake Roll results in a 6 or less, cut the RSL by two-thirds, and subtract 3 from any Quake Roll made in the next year. If a Quake Roll results in a 3 or less, cut the RSL to just the local mana level, and subtract 6 from any Quake Roll made in the next year. Over that year, the RSL builds back up to its normal "background" level.

Stabilizing a fracture zone may involve super-science "warp dampers," magic, or simply trying to remove potential quake stimuli (weird cults, reality shards, monsters, nexus portals) from the area. It might involve resolving the area's historical enigmas and mysteries to clear up any rubble from previous quakes. The GM should determine when an area counts as stable – a whole campaign could center on stabilizing a major fracture zone!

of different places (at random or by selection), and some are invisible until after the unwary traveler has tumbled through them into another world.

The Patrol has encountered every sort of portal mentioned above, and some even stranger than that. So far, the Patrol has found at least one potential portal on every world it has surveyed except for Coventry. Patrol doctrine allows Patrolmen to seal por-

als if the situation seems to demand it. Individual Patrolmen take various approaches to that question: some like having a bolthole available in case something goes wrong with the conveyor; others don't like the thought that the "back door" to the world is left open and unlocked.

Most nexus portals can be destroyed with sufficiently high energy release; dynamite does the job in

many cases. (Even if it doesn't close the portal, it can effectively block access to it.) Some portals go "offline" during nuclear blasts or very intense fires or electrical storms. A few portals require charged-particle blasts, magic, or other methods to close, and even then they can reopen after a few years. If possible, locking the portal makes the best compromise between access and security; this often takes a

magical ritual, psionic attunement, or tuning a quantum flux capacitor to match the portal's signature.

Dimensional Highways

The same basic strictures apply to dimensional highways, the paths that run across the parallels. They are almost always much harder to close than mere nexus portals. They are somewhat less common, although almost all mana-positive worlds have at least one minor dimensional highway usable by anyone (or sometimes any mage or supernatural being) who knows the way. These "faerie trods" mostly run between forests, their path strewn with Puck's-cap mushrooms and Queen Marie's clover.

Less decorative are the "ghost roads," straight paths leading through misty declivities. The fog on either side of a ghost road resembles the clouds of a banestorm, and has similar effects if you step into it. In the clouds, travelers see shadows and familiar faces – possibly quantum shadows of their alternate selves – that alternately entice and mock them. Walking a ghost road usually involves a Fright Check, at -2 to -4. Ghost roads normally appear in normal-mana or higher areas, but they sometimes drift onto the path (or vice versa) of particularly bloody massacre sites, plague pits, and the like.

One subclass of dimensional highway, called the "time tunnel," is just like a nexus portal, except that the journey is not instantaneous and passes through a tunnel. The tunnel resembles a natural cavern, with walls of raw stone occasionally enlivened by graffiti, carved runes, or paintings of bulls and dinosaurs. What, if anything, is on the other side of the tunnel walls remains unknown.

Some fairly well-known or significant dimensional highways include:

The Chronobahn: Two roads, composed of fitted hexagonal basalt blocks, run through a number of worlds on Quantum 3. Each road is about 20 yards wide, and runs through each world for about 300 miles before moving into the next. The two roads cross near Carchemish, in the upper Euphrates valley on Nostradamus (p. 138). Its western end on Nostradamus leads to Friedrich

(p. 124); the Raven Division has sent scouts along its length for about a thousand miles in all four directions.

Eleusis Alesia: This ley line runs through a number of worlds on a number of quanta, including Britannica-7, Johnson's Rome, and Wyvern. It can be accessed many places along its length, between la Aliseda, Spain, and Kalisz, Poland. Only women can travel it, and no vehicles past TL4.

I-776: "This psionic construct was built by the subconscious will of the United States just before the Great Awakening of July 4, 2076." That's what the Roadside Historical Marker says, anyway; all the Patrol knows is that it runs along the old Route 66 from Chicago to Los Angeles on almost every worldline with a U.S.

interstate highway system. It can only be accessed through patches of fog along a rainy highway somewhere in America, although there are certain radio frequencies that draw an on-ramp closer to your automobile.

SHIFTREALMS

Shiftrealms are geographical features (and some artificial constructs) that move between the worlds. Shiftrealms usually travel on a regular schedule, although it may be a fairly impenetrable and complex one. A few shiftrealms are either entirely random, or their schedule is so abstruse that no pattern has emerged yet. Some famous "ghost ships," such as the *Flying Dutchman*, may also actually be shiftrealms.

Gates of Thoth

Mysterious triangles that appear and disappear in an indecipherable pattern, the Gates of Thoth are doorways through time. Members of the Cabal believe that Khaibitu-na-Khonsu, their first Grand Master, opened the Gates during his war with the god Ra in the third millennium B.C. Opinions differ on what he thought he was doing, and on whether the Gates were even his intended result. If a person steps through a Gate, he usually moves backward in time to another Gate appearing at the same place. Occasionally, travel occurs across space or even forward in time. Gates can span hours or millennia, but a slim majority open across one to three centuries. A Gate may also open to another world or plane entirely. No Magery is necessary to utilize a Gate.

Gates of Thoth often open in high-mana worlds and high-mana locations on normal-mana worlds, but have also been known to materialize in any world with even a trace of magic. A Gate appears as a "hole" in the air in the shape of an equilateral triangle. Their height from base to apex is usually around 10 feet, but the Gates rarely appear at ground level, often materializing dozens of feet above the ground. A Gate usually remains open for three to 18 hours, during which travel is permissible both into and out of the Gate. When used in conjunction with the Planar Summons spell (p. B247), the gate increases the skill roll by 6 and reduces the energy cost to 10.

Gates of Thoth can allow a GM to introduce time travel into a cross-world campaign on a one-shot or limited basis, strictly under his control. Gates of Thoth can also bring dinosaurs, historical villains, or even unearthly Things from beyond the stars into a game, as part of some evil Cabal scheme or simply to spice things up. GMs who like the idea of random gates opening and closing under the GM's control, but don't want to deal with time travel even a little bit, can recast the Gates as magical nexus portals (p. 77). These Gates of Psais (named for the Egyptian god of destiny) only grant passage between parallel worlds.

The Ouroborous Car

Perhaps this subway car fell through the geometry of a subway system. It now rattles between subway stations on the infinite worlds. Nobody can tell what city it originally came from; the interior is dimly lit and smells bad. All its advertisements are in English and Spanish; the outsides of the car are painted over with graffiti and unreadable. It may be an intelligent parachronozoid rather than a shiftrealm, as Patrolmen who have taken it report that it somehow “knows where you need to go” and makes the required stop.

Silenzia

The Silent City, Silenzia flickers between many Earths, but only between two locations. In June and July it appears, wreathed in fog and rainbows, on the flank of the Muir Glacier in Alaska, above Glacier Bay and below the St. Elias Mountains; Midsummer Day at noon is the best time to try entering it there. In December and January, it manifests on the slopes of Mount Etna in Sicily, above the Straits of Messina; midnight on Twelfth Night it is most accessible there. Silenzia’s architecture is a strange but organic mixture of medieval Arabic and Gothic, although some of the buildings appear to have been constructed as late as the 1890s. The Silenzians claim that their city was founded by Roger II of Sicily, but stolen by Morgan Le Fay in anger at his refusal to renounce Christianity. (Less romantic theorists believe it to be a large reality shard, although it is a low-mana zone.) For at least 200 years, Silenzia has quietly prospered selling Yukon gold in Naples, Messina, and Palermo; local fishermen (both Sicilian and Inuit) do well selling their catches on Silenzia’s docks, and do not speak of it to strangers. Silenzia is a popular hangout and rendezvous point for swagmen, and dimension travelers can find a surprising variety of goods from all over the multiverse for sale (for a surprising variety of currencies) in Silenzia’s quaint shops and narrow bazaars.

Huy Breasil

In Homeline legend, Huy Breasil (also Hy-Brasil, among other variant

spellings) was the “fortunate island” of golden palaces and wise enchanters, rich in sheep and glass, wreathed in fog to the west of Ireland. Every seven years it would appear, sending a sweet wind of spice and apples across the ocean. As it happens, this is another legend with a basis in a shiftrealm; the island actually exists, floating between various Earths on a long circuit through the quanta. Seemingly TL2 at most, the natives need only murmur or gesture to find their desires fulfilled; higher technology, meanwhile, often fails (all rolls to use devices or equipment on Huy Breasil are at -1 to skill for every TL the tool is above 3). Huy Breasil is a very-high-mana island.

The mana differential between Huy Breasil and most of the worlds it visits kicks up a cyclonic banestorm around its coastline, which further shrouds it from visiting ships (and often sends ships right through the island, none the wiser). If it drops into a low- or no-mana world, it generates a banestream, a current of higher mana flowing east out of the island that can last for years or decades, even after Huy Breasil has moved on to another Earth. The banestream usually dies down by the time it hits the European continent, although in some bad years, gales and high waves churn up ports and dockyards from Glasgow to Lisbon, sending monsters and merfolk up onto the land. Particularly strong banestreams can affect weather patterns (and mana levels) as far inland as the upper Danube valley.

Faërie

Faërie is a timeless kingdom of elves (also called fae) ruled by Queen Titania and King Oberon. Although mutable by sufficiently powerful fae, it usually resembles a rural area of medieval northwestern Europe on a perfect spring afternoon. The palace of Oberon and Titania rises in the center of the shiftrealm, with a “goblin marketplace” on the border. Many trods (p. 74) run from Faërie to various northern Europes. Other trods link Faërie to other shiftrealms such as the Forest of Arden, which moves between Englands whenever the leaves turn. Although the trods to Faërie tend to open only to magi, or to

those with elven blood, even normal mortals can find themselves stumbling into Faërie from an Irish hilltop or a Tuscan grove. The relative solidity of Faërie makes it a common destination for material travelers in the Astral Plane, as well, since it touches the Astral Plane on all sides.

Wanshijieshan

Wanshijieshan, the “Ten Thousand Worlds Mountain,” seems to have flowed out of some Tang Dynasty print, wreathed in the mists, clad in impossibly slender conifers, and mounting gracefully up to heaven like cloud turned to stone. Along its ridges and ravines, a thousand caverns open – some wide and yawning, some softly glowing with phosphorescent fungi, some narrow and rimed with lime and lichen. Some of them are fouled with mephitic vapors or flooded with glacial runoff; others are closed off by landslides or blocked off by curiously shaped walls. Through every passage lies a different Earth, although some of the caves end in holes in an icy river in America, or ponds in a forest in England, rather than mountainsides and canyons in the rocky west of China’s Shanxi province, where dedicated or worthy travelers may find it.

The Mountain is home to a small community of monks who have retired there. Asking them about the caves is useless; they have retired to forget the Earths, not act as tour guides. It is the gravest possible discourtesy to recognize a monk, and especially to call him by a name he may have held once long ago. The abbot speculates, with respectful visitors, upon the nature of the Mountain itself, and the omens seen in its trees and skies and rivers. Perhaps the lightning that flickers around its top bears witness to some great disruption, or to the birth of some great majesty. Perhaps each new spring that bursts out of the rock is a dimensional road being cut, or a new set of minds learning to move around the continuum. Perhaps, he suggests over his tea, the mountain is not a shiftrealm at all, but the only fixed realm in all the infinite worlds, the true navel of the cosmos.

CHAPTER THREE

PRESENT AT THE CREATION

Angela and Suleiman – Agents Polk and Erdoglu, as their records chip read, or “Mrs. Banning and her manservant Pompey” as they were known hereabouts – were mostly concerned with the rain. Specifically, at its annoying tendency to fall through what was left of the plantation house roof, onto their very accurate, and hence not at all waterproof, clothing. “Nobody can be expected to perform c l o d y n a m i c a n a l y s i s soaked to the skin like this,” Angela grouched.

“Look on the bright side,” her partner responded, hunching a little deeper into his topcoat, “Nobody’s trying to kill us right now.” It was true; the Union artillery had found somewhere else to obliterate for the time being, and the two Patrolmen hadn’t seen hide or hair of the Centrum agents known to be swarming all over this particular stretch of Mississippi in this particular 1863. Angela sneezed. “Except maybe with pneumonia.”

“That’s right, though. Where the Hell are the I.S. boys, and why aren’t they trying harder to save the Rebs? If Vicksburg doesn’t fall to Grant, Gettysburg doesn’t matter a bit, and worse yet, Grant doesn’t go east next



year to finally teach Bobby Lee how to lose like a gentleman.” Suleiman, who had a soft spot for Lee, responded, “More to the point, the Mississippi doesn’t get cut, and that opens up some troublesome developments in Missouri that could tweak the 1864 election. All the numbers show that Vicksburg is the key nexus, so why hasn’t Centrum made its move by now?”

“Well, they’re all medieval screw-heads; maybe this is a bluff, and they’re trying to save Pickett’s Charge or something.” Suleiman grinned, but demurred: “Look, they don’t

think like we do, but they understand war pretty well. Gettysburg is a sideshow. Even if Lee wins, he’s still lost in the middle of Pennsylvania with no logistics and no cavalry support, and two Union armies over the next ridge.” He trailed off, realizing that Angela had neatly trapped him into calling Lee’s eternal genius into question, and changed the subject. “Maybe they’re not even thinking about the Civil War, though – Britain is the really important country here and now, and Palmerston is still holding on to Centrum-style hierarchy by the skin of his teeth.”

"Plus, they're supposed to be signing a free trade pact with Belgium and France this year – didn't Vanderlyn say that World War One really begins because Britain has too much cash tied up in Belgian ports?"

"Vanderlyn? He's crazy, and he's triple crazy about Belgium. If you want to find World War One starting in 1863, go to Denmark, where King Christian is being ass enough to give Bismarck a pretext for a war that will wind up unifying Germany."

"Is that this year?" "Yep."

"No," Angela sighed after a long thought, "that just seems too subtle somehow. Too long-term. I can't get away from the notion that Centrum is involved here and now, at Vicksburg. Otherwise, who's to say they're not murdering Henry Ford in his crib, or conniving to delete the penalty kick from soccer? No, I don't think they're in Denmark."

"Plus, it's probably raining in Copenhagen, too."

The two Patrolmen pondered that gloomy prospect, and watched more of the carpet return to the Delta mud that had no doubt produced it in the first place.

"Let's recheck the numbers again. Maybe the computer has something for us."

For miles around, the rain had turned Mississippi's roads to burgoo, bogging down the Union wagons and cannon, and pneumonia had begun carrying off more and more of the

Had I been present at the Creation, I would have given some useful hints for better ordering of the Universe.

– Alfonso X, called "the Wise," of Aragon

Union wounded. The besieging Union Army of the Tennessee was eroding away in the downpour, or drowning in mud. Ulysses S. Grant looked at the sky in frustration, and cursed to himself.

It was supposed to be sunny today, dammit. Somehow I just know it was supposed to be sunny.

Even the most heroic I-Cops, or the most fiendish interdimensional Nazis, need a stage for their actions. In the Infinite Worlds setting, as in most crosstime campaigns, that setting is the alternate world, an Earth where history took a different turn. Many examples of such worlds appear in fiction, speculative history, and film; GMs can have their hands full with adventures set in a single world of Nazi victory or Roman survival. However, the canvas of the Infinite Worlds setting is vaster than even one world where history turned aside; it

contains a myriad of parallel Earths, each one with its own potential for riches, adventure, mystery, or danger. This chapter lays out some of the basic types of alternate worlds, and some principles (based, as far as possible, on historical research) for designing or constructing them.

Throughout this chapter, various tables and metrics can help the GM to randomly or mechanically create another timeline. It should go without saying that these systems exist solely for the GM's convenience, and if he has a better idea, or wants to tweak the results to produce something that sounds interesting, he should do just that. However, just as some of the fun of "space merchant" games is randomly discovering planets, some of the fun of crosstime adventures is randomly discovering alternates. Hopefully, this chapter and these systems can add to that fun.

TYPES OF ALTERNATE WORLDS

Both crossworld travelers and GMs tend to classify worlds into various types, depending on their use, nature, and inhabitants. This section primarily approaches the topic from the GM's perspective, although it uses some Infinity Patrol terminology rather than reinventing the wheel. For specific Infinity world classifications, see the box on p. 83.

A world might be a pre-existing element of the game, or one custom-designed to fit a given scenario. A lost conveyor, or a more free-form setting than the "default" Infinite Worlds campaign, might drop Patrolmen into

any number of random worlds. To randomly generate an alternate

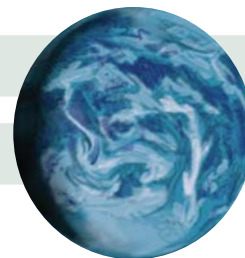
world, roll 1d twice and consult the following tables:

Random Quantum Table

1	Quantum 3 (Q8 for Centrum)
2	Quantum 4 (Q9 for Centrum)
3	Quantum 5 (Q10 for Centrum)
4-5	Quantum 6
6	Quantum 7

Random World Type

1	Empty
2-5	Echo/Parallel (if on Q6, roll again: 1,2 – Echo; 3-6 – Parallel)
6	Challenge



Infinity's World Classes

The Penetration Service gives every surveyed worldline a class rating, to guide future Infinity activity. UNIC can, in theory, override a Penetration Service classification, but never has. Sometimes, newly discovered (or defeated) dangers in a timeline can shift its class rating up or (less often) down the scale.

Class O (Open): Worldlines declared safe to enter, and available for trade, colonization, or other activity.

Class P (Protectorate): Generally applied to parallels with “autochrous” populations (those native to a timeline, as opposed to Homeline colonists and their descendants). Many lower-tech Class P worlds have limited and licensed trade or tourism openings.

Class R (Research): Set aside for special study, but not immediately threatening. Such worldlines usually have strange physical laws or wildly variant cultures, dinosaurs or other exotic ecologies, or pre-Bronze Age human populations.

Class Z (Closed): Worlds that pose a danger to Homeline, or to The Secret. This class includes most hell parallels (p. 128), very high-tech worldlines, the Reich parallels (p. 143), and worlds with aliens, magic, or open psionics.

Within each class, worldlines have Access Ratings. These denote which outtimers can enter the timeline, and range from 1 (Patrol personnel with specific orders only) to 10 (free visitation by any Homeliner). Intermediate stages 2 (Patrol personnel only) and 3 (Infinity, personnel only) restrict the world to Infinity, although with enough pressure from national governments or UNIC, outsiders might be allowed access. AR4 allows only Infinity-licensed researchers; AR5 allows accredited research staffs from any major corporation or university. At AR6 through AR8, Infinity allows outtime trade in ever-larger amounts and in ever-less regulated goods; AR9 allows guided tourism. No Class Z world has a Access Rating above 4.

EMPTY WORLDS

Empty worlds have no intelligent native life – or, at least, none that the cross-dimensional visitors have found yet! How Infinity, or other crosstimers, use such a world depends on their own procedures and on the nature of the empty Earth in question. An Earth where mankind never evolved – or hasn't yet – is very different from an Earth on which some horrible disaster cleansed the world of intelligent life or derailed hominid evolution.

Within the Infinite Worlds setting, a random empty world breaks down as follows; roll 1d and use the discussion below to refine the basic result.

- | | |
|-----|------------------------------|
| 1-4 | Resource exploitation. |
| 5 | Homeline colony or colonies. |
| 6 | Disaster world. |

Resources

Most Earths have the same geographical history, so the same mineral resources exist in the same richness and the same locations across the parallels. (Major exceptions include the Lucifer parallels, most of which were hit by major asteroid or meteorite strikes. In the impact zones of such disasters, very rich, pure veins of many different elements occur.) The major industrial minerals, their rough value on Homeline, and their primary deposits, are as follows:

Bauxite (\$20/ton): Bauxite (aluminum ore) deposits occur globally, the richest being in the Ural Mountains, the Guianas, Guinea, Ghana, and Jamaica. Although aluminum itself is dirt cheap, bauxite contains valuable gallium, widely used in computer technology and worth about \$200/lb. Recovering gallium without refining the bauxite into aluminum is economically unfeasible.

Beryllium (\$300/lb.): Found in the mountains of Utah, Sinkiang, and Kazakhstan.

Chromium (\$500/ton): 95% of the world's chromium deposits are in southern Africa (South Africa, Zimbabwe, and the Katanga province of the Congo). Minor chromium deposits appear in Greenland, Montana, and Kazakhstan.

Cobalt (\$25/lb.): Cuba, Zaire, Zambia, New Caledonia, and the northern United States (primarily Minnesota) contain most of the easily accessible cobalt in the world. It also appears in nickel mines.

Gold (\$4,400/lb.): South Africa has about half the world's gold deposits; the Yukon, California, the Amazon basin, and Mexico share another 25% of the total. Major Old World gold deposits include Spain, Nubia, Bactria, and southern India. One advantage of gold is that societies at all TLs value it; it makes a near-ideal medium of crosstime exchange.

Platinum (\$6,400/lb.): Over 90% of world platinum deposits occur in South Africa or Zimbabwe. The Ural Mountains, Kola Peninsula, and Montana also have viable platinum mines. Other platinum-group metals (palladium, rhodium, ruthenium, iridium, and osmium) appear in the same deposits.

Silver (\$220/lb.): The richest silver mines in the world were in Potosi, Bolivia; other major silver lodes appear in Nevada, Mexico, Peru, Greece, Turkey, and Spain.

Titanium (\$4/lb.): Ilmenite (titanium ore) occurs in Australia, Sri Lanka, Norway, and South Africa. Ilmenite sands in California and Florida also produce commercial-grade titanium.

Uranium (\$7/lb.): Almost all of the world's uranium comes from Niger, Namibia, or Australia; other lodes include South Africa, New Mexico, and Saskatchewan.

Other minerals worth mining from settled areas near Homeline colonies, or in pre-existing mining complexes, include copper, iron, manganese, nickel, and zinc. Gems, although tempting for smugglers (especially between primitive Earths) have little or no industrial value, since artificial gems equal or exceed their hardness and purity. Iron and nickel, on Homeline, come almost exclusively from asteroid mining, and manganese comes from seabed mining; there is little export market for crosstime mining of these metals. Similarly, the wide use of fusion power makes petroleum far less valuable on Homeline than it is on most developed Earths. A large percentage of petroleum extraction on parallel Earths is “wildcat” drilling for

cargoes to be shipped (legally or, more often, on the gray market) to more advanced Earths in tankers fitted with subquantum conveyors. Swagmen often work with, and sometimes work *as*, crosstime wildcatters.

The ability to mine other Earths for valuable resources contributes mightily to Homeline’s high standard of living. Mineral combines, and politicians interested in keeping prices low and technology booming, steadily pressure UNIC and Infinity to open more and more worlds for exploitation and extractive development. Since areas such as the American West, Australia, and especially southern Africa were outside the “known world” of most civilizations, these pressure groups have successfully gotten Infinity

licenses to open (strictly guarded) mines in those regions, even on worlds with substantial native development. Rumors about the mines spread, but usually evolve (or dissolve) into the standard legends of King Solomon’s Mines, El Dorado, and other “lost cities of gold” familiar from Homeline history and folklore.

Colonization

Given a world without any native humans, but otherwise hospitable, Infinity has the power to open it to permanent habitation from Homeline. Although most colonies also maintain some mining or research facilities, their purpose is settlement, not mere extraction or study. In general, the specifics of the colony parallel depend on the colonizing power or organization, but all crosstime colonies can fall into one or another general colony type.

Overflow colonies from nations such as India, China, Indonesia, and Nigeria allow surplus populations to settle otherwise empty alternate versions of their homeland (and usually the surrounding areas). Bhuvarlok (see p. 32) is an overflow colony.

Separatist colonies allow groups that do not wish to (or are not allowed to) remain in their Homeline nations to set up their own communities. Religious and green movements such as the Mennonites, Mormons, neo-Druids, and Sustainabilists comprise most voluntary separatists; their colonies sometimes purposely regress to TL4 in all areas save medical care. Some separatist colonies such as Lysander or Tebuguo (see p. 32) are primarily politically motivated.

Clandestine colonies are not quite colonies, in that they are usually permanent military bases, smuggling depots, or slave markets. They are not on the official maps, and some are not even on charted timelines! Clandestine military bases are usually the work of a major Homeline power, and may be secretly located on a worldline associated with it. The world of Lysander (see p. 32), for example, is widely rumored to be the site of a major clandestine parachronic base for the U.S. and British military, called “Camp No-When” in Net legend. Clandestine criminal colonies attract

Dinosaur Hunting

Although many Homeline organizations protest the practice, one of the most lucrative and romanticized fields of crosstime tourism is big game hunting. Not only lions and elephants in empty Africas, but aurochs in the primeval European forest, tigers in India, and mammoths in prehuman America draw the rich and bored of Homeline for elaborate safaris. Most hunting worlds are Class O empty worlds; jungle Shikari and Miocene Mammut-2 (both on Quantum 5) are the most “developed,” with hunting lodges, airfields, and permanent populations of guides and zoologists.

However, the biggest game of all is dinosaur hunting. This pastime is theoretically only legal on Lucifer-4, a late-Cretaceous parallel where the iridium meteor has already fallen, and the native dinosaurs are in the process of dying out. But Lucifer-4 has terrible weather, a dwindling game supply, and a serious absence of romantic flavor. Its other trouble is difficulty of access – since it is well out on Quantum 3, visiting Lucifer-4 is expensive.

Many hunters apply for “guard licenses” on research worlds with thriving saurian ecologies, such as Rex-2 and Sereno. Guards at the research stations on these worlds are allowed to kill stragglers or runts for meat. At some stations, the management looks the other way (for a consideration) if a guard takes a long “vacation” into the mountains with “visiting friends.” The mother lode, however, for the would-be poacher is Crichton, a Class R world with a theoretically impossible mix of dinosaurs from all eras of their evolution. Tyrannosaurs and dimetrodons, pterodactyls and apatosaurus all share Crichton’s steaming swamps and warm savannas. Crichton is on Quantum 7, and Centrum uses it to contact Homeline’s criminal elements. Its coordinates are one of the worst kept secrets in Infinity records, and although dangerous and unregulated, lucrative “pirate safaris” depart for Crichton several times a year. The Patrol has its hands full there, and has broken up kidnapping plots and attempted murders (a combination of rich hunters and law-breaking seems to draw such incidents), as well as more conventional smuggling rings feeding the substantial East Asian market for dinosaur glands.

large transient populations when the heat is on elsewhere, or when there are major cargoes to sell or divide; they usually have a small or medium-sized “permanent floating” population of whores, distillers, and muscle.

Manor colonies are those devoted to the privacy of the very rich. Many Homeline billionaires buy or lease million-acre (or larger) “manor estates” on empty worlds. Prime estates, such as all of Tahiti or Oahu, go for tens of billions of dollars unimproved; your own Rocky Mountain or a lesser Greek island can be a relative steal. Corporations also buy or lease manor colonies for retreats or executive country club housing. Many worlds devoted to other colonies make some money selling or leasing prime manors to rich Homeliners, with iron-clad privacy and airspace agreements (going both ways in the case of some separatist colony worlds).

In many cases, several geographically disparate countries or organizations pool their resources for one common world. The resulting timeline might host an overflow colony in its India, a separatist religious retreat on the American East Coast, and a number of European-chartered manors scattered around the Pacific islands and Mediterranean.

Many colonies support themselves by leasing their world's (or region's) mineral rights to Homeline consortia. A world can thus have a seemingly utopian and pristine separatist colony in its North America, supported by dirty, miserable – but unseen – extractive labor across the continent or around the globe. Colonial governments that can use such leases to fully support themselves can wind up with very low tax rates – but often have similarly little incentive to listen to the wishes of their citizens.

Disasters

This general term encompasses not only worlds depopulated by some cosmic impact, plague, or ecological shift, but also worlds too marginal to support colonization. Most disaster worlds that result from actual disasters are functionally “challenge worlds” for the PCs (p. 94). Earths where the atmosphere never

When we realize that the actual outcome did not have to be, that any alteration in any step along the way would have unleashed a cascade down a different channel, we grasp the causal power of individual events . . . Contingency is the affirmation of control by immediate events over destiny, the kingdom lost for want of a horseshoe nail.

– Stephen Jay Gould, *Wonderful Life*

oxygenated, or has no moon and DNA never formed in tide pools, or are the wrong distance from the sun for life to exist, are also considered “disaster” worlds. They can be cleared for entry faster than plague worlds, and robot mining or dumping operations (with a few well-paid, miserable technicians in pressure domes) can continue to exploit them. Most disaster worlds are cleared only for toxic waste disposal by automated conveyor, which is about all they are usually good for. Every so often, one of the mining stations goes silent, or a waste conveyor doesn't return, and then the Patrol has to suit up and see what happened.

ECHOES

An echo is an alternate Earth apparently identical to Homeline at some earlier point in its history. Although detailed records down to the individual level are not available for any era (even Homeline's civilized 21st century), no echo has been proven to deviate from “known history.” In the few cases of apparent deviation, later research determined that Homeline's records or interpretations were in error. This factor alone makes echoes

priceless resources for historical researchers – and since historical research is a key underpinning of Patrol success, Infinity does allow very carefully supervised research teams access to echoes wherever possible. In the final analysis, it often takes a trained historian to notice the beginning of an echo's shift!

That, of course, is why researchers on echo timelines need to be even more careful than usual. An echo can shift out of its current quantum coordinates, and into an entirely new quantum level, if history is changed on it. (Very minor changes, like the presence of Infinity researchers ordering breakfast in 1793 London, fortunately “damp out” in an indeterminate haze.) Unfortunately, since echoes are inherently unstable, it's not a matter of “if” history changes, but “when.” If it shifts by itself, or through accidental Infinity interference, that's one thing, and the team's biggest worry is getting back to Homeline in time for their reprimands. If Centrum shifts a timeline out of Infinity's reach, a team can be trapped there forever, or killed in the “mopping up” process as Centrum asserts its control.

Naming Echoes

Infinity names echoes based on the number of years the echo's local present lags behind Homeline. An echo with a local present date of 1776 would be Echo 251, or 251 Minus (both names get used interchangeably), since 1776 is 251 years behind Homeline's present date of 2027. Once the echo shifts (or, if it turns out to be an anchor, once its history changes from Homeline's), it gets assigned new coordinates – and usually picks up another name based on whatever the change point was – assuming anyone in Infinity ever finds the echo again.

Echoes therefore make good settings for subtle scenarios of investigation, mystery, and indirect action. Wild, maniacal gunplay and city-shaking explosions are more than normally dangerous (except during wartime echoes, of course). Echo settings also reward lots of close integration between the heroes and the world; they have to have local allies, local sources of information, and local clout to detect and prevent Centrum interference.

It's wise, therefore, to select an echo based on a historical milieu that the GM and players know well or a milieu for which they have reliable, useful resources. However, some GMs (and players) like the seat-of-their-pants feel of random reality-hopping; for such randomness, use the following system to create a "present" between 3400 B.C. and 2001 for a random echo.

Roll 1d repeatedly on the Random Present Table, incrementing the year forward as indicated from the initial Starting Era. After the third increment, if a specific year is desired, roll a final die and add the result.

Once the GM has the year figured out, he can use a timeline or world history text to find someplace exciting for the party to arrive. In our example, the era 554-560 A.D. is suitable for post-Arthurian grit in Britain, a decadent game of intrigue behind the scenes of Justinian's Byzantium, or high-flying wuxia martial arts action against the backdrop of China's Three Kingdoms.

This system produces a lot of "ancient" echoes; this can be handy for fantasy-genre crosstime adventurers (whose swords and sorceries

translate to most years before 1450 or so), but such periods aren't terribly well documented, which can run historically minded games onto the shoals. For a system weighted to produce more recent presents, add a modifier to the Starting Era die roll, or just pick the Starting Era you'd like to begin with.

Tampering

The great danger (and opportunity, from a story perspective) on an echo is historical tampering. Although minor shifts, like renting a room or hiring a maid, don't *usually* change anything, if you rent the room where Edgar Allan Poe was planning to sleep off a bender, or hire Emiliano Zapata's mother as a maid, you run a certain risk. Major changes are more likely to send things off the rails, though there have been cases of echoes where change after change mounted up before a shift occurred. (And there are echoes that just never change no matter what; see *Anchors*, p. 87.) Infinity doesn't know why some changes cascade into quantum shifts, and others seem to damp themselves out – the only thing the Patrol can do is keep a wary eye on any changes they notice.

Centrum, however, does know. Echoes go through windows of paratemporal instability, during which they are vulnerable to shifting out of their quantum. Changing history on an echo during other periods damps out; echoes outside a window have a higher degree of temporal inertia than most parallels! Centrum thus sets up their agents during high-inertia periods, and launches

its tampering plots at the opening of a window. To determine if a window of instability is open for a given echo takes a week. Either a week of "background readings" with a parachronic detector and a successful Physics/TL9⁺ (Parachronic) roll, or a week of checking newspapers and a successful Current Affairs roll for the local culture *plus* a successful Cliodynamics roll (p. 182) works. (To randomly determine if the echo is in a window, roll 1d; on a 1 or 2, a window of instability is open. Roll 3d on the *Shift Delay Table* on p. 104 to determine the window's length.) A critical success on either roll lets the agent predict the next window opening, though not its length.

A divergence that hits during a window of instability has a chance of shifting the timeline. This chance gets greater with the degree of divergence caused by the shift.

Minor event (+1 to shift): A change of the sort encountered in most close parallels (p. 88).

Important event (+2 to shift): A change of leaders in a minor power; the career of a major artistic figure; the founding or bankruptcy of a large corporation; a seminal scientific theory.

Major event (+3 to shift): A change of leaders in a great power; a battle in a major war; a new political philosophy; scientific discovery or invention.

Historic event (+4 to shift): A revolution or civil war in a great power; a decisive battle; a new scientific paradigm in a given field; a new industry.

World-historic event (+5 to shift): The defeat of a great power in a major war; a TL shift; the destruction or

Random Present Table

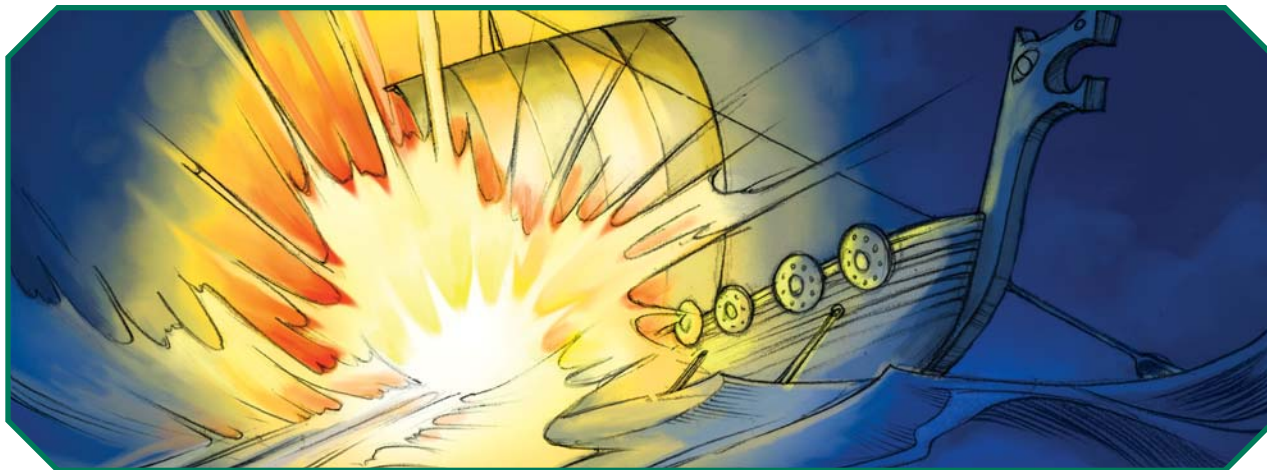
Roll	Starting Era	1st Increment	2nd Increment	3rd Increment
1	3400 B.C.	+0 years	+0 years	+0 years
2	2500 B.C.	+150 years	+25 years	+4 years
3	1600 B.C.	+300 years	+50 years	+8 years
4	700 B.C.	+450 years	+75 years	+12 years
5	200 A.D.	+600 years	+100 years	+16 years
6	1100 A.D.	+750 years	+125 years	+20 years

Example: The first die comes up 5, so the Starting Era is 200 A.D. The next roll is a 3, so the present is incremented up by +300 years, to

500 A.D. The next roll is a 3, adding +50 years (550 A.D.); the fourth die comes up 2, adding +4 years for a present of 554 A.D. A final die roll, if

desired, can add a few years, but the echo is clearly in the mid-sixth century A.D.





birth of a civilization or mass religion; the founding or aborting of a future great power.

Agents can use Cliodynamics to find something that starts small but will ripple up the scale as the shift progresses. This helps prevent their enemies from noticing it until the shift is well advanced. The GM is free to move events up or down this scale, which roughly corresponds to alternate history as presented in fiction and gaming rather than any specific (or rigorous) historical theory. For example, Shakespeare's career might well be a genuine +4 historic event.

For the results of Centrum (or accidental Homeline) tampering, see *Timeline Shifting* on p. 104.

Anchors

An anchor is an echo that, for some reason, does not shift quanta when the course of normal Homeline history is changed. The leading theories assume either that anchors are actually potential parallels with misleading quantum signatures (and were thus never really echoes at all), or that they are the "original" worlds from which the other echoes actually resonate – possibly including Homeline and Centrum! Discovering that an echo is actually an anchor usually triggers a stark escalation in the contest between Centrum and Infinity, since both sides can "change history" at will without risking a timeline shift. At its most dramatic, such a contest can trigger an international crisis, or even precipitate a major global war, as Infinity and Centrum "choose up sides" and get ready to rumble by (heavily armed) proxy.

Putting a Little English on It

Since Centrum is attempting to advance a specific ideology rather than shifting timelines randomly, Patrol doesn't have to watch every possible change point equally. Some signs of Centrum interference, with examples, follow:

Transnationalism: Centrum believes that all nations should unite; it tries to strengthen global forces such as the British Empire, Napoleon's empire, the U.N., the early Communist movement (but not Soviet Russian imperialism), environmentalism, medieval Christendom, and so forth. Genuine patriots and nationalists like Queen Elizabeth I or George Washington (who committed the extra sin of breaking up a global empire) attract Centrum assassins or intriguers.

Equality: Centrum doesn't like hierarchies, except for meritocratic ones. It helps out leveling revolutions like the French and Russian ones, and then try to steer them in the direction of technocracy. It works (in an orderly way) against ossified hierarchies like medieval China, the Incas, or Bourbon France – unless they have managed to build a unified global empire, of course.

Moderate scientific progress: Too much scientific advancement, too fast, leads to social turmoil. Centrum silences or diverts controversial, revolutionary figures like Galileo, Newton, Darwin, or Einstein while supporting technologists and pragmatists like Tycho, Hooke, Wallace, or Bohr.

Rationality: Centrum loves reason and the rational; it distrusts the religious and emotional. Centrum prefers Hegel to Nietzsche, and Frederick the Great to Hitler. The existence of a transnational Muslim caliphate frustrates Centrum immensely – it

would be perfect if it weren't so religious! Attempts to secularize Islam in the ninth century – or the 20th – get wholehearted aid from Centrum agents. Centrum also knocks off poets who cause trouble as well as celebrate the emotions: Shelley, Byron, Blake, and other Romantic radicals are often Centrum targets of opportunity. The Centrum has much the same objection to the Confederacy,

although its social conservatism and corrosive effect on American nationalism are both positives in Centrum's eyes.



There was inherent in the course of history a certain element of going off course.

– Robert Musil,
The Man Without Qualities

In practical game terms, the GM can make an echo into an anchor (either after the fact or in the original adventure plan) if it seems like more fun to explore the consequences of a change than to consign the echo to its new quantum and move on. (For a random method, once a timeline is determined to be an echo, roll 3d. On a 5 or less, the echo is an anchor. Post hoc, the GM can declare an echo to be an anchor if he rolls a 3 on the *Timeline Shifting Table* on p. 104, or if he makes three rolls in a row that don't wind up shifting the echo.) An anchor can also make an excellent setting for adventures involving ever-increasing cascades of technological or geopolitical change. A team of Infinity Special Operations agents tasked with uplifting Persia to TL5 and causing the fall of a Centrum-backed Roman Empire will have their hands full – especially when the Centrum agents in Rome begin to introduce their own innovations.

PARALLELS

Most of the worlds one thinks of when one hears the phrase “alternate Earths” are parallels. On a parallel, history turned aside from its course on Homeline at some divergence point in the past. Parallels span the gamut from client worlds such as Johnson's Rome to isolated dangers like Reich-5, and from close parallels where only Bob Dylan's discography is different to worlds with varying laws of physics and surviving Babylonian monarchies.

To randomly generate a parallel, roll 2d and consult the following table:

2-4	Close parallel
5-10	Farther parallel
11	High-inertia parallel
12	Myth parallel

Close Parallels

Close parallels have only minor differences from Homeline Earth. Further, those differences are primarily cultural or microeconomic. If political divergences exist, they are minor, creating small ripples rather than mighty waves. Although a close parallel might have a superior stapler design, it probably won't have anti-gravity, or magic. Often, the change comes about due to one person's death or life taking a slight detour from Homeline history: Pete Best stayed in the Beatles and broke them up before they hit America, or Sir Arthur Conan Doyle became a Spiritualist earlier in life, so Sherlock Holmes investigated only haunted houses. Not all small causes have small effects, however. Occasionally, a single death or career change by a seemingly minor cultural figure creates a farther parallel (see *Campbell*, p. 119). Cliodynamics is not an exact science, and the GM should feel free to let the entire world turn on a single horseshoe nail or lost Shakespeare play.

From a story perspective, close parallels basically serve as scenery – reminders that this is, indeed, a game of alternate Earths. A brief snippet of “the country stylings of Miss Britney-Lynn Spears” on the radio, or a movie based on “the best-selling romance novel by Tom Clancy” nicely conveys a frisson of difference in an alternate world. It's possible to use them as deeper settings for crimes (ripping off slightly alternate artworks), conspiracies (untangling the twisted skein of the Nixon assassination), or similar stories that likewise depend on surface detail for their interest. And certainly, any adventure you can set on Homeline you can probably add a little something to by setting it on a close parallel instead, unless Homeline-specific institutions like Infinity Unlimited need to play a role.

To generate a random close parallel, roll 1d on the table below to determine which changes are most significant (or visible). Some possible examples of each result follow.

1	Popular Culture
2	High Culture
3	Economic or Corporate
4	Technological
5	Political
6	Geopolitical

Popular Culture: Elvis Presley died at birth (instead of his twin Aaron) and rock and roll still competes with “big band” jazz for audiences; Fritz Leiber and Harry Fischer invented roleplaying games in the 1930s. Reality Holly (p. B526) is one example.

High Culture: Charles Dickens completed *Edwin Drood* before dying; Frank Lloyd Wright died in the Iroquois Theater fire of 1906 and American buildings are generally much uglier; Orson Welles' moody 1946 film *The Batman* made comics serious art to the New York critical establishment.

Economic or Corporate: Clever exploitation of the fur trade funded a golden age of art and wealth in 17th-century Norway; Coca-Cola became a moderately popular health tonic and sports drink; Studebaker replaced Chrysler as the number three U.S. car-maker. Reality Cherokee (p. B526) offers other examples.

Technological: Archimedes invented a water mill that nobody improved on until the 1300s; typewriter keyboards standardized on a different pattern than QWERTY; home videotaping never caught on because Sony introduced recordable DVDs in the early 1980s.

Political: Congress put Ronald Reagan on the nickel after he died in 1998; the Tranby Croft Scandal forced a reshuffling of the British Cabinet in 1891; Hitler made Göring his successor rather than Dönitz before committing suicide in 1945.

Geopolitical: Malta is still a British colony; the states of Tennessee and Kentucky are called Franklin and Transylvania, and have different borders; an earthquake leveled Aden in 1540, eventually moving the capital of Yemen to Mocha.

Skerries

Skerries are clusters of parallels, usually on the same quantum and sharing common historical or cultural elements.

Sometimes a skerry is created by a reality quake sliding different worlds into close contact both historically and paraphysically. Other skerries are actually joined by nexus portals, dimensional highways, or other links. These close ties disrupt the quantum flow around skerry worlds. In general, travel between two worlds in a skerry is at +4 (or higher) to skill; travel to any other outside world from a skerry is at -4 (or worse)! Banestorms, reality quakes, and other parachronic disruptions are usually more common in skerries, although some become hyperstable thanks to fortunate quantum geometry.

A thematically unified campaign can be set entirely within a skerry, or an adventure exploring different outcomes of the Battle of Antietam, for example, can chase through component Earths of a skerry.

representative result, roll 2d: on any result but 12, the TL is 0. On a 12, roll 3d: 3-9 is TL1; 10-13 is TL2; 14-15 is TL3; 16-17 is TL4. Roll 3d again on an 18: 3-9 is TL5; 10-13 is TL6; 14 is TL7; 15 is TL8; 16+ is TL9+. It's probably more fun to go with fiction this time around. Speaking of fun, weird or variant technologies can be a pure GM call; alternately, roll 1d. On a 5 or 6, consult *Technology Variants*, below.

After defining the leading TL, determine which civilizations predominate in the parallel. A civilization, generally speaking, is a society with cities and trade. In the plural form, "civilizations" are the larger cultural groupings described by world-historians such as Spengler, Toynbee, and McNeill. Such

Farther Parallels

Farther parallels diverge farther from Homeline history than close parallels. They may also have variant physical laws; if they have it, open magic often drives society and technology even farther from the Homeline historical path. Farther parallels can play any role in a game, from the sole setting to a brief mention in swagman gossip. ("You've got to see the matriarchy that Boadicea founded over on Britannica-7 – talk about your swinging Londons!") Design them to last, or just write a one-line description and move on; you'll never run out of things to do with farther parallels.

Randomly creating a farther parallel begins by defining its "present," rather than selecting a divergence point and branching its history forward from there. (For some discussion of "change forward" parallel design, see p. 96.) To randomly create a farther parallel, first define its leading TL by rolling 3d on the following table:

3	TL1-3 (roll 1d/2)
4-5	TL4
6	TL5
7-9	TL6
10-14	TL7
15-16	TL8
17+	TL9+

This table is designed to give results matching alternate history literature, which is overwhelmingly biased toward 19th- and 20th-century divergence points. For a more historically

Technology Variants

To randomly determine variant technology, roll 2d on the following table, based vaguely on a survey of the genre:

3 or less	Magic
4-5	Divergent Technology
6-7	Split Technology
8	Psionics
9	Supers
10+	Superscience

Modifiers: -1 per TL below 5. +1 per TL above 5.

For magic, psionics, or supers, roll 1d×25 to determine the average extra point value of a mage, psi, or super in the world.

Apply the results as follows:

Magic: Roll 1d or select: 1, theoretically accepted or covert; 2-3, open but rare; 4, open and common; 5, mages rule the Earth; 6, universal magic ability. Roll 1d for mana level: 1, low; 2-4, normal; 5, high; 6, very high.

Divergent Technology: Randomly determine the technological divergence point. For example, in a TL7 world, roll 1d and subtract the result from your TL; if the die comes up a 4, the world is TL(3+4). For a TL6 world, roll 1d-1, and so forth. Re-roll a result of 0 or less.

Split Technology: Roll 1d and apply the result to the indicated field from p. B511: 1, communications; 2, transportation; 3-4, weapons; 5, power; 6, medicine. Randomly determine whether the split is "forward" or "back." Repeat as desired; if you repeat a result, add airships to your world's technology regardless of the TL.

Psionics: Roll 1d or select: 1, theoretically accepted or covert; 2-3, open but rare; 4, open and common; 5, psis rule the Earth; 6, universal psi ability.

Supers: Roll 1d and apply the *Psionics* results, reading "super" for "psi."

Superscience: Roll 1d or make something up: 1-2, antigravity, 3, force fields, 4, ray guns, 5, zero-point energy, 6, Martian canals and reactionless drives. Roll another 1d: on 1-3, aliens or ancient astronauts brought the superscience.

civilizations consist of groups of nations, city-states, or tribes that usually share at least a few of the following characteristics: ethnic descent, language or linguistic stock, religion or mythic pattern, artistic or literary style, and a coherent territory. For the purposes of timeline creation, this chapter uses a modified version of Toynbee's list of civilizations, which has the advantage of including "abortive" and "arrested" civilizations, somewhat more suitable for alternate histories. For most purposes, civilizations are the same as cultural familiarities (p. 173).

Depending on the TL of the parallel, roll 3d on the Parallel Civilizations Table to determine the dominant or leading civilization. This is the civilization with local military superiority to the others, with the highest local technology (world TL or TL+1, possibly higher in some areas) the one most emulated by other civilizations, the one with the widest trading links, or the one with the most territory occupied in other civilizations' areas.

At different TLs, the Earth can "support" (or has room for) a different number of major, independent civilizations, as given in parentheses. Other, lesser, civilizations exist, but don't affect global affairs (or even regional affairs, sometimes) unless outtimers vault them into the lead, meteors wipe out the other civilizations, or some other catastrophic change occurs. After determining the dominant civilization, pick the others by any method you like: further rolls, geographic proximity (civilizations often have civilized neighbors) or balance (if all your major civilizations are in Europe, add China or India), or desired world flavor.

Parallel Civilizations Table

TL0-1 (1d civilizations)

3	Andean
4-5	Hittite
6-8	Chinese
9-10	Egyptian
11-13	Mesopotamian
14	Indus Valley
15-16	Minoan
17	Meso-American
18	Retgression or Dark Age; roll on TL2 table.

TL2 (1d+3 civilizations)

3	Mississippian
4	Andean and/or Meso-American
5	Celtic
6	Bactrian
7	Indic
8	Iranic
9	Hellenic
10-11	Chinese
12-13	Roman
14	Steppe
15	Mesopotamian
16	West African
17-18	Survival; roll on TL0-1 table.

TL3-4 (1d+2 civilizations)

3	Mississippian, Andean, and/or Meso-American
4	Malay
5	Japanese
6	Norse
7	Indic
8	Orthodox
9-10	Chinese
11	Islamic
12-13	Western
14	Steppe
15	Roman
16-17	Survival; roll on TL2 table.
18	West African

TL5-6 (1d civilizations)

3-4	Malay or West African
5	Japanese
6-7	Indic
8-9	Chinese
10-12	Western
13	Islamic
14-15	Orthodox
16-18	Survival; roll on TL3-4 table.

TL7+ (1d-2 civilizations)

3-4	Malay or West African
5-7	Indic
8-9	Chinese or Japanese
10-12	Western
13	Orthodox
14-17	Islamic
18	Survival; roll on TL3-4 table.

On a "retgression" or "survival" result, leave the base TL alone, but advance (or regress) the rolled civilization to fit. For example, a result of "Hellenic survival" while rolling on the TL3-4 table might indicate a TL4 Alexandrian Empire that survived into the Renaissance – or caused it to flower early.

This table reflects an Earth similar ecologically to Homeline; altering initial global conditions (see *Empty Worlds*, p. 83, and *Ecology*, p. 103) changes these probabilities – perhaps drastically! Note that a result indicating a dominant Andean, Meso-American, or Mississippian civilization after TL0-1 indicates cross-Atlantic contact and travel.

Civilizations

Andean: A series of increasingly complex cultures in western South America from the Chavin (c. 850 B.C.) to the Inca, who fell to plague and Western conquest in 1533.

Bactrian: A polyglot, possibly multiracial, urban trading and horse-breeding civilization arose in the seventh century B.C. in Central Asia and maintained a precarious existence despite numerous conquests until it became the battleground between the Islamic and Chinese civilizations in 750 A.D.

Celtic: Celtic civilization (building hill-towns by 550 B.C.) was almost entirely assimilated by the Roman civilization by 100 A.D. Increasingly Westernized outliers survived in Ireland and northern Britain until the 13th century.

Chinese: The oldest civilization still in existence, the culture that began with Lao Tzu and Confucius in the seventh and sixth centuries B.C. still predominates in East Asia from Timor to Tibet.

Egyptian: Egyptian civilization spread along the Nile from 3100 B.C. until its absorption into the Hellenic civilization by Alexander the Great in 330 B.C.

Hellenic: The barbaric successors to Minoan civilization created their own urbanized, adventurous, quarrelsome culture after 800 B.C. that eventually spread from southern Italy to Afghanistan. It fell to the Roman civilization in the second century B.C., but strongly influenced its conquerors.

Hittite: Hittite civilization arose in Anatolia around 1800 B.C. The Hittite Empire fell around 1200 B.C., and the Iranic and Hellenic civilizations absorbed its successor states by 550 B.C.

Indic: After a lengthy period of chaos and religious ferment, a common civilization extended across all of India by 320 B.C. and the rise of the

Maurya Empire. It has withstood several invasions by the Islamic civilization, and conquest by the Steppe and Western civilizations.

Indus Valley: Very little is known about this civilization, centered on Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro between 2500 and 1500 B.C. It may have traded with Mesopotamia, and may have fallen to barbarian invasion, but neither is certain.

Iranic: The same “Arya” barbarian invaders who produced Indic civilization built Iranic civilization in Persia in the sixth century B.C. It rapidly conquered everything from the Nile to the Indus. Although its influences spread even farther, wars with the Hellenic and Roman civilizations reduced it to its core territory until it fell to the Islamic civilization in 640 A.D. Its assimilation remains imperfect to this day.

Islamic: Although it began as a puritanical, leveling culture in the seventh century A.D., its conquest of lands from Spain to Bengal produced a sophisticated, even discursive civilization that remains dominant in north Africa, central Asia, and the Middle East today despite Western influences and pressures.

Japanese: An outlier of Chinese civilization developed its own combination of aesthetics and brutality in the Heian period (794-1192). Since the mid-19th century, it has been slowly assimilating into Western civilization.

Malay: A vibrant, hybrid trading civilization grew from Chinese, Islamic, and Indic outliers in the Malay peninsula and Indonesia, starting with the kingdom of Srivijaya in 700 A.D. Since the mid-17th century, it has been assimilating into Chinese and Western civilization.

Meso-American: A number of small city-states spread from central Mexico and Yucatan into a common civilization by 200 B.C., but never unified politically. The various Meso-American cultures all fell to Western conquerors during the 16th century.

Mesopotamian: Urban civilization was born with the Sumerian culture around 3500 B.C. Its ritual and political structures continued (with the occasional dark age) through the Akkadian, Babylonian, Assyrian, and Chaldean cultures that followed until being imperfectly assimilated into the Iranic civilization in the sixth century



B.C. Islamic conquest wiped out its last remnants.

Minoan: Little is known about this bull-obsessed civilization centered on Crete. It may have founded the Mycenaean pirate kingdoms or been destroyed by them, or both. It flourished between 2600 and 1400 B.C.; the Mycenaeans themselves fell to barbarians by 1100 B.C.

Mississippian: A loose multi-tribal trading network rose along the Mississippi-Ohio Valley in North America by 800 A.D.; it may still have been too diffuse to be a true civilization by the time its main centers collapsed in ecological exhaustion around 1350. Its final outliers fell to Western settlers in the 18th century. For game purposes, the GM can add Algonquin and Siouan confederacies like Pontiac, Tecumseh, or the Iroquois to this civilization.

Norse: The last vigorous, expanding pagan civilization probably arose in the sixth century A.D., but became thoroughly Westernized and Christian by 1100.

Orthodox: The successor state to Roman civilization incubated in its eastern half (Greece, the Balkans, and the Middle East) around 330 A.D. In the 10th century A.D., it successfully spread to Russia, which became its new center after the conquest of its old core by the Islamic civilization. Survives in Russia and the Balkans today.

Roman: Began around 600 B.C. with the Etruscan League of Cities, and built a unified empire and expanded over Europe, northern Africa, and the Middle East. Religious disputes, plagues, and barbarian invasions compounded the stresses of empire, and it collapsed around 450 A.D.

Steppe: Only seldom urbanized, save for caravanserais, the steppe tribes (of many cultures and ethnicities from Scythians to Mongols) shared characteristics (especially military tactics) driven by their nomadic lifestyle and common environment. Independent steppe civilizations existed from 600 B.C. or before; by 1650 the last of them had been subdued by the Orthodox Russians or fully assimilated by their “subject” civilizations in Mogul India and Manchu China.

West African: Iron-working, gold-mining, industrious traders spread along the Niger, Volta, and Senegal Rivers during the seventh century A.D. By 1700 A.D., their urban centers (which eventually reached the Congo and Sudan) had all fallen to Islamic or Western conquest, although successors resisted assimilation until the late 1880s.

Western: Born by 550 A.D. out of the mix of German invaders and the fallen Roman civilization, Western civilization fought off a series of invasions and then began expanding out of western Europe. By 1100, it had reached the borders of Russia and invaded Asia; by 1500, it was planted in Africa, India, and the Americas. It has dominated the globe since the 19th century.

Civilization Unity Table

2	Unitary
3-4	Empire
5-6	Empire with satellite states
7	Empire with rivals
8	Bipolar
9-11	Multipolar (1d+2 powers)
12	Diffuse

Once you’ve determined the major, independent civilizations, roll 2d on the Civilization Unity Table to establish their internal geopolitical structure.

Modifiers: -4 for Japanese or Andean civilization, -2 for Egyptian or Orthodox civilization, -1 for Chinese or Roman civilization, +1 for Islamic civilization, +2 for Western, Bactrian, Hellenic, or Indic civilization, +4 for Celtic or Norse civilization. These modifiers are based on historical performance; obviously, in an alternate history, this performance can change! The GM should disregard them for "wilder" alternates.

Unitary: This civilization consists of one, essentially homogeneous, state. Although powerful and advanced, it has no significant colonies in other civilizations' territory. The Japanese civilization has usually been unitary, except for a brief period from 1890 to 1945.

Empire: This civilization is unified under one state, which has conquered all the other states in this civilization. An empire usually has colonies or military bases in other civilizations' territory, but not always: the Chinese empire seldom has, except for Tibet and occasional forays into the steppes of Central Asia.

Empire with satellite states: Some of the states under the empire's umbrella maintain local independence, but do not (or cannot) chart independent foreign policies. The Roman and Soviet empires both used this model.

Empire with rivals: Although the empire is by far the most powerful state within the civilization, other states retain considerable independence and might conceivably ally against it, or back other civilizations' empires against it diplomatically or militarily. Imperial states are not necessarily dictatorships; the United States, under this definition, has been a democratic empire with rivals dominating Western civilization since 1945.

Bipolar: The civilization is divided between two great powers, with lesser states unable to chart separate courses.

Multipolar: There are a number (1d+2) of great power states within this civilization with substantial capacity for independent action against other civilizations, or other lesser states in their own civilization.

Diffuse: This civilization has no central concentration of power; its

Deciding on the great powers within a civilization or on a parallel Earth helps add concrete detail and flavor to a game setting.

individual states (if any) set their own course and run their own risks. Steppe civilizations, or collections of city-states, usually fluctuate between diffusion and empires.

Any degree of unity (except diffuse) may be "fragmenting" – the old order is collapsing, but the new order has not yet defined itself. The GM can make this call based on desired flavor, or roll 1d: on a 6, the system is fragmenting. (Add +2 for Steppe civilization rolls.)

The GM may also decide that some civilizations have been conquered, but not assimilated by others, like the Indic civilization under the Western (British) rule between 1757 and 1947. Although part of another civilization's empire, they may still be very important, and constantly simmering with rebellion and separatism. Other civilizations (or empires) may be true hybrids; the Roman civilization might have been such a hybrid with Hellenic civilization if Mark Antony had defeated Octavian and moved the imperial capital to Greek Alexandria. If Alexander the Great had lived, he might have tried to build such a hybrid Hellenic-Iranic civilization. Usually hybrids either assimilate the weaker civilization over time or become a new civilization, as Western civilization evolved from the Germanic conquest of, and hybridization with, Roman civilization.

Great Powers

Each dominant civilization (except diffuse ones) contains at least one great power. (Some multipolar civilizations may have so many local great powers that they don't actually have a true great power.) A great power is a nation capable of militarily defeating or economically dominating any other nation, except a fellow great power, with minimal effort. Usually, though not always,

great powers can project war-winning military force to the farthest extent local technology allows. Deciding on the great powers within a civilization or on a parallel Earth helps add concrete detail and flavor to a game setting. It also provides a handy list of "usual suspects" for high-tech experiments, moon shots, global wars, spy plots, and so forth. Quite often, the divergence point of a parallel (or a place to influence it for your own ends) comes in a great power's political or military history, or at the contest point between two great powers.

Randomly determining great powers would be a massive task well outside the scope of this book, but the following list of examples (including some near-great powers) in rough chronological order for the various civilizations may help GMs create great power rosters for their world. Fictional powers are in quotes.

Andean: Chavin, Moche, Tihuanaco, Inca Empire, "Amaru Republic."

Bactrian: Ferghana, Sogdia, Bactria, Tocharia, Kushan Empire, Bokhara, Balkh, Samarkand.

Celtic: Cisalpine Gaul, Galatia, Nervii, Vercingetorix's league, Icenic confederacy, "Camelot," "Holy Eirish Empire."

Chinese: Various Chinese dynasties (Han, Tang, Sui, Song, Yuan, and Ming), Jin, Funan, Champa, Korea, Khitai, Manchu Empire, Taiping Holy Empire, Nationalist China, People's Republic of China, "Hongkong LLC."

Egyptian: Khemet (ancient Egypt), Upper and Lower Egypt, Canaan, Keftiu, Kush, "Aigyptos," "Coptic Sun Kingdom."

Hellenic: Athens, Sparta, Syracuse, Thebes, Ionia, Magna Graecia, Macedonian Empire, "Alexandrian Oikoumene," Seleucid Syria, Ptolemaic Egypt, Greco-Bactria.

Hittite: Old and New Hittite Empires, Hurrian Empire, Mitanni, Aram, Urartu.

Indic: Maurya Empire, Malwa, Gupta Empire, Maharashtra, Chola, Delhi, Bengal, Mogul Empire, Mahratta League, Punjab, "United India," India.

Indus Valley: Harappa, Mohenjo-Daro, "Dilmun."

Iranic: Elam, Persia, Media, Achaemenid Empire, Scythian Bosphorus, Chorasmia, Parthia, Sassanid Empire, Safavid Empire.

Islamic: Umayyad Caliphate, Abbasid Caliphate, Buwayhid Empire, Ghaznavid Empire, Andalus, Almohade Empire, Fatimid Egypt, Khwarizm, Sultanate of Delhi, Ottoman Empire, "Nasserite Union," Iranian Republic, "Neo-Caliphate."

Japanese: Tokugawa Shogunate, Japanese Empire, "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," "Japan, Inc."

Malay: Srivijaya, Majapahit, Javanese Empire, Malacca, Indonesia.

Meso-American: Teotihuacan, Zapotecs, Mixtecs, Maya, Toltec Empire, Tenochca (Aztec) Empire.

Mesopotamian: Sumer, Ugarit, Akkad, Amor, Babylon, Assyria, Chaldea (Neo-Babylonia).

Minoan: Knossos, Mycenae, Troy

Mississippian: Adena, Hopewell culture, Tuskegee, Muskogea, Cahokia, Natchez.

Norse: Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Holmgard, Koenugard, Iceland, "Vinland"; England, Scotland, and Ireland (at times).

Orthodox: Byzantine Empire, Bulgarian Empire, Kievan Rus, Serbian Empire, Muscovy, Russian Empire, Soviet Union, Russian Republic, Ukraine.

Roman: Etruria, Roman Republic, "Sertorian Spain," Roman Empire, Kingdom of Syagrius, "Arthurian" Britain.

Steppe: Scythia, Saka, Sarmatia, Yueh-Chih, Hunnic Empire, Khazar Khanate, Seljuk Empire, Mongol Empire, Golden Horde, Timurid Empire.

West African: Ghana, Mali, Audo-ghast, Dahomey, Yoruba, Hausa, Kongo.

Western: Frankish Empire, Venetian Republic, France, Poland, Crusader states, Portugal, Hapsburg Empire, Dutch Republic, Prussia,

Great Britain, United States, Mexico, Empire of Brazil, Confederate States, Australia, Nazi Germany, European Union.

Political Structure

If desired, roll 3d to determine the political structure of any states you have created in the foregoing process.

3	Anarchy
4	Technocracy
5	Caste
6-8	Feudal
9-11	Dictatorship
12	Oligarchy
13	Representative democracy
14-15	Clan/tribal
16	Theocracy
17	Corporate state
18	Athenian democracy

This table uses the government type categories on pp. B509-510, plus Oligarchy (rule by a small group of rough equals). It maps roughly to historical frequency, modified for great powers only. Individual civilizations differ: for example, representative democracy was invented by the Roman civilization but spread via Western civilization to many others; Steppe cultures flip between dictatorship and clan/tribal structures; all Indic systems have had a

strong caste flavor no matter their official form. Any structure can be "feudal," from democracies like the pre-Constitution United States to dictatorships like the Mongol Empire; roll again to determine the underlying structure. (A "feudal feudal" result is a collection of independent fiefdoms with no overlord, such as the Greek city-states before and after Alexander, or with a completely powerless one such as the German states from 1648 to 1806.) In other words, do not feel constrained by these results. It is important to remember that even a relatively restrained monarchy such as the 17th-century Swedish kingdom counts as a dictatorship for this table, as per p. B509. Use pp. B506-507 to determine CRs, if desired.

You may want to differentiate the various political systems by region or historical era; political structures do seem to change as TL does, for instance. As an applied example, see the *Western Political Structures Table*, p. 94. Entries in quotation marks indicate theoretical political structures actually developed (but not fully instituted) in Homeline history; italicized entries are purely fictional (at least on Homeline), but not inherently less plausible.



Western Political Structures Table

<i>Political Structure</i>	<i>TL3-4</i>	<i>TL5-6</i>	<i>TL7+</i>
Anarchy	Iceland	<i>Post-disaster</i>	<i>Autoduel</i>
Athenian democracy	"Free towns"	New England town meetings	"Cybertopia"
Representative democracy	Dutch Republic	U.S.A., U.K.	E.U.
Clan/Tribal	Scotland	Mormon Utah	"Communitarian network"
Caste	"City of God"	"Enlightened despotism"	Reichsostland
Dictatorship	Hapsburg Spain, Louis XIV	Bonaparte, WWI Germany	Nazi Germany
Technocracy	"Alchemical kingdom"	"Philosopher-kings"	Gernsback (p. 126)
Theocracy	Papal States	Puritan Massachusetts	<i>Fundamentalist dystopia</i>
Corporate state	Flemish towns	<i>Steampunk</i>	<i>Cyberpunk</i>
Feudal	Frankish kingdoms	Austria-Hungary	<i>Post-disaster</i>
Oligarchy	Italian cities	Georgian England, C.S.A.	Banana republics

Although providing a full network of randomized historical junctures is outside the scope of this (or perhaps any) book, the GM can use this table as a possible guide to the political history of a randomly generated (Western-dominated, at least) alternate. For example, suppose the tables generate a bipolar, TL6 Western-dominated parallel. Further, the two superpowers are an oligarchic power and a dictatorship. Looking at the table, one example of a TL6 oligarchy is the Confederate States of America. In this parallel, perhaps the Confederacy won the Civil War, and now leads a coalition of similarly "aristocratic" powers (Brazil, Britain, and France, say) against a dictatorial Russia or Germany that has absorbed or cowed its neighboring states. The rump United States would be a minor power, either within the Confederate sphere or vengefully supporting the dictators across the Atlantic.

High-Inertia Parallels

Some parallels remain relatively close to Homeline history despite major divergences such as magic or supers, or changepoints centuries in the past that should ordinarily have produced much greater variances in history and politics. The classic example is Ezcalli (p. 122), which somehow produced an Aztec empire culturally almost identical to that in Homeline's 15th century, despite a divergence point two millennia earlier and massive cultural contamination of Meso-America by European and Near Eastern civilizations. The so-called "United States of Lizardia" parallel (p. 148) is another – even though the inhabitants are sentient, evolved dinosaurs!

Parachronic theorists aren't sure what to make of high-inertia parallels. Some believe that some forms of magic or superpowered psi have a damping effect on temporal change rates. Others consider high-inertia worldlines proof of the "law of very big numbers" and argue that if Ezcalli, for example, exists, there must be tens of thousands more parallels than current quantum theory predicts – possibly in a "dimension" perpendicular to the standard quantum array. Still others argue that some agency, perhaps time travelers or an unknown dimension-hopping group, has meticulously *built* Ezcalli or other high-inertia parallels for an unguessable purpose.

Since high-inertia parallels are, by definition, idiosyncratic and strange, creating them randomly doesn't work. You might get a result from the Parallel Civilizations Table that requires a high-inertia parallel to explain, of course! Essentially, however, they provide excuses for otherwise unrealistic or implausible parallels that the GM nevertheless just wants to put in his universe.

Myth Parallels

These parallels mirror the settings of Homeline fiction, mythology, and folklore. Infinity parapsychicists aren't sure whether the existence of myth parallels means that famous authors are latent psionics who see other worlds in dreams or subconscious clairvoyance, or whether it provides powerful evidence for the Williams-Khor Hypothesis (p. 21). Neither explanation is particularly convincing, or particularly comforting, and some Homeline theorists believe that

myth parallels are built by unknown powerful figures such as Cabalistic magicians or even "gods".

Like high-inertia parallels, myth parallels should be selected by the GM rather than randomized. The GM needs to choose the myth, the version of it the parallel follows, and the degree to which the parallel remains true to literature or folklore. The Parallel Civilizations Table can perhaps give the GM a nudge toward a random culture for the parallel's legendary source, but choosing a familiar myth is easier for the GM, and usually more fun for the players.

CHALLENGE WORLDS

In a sense, any world is potentially a challenge world; it presents a problem or an opportunity for the Infinity Patrol to solve or attain. True challenge worlds, however, are all problem and little opportunity. In dramatic terms, they exist to warn, to add flavor, or to pose obstacles.

Hell Worlds

Hell parallels are those on which humanity is dead, devastated, or dwindling to extinction. Usually, the Earth's surface, climate, and ecology also bear horrific scars. Infinity exploits a few relatively benign (or utterly dead) hell worlds as empty worlds (see *Disasters*, p. 85). If such operations go badly (or mysteriously) wrong, PCs may be chosen to investigate, which gives the GM an excuse to get out the depressing adjectives on a global scale. Adventures in a hell world can encompass disaster movie

Unusual Civilizations

None of the following civilizations appear on any of the tables or systems in this chapter. They serve as examples of curve balls the GM can throw into high-inertia parallels or puzzle worlds, or use as strange enclaves in more normal timelines.

Mysterious Civilizations

These civilizations, although real, remained “off the map” of history. Like many ancient civilizations, they have been exoticized in adventure fiction and occultism.

East African: This syncretic blend of urbanized, mercantile Islam and East African pastoral tribes created a number of small urban centers such as Zimbabwe and Zanzibar. Such centers were usually near gold mines or along trade routes. It flourished between 1100 A.D. and Western conquest in the 19th century.

Gothic: This cattle-herding culture of warriors along the Danube and Dniester valleys emerged about 100 A.D. but only urbanized after conquering Rome in the fourth century. It or its outliers may have given rise to Norse civilization; it was quickly subsumed into the nascent Western civilization.

Khmer: A Cambodian civilization descended from a blend of Indic, Chinese, and Malay influences. From its capital at Angkor, priest-engineers built temples, canals, and irrigation systems between 790 and 1400. After that date it declined relative to its outliers in Siam. Chinese and Western civilizations encroached upon it until the French conquest in the 1880s. It remains only partially assimilated.

Olmec: Considered by many to be the first emergence of Meso-American civilization, the Olmecs (who flourished between 1150 B.C. and 800 B.C.) had enough variance in art and design that others have claimed only an ancestral relationship between the two civilizations.

Punic: This outlier of Mesopotamian civilization emerged on the Phoenician coast in about 3000 B.C.

Heavily influenced by Egypt, it expanded commercially over the Mediterranean coast. Iranic, then Hellenic, civilization absorbed its homeland from the sixth century B.C.; its most successful outlier, Carthage, lasted until 146 B.C. and Roman conquest. Some scholars see Hebrew, and thus much of Western, civilization as a Punic offshoot.

Sheban: A trading network of theocratic monarchies in Yemen and Ethiopia emerged beginning in the 11th century B.C. Mostly absorbed into Islamic civilization by the seventh century A.D., its last descendant, the Ethiopian kingdom, fell to Soviet Orthodoxy in 1977 and remains culturally shattered.

Tibetan: Beginning in the seventh century A.D., this Indic-Chinese border outlier (oddly influenced by Iranic civilization) became a theocratic Buddhist civilization alternating between military and religious expansion. It survives, barely, under Chinese overlordship.

Weird Civilizations

These civilizations never existed, but can sneak into sufficiently strange parallels either as mysterious ruins in the past or truly bizarre actors in present-day geopolitics.

Atlantean: Sorcerous and aggressive, the Atlanteans left pyramids and solar kingships all along the Atlantic and Mediterranean coasts. They vanished by 4000 B.C.

Megalithic: These matriarchal, earth-centered mages erected standing stones as observatories and ley transformers from the time of the Flood to about 1500 B.C., when patriarchal Aryans destroyed them.

Sirian: Seeking gold for unguessable reasons, these aliens ruled earthly civilizations as gods, building strange structures and tampering with human DNA. They arrived in 10,000 B.C. and left on their own (or after a human revolt) in 1200 B.C.

action sequences, tense investigations of toxic ruins, heartbreaking encounters with devolved savage humans, or all three.

For a random global catastrophe, roll 3d and consult the following table:

3-4	Disease
5-6	Cosmic catastrophe
7-8	Ecological disaster
9-15	Global war
16-18	Odd disaster

Disease: A disease capable of wiping out all of humanity is, evolutionarily speaking, highly unlikely. Although

plague worlds such as Attila (p. 110), Ariane (p. 128), and the terrifying Gotha-parallels (p. 128) exist, humanity (if not civilization) usually begins recovery within a few generations. Such plague worlds are still very dangerous for unprotected outworld visitors, of course, and Infinity maintains strict decontamination procedures for returning conveyors, just in case. Plagues that actually eradicate humanity are usually either bioengineered war-plagues or paranormal ones.

Cosmic Catastrophe: Although Earth seems to dwell in a pretty safe neighborhood, cosmically speaking, it only takes one asteroid impact to ruin your whole species. Most of the Lucifer worlds (p. B528) suffered asteroid or comet impacts (although not all of them are hell worlds; see p. 133). A nearby gamma-ray burster or supernova sterilized Lucifer-3 (p. B528). Solar flares, dark energy, black holes, and any number of other dangers wait out there.

Ecological Disaster: Whether man-made or natural, global climate shifts or extinction events can wipe out civilization in under a century. If the atmosphere dies, it can wipe out all multicellular life. A returning Ice Age, runaway global warming, catastrophic species depletion, and catastrophic volcanism are the four most common conditions on ecological hell worlds. Asteroid strikes or uncontrolled sorcery might replicate any of these effects.

Global War: To truly endanger the human race, a global war has to be fought at TL7 or higher (or with equivalently deadly magics). Most such wars begin as (or include) nuclear wars; almost all of them kill their billions by plague and famine after the bombs have destroyed cities and crops. On some worlds, nuclear warfare produces evil mutant supermen

(or submen), nuclear winter, or magical manastorms, as well as piles of corpses and charred cities.

Odd Disaster: Unclassifiable or unusual events crop up fairly often in the Infinite Worlds, and some of them doom humanity. Drexler (p. B528) and Leviathan (p. 129) are two examples of strange new hells; the GM's fiendishness and creativity are the only limits to what possible disasters the Scouts might encounter. Unleashed demons, angry gods, and powerful Things Man Was Not Meant To Know would fit in this category, although some cosmic catastrophes might be indistinguishable from the return of the Ancient Ones to near-Earth space.

Puzzle Worlds

Figuring out what doomed humanity is a specific, if unpleasant, type of

puzzle. Narratively, a puzzle world is its own justification for existence; it exists to add color, drama, or weirdness to the game. Solving the puzzle is therefore often beside the point. With some worlds (such as Enigma on p. 140), a solution may be a larger goal of the campaign, perhaps to prevent a similar fate overtaking Homeline or some helpless parallel. A puzzle world should be entertaining (or creepy) enough, however, that one or two pro forma "travelogue" adventures there can still be fun and challenging for the team. Otherwise, there's little point in visiting it in the first place. The GM can simply drop its existence into Patrol gossip or a Paralabs briefing and move on with the real story. The GM needs to decide on a good puzzle (and, if desired, a solution) that fits the game's tone; again, randomized results are little help.

HISTORY, ALREADY IN PROGRESS

The basic structure of an alternate history is simple enough: a historical event happens differently, its changes echoing down the years to a radically changed present. While a single change point is generally desirable, the specific reasons for subsequent changes might be obscure. This section discusses some principles of alternate Earth design, and some issues that the would-be worldbuilder might wish to keep in mind.

DIRECTION

There are two basic approaches to alternate timeline construction. You can work forward from a known or postulated divergence point such as the Battle of Hastings or the invention of the microscope by Archimedes. Or, you can work backward from the world you'd like to see built, providing a (hopefully somewhat plausible) rationalization for an independent Sioux confederacy or for antigravity weapons in the Hundred Years' War.

Change Forward

To begin with the change point, you need to *pick* a change point. This

can be as easy as opening a history book and pointing, but most designers begin with at least some idea of what the change is intended to accomplish. There's little point, for example, in carefully designing an alternate history in which Napoleon wins at Waterloo and is then immediately cut to pieces at Mechelen two weeks later by a regrouped Allied force. If you're beginning with Napoleon, you are presumably interested in a history in which Bonapartism lasts longer and has a greater influence over (at least) the next decade or so.

This is an example of *lost cause* design, which includes the two overwhelmingly most popular alternate history topics: a Nazi victory in World War II and a Confederate victory in the Civil War. A surviving Rome, a restored Stuart dynasty in England, a unified Catholic Christendom, or an American victory in Vietnam also fit the lost cause model.

Be careful to look past the one decisive battle; a lot of causes were lost for deep-set economic or demographic reasons. Still, with suitable hand-waving and a judicious selection of divergence points, you can make

things seem retroactively plausible, at least. Don't get *too* hung up on plausibility: there are enough bizarre twists of fate in real life that *any* event can be made to seem inevitable.

Another common divergence point for change forward designs is the *outlier*. This is a small colony or offshoot of a larger civilization left alone to develop along its own path. The American colonies were outliers of England, for example; the abortive colony of Vinland would have been an outlier of Iceland, itself an outlier of Norse civilization. Often, the purpose of an outlier design is to allow some factor already present in the parent civilization to dominate the new one. English democracy, for example, flourished like a weed in New England, with no kings or landed gentry to thwart it – as did the theocratic tendencies of the Puritans, with no Anglican accommodationist model to obey. In S.M. Stirling's "Draka" novels, every unlovely factor in Western civilization, from slavery to Nietzschean morality, flourishes in the Cape Colony. The spirit of the French Revolution might have thrived in an independent French Canada, or the

spirit of the Romanov mystics in a surviving Russian Alaska.

If you don't already have a divergence point in mind, you can always use the Random Present Table (p. 86) to pick one, of course.

Destiny Backward

Even when using a change forward model, it can be very helpful to have a goal toward which you want the history to evolve. This goal may be a vision of what reality should look like in the present, or at least a few elements to be included (for instance, Irish dominance of England, Egypt the most technologically advanced nation on Earth, America divided into petty states like medieval Europe – or all of the above). It may even simply involve assuring that the beneficiaries of the initial change survive and prosper, though this works much better for short periods than histories of more than one or two centuries. In any case, having a goal in mind allows you to choose among the many plausible alternatives that shortly appear.

One such goal is enhancing the importance of any person, concept, or nation relatively marginal in our own history. Examples of such *strengthening the marginal* design goals include making Poland a world power, allowing the Celtic Christians to continue their development without interference by of Rome and the Vikings, or letting Roger Bacon continue to develop the scientific method in the 13th century. A startling number of alternative histories wind up strengthening the marginal technology of airships and zeppelins, for example. This is a matter of flavor rather than logic, but this is a game book, after all. Nikola Tesla's electrical experiments, the Maya kingdoms, and imperial Brazil or Sweden are similarly marginal figures with that combination of obscurity and flair.

Failing that, perhaps you'd like to *marginalize the strong*. Cast a great nation, religion, hero, or culture onto history's ash heap and never look back. For example, the Mongols came close to overrunning Europe in the 13th century, and might have forestalled the European age of creativity that gave birth to the Renaissance and the Great Discoveries. Or Genghis Khan might have died during his

childhood, when he was enslaved by a rival, and never united the Mongols at all. Because this sort of change tends to throw the possibilities wide open, it often requires a more specific goal in addition. Removing Christianity, for example, leaves you with the question of what world religion the Romans eventually convert to. Do they bring Buddhism from India, or raise Mithraism from cult to mass church, or simply dodder along as increasingly apathetic pagans until the Muslim invasions convert them all to the True Faith of the Prophet?

This may wind up as *displacement*: changing the history of one area to mirror the history of another. If an Islamic Roman empire becomes the new caliphate, will future Muslim culture resemble Western civilization, or will future European civilization resemble the post-Abbasid sultanates? Either way, you can seek models in the historical past and apply them to your alternate history. The most common sort of displacement is moving the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions from Western Europe to ancient Greece, or Muslim Baghdad, or medieval India, or Song Dynasty China. The history of Roma Aeterna (p. 144) is essentially the displacement of the Chinese imperial model of breakup and reunification within a self-conscious imperial culture to the West. One could just as easily postulate a China that, like the West, turns into a mass of squabbling kingdoms after the fall of the Han. Like Western Europe, these successor states would gradually lose interest in their imperial past as they develop into independent nations and expand overseas. You could apply Japanese modernization in the 1880s to the Iroquois in the 1760s, Mehmet Ali's Egypt in the 1820s, or to the Sikh Punjab in the 1840s.

One trick that sometimes works, for those of an academic cast of mind anyhow, is to put on your snootiest History Channel documentary voice and say something like "In retrospect, German victory in 1918 was inevitable." Then list all the things that (if you didn't know how World War I wound up) would make German victory indeed seem inevitable – French morale disintegrating, the Russian Revolution freeing up the German Eastern Front, the

new proto-blitzkrieg tactics developed by Hindenburg, submarines keeping America out of Europe – and emphasize them in your own timeline. Justify increasing all those factors, and determine what you need to change to make such increases happen, even if your change point winds up being something like "Kaiser Wilhelm II wasn't as big an idiot as he was in our history."

Even if you have a present in mind, you may wind up determining a suitable divergence point in the past, and working both forward from the divergence point and backward from your goal. It may happen that a goal turns out to be impossible to reach from a particular divergence point. Don't hesitate to find another change point, usually farther back in history, and run the tape again. If changing the outcome of the Battle of Gettysburg isn't enough to gain Confederate independence in your estimation, move back and try Antietam, or the Trent affair and a British-brokered peace, or have the war break out in 1857 under a weak President Buchanan instead of a determined President Lincoln.

DECISION

So, what exactly makes history diverge? What is necessary and sufficient to shift history out of its tracks? If we live in Plastic Time With High Inertia (p. 154), how plastic is time, and how high is high? The GM needs to answer these questions for time-travel games. In the Infinite Worlds setting, inertia varies from world to world. In our own history, the answer has likewise varied.

Great Man

The most plastic theory is the Great Man theory, which holds that a man or woman of sufficient willpower, ability, and vision can alter history and change the course of nations. History, in this view, is biography; it's the story of Moses and Napoleon, Hitler and Lincoln, Queen Elizabeth I and Marie Curie. This theory suits games and adventures admirably – human stories and human achievements are what games are about, after all. It's also much easier to write and game a Centrum plot to kidnap Einstein than to write or game a Centrum plot to

mount a decades-long campaign to weaken German academic standards. This theory, sadly, is well and truly out of fashion among academic historians. However, historians from Plutarch to Carlyle believed in it implicitly. To many people it seems highly unlikely that the American Civil War, for instance, would have been remotely the same without Abraham Lincoln or Robert E. Lee. Of course, Lee also provides a salutary corrective to the Great Man theory – even *he* couldn't win the war for the South, after all. "But maybe," the Great Man theorists respond wistfully, "if Lee had been just a little bit *greater* at Gettysburg . . ."

Great Moment

The counter to the Great Man theory is what one might call the Great Moment theory. The times make the man; postwar chaos in Germany would have inevitably produced an anti-Semitic, warmongering demagogue. If not Hitler, perhaps Julius Streicher or Joseph Göbbels or some unknown street fighter might have become dictator and launched World War II and the Final Solution. Similarly, the forces of demographics and economics meant that Britain would have ridden out the threat with or without Churchill, and America would have gotten involved in Europe with or without Roosevelt.

This is history as sociology; societies change according to large mass movements, and those movements throw up "leaders" and "founding fathers" and "inventors of the steam engine" who just happen to fit the requirement of the times. This theory is most closely associated with Marx (and Hegel, from whom he lifted it). However, other historians from Macaulay to McNeill have presented it in one or another form and it basically dominates academic discussion today.

As a model for alternate history, it has its uses. It's very important, for plausible alternate histories, to keep mass movements and large-scale factors like economics in mind – Lee or no Lee, the Confederacy was not going to defeat the Union militarily as long as the North's industry outproduced the South's by 10 to 1. Britain was probably never going to accept a

slave-holding ally, and the "peculiar institution" would have likely died out even with an independent Confederacy. However, the Great Moment theory is resolutely unromantic, *and* difficult to address in game terms. One can try to set up complexes of conditions early enough that the mass movements themselves are diverted – perhaps the cotton gin isn't invented and the South has to industrialize to make money when cotton bottoms out. Perhaps a harsher bout of Chartist radicalism strengthens English aristocratic reaction, and Palmerston can support the South without losing any votes in Parliament.

Great Motherland

The Great Moment theory looks positively carefree compared to the new macrohistorical studies that argue that even those mass movements are predestined by the regional and continental ecology where they occur. This "Great Motherland" theory is the highest of inertia. It presents history as geography; the vectors of disease, the varying disaster regimes and coastal formations of Europe and China, and the luck of the draw for domestic animals and plants meant that western Eurasia was destined to rise to global supremacy. This is the

argument of Jared Diamond's *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, which has become the centerpiece of a construct that denies almost any individual human agency in history.

People everywhere adapt to their environment, and adapt their environment to themselves. If the environment contains horses, coal, iron, and barley, you get Prussia. If it contains rice, chickens, silver, and typhoons, you get China. If it contains gold but no heavy draft animals or infectious diseases, you get wiped out by Cortés when he shows up with his horses and iron and smallpox (see *Plagues*, p. 99) to take your gold.

This model is horribly depressing and unromantic, but it does have the virtue of denying any role to race, or class, or "cultural energy," or any of the other things that besmirched so much historical thought in the 19th and 20th centuries. It can also make a handy set of invisible walls for building alternates. Taking ecology and geography into account can prevent silly alternates like a Madan Empire based in New Guinea (too many mountains and typhoons to develop cultural unity) or the Maya conquest of Spain in 1492 (that pesky smallpox again, plus no accessible iron or tin for cannon).

Alternate Greats

Where do you put the Great Men in your alternate history? Near the divergence point, in particular; similar people may play roles of similar importance. Designers of alternate histories often use real historical figures in roles that somehow resemble their real lives but differ with the changed historical context. With this "repertory theater" approach, the stars – the Great Men – always get to play the lead. This helps players and readers keep the cast of characters straight, and familiar faces spark interest. The sight of the *condottiere* Napoleone Buonaparti rising to power in the decadent Florentine Republic, for example, has the twin advantages of emphasizing the changes to the world and clarifying the situation for everybody. It's hard to quarrel with a solution that both enhances strangeness *and* familiarity.

However, it becomes faintly silly after a century or so of divergence; after 350 years, it's unlikely that the Buonapartis of Corsica would have even *had* all those kids, much less that one of them just *happens* to be a brilliant soldier and dictator-in-the-making. As the timeline moves further away from real history, it's often easier to look at broader trends and assume the existence of unnamed geniuses in the background introducing monotheism or atomic theory when necessary. In this "commedia dell'arte" approach, the story always has the same roles, and it doesn't matter who fills the Great Moment.

Plagues

Not all humans suffer equally from all diseases. Mere childhood ailments in one area become deadly epidemics in another. Even whooping cough or chicken pox can kill millions in a “virgin field epidemic,” if none of those millions have any resistance to them. (Whooping cough may have killed half of Japan in the late ninth century A.D.) The clearest case of this in history is the nearly 90% death rate of American Indians after lasting European contact in 1492. Although the conquistadors certainly gave it the old college try in some places, they simply could not have physically slaughtered such vast populations. Groups too small to bring Old World diseases with them settled the New World during the Ice Ages, and few new diseases appeared in the next 30,000 years. Other major plagues had a similar impact on history:

Plague of Sennacherib (708 B.C.): “The angel of death” slew the Assyrian army besieging Jerusalem, forcing Sennacherib to leave the Jews alive. May have been typhus, a killer of armies (such as Napoleon’s in Russia) up to the 20th century.

Athenian Plague (430-429 B.C.): Devastated Athens, killing a third of the city, including Pericles. Athens lost the Peloponnesian War as a consequence. May have been measles.

Plague of Antoninus (166-180 A.D.): Brought back from Persia by victorious legions, this epidemic killed 25 million people in the Roman Empire. Rome never recovered from this demographic disaster, which returned in 251-266 A.D. It may also have reached China in 161-185 A.D., and returned there in 310-322 A.D., when a plague killed 25% of the population. Probably smallpox.

Plague of Justinian (542-543 A.D.): Arrived in Constantinople by ship from Egypt and killed 120,000 people; may have killed up to a third of the Byzantine Empire and southern Europe by 590 A.D., preventing the reunification of the Roman Empire. Its spread to Syria and Persia paved the way for the Arab conquest. Probably bubonic plague.

Black Death (1346-1350): Arrived in Venice from the Crimea, having already (1331-1354) killed up to half of China and disintegrated the Mongol Empire. Killed a third of Europe, and sporadically reappeared there for the next 400 years, especially in the Plague of London (1665-1666). Its last outbreak killed a million people in Manchuria in 1921. Almost certainly bubonic plague, although some historians theorize that the 1346 outbreak may have been anthrax.

“Pox Americana” (1775-1782): Smallpox epidemic ravaged American soldiers during the Revolutionary War, and spread across the plains to eradicate Indian tribes as far away as Puget Sound. May have killed 25 million people in North America.

Urban Cholera Epidemics (1826-1837): Endemic in Bengal, cholera spread via British ships to Cairo (1831), London (1832), New York (1832), Havana (1833), and Canton (1835); and via Russian soldiers to Moscow (1830), Warsaw (1831), and Berlin (1831), killing tens of thousands of people in each city. Sanitation reform ended the cholera threat in the West by the 1890s.

“Spanish Flu” (1918-1919): Killed 675,000 Americans, and up to 40 million people worldwide (more than World War I); it may have begun in U.S. Army camps in Kansas. An unknown strain of influenza 25 times deadlier than normal.

Any of these plagues might show up in an alternate history; the GM who wants to avoid the Black Death needs a clever explanation of why his Europe is immune. In the case of the Black Death, eliminating the Mongol conquests might have done it, since it may have been the Mongol unification of the steppes that allowed plague carriers to spread a Central Asian disease to both China and Europe in 20 years. Without the Mongols, it might have taken many more decades to spread, and the vector might have been through the Middle East, which was not particularly affected by the Black Death in our history.

The Disease Barrier

“Fear, fear, the Bay of Benin. One comes out for each 10 that go in.” This old sailor’s rhyme, about the dangers of the Benin coast of west Africa, accurately conveys the impact of malaria and other jungle fevers such as dengue and yellow fever on populations that have not evolved a resistance to them. Until the isolation of quinine from Peruvian cinchona bark in 1820, non-Africans simply could not effectively colonize tropical Africa. Once Columbus accidentally introduced the anopheles mosquito to the Americas in 1493, the Caribbean and its shores became similar death traps for Europeans; Southeast Asia and the Pacific took a less deadly, but notable, toll as well. Only the promise of vast wealth from gold and slaves could induce Europeans even to garrison the few tiny outposts along the African coast. Before you send those Roman armies south of the Sahara, explain why they’re not all dead or delirious first.

DEVELOPMENT

The way to use such depressing concepts as the Great Moment and Great Motherland theories is as guidelines for developing alternates. Just knowing that there’s a plague or

drought coming can spark ideas for the next decade or century of your timeline. Even if you’ve secretly built your whole timeline on the heroic contests of Great Men, applying these factors can give it that all-important veneer of plausibility, and help you

pick which Great Man wins the next round. This section gives a brief primer on some of these macrohistorical concerns, with extreme prejudice in favor of those that make useful tools for world design.

Politics

A number of historians have postulated a natural “pendulum” in political history between action and reaction. In 1949, Arthur Schlesinger, Sr., famously cited a 16-year pendulum that sadly didn’t even explain the next 16 years without a lot of special pleading. With that said, generational models (see *Generational Cycles*,

People make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given, and transmitted from the past.

– Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire*

Generational Cycles

One model for studying both historical change and historical continuity is the generational model. The social impact of the Baby Boom in America (and in other nations) is a clear example of generational history in action – and so is the “Greatest Generation” that survived the Depression, won World War II, and built the greatest economy in the world.

In *Generations*, historians William Strauss and Neil Howe break out generational types, in order, as follows:

Idealists are born into a time of conformity, and come of age during social ferment. During adulthood, they pursue individualism while urging a return to morality; they age into visionary figures. The Baby Boom generation (born from 1943 to 1960) are Idealists, as are the Transcendentalists (born from 1792 to 1821).

Reactives are born during social ferment, come of age in alienation and risk, shoulder a crisis, and age into dim respectability as society becomes more conformist. The Founding Fathers (born from 1724 to 1741) are Reactives, as is Generation X (born from 1961 to 1981).

Civics are born during a return to morality, unite and come of age dealing with a crisis, found institutions in midlife, and build the society the next ferment will question and disrupt. The Greatest Generation (born from 1901 to 1924) are Civics, as are the Millennials (born from 1982 to 2003).

Adaptives are born during a crisis, relish social conformity in adulthood, work for compromise during social ferment, and age into sensitive elders. The Progressives (born from 1843 to 1859) are Adaptives, as are the Silent Generation (born from 1925 to 1942).

This model also implies that society-threatening crises occur about once in every four generations (every 80-odd years), followed by ages of conformity, social ferment, and individualism each lasting about 20 years. Each age sows the seeds of the next. The stress of the crisis produces conformity, Idealistic rebels against stifling conformity cause ferment, and the resulting breakdown of conformity leaves risk and rampant individualism. Reacting against the alienation and atomization they see around them, the (now older and wiser) Idealists call for a return to morality, just in time for the next crisis to hit and cement those demands.

To make their model fit American history, Strauss and Howe have to postulate that the Civil War was a “crisis too soon” that “aborted” a Civic generation, and place Thomas Jefferson (an Idealist if ever there was one) in a Civic generation. However cut-and-try the model, though, using it can help give a natural-seeming rhythm to an alternate society.

below) as used by the historian Samuel Huntington (among others) present a plausible explanation for the commonly observed 20-year life of many political movements. Radical libertarianism began in America with the Stamp Act protests in 1765; by 1785 it was mired in tariff disputes and wrecking the Articles of Confederation. Kennedy’s 1960 rebirth of American liberalism was convincingly buried by Reagan’s landslide in 1980. The Republican Party destroyed the Whigs in 1856 over abolition and by 1876 was cutting corrupt deals with Southern whites to steal the Presidency. The young activists who drive the issue become middle-aged politicians with their own interests to protect; the middle-aged politicians they converted or frightened into agreement die or retire.

About twice that length (every 40 to 45 years) is a peak riot period for oppressed minorities. This, too, may be generationally driven; perhaps it takes two generations to forget how societies increase repression after a riot. Toynbee claimed that it takes something like five generations (100-125 years) for a new ideology to create a movement capable of changing society, but that might be an underestimate. Peter the Great’s intelligentsia took 136 years before they tried to overthrow Czar Nicholas I in the Decembrist Revolt of 1825. Puritan Massachusetts took 145 years to riot against the King. The Civil Rights Act was passed 133 years after William Lloyd Garrison founded the American abolitionist movement.

It takes about eight generations (160-170 years), on average, for an empire to get strong enough to fight a civil war, and about three (60-odd years) to recover from it. (Long enough for all the war veterans to become tiresome old coots with

stories nobody wants to hear any more.) By this reading, the American Revolution was a civil war in the British Empire established in 1607 at Jamestown, 169 years earlier. After 1776, America took until 1836 (60 years) to start its own imperial expansion into Texas and concomitant disintegration over slavery, while Britain spent almost that long watching its monarchs go mad and its population riot before the Reform Act stabilized its political system in 1832. Rome went through *three* of those cycles before finally collapsing from the outside; an average “really successful” Chinese dynasty manages two of them.

Economics

Another field ripe for cyclical patterns is economics, either within a society or on a global basis. (Controversial modern systems theorists believe that all economies have been on a global basis since about 930 A.D., when the Song Dynasty restored the trade links between China and the West.) The “boom and bust cycle” is familiar to most casual observers of the modern business scene, for instance.

In 1925, a Russian economist, Nikolai Kondratiev, discovered “waves” of roughly 50 to 54 years (27 years up to the peak, 27 years down to the crunch) in trends within the Western business cycle. The global depressions of 1816, 1873, and 1929 seemed to match the theory pretty well, and if you squint, you can fit the recession of 1978-1983 in there, too. Unfortunately, the other global depressions in 1826, 1837, and 1893 don’t match the wave; nor did the crash of 2000. (Kondratiev, ironically, was sent to Siberia for making the perfectly Marxist observation that the economy drove history.) Historians still squabble over whether the Kondratiev wave even exists; others favor the “Kuznets wave” of 18-21 years, which fits the generational framework better.

If the Kondratiev wave does exist, it probably represents a two-generation lag in exploiting a new industrial development. Railroads are introduced in the 1830s and mature by the 1880s; telegraphs come in the 1860s



and are edged out by radio in the 1910s; microcomputers show up in the 1970s, and we just passed the “peak” of their productivity growth in the Internet boom of the 1990s. A similar pattern likely holds in any alternate history after TL3 and the invention of banking.

On considerably firmer ground are the Price Revolutions, which unlike Kondratiev waves are taken from the data themselves rather than statistical models of the data. General prosperity causes slow inflation, which becomes rapid inflation during the next major

war or capital influx. Rapid inflation causes increasing inequality and social control of the economy until control and inequality both become excessive, leading to (or contributing to) cults, pessimism, intellectual revolt, addiction, imperial wars, and finally a vast crisis. In the aftermath of the crisis, prices stabilize in an equilibrium and prosperity returns to start the next slow inflation. Unfortunately, although the Price Revolutions have a regular structure, they don’t have a nice regular cycle.

[T]here are no correct alternate histories; there are only plausible alternate histories.

– Will Shetterly, “The Captain’s Story”

Civilization as Biology

From Ibn Khaldun to Malthus, historians have seen societies as essentially following biological patterns: spring growth, summer florescence, autumnal decay, and winter death. The German philosopher Oswald Spengler is probably the best-known theorist to apply the biological model to history. In *The Decline of the West* (first published in 1918), he proposed that civilizations have individual personalities (Classical civilization was Apollo, while Western civilization is Faust, for example). However, their inherently biological nature (being made up of people, after all) constrains them to follow similar “life cycles” like any other organism. Spengler postulated only eight such civilizations, which he called “cultures”: Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Chinese (which he begins around 1000 B.C.), Classical (Hellenic plus Roman), “Magian” (Iranic plus Islamic, with substantial Jewish influence), Indian (which he begins with the Aryan invasions), and Meso-American. Although almost no modern historians take Spengler seriously, his model makes a great frame for alternate histories or future histories (James Blish used Spenglerian concepts for his *Cities in Flight* series). In that spirit, Spengler’s “epochs” of civilization are as follows:

Pre-Cultural Period (400-500 years): This is a period of tribes and chieftains; there is no state system or literature. For Western civilization, Spengler equates this era to the Frankish conquests from 500-900 A.D.; for Classical civilization, the pre-cultural period is the Mycenaean Era.

Formation of Feudal Order (300-400 years): States and cities emerge and extend their power, as with Chou Dynasty China or Sassanid Persia. The “cultural spring” begins with the first priestly (the *Lives of the Saints*, the *Rig-Veda*, and Hesiod’s *Theogony*) and military (the Arthurian tales, the *Mahabharata*, and the *Iliad*) myths. Vigorous architecture, as with the Pyramids in Egyptian civilization or the Gothic cathedrals in the West.

Interregnum (100-200 years): The feudal order breaks down in warfare, plague, and famine. The cultural spring becomes summer, and reaction begins. In the West, Aquinas perfects Catholic scholasticism, and the heresies that will lead to Luther emerge. In Classical culture, the Orphic cults question the Olympian orthodoxy. Springtime art is exhausted.

Aristocratic State Formation (150-170 years): Major aristocratic states emerge and contend; this is the era of the Tudors and the Hapsburgs in the West, and of the seven warring states in China. The passing of the cultural high summer is reflected in the Renaissance becoming Baroque, or Doric art giving way to Ionic art. New mathematics emerge: Classical Pythagorean geometry, Magian algebra, or Western calculus. At the end of this period comes a puritanical reaction: Mohammed, or Cromwell.

Absolutism (100-150 years): Aristocratic power becomes centralized, but the king and bourgeoisie seize power themselves; society approaches a crisis. In the Classical culture, this is the duel of Pericles and Themistocles; in the West, it is the rise of Louis XIV and the Stuarts and Hanoverians. Cultural autumn has set in, with summer’s beliefs cast into doubt: examples include the Enlightenment in the West, the Socratics in Classical civilization, or the Mutazilites in Islamic society. Confucius is the final “Indian summer” of Chinese civilization, reaffirming order in the midst of chaos.

Revolution and Napoleonism (30-50 years): Revolt of the bourgeoisie unleashes war and military dictatorship. The “Napoleons” – Alexander, Sun Tzu, Napoleon – sweep away the old order but usually cannot create a lasting empire. In Egypt, the crisis (Hyksos invasion) destroys the nation; in Islam the “Napoleon,” Al-Mansur, was able to create an empire, the Abbasid Caliphate. Art is autumnal, backward-looking, and fierce: Romanticism in the West, and the *Shah-Nameh* in Magian culture.

Transition from Napoleonism (200 years): In the clear space after the crisis, bourgeois interests and contending mass states (some of them democratic, such as the Roman Republic, the city-states of the Punjab, or the United States) dominate. The Hellenistic phase of Classical culture, the era of five warring states in China, and the imperialist phase of Western culture, are all urban, mercantile, and pragmatic. Ethics replace religion, from the Buddha in India to Sufism in Islam to Stoicism in Greece to secular humanism in the West. Art is experimental, but little of it lasts . . . final shoots as winter falls on culture.

Caesarism (200 years): The masses in the victorious state eventually rally to force-politics, suppress the bourgeois, and impose a unified empire to the limits of their civilization’s reach. This is the age of Augustus Caesar, Shi Huangdi, Alp Arslan (who founds the Seljuk Sultanate), the Pharaoh Ahmose (who founds the New Kingdom), Chandragupta Maurya . . . and the “military-industrial-media complex” in the United States. Cultural winter leads to artificial, syncretic, postmodern art forms imitating earlier forms.

Final Stasis (200+ years): The imperial state gradually ossifies and decays. Classical culture enters final stasis with Domitian, Magian culture with the Ottomans, Egypt with the Ramessids, China with Han Wu Ti. On Spengler’s schedule, Western culture is due for final stasis some time around 2105. Frozen and dead, the culture’s only expression is gigantism.

Aftermath: The empire falls to barbarians, who plant the seeds of a new feudal order in its ruins.

Alternate histories can ignore the Price Revolutions, react to them, or include Revolutions of their own, at the designer's whim. Again, including them or something like them vastly increases a timeline's plausibility and realism – two or three centuries of prosperity without consequences have never happened in human history.

The major Price Revolutions are as follows:

Medieval (1180-1350): Begins with the invention of banking and the loot of the Fourth Crusade. Ends with the Black Death and a century of warfare and destruction. The equilibrium afterward is remembered as the golden age of the Renaissance.

Sixteenth Century (1520-1620): Begins with the discovery of American gold mines and the war against the Turks. Ends with the Thirty Years' War. The equilibrium afterward is the Enlightenment of Newton and Bach.

Eighteenth Century (1740-1800): Begins with the rise of joint-stock companies and the sugar boom. Ends with the French Revolution and Napoleonic global wars. The equilibrium afterward is the Victorian era.

Twentieth Century (1900-present): Begins with the full flowering of industrial capitalism and the age of empires. The current Malthusian diebacks in Africa, and the wars in the Middle East, may represent its end stage. If so, the mid-to-late 21st century looks pretty good.

There may also have been Price Revolutions in ancient Babylonia (1750-1680 B.C.), classical Greece (500-300 B.C.), Rome (90-220 A.D.), and early medieval Europe (850-1000 A.D.). All of those periods end in devastating war.

War

Which brings us to our next cycle, the war cycle identified by Quincy Wright. He found that, statistically, a major war breaks out between the great powers every 75 to 85 years. In other words, every four generations, just long enough for everyone who remembers how awful the last one was to die off. This great-power war usually lasts on and off for 25 to 30 years in several phases (like the two World Wars or the two Napoleonic Wars); long enough to kill a whole generation off and get society thoroughly sick of it for another four generations. George Modelski has modified Wright's theory by introducing the oceanic war, which he claims is the only kind that actually shifts power structures, with a slightly longer cycle of 90 or so years. Neither cycle actually fits the dates involved, but if your alternate history has gone 80 or 100 years without a great-power war, toss one in.

On average, great power wars result in at least one great power getting the stuffing knocked out of it and removed from great power status. The Italian Wars knocked Venice off the list; the Thirty Years' War bounced Spain; the War of the Spanish Succession made the Dutch and Swedish second-rank powers; the Napoleonic Wars knocked Spain back again and finished France demographically; the World Wars pinned Germany's ears back, and so forth. A great power can try to climb back, which takes about a generation, or settle for decline. Some great power wars introduce a new great power to the mix, as previous second-rankers mobilize to fight. The Italian Wars marked the debut of France as a contender; the Thirty Years' War made Sweden a great power; the War of the

Spanish Succession put England and Prussia on the global stage; the Napoleonic Wars did the same for Russia; the World Wars introduced America. In your alternate history, keep a running tally of great powers; if they have passed their sell-by date, drop them off in the next big war.

Ecology

The final major influence on the course of history is climate. Like economics, people try to identify cycles in it such as the El Niño-Southern Oscillation cycle (ENSO), which causes floods in China and Peru, famines in India (by wrecking the monsoon), bitter cold and snow in Russia, drought in the American West and Mediterranean, and general chaos every 8 to 15 years. Strong "mega-ENSOs" may have brought the wet, cold weather that bogged down both Napoleon and Hitler in Russia. It's possible, in a Great Motherland way, that the reason northwestern Europe wound up conquering the world is that it's the temperate zone least affected by ENSO! Still little understood, ENSO may be the most important single weather pattern in history.

On a larger scale, global climate has fluctuated strongly many times in the history of civilization. Major weather shifts may be the reasons for plague outbreaks, famines, and other demographic crises – every civilization in the world went through similar crises during the third century and 17th century, for instance, which argues for global causes. Any of the following climate shifts probably still occur in a parallel Earth, unless changing the climate is the point of the alternate:

Laurentide Cooling (c. 6200-5800 B.C.): Four millennia of global warming finally melted a glacial ice sheet in North America, opening the St. Lawrence, spilling cold water into the Atlantic, and shutting off the Gulf Stream. The end of this cold drought sparked the urban revolution in Mesopotamia, India, and Palestine.

Boreal Cooling (3800-3100 B.C.): Another cold drought forces the concentration of towns into cities in Sumer; its end creates Egyptian civilization with the return of regular Nile floods.

On average, great power wars result in at least one great power getting the stuffing knocked out of it and removed from great power status.

Sub-Boreal Event (2200-1900 B.C.): A major volcanic eruption triggers another cold drought, causing the end of Egyptian Old Kingdom and Sumerian-Akkadian civic empires.

Crisis of 1200 B.C. (1200-1100 B.C.): Major drought in 1200 B.C., combined with the eruption of Mt. Hekla in Iceland in 1159 B.C., sends waves of nomadic invaders through the Hittites, Babylonians, and Egyptians. This event may have helped trigger the war for Troy, to seize grain routes in a famine.

Classical Warm Period (300 B.C.-200 A.D.): This was probably a shift in wind patterns; the warm

Mediterranean air mass moved north over France and Britain, supporting Roman wine and olive culture. Eventually, the warmth led to renewed drought, which shifted the air mass back south. According to legend, the Goths invaded the Empire over the frozen Rhine and Danube.

Catastrophe of 535 (535-600 A.D.): A major volcanic event in Java (possibly an eruption of Krakatoa) causes a global “nuclear winter,” wrecking Byzantium, China, Teotihuacan, and “Arthurian” Britain.

Medieval Warm Period (900-1300): Global warming lets Vikings settle Greenland, sparks the High Middle

Ages in Europe (with demographic consequences such as the Crusades), and dooms the Anasazi as drought grips the American Southwest.

Little Ice Age (1316-1850): Global cooling, possibly volcanic, sets off famine and plague in Europe and China. The glaciers advance in the Alps during the coldest era (1580-1760). This may also be tied to the “Maunder Minimum,” a decrease in sunspot activity from 1645-1710. This in turn may have triggered the global crisis of the 17th century, from the Thirty Years’ War to the Manchu invasions of China to the first Indian Wars in America.

ALTERING WORLDS

This section provides specific rules for shifting echo timelines, and guidelines for altering the technological, political, or cultural climate of any timeline. The GM can require players in a Centrum campaign (or a more aggressive Infinity Patrol attempting to shift echoes downward before Centrum can steal them) to develop their shift plans using these guidelines, or simply leave things up to a Cliodynamics roll.

TIMELINE SHIFTING

If outtimers, either PCs or NPCs, do something that the GM thinks might “change history” on an unstable echo, roll 3d. If the tampering was according to a Centran plan and occurred during a window of paratemporal instability (p. 86), add 3 to the die roll result. (Add 2 more if the Centran planner scored a critical success on his Cliodynamics roll.) The GM may also add from 1 to 5 to the result, depending on the degree of divergence of the change; the

Tampering section on p. 86 gives some guidelines for this modifier.

Any change can cause a shift in a random direction; a Centran plan sends the timeline higher 5 out of 6 times, while a vigorous counterblow to a Centran plan still sends the echo higher 2 out of 6 times. A thoroughly random, accidental, or unplanned change sends the timeline higher 3 out of 6 times, of course.

No shift is immediate, and if the change is effectively reversed during the period of delay, it does not take place. (If the change was severe enough, however, there may be no way to negate it in time.) For the length of time before the shift, roll 3d6:

Shift Delay Table

6 or less	1d days
7, 8	2d days
9	1d weeks
10	2d weeks
11	3d weeks
12	3d×2 weeks
13	2d months
14-16	2d×3 months
17+	2 years, plus two more rolls on this table

Roll on this same table to determine how long it takes Infinity to find a “lost” timeline. If the timeline is now below Quantum 3 or above 7, it can’t be found by Infinity.

Modifiers: +1 if the timeline is now in Quantum 4 or 6; +3 if it is now in Quantum 3 or 7. Centrum can find it in one quarter of the time; modify a Centrum search roll by -1 if the timeline ended up in Quantum 7 or 9, and by -3 if it is now in Quantum 8. Centrum cannot find a timeline below Quantum 6 or above 10.

The above assumes Infinity (or Centrum) is doing the searching. If Infinity is not *aware* of the lost timeline (e.g., if it was a secret development of some government or corporation) add *at least* +4 to the roll. Many clandestine operations would not have the facilities to find a lost timeline if they had 20 years to do it.

This also assumes that a faceless team of researchers is doing all the searching. If a PC scientist (or important NPC) is involved in the search, he may attempt one Physics (Parachronics) roll. For every point by which he makes his roll, *subtract* 1 from the search roll.

Timeline Shifting Table

9 or less	No result, but add 1 to any further roll made within a week.
10-11	No result, but add 2 to any further roll made within a week.
12-13	No <i>immediate</i> result – but if the change is not reversed, roll again in 1d×10 hours, at +2. This modifier is cumulative if rolled more than once.
14-15	Shift of 1 quantum, but not immediately – see below.
16-17	Shift of 2 quanta. See below.
18 or more	Shift of 1d quanta, minimum 3. See below.

TRY TO CHANGE THE WORLD

This rules system lets meddlesome Infinity or Centrum agents attempt to introduce changes into a timeline, whether it is an echo or not. It can also model *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen* type scenarios involving a stranded crosstime traveler trying to “modernize” his new home, renegade time travelers with a grudge against history, or Denarius Group brokers trying to remake a parallel’s fiscal culture for order and profitability.

None of these rules should ever replace roleplaying or adventure. If the GM and players would rather poison Frederick the Great than work to refashion Prussia’s culture, feel free to go ahead and do it. In general, a specific player plan should trump any of these results, as long as the GM doesn’t consider it abusive or ludicrous. What these rules can do is provide a framework for long-term campaigns, or a “time limit” for countervailing action. If the culture of the Mogul Empire will shift dramatically in six months unless the program of social change is stopped, the GM can determine approximately how many attempts the bad guys (or good guys) can make to shift things back the other way or otherwise thwart the alteration.

Technological Change

GURPS already has a guideline for introducing technological change into a society, on p. B511. According to these general guidelines, uplifting a culture by one TL in one broad field of scientific or technical endeavor (transportation, weapons, power, or medicine, for example) takes two years, given favorable conditions and suitable technical know-how (12 or better in all relevant skills at *both* TLs) by the lifter. This system is extremely abstract, and can be taken as an “outside limit” for games – few campaigns can spare two years of down time, or even spend two years in a “backstory montage sequence” before resuming the action.

The other way to change a culture’s technology is at retail: inventing stuff until the locals catch on and the technological revolution becomes self-perpetuating. The *New Invention* rules on

p. B473 cover this territory, and the *Reinventing the Wheel* box specifically refers to “pre-inventing” older, lower-TL inventions. Whether it’s a futuristic grav-car or a geared-down watermill, a technological change must be designed, constructed, and tested for failure points. The inventor needs some degree of skill at an “invention skill” to make any of these things happen. These same principles apply to other changes.



Political Change

For political changes to a society, the agent must have some *entrée* into its political process. In an open democracy, this can be as simple as taking out ads in the paper, calling a Congressman, or staging a public rally. In a totalitarian theocracy, it may involve overt displays of sanctity, heavy donations to the shrines, or good old kidnapping and blackmail of the sort PCs seem to specialize in.

With access either realized or possible, the agent must come up with the change he wants to happen. The GM should determine how significant a change this is to the system: a Simple change, an Average change, a Complex change, or an Amazing change. (This parallels the Complexity of a new invention, as on p. B473.) An Average change usually has a degree of divergence of +1, a Complex one +2 or +3, and an Amazing change +4 or (if the society to be changed is a great power) possibly even +5. Definitions, and a few examples of each, follow:

Simple change: One that would likely happen anyway, but not as soon or as favorably as the agent would like. *Examples:* saber-rattling against a rival nation; promotion for a favored courtier; increasing taxes on

the poor or on a rich minority; holding ceremonial games.

Average change: One that could happen anyway, but might not given existing interests and the political climate. *Examples:* war with a weak, rich neighboring country; appointment of a cabinet official; tariffs or trade agreements; building a railroad.

Complex change: One that is not likely, but possible, despite major opposition or public disfavor. *Examples:* war with a powerful country; resignation of a major figure; reform of tax structure or pension system; constitutional amendment.

Amazing change: One that could only happen through staggering shifts in opinion or major national emergency. *Examples:* disarming unilaterally; abdication of the ruler; complete change of economic system; complete change of political system.

The GM now makes a “Concept roll” in secret against the agent’s relevant political skill (which depends on the political system – Politics, Administration, Savoir-Faire (High Society), Theology, etc.) to see if the agent’s proposal has any chance of working. Some systems or issues may require two or more skills: a corrupt Medici city might require Savoir-Faire and Streetwise, for example, or a banking reform proposal might require both Politics and Finance. Use the *lower* of the relevant skills. Timing and failure work as the New Inventions Concept roll on p. B473.

Modifiers: -6 if the proposal is Simple, -10 if Average, -14 if Complex, or -22 if Amazing; +5 if the change is visibly working well somewhere else in the world; +1 to +5 if an established interest group absolutely supports it; -5 if the concept is entirely new to the world or civilization (representative democracy in ancient China, a national bank in ancient Rome).

The second roll against the agent’s political skill is the Proposal roll. This roll lets the concept get a fair hearing in the government (or by the people, in a democracy). On a success, the proposal is made in suitable fashion (a thoughtful article in the *New York Times*, fortunate-character wall poster; or witty kenning by the court skald). On a failure, the concept is presented hamfistedly or unfairly; any future

The Cost of Social Change

Nothing is free, in politics or culture. Although the GM should adjust these figures at whim, PCs looking to get political changes passed should expect to shell out for bribes, campaign donations, catered lunches for the intelligentsia, full-page advertisements, fawning documentaries, commercial air time, and so forth. The same is often true of a social change; expenses add up, whether for marketing, feeding missionaries, or buying all those jackboots. Use the following table as a guideline for the outlay per citizen affected:

Significance	Base Cost
Simple	\$1
Average	\$2
Complex	\$4
Amazing	\$10



Modifiers: Double these costs for a relatively wealthy society, or one with a high degree of mercantile or corporate control. Double them for highly corrupt political systems (such as 21st-century Nigeria or 1780s France). Costs are set at TL8 levels; modify them as per *Starting Wealth by TL* (p. B27).

rolls are at -2. On a critical failure, the concept seems treasonous, sacrilegious, or cowardly; this reduces the agent's local Reputation by *at least* 4 points (from +2 to -2, for instance). There may be other legal or social penalties such as banishment from court, or danger from angry mobs. He can never present such an idea again unless he has first cleared his name (e.g., by military victory, royal marriage, or public abasement).

Modifiers: All modifiers listed for the Concept rolls; +1 per assistant with skill 20+ in one of the skills required for the proposal, to a maximum of +4; +1 for each level of Status above 3 in the *local culture* held by the agent's Allies, or +1 for each such level held by the agent's Patrons; -1 to -10 (GM's discretion) for the level of pre-existing opposition to the proposal. Double *all penalties* for cultural unfamiliarity! The GM may also add bonuses for the agent's Reputation on the subject matter; for example, a +2 Reputation (successful general) improves the odds that a military proposal will get a fair hearing.

Any proposal inspires debate and some level of opposition. Critical success on the Proposal roll means that the opposition can be ignored or steamrolled and the measure passed as soon as possible; success by 3 or

more gives any opponents a chance to delay by 1d-3 weeks (minimum 1); any other success means the measure takes 2d-2 weeks to pass. During this time, the GM should set up at least one adventure seed, or a dramatic scene, between the agent and his opponent(s) requiring a skill roll (usually a social roll such as Diplomacy, Public Speaking, or Savoir-Faire). A critical success on that roll ends the opposition immediately.

Cultural Change

Most of the same rules apply to cultural changes: new religions, cuisines, pacifist or militarist movements, and so forth. The relevant cultural skill may be Propaganda (Advertising), Performance, Poetry, or Writing, for example.

Some examples and definitions for the levels of cultural change follow:

Simple change: A simple change to a small facet of daily life with obvious attractions. *Examples:* A tasty new snack; a new tune or song; a new reason to hate a despised minority; a new prayer.

Average change: A noticeable change to daily life, but one not outside cultural norms. *Examples:* A new cuisine style; a smash hit song or play; adding a negative or positive

Reputation to a public figure; a new patron saint or demigod.

Complex change: A major, potentially permanent change to daily life at substantial variance with cultural expectations. *Examples:* An unusual new crop; a new art form or major change to an existing one; adding or removing a -5-point or -10-point Social Stigma for some group; a heresy or revival movement.

Amazing change: A revolutionary change in social expectations with strong opposition. *Examples:* Vegetarianism; iconoclasm; revolutionary equality or freelance genocide; a new mass religion or conversion to a foreign faith.

Use all the same rules and tables as above, with the exception of the result of the Proposal roll. Cultural changes tend to damp out over time unless they are reinforced. A critical success on the Proposal roll makes the change permanent (barring revolution, war, or other major cultural stress); success by 3 or more on the Proposal lets the change last 2d years; any other success lets the change last for 2d months. Further rolls may be necessary to reinforce success; each such roll is at +2 to skill.

Social Gadgeteering

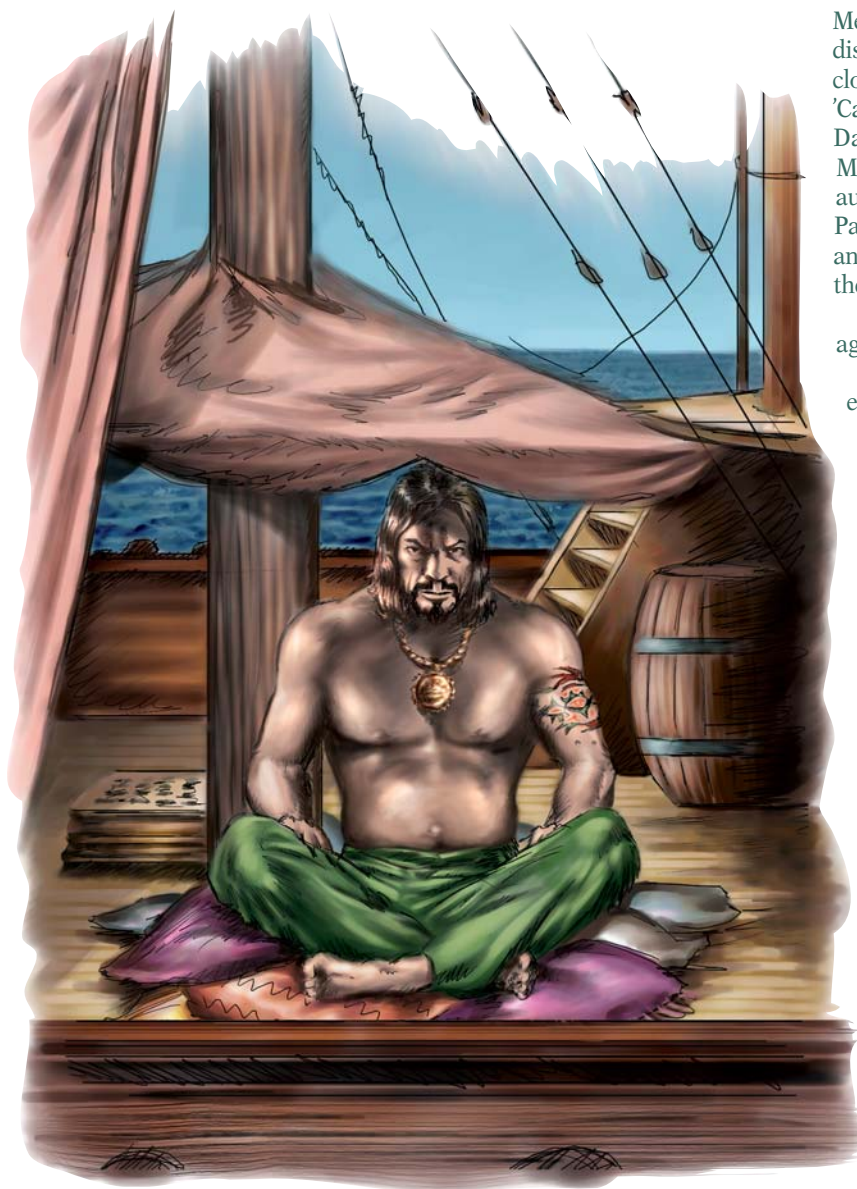
As these rules parallel the New Inventions rules on p. B473, the GM may wish to allow a Gadgeteer (Social) advantage that would reflect characters from fiction who seem unusually adept at mastering political structures and altering cultures wholesale. (The hero of Harry Harrison's *Deathworld* trilogy pops to mind, as does Conrad Stargard from Leo Frankowski's *Crosstime Engineer* series.) Costing 25 points, the same as Gadgeteer, it would allow modification of the above rules as per the Gadgeteering rules on p. B475 – lower penalties to the Concept and Proposal rolls, and treat all success on the Proposal roll as a success by 3 or more. (A critical success still has the same effect.) The GM may wish to come up with his own entertaining Bugs Table, suitable for the specifics of the Social Gadgeteer's proposal.

There is no Quick Gadgeteer (Social), as that would be just silly. Buy psionics instead.

CHAPTER FOUR

WORLDS

ENOUGH . . .



Although the Atlantic waves sent the deck pitching and yawing under his boots, Robert Giancarlo barely noticed, his hips and shoulders balancing subconsciously. His entire attention was on the bright purple awning spread from the mainmast, and on the stocky merchant sitting cross-legged beneath it. He had heard rumors of Merubaal's tent in every port from Mobile (although they called it Murgha on this world) to Carthage, but it had eluded him until last week.

Merubaal was like a wisp of fog; visible at a distance, but dissolving into droplets up close. It was nothing but a lucky break that 'Carlo had stopped in Olispo and heard two Dahomeyan longshoremen talking of Merubaal's tent being loaded up for the autumn convoy. A quick jump back to the Patrol base, a nighttime flight to the Azores, and then back across to Melkart-2 to catch the galleass just leaving Funchal harbor.

Merubaal was not going to just vanish again, 'Carlo swore to himself.

The merchant certainly looked solid enough now, sitting on his cushions in the shadows. 'Carlo could see muscle under the layers of fat that a merchant required to advertise his prosperity. 'Carlo could also see no guards, which told him that Merubaal had the whole crew in his pocket.

"Greetings, prince of merchants." Although the phrase was just a formality, Merubaal somehow seemed to embody it, from his oiled auburn locks to his fine calf-skin sandals. Only a spiky forest of tattoos on one arm spoiled the effect of urbane luxury. "And to you, greetings, noble sir. How may this unworthy one assist your lordship?"

'Carlo knew realities where this rigmarole could go on for hours – including at least two meals – before getting down to business. Fortunately, on Melkart-2 the Carthaginians had discovered that time was money. He dropped to his haunches and produced the coin he had found in the ruins of Rome, sliding it across the silk to Merubaal. "I am interested in such coins."

Merubaal stared at his customer for some time before replying. "Surely the noble lord would prefer finer specimens. I have here hexagons of silver cash from the courts of the Dragon Empire, and a few of the gold staters of Baktria, which even the finest sculptors today swear cannot be matched." He spread them out next to 'Carlo's coin, and indeed the Patrolman's sample looked somewhat drab and flat next to their harsh splendor.

"Yes, those are wonderful pieces," 'Carlo admitted, dropping his voice to a whisper and leaning closer. "But they don't have George Washington on them, now do they?"

Merubaal was silent for another long minute, but when he replied, his tone was hearty.

"Is that the name of this king? He must have been a poor sort, to adulterate his coins with nickel and copper thusly. I would not give two snaps" – and the merchant snapped his fingers twice – "for such a king."

To Giancarlo's credit, he almost instantly recognized the signal to the nearby sailors. Also to his credit, he crippled four of them before they got the ropes around his legs. This was little comfort, chained up the stinking blackness of the bilge, but it was some.

When 'Carlo saw daylight again, it was a watery green color, shot through with lightning flashes of actinic blue, and he was standing on the deck with some very sharp spearheads inches away from his spleen. Away from the spearheads, a long plank stretched over the side of the ship and out toward the approaching banestorm.

He craned his neck around to see Merubaal – or whoever he was – standing on the quarterdeck. "Walking the plank? Are you serious?"

Unlike Newton and Schopenhauer, your ancestor did not believe in a uniform and absolute time; he believed in an infinite series of times, a growing, dizzying web of divergent, convergent, and parallel times. That fabric of times that approach one another, fork, are snipped off, or are simply unknown for centuries, contains all possibilities.

– Jorge Luis Borges,
"The Garden of Forking Paths"

Merubaal answered in English, with an incongruous Tennessee lilt to it. "It's better than you deserve for blowing my operation here, Agent Giancarlo. But you're Patrol, and I don't like killing Patrolmen outright. It's bad luck." His fingers unconsciously caressed the amulet of Tanith he wore, but he continued without a trace of Melkart-2 formality. "The banestorm will take us someplace you can't follow, not without a ship or a seer. And it will take you somewhere else; I've sailed this one before, and it's funny like that. So you get the glory of discovering an unknown world for Infinity. Sounds like value for your quarter to me."

The following chapter gives a sampling of some of the Earths among the Infinite Worlds. (Reich-5 and Centrum received comprehensive writeups in Chapter 2.) Major world entries have basic data boxes providing the following:

World Name and Current Year

The colloquial name of this worldline to Infinity personnel, along with the local present year on this parallel.

Current Affairs

A brief summary of the current state of this worldline. If there is an ongoing global war or other major crisis, it appears here.

Divergence Point

The year in which this worldline's history diverges from Homeline's, and a brief discussion of the resulting change.

Major Civilizations

The major civilizations on this worldline, roughly in order of cultural-military dominance. As per p. 90, other civilizations almost certainly exist, but play only regional or local roles. The unity level (p. 91) of each listed civilization appears in parentheses.

Great Powers

The great powers on this alternate, per the definition on p. 92. Some "near great" powers appear as well, listed in italics, either because they are rising candidates for great powerhood, or because they add flavor to the world writeup. The government type (see pp. B509-510) or political structure of each power appears in parentheses, along with the general Control Rating (p. B506).

TL

The tech level of the dominant civilization on this worldline, with any divergences or split technologies noted.

Mana Level

The mana level of this Earth (p. B235).

Quantum

The quantum in which this worldline exists (p. B526).

Infinity Class

The World Class and Access Rating assigned to this worldline by the Penetration Service of the Infinity Patrol (see box, p. 83).

Centrum Zone

The Zone into which Centrum's Interworld Service classifies this worldline (see box, p. 51).

The GM should feel free to adjust the quantum, mana level, or any other factor of the worlds involved to suit his campaign. He can either create a "new" world (a variant on Campbell might be Campbell-2, on Quantum 4, for example), rule that a convenient reality quake has restructured the world to his specifications, or just decree that "this is how it always was" and go on with the game.



ARMADA-2

After the Victorious Armada sailed, for over 200 years Spain's naval mastery has guaranteed the dominance of Catholicism, order, and conservatism. As that mastery shreds, the nations once cowed by Spanish guns have stealthily equipped privateers and buccaneers to contest the seas. The explosive growth of steam power in Egypt and Huguenot Nouvelle-France creates new economies and new technologies outside the embrace of Madrid. Spain's great rival Sweden, meanwhile, is arming Indian princes and Turkish pashas, setting the stage for another global showdown.

The Spanish Ascendancy

When Philip II of Spain died in 1598, he ruled a Catholic empire on which the sun never set. The Netherlands were once more united under the liberal and tolerant rule of the Duke of Parma, whose policy of tax relief for Catholic merchants had brought a flood of conversions from the heretofore staunchly Protestant burghers of Amsterdam. Missionaries from Florida had converted heathens as far north as the Penobscot Valley to Catholicism, and founded missions from Roanoke to Manhattan. Gold and silver from Mexico and Peru

flooded into Madrid, buying the allegiance of princes and dukes in Italy and Germany; spices from the Indies likewise.

During the next century, turmoil in Bohemia, Poland, Russia, and Germany threatened to the French

and Spanish dominions, and sparked a brief Protestant rebellion in England. The far-seeing policies of Richelieu and Olivares managed to stem the tide with financial reforms, centralization, and the Canadian safety valve that allowed Huguenots,

Armada-2, 1812

Current Affairs

An overstretched Spanish realm battles pirates and corsairs all along the fringes of its empire, as the aggressive Swedes look on.

Divergence Point

1588; the Invincible Armada lands in England, deposes Elizabeth, and puts Henry Percy on the throne of England as Henry IX. A resurgent Spain puts down the Dutch Revolt (1589) and deposes Henry IV of France (1591) in favor of Charles du Mayenne, who becomes Charles XI.

Major Civilizations

Western (fragmenting empire with rivals), Orthodox (empire), Islamic (multipolar), Chinese (empire).

Great Powers

Spanish Empire (dictatorship, CR4), Swedish Empire (dictatorship, CR3), Ottoman Empire (dictatorship, CR5), Russian Empire (dictatorship, CR5), *Manchu Empire* (dictatorship, CR5), *Nouvelle-France* (oligarchy, CR3).

Worldline Data

TL: 5

Mana Level: low

Quantum: 6

Infinity Class: P9

Centrum Zone: Yellow

Other Armadas

Infinity has discovered two other worldlines where the Armada won. On **Armada-1** (Q5, current year 1833), Philip II united the Spanish, English, French, and Imperial crowns under a single Holy Roman Empire ruled from Madrid. This ramshackle contrivance exploded in revolt during the 1620s-1680s, returning Europe to a patchwork of squabbling feudal states. None of them have the economic muscle, intellectual vibrancy, or spare capital to spark the Industrial Revolution; the world remains at TL4.

On the low-mana TL4 world **Armada-3** (Q3, current year 1602), English and Dutch rebellions erupted on Philip II's death in 1598. Spanish broadsheets claim that an "invisible college" of sorcerers, witches, and Rosicrucians is behind the rebellion.

Dutch Reformers, and Puritans alike to settle that wasteland rather than stay in Europe and make trouble. Spain even felt strong enough to push the Turks out of Morocco and Algeria, although an invasion of Greece faltered in 1683. The Turks, shocked at their near escape, began to modernize in earnest under their Albanian viziers the Koprulus, seen (not incorrectly) as the saviors of Islam.

Sweden managed to unify Scandinavia and the few Lutheran states of north Germany, but wisely transferred its expansionist aims east rather than face the combined Catholic armies of France, Spain, and Austria in Germany. Although Gustavus Adolphus' conquest of Poland removed a Catholic monarchy from the stage, it forced the Swedes to tolerate Catholicism in their domains as the Swedish army rapidly absorbed and professionalized the endless supply of Polish peasants in its frontier wars with Russia and Austria.

(Olivares and Richelieu may not have been too disappointed to see the Austrian emperor forced to turn his own attention to his alarmingly powerful Swedish neighbors, rather than to Franco-Spanish activities in Germany.)

Over the next century, some of the luster came off the Spanish ascendancy. Sweden began to field better, and better-equipped, armies against Austria and Russia, conquering Silesia and Novgorod. Swedish traders founded Christiania in south Africa, and began to poach on India. Swedish cannon turned up in the armies of Spain's enemies overseas, such as the Nawab of Bengal (whose Swedish artillery broke the Spanish square in the monsoon rains at Barisal in 1763). Spain's ally France began a steep decline, punctuated by famines and unrest, forcing King Charles XIII to abdicate in favor of Charles of Lorraine in 1789. Nouvelle-France took this opportunity to declare itself an independent Republic on the

former Dutch model, and to sign a treaty of alliance with Sweden. Finally, the Albanian mercenary Mehmet Ali climbed to the Ottoman throne in 1804 and dealt the Spanish fleet a crushing defeat at Navarino. Pirates from Sweden, Scotland (a disaffected former French client state), and Nouvelle-France (and corsairs from the Sultanate of Segu in Senegal) prey on the Spanish Main. As Sweden, Spain, Turkey, and Nouvelle-France begin the climb to industrialization (slower and later than on Homeline, but broader-based in more countries), it may be only a few years before the armadas sail again and the world is plunged into war.

Outworld Operations

The Patrol is keeping a weather eye on this alternate, concerned that it could slip into a global conflagration endangering the generally lucrative trade in fur and auroch meat White Star enjoys. The Patrol also suspects that some Homeline traders have been slipping the Swedes improved firearms and ship designs, and possibly even blast furnaces and other crucial war-fighting and industrial technologies. Tourists primarily visit windswept Stuart Scotland, the immense Lacota trading post near Fort-Nicholas on the upper Mississippi, or the steam-powered cotton mills rising under the Pyramids of Egypt. Centrum's activities, if any, on Armada-2, remain mysterious, although the 1809 disappearance of the Spanish colony of Bahia Teresa (on the site of Homeline's Sydney, Australia) is suspicious to say the least.

ATTILA

Dreams of the Devil's Horsemen

The horsetail standards of the Mongol khans wave across grasslands and forests where kingdoms and cities once rose. A vicious cultural cycle, and the power of Genghis Khan's precedent, keeps the horse barbarians on top of a world without cities. Only where the Mongol ponies cannot ride – Japan, tropical Africa, the New World – do men build walls and dream of progress.

According to Mongol tradition on this worldline, when Genghis Khan captured Beijing in 1215, he dreamed that a weed grew out of the city to choke his horse. The Great Khan decided then and there to raze the city to the ground and to forbid the Mongols to ever build cities; he put many more cities to the torch during his career, and his successors followed

his lead. Subotai leveled Venice, Cologne, and Paris; Mangku crushed Alexandria, Constantinople, and Isfahan to powder; Kublai destroyed Canton and filled in the Chinese canals, and although the "divine wind" saved Japan, he was able to add London and Mecca to the Mongol toll of destruction.

Kublai reputedly rode from the great camp at Karakorum to the ruins of Venice and back, but upon his

death the Mongol Great Khanate fell apart; it was too big to be ruled by even the most mobile of khans. His successors warred among themselves and adopted non-Mongols such as Turks and Hungarians into their clans to add horsemen to their armies after the Black Death ravaged the Khanates. With new cities inevitably falling to plague or nomads, Europe has mostly returned to forest; the Khans of Magya and Potu hunt the primitive woodland tribes of England, France, and Germany for sport.

Japan has unified itself under the Tokugawa, raids the Chinese barbarians for slaves, and trades with the increasingly urbanized tribes from Puget Sound to Peru, most of which are falling under the sway of the sun-adoring, coca-chewing missionaries of Intipu, the theocracy that succeeded the Incas in the 1780s. In Africa, the Bantu nations have urbanized and their city-states squabble within the expansionist Great Kongo League. The Oyo (in Homeline Nigeria) have invented the first steam engines, but their growing wealth makes them a tempting target for the militaristic cities to the east and south.

Attila, 2004

Current Affairs

Descendants of the Mongols still ravage a thoroughly rural Eurasia.

Divergence Point

1215; Genghis Khan levels Beijing, and the Mongols continue to destroy cities as policy.

Major Civilizations

Steppe (diffuse empire), Japanese (unitary), West African (diffuse), Andean (unitary).

Great Powers

Mongol Khanates (clan/tribal, CR2 for Mongols, CR6 for subjects), Shogunate of Japan (dictatorship, CR5), Great Kongo League (feudal, CR2-3), Intipu (theocracy, CR6).

Worldline Data

TL: high 4 (in Japan, Peru, and Africa), 3 (in Khanates)

Mana Level: low

Quantum: 5 **Infinity Class:** P4 **Centrum Zone:** Inaccessible

Outworld Operations

Discovered in Homeline's year 2001 (local year 1978) by an early Scout mission, this worldline was named Attila due to confusion about the identity and allegiance of the

Hungarian horde that nearly killed the Scout survey team charting the ruins of Rome. Most Homeline visitors to Attila are historians, and the Patrol still loses one or two civilians a year on this dangerous parallel.

Other Mongol Conquests

In 1241 on Homeline, two hordes under Batu and Subotai had just eradicated the armies of Poland and Hungary at the battles of Liegnitz and the Sajo River, bringing the Mongol frontier to the heart of Europe. Mongol scouts had ridden to the gates of Vienna and Venice, and in the next year's campaigning, Batu planned to conquer Germany, France, and Italy. That winter, however, the Great Khan Ogotai died, and by the laws of Genghis, all Mongol generals were required to return to Karakorum to choose a new Khaghan. Batu and Subotai rode back to the east, and the Mongol empire never expanded out of Russia again.

On Homeline, that is. On several other worlds, such as Attila and Ezcalli (p. 122), the Mongol invasions continued their seemingly inevitable course. On **San Tomas** (Q6, current year 1580), European refugees from the Mongols fled to the Crusader States in Palestine, perhaps hoping to be saved from this obvious apocalypse. They gave the Crusader kingdom a big demographic boost, and by allying with the Mongol Ilkhans against the Muslims, the Crusaders survived and flourished, seizing Egypt in 1380 and sacking Mecca in 1409 with Venetian ships built on the Red Sea. TL4 Crusader Egypt dominates the Indian Ocean

as England reconquers Europe from the White Horde. The Patrol suspects Centrum involvement behind the Crusaders, possibly within the very influential (and English-speaking) Order of St. Thomas of India.

On **Cham** (Q4, current year 1902), the Mongols not only ravaged Europe but successfully captured Japan and, following Japanese fishing routes, discovered America in 1290. The Mongols conquered Toltec Mexico and the Incas, while some European refugees settled in Vinland. The Black Death wiped out 80% of Eurasia but left the Americas mostly alone; TL4-5 Mongol-Chinese-Siouan-European hybrid states rule from the Great Plains, and the cities along the Mississippi are developing steamboats.

On **Tengri** (Q7, current year 1588), the Mongol conquests forcibly joined Western and Chinese civilization in a global economy that traded ideas and technology at a fantastic rate. The Scientific Revolution occurred at Bokhara in the late 14th century as Italian, Greek, Arabic, Indian, and Chinese scholars all met; the World-Khanate is at TL7 and rapidly on the way to becoming a Zone Green world as the Uplift Service consolidates its control.

AZOTH-7

Many worlds have Industrial Revolutions. A few have Alchemical Revolutions. Infinity uses the “Azoth” designation for them, using the alchemical name for the “philosopher’s mercury,” a key ingredient in the Philosopher’s Stone. On Azoth-7, Isaac Newton found the keys to the Stone in the words of the angels. In 1693, he shared those keys with his world.

Ad Astra Per Angelis

Newton unlocked the crystalline harmonic code of the universe, creating a system of mathematical equations that gave man mastery over the lower orders of angels, including the material spirits of the Earth. Initially, his discovery merely meant an ever-full English treasury, as gold mines erupted in Warwickshire and fish catches set records from Aberdeen to Sheerness. The hubristic speculation that followed nearly wrecked the British economy, and Louis XIV managed to unite Spain, Austria, Prussia, and Sweden in a war against a suddenly all-powerful England. Newton was able to summon Amnitziel, the tutelary angel of Britain, who swept away the Allied invasion fleet. The war

ended decisively with the Duke of Marlborough installed as Governor of France, and the French and English thrones unified for the first time since the Plantagenets.

Gottfried Leibniz had deciphered Newton’s codes and allusions, and derived the Stone (and its attendant harmonies) himself in Berlin, which kept Prussia independent, as it harnessed Zuriel, the angel of Germany. The Inquisition announced that it had awakened “the holy angel of Spain,” which it called Barachiel, although English broadsheets trumpeted the charge that it had merely made a pact with Samael, one of the Fallen. Before Spain could subdue all of Italy, the Doges of Venice unleashed their own spirits, having somehow obtained the services of Dobiel and Uzrael, the tutelary angels of Media and Egypt. A rough parity established itself as the four angelic powers took the “four corners of the world”: England, the North, ruled North America; Spain, the West, took South America and the Indies; Venice, the South, took Africa and Turkey; Prussia, the East, took Russia and (eventually) China.

As the angelic-alchemical economy heated up, and new devices were built



that depended upon Stones to work, the four powers fell to disputation over supplies of gemstones, which provided the necessary crystalline quintessence. Lesser angels could not move such stones, since the gems’ quintessential power resisted such weak force – the four powers began to charter first pirates, then privateers, then mercenary bands, to seize ships on the high seas or even loot mines from each others’ client states. French “sky dogs” left penniless Paris to swoop down on Spanish emerald shipments from New Granada; Dutch and Hessian homunculi clashed in Cochinchina; subtle Milanese poisoners lifted stones from Indian rajahs and Russian countesses alike. In 1752,

Azoth-7, 1780

Current Affairs

Alchemically powered Britain, Venice, Prussia, and Spain compete to harness angels and mine magical gemstones from the far reaches of the zodiac.

Divergence Point

1693; Isaac Newton achieves the Philosopher’s Stone, preparing the way for the rise of angelic alchemy.

Major Civilizations

Western (multipolar).

Great Powers

British Empire (oligarchy, CR3), Venetian Republic (oligarchy, CR4), Prussian Empire (dictatorship, CR5), Spanish Empire (theocracy, CR5).

Worldline Data

TL: 4+2 (space travel and weapons are TL4⁺)

Mana Level: normal

Quantum: 3 **Infinity Class:** Z4 **Centrum Zone:** Inaccessible

just when the four powers seemed about to plunge the world into angelic apocalypse, the immortal but ever more reclusive and peculiar Newton revealed a new discovery.

The Ritual of Qauqabel allowed the angelist to commune with one of the Heavenly Virtues, angels who ruled (or personified, the math is not clear) the stars of heaven. Each star, Newton revealed – based on the uncredited work of Giordano Bruno – had its own worlds, and those worlds had gemstones with unique powers granted by their ruling angel. Rubies from Regulus, for example, made cannon that fired lances of holy flame; the glow of emeralds from Spica could regrow limbs white and smooth; diamonds from Rigel could erect impenetrable walls. Every nation, and every independent angelist, immediately set out for the stars; colonies grew up under other suns, and soulless aliens were brought back as curiosities and slaves. The four powers found their rivalry increased, but on a vaster scope; although the piracies and raids grew to span the stars, the threat of war with the new weapons keeps the peace of Europe intact . . . for now.

Outworld Operations

Azoth-7 is one of the most extensive pocket multiverses that Infinity has ever stumbled across, including not just Earth and the Solar System but scores of other “stellar systems” somehow tangent to it. (Paralabs is adamant that wherever – and whatever – this worldline’s “Polaris” and “Sirius” may be, they aren’t glowing

balls of hydrogen tens or hundreds of light-years away from Earth.) Infinity’s great concern is that some angelist may burrow further into Giordano Bruno’s research and attempt to reach a parallel Earth; most Patrol missions on Azoth-7 focus

on stealing Bruno manuscripts for this reason. The rest of the Patrol’s missions on this parallel usually involve attempts to balk the trickle of greedy Cabalists who pop up here and attempt to steal manuscripts or Stones of their own.

Other Azoths

On other worldlines, the Alchemical Revolution takes different paths, based on their variant magical and physical laws as well as the roll of the historical dice. (All these worlds are low mana unless otherwise noted.)

On Azoth-1 (Q3, current year 1632), the worldline is TL(4+3). Bernard of Treves isolated azoth from quicksilver in 1488; da Vinci developed the azothic flyer four years later, which the Medicis used to unite Italy. Austrian flyers and azothic cannon drove the Turks out of Europe in 1571. In 1617, Sir Walter Raleigh became the first man to land on Venus.

On Azoth-2 (Q4, current year 1558), Nicolas Flamel discovered the Red Elixir in 1382; the French and English used it to destroy each other in the last stage of the Hundred Years’ War, and the TL(3+2) Italian cities, Aragon, Norway, and Burgundy now compete for colonies in the Americas.

On Azoth-3 (Q7, current year 1634, high mana), an unknown alchemist developed the Higher Metals in 1614; two decades later, TL4⁺ 50-foot armored clockworks devastate Germany in the Thirty Years’ War.

On Azoth-4 (Q6, current year 1010), a Chinese alchemist discovered the True Cinnabar some time during the Han Dynasty, which has ruled China in splendid TL2⁺ isolation ever since; the rest of the world remains essentially unaffected.

On Azoth-5 (Q6, current year 854) both the Arabs and Byzantines systematized the universal solvent alkahest (which releases Elemental Fire from naphtha, among other things) in the late seventh century, leading to an alchemical arms race currently at TL(3+4).

Azoth-6 (Q4, current year 1903) is a hell parallel rimed with frozen alkahest and choked with clouds of Elemental Sulfur. Desperate Cabalists sometimes prospect there for trans-sublime elements. Researchers would like to discover if this is the aftermath of an alchemical war, an experiment gone wrong, or what passes on that timeline for a natural disaster.

BONAPARTE-4

In Homeline history, Napoleon Bonaparte made his name with a bold, but ultimately disastrous, invasion of Egypt in 1798. Outwitting the British and outfighting the Turks, his romantic exploit fired the imagination of Europe. In this world, he sacrificed romance for results, slipping out of the Breton ports in a fog and taking his 40,000 veterans to Ireland. With one bold stroke, he had broken the British blockade forever and made himself master of the continent.

Clash of Eagles

With the Hibernian Republic bristling with French troops, Britain’s strategic position was untenable. Although the Navy fought gallantly, the need to divide the Home Fleet guaranteed Bonaparte’s invasion of 1802 would succeed. (An opportunistic American President Burr invaded and annexed British Canada at the same time.) Polishing off Austria, Prussia, and Russia at Austerlitz, Jena,

and Friedland, Bonaparte was master of Europe by 1807. He dedicated the next two decades to reforming and realigning European laws and sciences on the Napoleonic model, and unified the French and Spanish crowns under his son Napoleon II. The Portuguese monarchs fled to Brazil, which thus became an independent Empire in 1820.

France and the United States fought three border wars over Louisiana over the next century,

Bonaparte-4, 2024

Current Affairs

The decadent Bonapartists rule a cyberpunk empire threatened by a militaristic United States and Japan, and by the slow disintegration of their own society.

Divergence Point

1798; Napoleon invades Ireland instead of Egypt, leading to British defeat in the Napoleonic Wars.

Major Civilizations

Western (empire with rivals), Japanese (empire), Islamic (empire with satellite states), Orthodox (empire).

Great Powers

French Empire (dictatorship, CR5), United States (representative democracy, CR4), Japanese Empire (military oligarchy, CR6), Ottoman Empire (dictatorship, CR5), Russian Republic (anarchic oligarchy, CR1), Brazilian Empire (oligarchy, CR4).

Worldline Data

TL: 8 (9 in some areas)

Mana Level: no mana

Quantum: 7

Infinity Class: P5

Centrum Zone: Red

propaganda and posturing student movements, and the maglev trains never run on time.

Outworld Operations

Infinity is hampered on this worldline by the insistence of the Homeline French government that nothing be done to destabilize the French Empire, despite clear evidence that Centrum is busily infiltrating the Bonapartist military and scientific establishments. As an end-run, the Patrol turns a blind eye to the massive White Star trade in advanced computer and other technology to the United States, Brazil, and Russia, strengthening their relatively free economies. Nobody on Homeline has any great love for Bonaparte-4's Japanese Empire, which still embraces a fanatical militarist ideology of twisted bushido.

always while the Empire was distracted with outside rebellions (Mexico in the 1820s, India in the 1850s, Spain in the 1880s). The United States never kept New Orleans, but did take Florida, Oregon, and Cuba as it grew stronger and more militarized after each stalemate. Meanwhile, Japan invaded China in 1894, and defeated Russia in 1905, triggering a social-democratic revolution in the latter. French attempts to destabilize the nascent Russian Republic led to the Great War with Russia, Japan, Brazil, and the United States in 1937; the war ended in the Stockholm Armistice of 1942 after both sides invented atomic weapons.

Since then, the overwhelming French military advantage has been sufficient to keep the borders stable from the Niemen to the Mississippi, and to keep the oil flowing from its Ottoman allies, but not to defeat the endless rebellions in Latin America, Africa, and India covertly supported by the Allies. Slowly drained and ossifying, the French Empire has become a globe-spanning banana republic. The secret police is in bed with the Union Corse, the computer network links to nothing but government

Other Bonapartes

Other parallels with a Napoleonic victory include:

Bonaparte-1 (Q6, current year 1895), a TL6 worldline in which Nelson died in an attack on Boulogne in 1801. Without Nelson, Trafalgar ended as a Franco-Spanish victory, and Napoleon dictated peace from the Tower of London in 1806. France lost the War of 1812 trying to retake Louisiana from America, and the French Empire came apart in a series of German, Italian, and colonial rebellions in 1848-1850; Russia and America (which annexed Mexico in 1853) are dominant powers quarreling over China.

On **Bonaparte-2** (Q7, current year 1863), Napoleon managed to rout and kill Wellington at Waterloo in 1815. The British stock market and government fell, leading to a reforming Whig cabinet. Napoleon II is the grand statesman of Europe, and makes noises about intervening in the American Civil War.

Bonaparte-3 (Q4, current year 1913) saw Napoleon hang onto Minsk and Smolensk in Russia, and resume the war in 1813 for four more years against an increasingly mad Czar Alexander. Russia eventually collapsed, breaking the Coalition; a century later, the TL6 Kingdom of Poland is threatening a global war against the Anglo-Japanese Alliance.

In 1809 on **Bonaparte-5** (Q6, current year 1921), both Napoleon and Wellington were killed in battle; Metternich negotiated a peace that left the half-Hapsburg Napoleon II on the throne of France. Austria fell to Communist revolutionaries in 1919 after defeating Russia and Prussia in the Great War; Napoleon V is rallying the West to destroy the new Revolution; TL6.

And on **Bonaparte-6** (Q6, current year 1969), the Corsican revolutionary Paoli died in 1759, allowing Napoleon to be born Genoese. During the Revolutionary era, he unified Italy in the Roman Republic, and conquered Egypt and Greece. Rome allied with Britain and the United States in the War of 1914 against Germany, Turkey, and Austria. Fermi's atom bomb and Caproni's jets made Rome the first superpower in the 1940s; TL8.

BRITANNICA-3

In Homeline, the Protestant Duke James of Monmouth rebelled against the increasingly autocratic (and dangerously pro-Catholic) King James II in 1685. His followers claimed that as Charles II' bastard son, he was entitled to the crown. Monmouth's rebellion ended in disaster, and the "Bloody Assizes" swept his supporters out of England's west country and into the Caribbean and America. It was left to a later group of rebels to remove James II in 1688, in the "Glorious Revolution." On Britannica-3, though, James of Monmouth was better advised, and James II was over-hasty in his repression. When the smoke had cleared, the "bastard Duke" had become King James III of England, and the gentry had learned a salutary lesson about royal power.

The Sun Never Sets

Although James III was an amiable fathead at best, his instincts were sound. Colonies were good, radicalism was bad, and it was best to keep the one away from the other. In the American euphoria that greeted James II's deposition, James III was able to convert the colonial charters to royal grants, while officially recognizing colonial legislatures as "our American Parliaments" in his happy phrase. His successors continued his policy of tying local American elites to the fortunes of England's elites – Benjamin Franklin was knighted for his lightning rods and post offices, and George Washington was granted first a Regular Army commission in the French and Indian War, and then a peerage for conquering Louisiana in the Sugar War of 1779-1783. Lord Washington (later the Duke of Washington) became the first Governor-General of North America, and his personal example defused the Abolition Crisis of 1794 that nearly precipitated a revolt by Virginia and South Carolina against the Crown.

By the mid-19th century, the Dominion of North America exceeded the mother country in all types of production and manufacture save for steel and chemicals. General Sir Robert Lee pioneered the integration

of colonial units into the British Army (transforming it into the Imperial Army) after his astonishing tactical successes in the Crimea. That defeat marked the nadir of Russian power, however; Czar Alexander II's long reign and his visionary alliance with Prussia created a continental and industrial rival capable of matching Imperial production. German and Russian backing for the Turks kept the Ottoman War bogged down in trenches for four years until the stalemate broke with the Arab revolt and Italian entry on the Imperial side. Admiral Sir William Halsey defanged the Japanese Navy with a startling surprise air attack on Formosa in 1941 that ended the threat of a Pacific War, but the Alaska War erupted in 1943 with the discovery of vast oil fields in

Russian Alaska. Again fought primarily in France, Persia, and on the high seas, it ended inconclusively once Einstein and Sakharoff invented the fission bomb in 1947.

The last 40 years have seen German- and Russian-backed agitation in Ireland, Argentina, and Kwantung, and the anti-Italian "Gaulist" military coup in France, but no real change in the balance of power. A burgeoning space race, social turmoil and religious ferment, and blossoming sexual license dominate the newspapers and telescreens. The North American and Indian Dominions lead the world in all three, as well as new industry and invention, under the wisely minimal direction of His Imperial Majesty's Government in London.

Britannica-3, 1984

Current Affairs

Centrum operatives tighten their hold on a decent, well-run British Empire where the sun never set.

Divergence Point

1685; the "Protestant Duke" of Monmouth becomes King James III, overthrowing James II, and conciliating the American colonies.

Major Civilizations

Western (empire with rivals), Orthodox (empire), Islamic (multipolar).

Great Powers

British Empire (representative democracy, CR3), German Empire (dictatorship, CR5), Russian Empire (dictatorship, CR5), Kingdom of Italy (oligarchy, CR4), *Arab League* (feudal, CR5).

Worldline Data

TL: 8

Mana Level: low

Quantum: 7

Infinity Class: P9

Centrum Zone: Orange

The one duty we owe to history is to rewrite it.

– Oscar Wilde, Intentions

Outworld Operations

Like almost all the Britannica timelines below, Britannica-3 is a tempting plum for Centrum subversion and control. Their language handicap presents no difficulties, the British Empire on this world is already increasingly meritocratic, and the Interworld Service operates with relative ease on Quantum 7. How deeply Interworld's tentacles penetrate into the London, Philadelphia, Capetown, or Delhi governments (to say nothing of lesser colonial capitals from Havana to Stanleyville) is impossible to tell from the outside – Centrum and the Imperial Government have the same goals, after all! Infinity tries to increase the power and influence of advanced, decent, neutral countries like Japan (where the military government fell after the Formosa Raid), New Granada, and Cochín-China . . . but without revealing their presence (and risking a parachronic breakthrough by their beneficiary), there are limits to what Infinity aid can accomplish. The Patrol's job is not made any easier by the immense popularity of Britannica-3 with Anglophile Homeline tourists.



Other Britannicas

On all accessible worlds with a vigorous, globe-spanning British Empire, Centrum's Interworld Service busily attempts to subvert it to Centrum direction and control, with the goal of adding that parallel to Zone Green (p. 51).

On **Britannica-1** (Q5, current year 2001), the American colonies splintered after independence to become a zone of proxy wars between the European powers. Undistracted and eventually economically predominant in America, the British Empire defeated Napoleon (1792-1809), Russia (1854-1856), Germany twice (1910-1914 and 1936-1940), and the Soviet Union (1958-1963). The Bolshevik War ended with TL7 Britain holding a near-complete monopoly on space travel and a new Pax Britannica unfolding before it; now TL8.

The TL(5+2) Empire of **Britannica-2** (Q6, current year 1936) diverges in 1824, with the death of John Quincy Adams. Prime Minister Canning easily outmaneuvered President Henry Clay, and the British obtained a full claim to Oregon, which they expanded into California in 1846 to secure their Nicaraguan Canal. (The canal was very useful in the 1862 intervention that separated the American Confederacy as a British puppet.) The Raj extends from Thibet to Persia, British capital dominates the factories of the Germanies through Hanover and Holland, and a British railway runs from the Cape to Cairo. Infinity is unsure how much of this is due to Centrum manipulation; the timeline has been part of Zone Green for over a decade. More worrisome are the hints that the Empire has developed *time* travel, which if true would explain the unbroken run of British luck since 1824.

On TL6 **Britannica-4** (Q5, current year 1901), Washington was able to bring up enough troops to capture British supply depots in New Jersey and besiege New York in 1777. France jumped in and stripped Britain of its tropical colonies; George III went mad and the Prince Regent formed a government led by Fox and his Whig cronies. England industrialized and radicalized as France ossified; by the 1860s, it was democratic and overwhelmingly prosperous. Its "freelance anti-imperialists" intervened in the American Civil War against slavery, intrigued with the sepoys who overthrew French India, and ran guns to rebels against Franco-Russian-dominated China. Prime Minister Rhodes and President Roosevelt have suggested a democratic English-Speaking Union with the Canadian and Australian Republics – almost certainly a Centrum plot in some fashion, but hard to oppose for Infinity without aiding Continental despotism.

Other Britannicas diverge more strongly still: **Britannica-5** is a steampunk reality absorbed into Zone Green a decade ago.

Britannica-6 (Q6, current year 1887) diverged with the survival of the Princess Charlotte in 1817 to become Queen Charlotte in 1830 and spawn a vast new royal family, all of whom continuously intrigue against each other, exile each other to remote colonial fortresses, and sponsor senseless, grandiose TL(5+2) engineering projects such as the Channel Bridge, the Ice Dreadnought, and the Electrical Terror, while betting immense sums on dromedaries or racing aerostats.

On **Britannica-7** (Q4, local year 1141) Boadicea threw off Roman rule in 60 A.D. and established a matriarchal Celtic tribal union, Brittia, that spread into Ireland and Scotland over the next centuries. An Irish cultural-technical upsurge in the sixth through eighth centuries extended Brittia across the North Atlantic and its influence deep into Europe; it has alternated holy wars and very profitable intellectual exchange (reaching TL4) with the Saracen Caliphate in Rome for the last 200 years.

CALIPH

This timeline is almost 350 years behind Homeline, but any visitors could be forgiven for thinking it centuries in the future. In Caliph, however, the invention of the printing press in eighth-century Baghdad sparked an Islamic Renaissance when the first flush of Arabic expansion had hardly faded. Following its ninth-century Scientific Revolution, this worldline has advanced to universal prosperity and space colonies. At present, a global war threatens its achievements, and perhaps its very survival.

The Great Transformation

By the time the Abbasid Caliphate split into successor states in the 11th century, the Muslim world was well towards modernization, with personal firearms and Newtonian physics. Egypt achieved naval control of the Indian Ocean, as far as southern Africa and the island continent of Djiba, while its rival Andalus established itself in the Mediterranean and leaped across the Atlantic to the new world of Talentis (hardly noticing the Christian colony in the far north). Persia fought with the Turks for control of inner Asia, while to the north their protégés the Bulgars expanded from their Volga heartland to dominate their Khazar and Russian neighbors. The impact of Muslim culture even reached the Khitans in northern China, whose conversion revitalized their state and led to the conquest of Song Dynasty China.

Egypt and Persia led the way into the Industrial Revolution, which began with oil rather than coal. Their rivalry for control of the Muslim heartland lasted centuries, though ironically they fought together in the greatest wars. When the Global War began with revolts in their Asian colonial empires, they fought Bulgaria, Andalus and the African sultanates as well as the rebels – and, ultimately, were overmatched even with Khitan aid. This 10-year struggle introduced Caliph to industrialized warfare and was long considered to have demonstrated the folly of armed conflict

between the major powers. The Peace of Zanzibar ended the last war between the great caliphates for almost 350 years, although there were occasional scares such as the fall of the Qi Dynasty in China and the suppression of the totalitarian Umarites.

The world had sufficient difficulties even without warfare, as technology continued to advance and society was repeatedly shaken and remade. Technology brought prosperity and knit the Earth together in an increasingly unified global society, even as it began to reach outward to space. Older political structures came to seem outmoded, with the decline of national governments reaching its apex early in the current century with the formal dissolution of the Egyptian Caliphate. Religious sentiment ebbed as a universal system of law and economics organized the secular world, only to come flowing back as the approach of the millennial year (1000 A.H. or 1591 A.D.) tapped into reservoirs of popular belief.

Meanwhile, as technology advanced, Caliph dealt with the side effects of success. Industrialization damaged the ecosystem, which was

healed; universal prosperity brought economic dislocations, which were absorbed, and increasing longevity disrupted social assumptions in ways that have yet to be entirely resolved.

Fourteen months ago, an alliance of old-fashioned imperialists in the Caliphate of Hind and a new sort of ideological state, the radical secularist Jamahiriya in the Americas, launched a war of conquest. At first, it was hard to believe that such an inexplicable atavism could pose a serious threat to the modern world, but that illusion has been dispelled. The aggressor Alliance now controls a third of the globe, and the rest of the planet responded with a startling revival of martial enthusiasm. The Zaghawi Associates, this worldline's dominant space corporation, and the only known constructor of djinn (AIs), responded by severing its ties to Earth and declaring itself an independent caliphate – it has bigger fish to fry, building a stargate in trans-Neptunian orbit and (so they claim) carrying on communications with alien species.

(See *GURPS Alternate Earths 2* for further details.)

Caliph, 1684

Current Affairs

In an ultra-tech worldline, radical secularists allied with the expansionistic empire of Hind have launched a global war against the Muslim caliphates.

Divergence Point

796 A.D.; invention of the printing press in Baghdad awakens an Islamic scientific and industrial revolution.

Major Civilizations

Islamic (multipolar), Islamic-Indic (empire).

Great Powers

Umma (anarchic theocracy, CR1), Jamahiriya (technocracy, CR5), Hind (dictatorship, CR5), Zaghawi Associates (orbital corporate state, CR1), Persia (dictatorship, CR3), Andalus (dictatorship, CR3), Bulgaria (dictatorship, CR3), Sofala (dictatorship, CR3).

Worldline Data

TL: 11 (biotech, TL8) **Mana Level:** no mana
Quantum: 6 **Infinity Class:** Z2
Centrum Zone: Red

Outworld Operations

Infinity only discovered Caliph a year ago, and it remains a top internal secret of the Patrol and UNIC, neither of which wants to see Homeline idiots gold-rushing into a deadly high-tech war zone. If it weren't for the Zaghawi Associates stargate experiments (and the threat of Centrum getting a jump on Caliph technology), Infinity would just quarantine this world and be done with it. High-tech worlds are dangerous enough, without being caught in a war of godlike energies and insane mobility.

Centrum's reaction to Caliph is panic tempered by greed – it wants the high technology, but *really* doesn't want to risk a world this powerful getting parachronics. One solution would be encouraging the conflict to turn apocalyptic and sorting through the ruins: the I.S. might try that if convinced it could work, since it seems too late to save this worldline from its Last War. Infinity has been trying to negotiate a mutual interdiction to take Caliph off both sides' agenda, but between the greed and the panic, it's unlikely that Centrum will go along.

Unfortunately for both sides, information is harder to obtain during a war than in peacetime. It is very difficult to establish a false identity under current conditions, and just about impossible to operate without one (for starters, almost all money is electronic). Law-abiding citizens across the Dar al-Islam are ready to point security forces toward any sort of odd behavior.



It may actually be easier to operate in Alliance territory – and certainly easier to recruit local help. Of course, the personal consequences of detection are heavier, but that might be an advantage. Better any captured Patrolmen should be killed on suspicion than questioned deeply enough to reveal The Secret.

Oh Mankind, surely you are the ones who have need of God; He is the All-Sufficient . . . if He but wills it, He can do away with you and make a new creation: surely that is no great matter for God.

– *The Koran, 35:15-17*

Other Muslim Worlds

Infinity knows of several other parallels where history diverged to vault Muslim powers into predominant roles. Caliph is the only one more advanced than Homeline, although **Jihad-2** (Q5, current year 1429), in which Constantinople fell to the Arabs in 676 and Europe followed, is well into a TL5 industrial revolution.

In **Jihad-1** (Q5, current year 1881), where the Arabs defeated the Franks at Tours in 732, Muslim Faranjistan is still stagnating with the rest of the world at TL4.

In **Ottoman-1** (Q6, current year 1766), the Turks took Vienna in 1529 and marched to Rome and the Rhine; the Anglo-Spanish alliance is gingerly pressing back into the fragmented taifa states of France and Germany; TL4.

The Turkish empire in **Ottoman-2** (Q6, current year 1766) extends over a huge part of Asia, Russia, and India as the Ottomans turned east to swallow Tamerlane's empire upon his death. The Europeans they neglected are moving into TL5, however.

Ottoman-3 (Q4, current year 1640) also diverges with Tamerlane, who conquered China in the 1390s and forcibly converted it to Islam. With Tamerlane occupied in the East, the Ottomans took Constantinople in 1405 and swallowed Europe to the Elbe. Both TL4 Muslim empires (and the remainder of Muscovy) are wracked with revolts and famine from Germany to Manchuria.

In **Ottoman-4** (Q7, current year 1871), Mehmet the Conqueror survived long enough to complete his invasion of Italy in 1481, aborting the Renaissance. The TL6 Ottomans control the Mediterranean and Caribbean both, and are racing the Moguls to African colonies.

Other Muslim timelines include:

Andalus (Q4, current year 1930), in which the Muslims of Spain threw back the Reconquista and went on to discover America in 1484, achieving TL6 in rivalry with Japan, Saxony, and Russia.

Isma'il (Q4, current year 1594) in which the Safavids defeated the Ottomans in 1512 and built a millenarian TL4 Shi'ite empire stretching from India to Algiers.

Khedive (Q6, current year 1941) in which Mehmet Ali's modernization program in Egypt achieved industrial takeoff in the 1860s, allowing Egypt to absorb most of northern Africa and the Middle East and become a TL7 great power holding the balance between Britain, Germany, and Russia.

CAMPBELL

Look both ways before you cross the intersection – the universe you save could be your own. On the worldline named for him, the science-fiction editor John W. Campbell died in a traffic accident early in his career. As a result, many science-fiction writers from Isaac Asimov to Robert Heinlein never developed their talents, or developed them in other directions. (Robert Heinlein, for instance, became a successful writer of young adult mystery fiction and, later, TV sitcoms. The beloved *Bob Anson Show* was based on this part of his career.) The field of science fiction didn't advance much past space opera. Apparently, this reduced the number of students who became interested in science and engineering, because scientific development has stagnated here since the end of WWII.

Twilight

John W. Campbell's death didn't end all science fiction, of course. Hugo Gernsback's *Amazing Stories* continued to publish wild utopian scenarios and odes to antigravity machines; Flash Gordon and Buck Rogers still appeared in the comics; the dystopic *The Shape of Things to Come* still premiered in movie theaters in 1936, with its vision of grim, devastating warfare. Unfortunately, that was the only accurate prediction of the lot. Perhaps military-technical decision trees had been slightly skewed toward the optimistic by a steady diet of Gernsback's pabulum, or maybe Robert Heinlein, L. Sprague de Camp, and Isaac Asimov were working more productively without writing distracting them from their war research. (Other would-be writers with scientific training went into military black programs, too.) Either way, the Army deployed radioactive dust bombs against Germany in 1944, and responded with advanced germ warfare when the Nazis unleashed gas in retaliation.

A nuclear barrage finished off the Axis, and managed to poison not only Europe and the North Pacific, but also the American view of science. Science had let the West win the war, to be sure – but it had killed 170 million people doing it, and the “scientific materialist” Soviets were gobbling up

the survivors in concentration camps of their own. Communist China emerged from the toxic wreckage of Asia and began its own “scientific” mass murders to build the World of the Future. American and British soldiers who came back from the war had been to the World of the Future, and it was a blasted wasteland. Both countries rejected all such thinking; waves of pacifism and Luddism spread through the intellectual elite and common folk alike. In the 1960s, tens of millions of young people embraced charismatic religion in massive outdoor revival meetings and folk concerts, which continued and re-emphasized the anti-technological bent of society. Environmentalism in the 1970s and 1980s, and even the newly militant anti-Communist sentiment in Britain and America during the 1980s and 1990s (which did produce a modicum of military research money), all fed into that same channel of religious technophobia.

Campbell remains a poor world without communications satellites or personal computers, without robotized factories or advanced oil-drilling technology or the agricultural revolution that allowed India to feed itself on Homeline. It grows ever poorer and more dangerous as the Communist

powers begin to hit the wall of economic performance and ecological disaster. Even Russia's German and Italian satellites, and China's Japanese and Korean ones, have sunk into Marxist toxic sloth and debilitating famine. British, Indian, and American draftees face renewed Communist aggression in the Middle East, Indonesia, and Latin America, and thank their God (or gods) that at least they won't be fighting “scientifically” this time.

Outworld Operations

Most Infinity operations on Campbell fit into one of two categories: attempting to promote science (a real uphill climb in this world; White Star has seen four SF magazines go bankrupt after being banned by church leaders), and intensive sociological research. The near-total derailing of scientific progress (all over the world, not just in the United States) seems like such a dramatic result from such a tiny cause that some Patrolmen suspect there's more to it. A secret society or conspiratorial group might be deliberately retarding progress, or some transhuman entity could be trying to remove any possible competition.

Campbell, 2004

Current Affairs

A world without SF becomes a world without scientific progress; the impoverished globe girds for the final showdown between Communism and democracy.

Divergence Point

1932; SF editor John W. Campbell dies in an auto accident, leaving a dearth of positive images of scientific progress.

Major Civilizations

Western (multipolar), Orthodox (empire), Chinese (empire).

Great Powers

United States (representative democracy, CR3), Soviet Union (dictatorship, CR6), People's Republic of China (dictatorship, CR6), British Commonwealth (representative democracies, CR2-4).

Worldline Data

TL: 6 (military, TL7)

Mana Level: no mana

Quantum: 5

Infinity Class: R6

Centrum Zone: Inaccessible

CENTRUM BETA

A newly penetrated Q7 timeline seems to be exactly like Homeline researchers *think* the world of Centrum was in the year 1895. Could it be an echo? If so, it has untold repercussions for parapsysics as Infinity understands it. Even an ordinary parallel has plenty of potential for revelation . . . or trouble. Either way, why is it the only one they've ever found? Since Quantum 7 is more accessible to Centrum than it is to Homeline, Centrum Beta swarms with Interworld agents – but for once in the Infinity War, they're playing defense.

The Plantagenet Mirror

The history and geopolitics of Centrum Beta are identical to those of Centrum up to 1895, as detailed on p. 46-56. (See **GURPS Alternate Earths 2** for further details about Centrum's history.)

Outworld Operations

Since the discovery of Centrum Beta earlier this year, the Penetration Service has launched several deep recon missions into this echo. The Scouts' goal is to trawl as much information as possible about the otherwise inaccessible history of Centrum before the inevitable Interworld counter-operation moves it out of Homeline's reach. One particularly bold Penetration Service op cleaned out every library in Penzance just before a tidal wave hit – the Patrol remains silent on the subject of just how the Scouts knew a tidal wave was

coming. Patrol operations on this worldline are particularly reckless, since they know they face a ticking clock. And if Centrum Beta is an echo, perhaps their "interference" will actually move it closer to Homeline!

Interworld, meanwhile, finds itself in the unenviable position of playing defense. Normally, the I.S. gets to pick its battlegrounds after careful planning, and has the tactical advantage resulting from picked targets and overstretched opposition. They have not, it must be admitted, adjusted very well to the change. Disagreement at the higher levels of Interworld exacerbates this lack of flexibility:

their sensors report that Centrum Beta (which Centrum calls "Speculum") is, in fact, an unprecedented Centrum echo, but its paratemporal instability index has an odd geometry to it. Interworld walks on eggshells, worried that if it disturbs this echo, it will set up a chain reaction throughout the continuum, producing a flood of new Centrum echoes and possibly ejecting their own world from 8-space altogether. In the last month or so, however, I.S. has decided to massively increase its reaction team deployments on Centrum Beta – whatever happens, Infinity's free ride here is over.

Centrum Beta, 1895

Current Affairs

Access to a possible echo of Centrum gives the Patrol a unique opportunity for research and sabotage.

Divergence Point

1120; William the Ætheling's ship doesn't sink, and he becomes King William III in 1135, eventually leading to English absorption of France under Eleanor of Aquitaine.

Major Civilizations

Western (universal empire).

Great Powers

Anglo-French Empire (semi-feudal dictatorship, CR3-5 depending on fief).

Worldline Data

TL: 7

Mana Level: no mana

Quantum: 7

Infinity Class: Z4

Centrum Zone: Red

DIXIE-1

Homeline's United States government takes a particular interest in this Quantum 6 parallel. This worldline begins to diverge from Homeline history with the conquest of Nicaragua by the Southern adventurer William Walker in 1856. In Dixie-1, Walker's aid ultimately led to a Confederate victory in the American Civil War – or, as the Confederates of Dixie know it, the War of Southron Independence. 130 years later, the Confederate States of America remain locked in a nuclear

stalemate with their old rival. Across the Atlantic, the German Empire retains the European hegemony it won early in the century. In southern Asia, the Indian Republic supplies modern weapons to the rebels in German Indochina, while the newly industrializing countries of the "Indian Rim" manufacture the cheap electronics which find their way into Confederate dirigibles and Yankee stratojets.

The Confederacy itself retains its particular charms, complete with Southern belles, riverboat gamblers and dashing cavaliers in butternut. If one is (or can act as) a "gentleman" or a "lady," Southern hospitality is all a denizen of Homeline might wish, as hundreds of well-heeled tourists discover annually. Only white tourists and those who can pass for white, of course – Southern gentility extends only to those who belong to a race eligible for citizenship. Beneath even

“white trash” factory workers and smallholders, nearly half the population of the CSA lacks the right to vote, own land, or move across a state line without permission. Indeed, in nine of the 21 states of the Confederacy, chattel slavery remains legal.

From Secession to Superpower

Both the Confederacy and the United States spent the decades after the War of Southron Independence weathering its economic shocks and expanding on the continent. The Confederacy picked up the pieces in Mexico after the French adventure there failed, as the vengeful Union dismembered British Canada during the Riel Rebellion of 1869 (the United States annexed the resulting Republic of Manitoba in 1911). Bismarck negotiated a U.S.-German Accord to counter the British alliance with the CSA, leaving the two American powers tied into European alliance politics. The Guiana War of 1895-1897 and the Great War of 1914-1921 pulled the knots tighter, as the situation in Europe came to determine the outcome in America. With Bismarck keeping Russia neutral, the first ended in a stalemate. In 1920, German armies (redeployed after the revolutionary collapse of Russia and the French army) bypassed Patton's brilliant mobile defenses in the West and smashed through the trench lines in the Shenandoah Valley, leaving the Union victorious. The Confederacy lost Oklahoma, Sonora, Maryland, Delaware, and D.C. to the Union by the Treaty of Washington.

Both the United States and the Confederacy fought new wars in the 1940s, though not against each other this time. The Union had to rescue its German ally from a mechanized Franco-Italian assault by the dictators de Gaulle and Mussolini, and the Confederacy fought a brutal naval war in the Pacific against an expansionist Japanese Empire that coveted British concessions in China and Confederate oilfields in the Dutch East Indies. (Britain, mired in U.S.-backed revolts in India, dropped out of the Pacific War early, leaving Australia a permanent Confederate ally.) The war in

Dixie-1, 1993

Current Affairs

Nuclear stalemate keeps the peace between the increasingly strained slave-holding Confederacy and a libertarian Union wary of an apocalyptic war.

Divergence Point

1856; William Walker retains control of Nicaragua, and uses that base to break the Union blockade of the CSA, allowing the South to win at Antietam and become independent.

Major Civilizations

Western (multipolar), Indo-Western (unitary).

Great Powers

United States (representative democracy, CR2), Confederate States (oligarchy, CR4 for whites, CR6 for others), German Empire (dictatorship, CR5), United Republic of India (representative democracy, CR3).

Worldline Data

TL: 8 (aerospace, late TL8)

Quantum: 6

Centrum Zone: Orange

Mana Level: low

Infinity Class: P9

Europe ended with the German invention of the atomic bomb, dropped on Elba in a demonstration shot; the Pacific War ended with a bold redeployment of the Atlantic Fleet through the Nicaragua Canal and the invasion of a fire-bombed Shikoku. In the turmoil, India had become independent, and the Russian Soviet Republic had escaped the German orbit.

The years since have seen an economic struggle in North America, proxy wars in South America and Asia and a continual arms race that has impelled both powers into outer space. Both Northerners and Southerners call this conflict by a name coined by a Richmond newspaper editor: “The Long Drum Roll.” A brief “Parade Rest” in the 1970s ended as the Confederacy, feeling the economic squeeze of its military programs (and inefficient apartheid economy) clamped down on domestic dissent and ramped up its military space program to develop an anti-missile defense shield. In response, U.S. President Knox deployed missiles to Puerto Rico in 1983. Ten years of tension, while the Union's Indian and German allies squabbled over territory in the booming “Indian Rim,” have left the libertarian North tired of the struggle but unable to step back from

the brink – and driven the “White Circle” of South Africa, Australia, Brazil, and the Confederacy ever closer to formal union or pre-emptive war.

(See *GURPS Alternate Earths* for further details.)

Outworld Operations

The Infinity Patrol has a relatively large presence in Dixie-1, facing an even larger variety of problems. (Note that “large,” given the limited number of Patrol agents available, means a permanent staff of perhaps 20.) Naturally, their bulk of work lies in observation and aid to Homeline tourists, who flock to the Confederacy in droves. The Patrol's biggest headache is nonstop smuggling, largely based in Dixie-1's utterly corrupt Fascist Italy. For example, an information smuggling operation succeeded in introducing spreadsheet programs into the local computer industry, sparking a revolution in business productivity that has not yet entirely run its course. Legitimate traders like White Star primarily export licensed computer technology and software to Dixie, importing hovercraft designs, hypercotton, and intellectual property of all kinds back to Homeline (particularly Faulkner novels and bootleg Janis Joplin CDs).

Of Homeline's national governments, the United States, Germany, India, Russia, and South Africa maintain Dixie-1 bases known to Infinity, usually in the capitals of their Dixie-1 analogs. Homeline governments (especially the United States and South Africa) are constantly interfering in the Confederacy, despite a clear UNIC finding that racial instability in the CSA could trigger a potentially nuclear civil war. Dixie-1's popularity among illegal emigrants from Homeline is notorious. Usually romantic citizens of the southern United States, these individuals book a tour to Dixie-1, and then attempt to disappear. The Patrol's vigilant watch for "new" inventions catches most of the obvious expatriates, and keeps interference by outtimers to a minimum, although the Patrol worries constantly that one of these Confederate patriots might reveal The Secret. Both Centrum and Infinity busily divert physicists on all sides away from research that could lead to parachronics. None are really close, but the CSA is investigating some backwaters of physics that could potentially mean trouble.

Dixie-1, in both Zone Orange and the Quantum 6 battleground, gets Centrum's close attention. Interworld feels that the CSA is probably easier to transform to its kind of society than is any rival power; with India the second choice. Confederate rigidity and

reaction respond well to Centrum sociodynamics, while since the revolution, India has enforced church/state separation with the express goal of maintaining egalitarian politics despite the Hindu caste system. Interworld's goal is to drive a wedge between the Union and India, tying the United States tightly to Germany's fading strength, and then to offer overwhelming strategic advantages to

the CSA (in exchange for concessions that leave Centrum in the saddle in Richmond). With the Union and Germany shoved over the edge, Centrum's puppets would pick up the pieces, and their natural tensions would allow the Uplift Service to implement some of the Education Service's decades of experience at ruthlessly enforcing racial equality.

Other Dixies

Dixie-1 was the first of the "victorious, surviving Confederacy" parallels to be discovered. There are five more known to Infinity:

Dixie-2 (Q3, current year 1966) and **Dixie-3** (Q6, current year 1937) both diverge at Gettysburg. In Dixie-2 the CSA dominates the Caribbean and the United States is an appendage of French and Japanese bankers. In Dixie-3 both the CSA and the U.S. are poor, corrupt satellites of European powers. Both realities are high TL6.

In **Dixie-4** (Q4, current year 1954), the Civil War occurred in 1844, the West is still Mexican, and the United States and CSA are allied against the Mexican and German Empires. Britain is neutral; the world is TL6.

Dixie-5 (Q6, current year 1943) diverged with Early's Raid in 1864 and turned into a long British quagmire in America that left the CSA an impoverished British puppet and the United States a fanatical garrison state between British Canada and the Confederacy. The U.S. military is TL8; the rest of the world is TL7 or lower, including the Union's TL6 Soviet allies.

Dixie-6 (Q6, current year 1910) diverged at First Manassas when the CSA pushed on and took Washington; Texas and California have both declared themselves independent, and all four nations are rivals for the Indian West.

EZCALLI

The Pan-American research team that recently discovered this worldline named it *Ezcalli*, from the Náhuatl for "house of blood." Here, the Pyramid of the Sun continues to smolder with the burning hearts of human sacrifice. Here, slave ships travel from Europe to México groaning with their human cargoes. Here, the harsh tropical sun beats down on Tenochtitlán's lakes and factories, shining through the haze on the Place of the Cactus, the greatest city in the world. Here, the Aztecs rule an expanding empire of blood and glory.

The Tenochca Empire, known to Homeline historians as the Aztec Empire, dominates this world. Its divergence point from Homeline

begins with the Carthaginian discovery of the New World and the Columbian Exchange of foods, diseases and ideas occurring two millennia early. Europe and Asia lie somnolent under the placid, orderly, static rule of the Mongol Khaghans. Rome lies in ruins, its legacy preserved in the West African Songhay Empire. The Tenochca navies take colonies overseas as they battle their rivals the Hotinohsavannih League (Homeline's Iroquois Confederacy) for domination of North America. Steam-powered industry is common in Africa and the Americas, and the first tremors of the scientific revolution are stirring the Tenochca elites.

Birth of the New Sun

Rome dissolved into civil wars following the assassination of the Emperor Nero. With potatoes planted in the Gallic soil, the West was no longer dependent on Egypt for food, and looked across the Atlantic rather than back to Asia. The Roman Mediterranean economy was split, and the Empire split as well. Barbarians swept over Europe; Rome maintained its rule only in North Africa, by vigorous Christian Caesars and cunning diplomacy. In the New World, the great empire of Teotihuacán, stretching from the Orinoco to the Illini, fell to its own barbarians, the Siouans and Toltecs,

and to new plagues from Asia. Only in Africa did civilization prosper, as the Empire of Mali, centered on the great Romano-Christian trading city of Timbuctu, supplanted the Christian kingdom of Ghana. Mali fell to Songhay in turn, expanding Roman-African civilization from Spain to the Congo.

The final barbarian wave brought peace and one last great plague to the warring states of Eurasia. The Mongol armies raced through Central Asia and poured into Europe, crossing into North Africa, taking Roman Carthage and ending the last Roman kingdom in 1240. Later Great Khans added Persia, China, Japan, India, Indochina and finally Java to the great Mongol Khaghanate. The Black Death swept through Eurasia, crippling the Mongols' foes, and left the Pax Mongolica supreme over two continents.

In the New World, another barbarian tribe from the fringes of civilization founded a great empire. The Tenochca entered the Valley of México and founded their capital Tenochtitlán in 1325. After the Black Death hit in 1361, the Tenochca overwhelmed their demoralized neighbors and established a powerful kingdom. The political genius and reformer Tlacaélel built the Tenochca Confederacy into

an empire based on military skill, economic diversity, and religious bloodthirstiness. One after another, the rivals of the Tenochca from the Quechua in Peru to the Muskogea along the Mississippi fell to the Jaguar and Eagle Knights of the Empire. Their only obstacle is the Hotinohsavannah League, another expansionistic confederacy centered on Onondoga in the northeast stretching from the Free City of Manannán (founded by Irish traders in 200 B.C.) to the iron mines west of the Five Lakes.

The Tenochca send their *pochteca* merchants across the oceans to fortified trading posts on every coast. They bring back European slaves for the fields and mines, and gems, spices, and silks from the Mongol East. The Tenochca Empire is on the verge of its greatest wave of expansion – if it can beat back its Hotinohsavannah and Songhay rivals for the rich spoils of the senescent Mongol Khaghanate and the unclaimed riches of Africa and North America.

(See *GURPS Alternate Earths* for further details, and *GURPS Aztecs* for background.)

Outworld Operations

Ezcalli was so recently discovered that Infinity and other parties on

Homeline are still trying to decide on a policy toward it. Since no one is worried about anyone in Ezcalli developing parachronic technology, debate is over exactly what form covert intervention ought to take. While there is a broad consensus (even by the Homeline Mexican government) that *something* should be done to curb the Tenochca, no one can agree on exactly what to do or how to do it.



Infinity's main worry is coordinating the activities of the groups that want to "better the lot" of the natives, to avoid revealing The Secret. White Star Trading is interested in some of the unique artistic and cultural artifacts of Ezcalli cultures, but they *really* don't want to have to disguise themselves as *pochtecas* and participate in local religious practices. The Duncorne Foundation has a similar interest in Tenochca astronomical records, and even more serious qualms about worshipping Huitzilopochtli. Miracle Workers normally concentrates on relieving the effects of natural disasters. It frowns on political intervention except for the prevention of wars, but many of their employees are urging them to make an exception.

Centrum's intervention in Ezcalli is even more recent than Infinity's discovery of the timeline; the first reports of what sounds like Centran activity have only just appeared. Reports of a visitation of babbling demons at the Tenochca colony in Knasgord (Homeline La Rochelle, France) sound a lot like parachronic travelers disrupting the sacrifice . . . and Infinity is quite certain that there were no visits from Homeline. Because of the suspicious timing, Infinity suspects that some source inside Infinity itself leaked Ezcalli's parachronic coordinates to Centrum.

Ezcalli, 1848

Current Affairs

An industrial Aztec Empire expands across the world.

Divergence Point

508 B.C.; Carthaginians discover the New World and launch the Columbian Exchange of diseases and food two millennia early.

Major Civilizations

Meso-American (empire), West African (empire with satellite states), Iroquois (empire), Steppe (empire).

Great Powers

Tenochca Empire (caste-based dictatorship with strong theocratic component, CR4, CR6 for subject tribes), Songhay Empire (dictatorship, CR4), Hotinohsavannah League (representative democracy, CR2), Mongol Khaghanate (feudal dictatorship, CR4-5).

Worldline Data

TL: 5 (Tenochca agronomy, TL7; Mongols, TL4)

Mana Level: low

Quantum: 6

Infinity Class: R5

Centrum Zone: Yellow

FRIEDRICH

In Homeline history, Emperor Friedrich I Barbarossa exemplifies the horseshoe nail, the change point that almost happened. He almost brought the rich cities of northern Italy into a common Empire, losing one campaign thanks to malaria, and losing the Battle of Legnano in 1176 only through the defection of his vassal Henry the Lion, Duke of Saxony. He deposed Henry with the aid of many German bishops, and almost broke the power of the German nobles, which (along with the tax revenues from Italy) would have unified Germany as a nation much as his contemporary Philip II did for France. His struggle with Pope Alexander III almost ended papal control over the national churches, which might have allowed the Church to reform gradually without splintering. And he led the Third Crusade in 1190, which almost took Jerusalem, except that Barbarossa drowned in the Saleph River and the German armies dissolved.

A Ripple In The River

On this worldline, Barbarossa managed to cow Henry the Lion; with his support, he defeated the Italian cities;

with their funds, he tamed the nobles and declared a Crusade; with the prestige he gained as the liberator of Jerusalem, he forced the Pope to back down. His policy of encouraging scholarship may have made the difference on this world, where a few court scholars have access to subtle and terrible magics. His good relationship with the Knights Templar (reputed to be wizards), through his court meistersinger Wolfram von Eschenbach, may also have gotten Friedrich a little magical support where it counted.

Be that as it may, when he died in bed in 1202, he left the unbreakable nexus of a German nation to his son Henry VI, who added Sicily to the imperial domain by marriage. In 1204, allied with the Venetians, Henry VI stripped the remainder of Anatolia from the Byzantines to add to the former Seljuk territories Friedrich had conquered on crusade. Henry's son Friedrich, the Crown Prince, already shows signs of genius, and the New Men from out of the East have brought new methods of war and machinery that will further strengthen and enrich the German-Roman Empire. Surely, Friedrich Barbarossa founded a Reich that will last a thousand years . . .

Outworld Operations

The Raven Division began operations on Friedrich in 1214, moving in strength along the Chronobahn (p. 79), which runs from the Cilician Gates pass in the Taurus Mountains of southern Anatolia to the high scarp above Nicomedia, almost to the Black Sea. On its southeast end, the Chronobahn enters Nostradamus (p. 138); on its northwest end, it shifts into Agamemnon (Q3, local year 1189 B.C.), which may be a myth parallel based on the Greek heroic legends, or merely a high-mana alternate Earth. Reality quakes are common on that parallel, and some aftershocks travel along the Chronobahn in Friedrich, as well.

The Nazis have recruited three regiments worth of local German troops, which they are training in modern weapons and military science as best they can with the limited resources available to them. The main Nazi training base is the castle of Lampron, an impregnable fortress overlooking the Cilician Gates and the Nostradamus end of the Chronobahn. It lies on the border between the Kingdom of Lesser Armenia and the Kingdom of Iconium ruled by Friedrich of Swabia (son of Barbarossa). The Nazis have major Raven Division outposts in Regensburg, the Imperial capital, Venice, and Messina in Sicily. Armanen agents have already assassinated Genghis Khan and bio-bombed Mongolia, which has thrown northern China into total chaos.

The Patrol has to work very discreetly here; it is imperative that the Nazis not get their hands on another, completely functioning, conveyor. Between the possible sorceries of the Empire's Templar allies and the psionic wild talents the Raven Division's Mules display, even the slightest hint of Patrol activity could bring down disaster. The Patrol also suspects that some third force operates in this worldline; the Order of the Assassins has kidnapped at least one Raven Division trooper, and may be responsible for the loss of two Patrolmen from the Ayyubid court in Cairo.

Friedrich, 1217

Current Affairs

A cadre of SS from Reich-5 seeks to transform the German-Roman Empire into the First Reich, a breeding ground for Aryan warriors.

Divergence Point

1176; Friedrich Barbarossa defeats the Italian cities at the Battle of Legnano, then doesn't drown during the Third Crusade in 1190 but liberates Jerusalem, returns and strengthens imperial power in Germany and Italy.

Major Civilizations

Islamic (multipolar), Chinese (empire with satellite states), Western (decreasingly multipolar).

Great Powers

Song China (dictatorship, CR4), German-Roman Empire (decreasingly feudal dictatorship, CR4), Ayyubid Egypt (dictatorship, CR3), Khwarizm (dictatorship, CR4), *Venetian Republic (oligarchy, CR4)*.

Worldline Data

TL: 3 (plus some TL8 Reich-5 uplifting) **Mana Level:** normal
Quantum: 3 **Infinity Class:** Z2
Centrum Zone: Inaccessible

GALLATIN

"Whether we remain in one confederacy, or form into Atlantic and Mississippi confederacies, I believe not very important to the happiness of either part. Those of the western confederacy will be as much our children and descendants as those of the eastern, and I feel myself as much identified with that country, in future time, as with this."

– Thomas Jefferson to Joseph Priestley,
Jan. 29, 1804

Thomas Jefferson wrote this letter in many histories (including Homeline's), but not in the worldline named for his Secretary of the Treasury, Albert Gallatin. In that worldline, Alexander Hamilton had died taking a Hessian bullet at the Battle of Trenton, like the one that nearly killed future President James Madison in Homeline history. Madison survived in both worlds to write his Constitution, but in this worldline, there was no Alexander Hamilton to defend and explain it in the *Federalist Papers*, or to knit the new nation together with a strong economic policy. The United States splintered into many "confederacies," leaving Thomas Jefferson revered by all of them, but president of only one.

E Pluribus Nullium

Without the *Federalist Papers* and Hamilton's oratory, New York refused to ratify the Constitution of 1787, dooming the pact. An open convention redrafted the Articles of Confederation the next year, but tensions over Western trade down the Mississippi drove the Ohio Valley settlers further from the weak Philadelphia government. When Napoleon acquired Louisiana in 1802, threatening to choke off Western trade, Aaron Burr and Andrew Jackson led a filibustering expedition that captured New Orleans; their Louisiana Republic made its own trade treaty with the Ohio Country, ignoring the central government entirely.

By 1860, only five states remained in the United States of America (which adopted a centralizing constitution in 1815 similar to the 1787

document): Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, and New Jersey. Eight other American republics checkered the continent: New England (rapidly returning to the British sphere of influence), the Confederation (in which the states from Maryland to Georgia operate as almost independent nations), the Louisiana Republic (between the Sabine and Mobile Rivers, having split Spanish Florida with Georgia), the Ohio Association (a Jeffersonian-libertarian confederacy in the Ohio and Upper Mississippi Valleys), the Texas Republic (an expansionist slave state stretching deep into Mexico and north into Indian country), Deseret (a Mormon theocracy in the Great Basin), and the Bear Flag Republic of California (including the company forts north past Vancouver). Although border wars and skirmishes broke out from time to time, on the whole, their relations were more peaceable than those in the outside world.

After its own unification in 1871, Germany unified the European Continent in the Great War of 1914-1916, folding it into a common bureaucratic-economic union run from Berlin. The British resented this usurpation of their monopolies, but could do little but mirror it in their own Empire, creating an economic Commonwealth dominated by London. Both powers suffered setbacks in the Pacific War, when the Japanese Empire (having allied itself with Stalin's Soviet Russia) threw the Germans out of Indochina, the Philippines, and the East Indies, and the British out of China, Burma, and the Sandwich Islands. (Texas' refusal to open the Nicaragua Canal to any belligerent power made it difficult for Britain and Germany to cooperate in retaking the Pacific, even if they had wanted to.) The Japanese atomic bombing of Calcutta ended the war. Britain, Russia, Germany, and Texas all built their own bombs in the next five years, resulting in a Pax Atomica that lasts mostly unbroken to this day.

Gallatin, 2004

Current Affairs

A balkanized North America shelters under the Texan nuclear umbrella as the Germans, Japanese, and Soviets duel for global control.

Divergence Point

1776; Alexander Hamilton dies at the Battle of Trenton. The considerably more libertarian Albert Gallatin becomes the first Secretary of the Treasury, and the nascent United States disintegrates.

Major Civilizations

Western (empire with rivals), Orthodox (empire with satellites), Japanese (empire).

Great Powers

Europaverein (military oligarchy, CR4 for Germans, CR5 for other nations), Soviet Union (dictatorship, CR6), Japanese Empire (military oligarchy, CR4-5 for Japanese, CR6 for subject nations), British Commonwealth (representative democracies, CR4), Texas Republic (representative democracy, CR3 for whites, CR5 for non-whites).

Worldline Data

TL: 7 (some military hardware, low TL8) **Mana Level:** low
Quantum: 5 **Infinity Class:** P9
Centrum Zone: Inaccessible

Outworld Operations

Infinity Patrol operatives on Gallatin attempt to crack down on the massive smuggling operations from the Ohio Association (where all drugs and many heavy weapons are completely

legal) to Homeline, but can barely make a dent in the traffic without overthrowing the Ohio government (such as it is). Although Ohio has no army to speak of – essentially free-riding on Texas and the United States for its international defense, and for defense

against Sioux terrorism – it has a remarkably robust set of local militias. Outtime tourism is also tremendously popular on Gallatin, especially by Homeline Texans eager to see the Lone Star Republic standing tall.

GERNSBACK

This Quantum 7 world follows the same physical laws as Homeline, but with some odd variations that led technical progress into a number of very bizarre detours. For example, dirigibles plow the skies side by side with gigantic atomic-powered cargo planes. The transistor is unknown, but rayguns and aircars are common. Here, the slide-rule is king.

The first Patrolmen here saw the towering Art Deco buildings, the sleek aircars, and the omnipresent power-casting towers and named this parallel after Hugo Gernsback, utopian technophile and founder of modern science fiction. Much about the world does seem like something out of a 1930s science fiction adventure, from the personal jetpacks to the benevolent power of the World Science Council.

The history of Gernsback diverges from Homeline with the marriage of

Nikola Tesla, the last of the mad scientists, to the daughter of J.P. Morgan, the last of the robber barons. In Homeline history, Tesla and Anne Morgan became good friends, but Tesla died a bankrupt bachelor, the majority of his inventions remaining in his head or sketched in his notebooks. On Gernsback, Tesla's marriage stabilized him both emotionally and financially, and he went on to revolutionize virtually every aspect of modern life.

The World of Tomorrow

In 1902, the Morgan-Tesla Radio Company began global radio broadcasts from Wardenclyffe, Long Island. The immense success of global radio freed Tesla to concentrate on his life-long goal: broadcasting electrical power without wires. After years of arduous laboratory work by teams of



Gernsback, 1965

Current Affairs

The World Science Council puts down all threats to techno-utopia in the fantastic World of the Future!

Divergence Point

1893; Nikola Tesla marries Anne Morgan, the daughter of financier J.P. Morgan, and thus remains sane enough to invent radio and broadcast power with Morgan financing.

Major Civilizations

Western (multipolar).

Great Powers

World Science Council (technocracy, CR4), United States (representative democracy, CR3, CR5 for blacks), German Republic (representative democracy, CR4), British Empire (representative democracies, CR4), Japanese Empire (military-corporate oligarchy, CR4-5).

Worldline Data

TL: (6+2) (weapons, up to TL(6+3); broadcast power, TL6^)

Mana Level: no mana

Quantum: 7 **Infinity Class:** R9 **Centrum Zone:** Red

technicians, Morgan-Tesla introduced Tesla's system of broadcast power. The result was global panic and a stock market crash. Morgan firms stabilized first America, then Germany; the Dawes-Morgan plan wound up rewriting the German Constitution to end its chronic political and economic instability. Prosperity restored confidence in European institutions, such as the League of Nations, and let the world weather another stock panic in 1929, and crises in China and Ethiopia in 1933 and 1935. The League forced the aggressors to back down in both cases, further stabilizing the world order.

The next crisis began deceptively, when German physicist Otto Hahn split the atom in 1938. The League

placed the newly founded World Science Council (WSC) in charge of a program to develop atomic power plants. By 1945, the WSC was building atomic power plants in Germany and America. When the Soviet physicist Andrei Sakharov defected and warned the world of Stalin's plan to build an atomic bomb, the League responded instantly and declared war on the Soviet Union in 1951. The war was the most massive conflict in world history, with millions of men fighting on both sides. The WSC produced an endless stream of superweapons for the League, from tanks firing particle beams to teleguided missiles. Eventually, Stalin's scientists revolted against his mad plans, destroying the bomb project and surrendering to WSC paratroopers dropped from League superwings. Stalin died on April 30, 1953 in the confused capture of Moscow, and the world was once again at peace.

The League of Nations and the World Science Council were faced with the massive job of reconstruction. The League took over the administration of Russia and the "League Taxes," which had paid for the war in the member countries, now paid for rebuilding and peacetime conversion. The League placed all atomic power research under control of the WSC to prevent any other nation from attempting to build atomic weapons. The 1957 Treaty of New York formalized League powers, made the League Taxes permanent, and mandated economic coordination of League countries with WSC guidelines and predictions. Finally, it established the League Peace Forces (LPF), a permanent standing League of Nations army.

The amazing inventions made during the war were perfected and marketed for civilians, and a huge economic boom began as war plants moved over to peacetime production. The Electronic Brains invented just before the war began to produce economic predictions, which the League used to manage the global economy. The LPF contained the few anti-League rebellions in India, Africa, and the Middle East, and the WSC stopped an attempt by the revolutionary government of Cuba to withdraw from the League. The Council did not even wait for League authorization before

The WSC produced an endless stream of superweapons for the League, from tanks firing particle beams to teleguided missiles.

shutting down all electrical power on the island and forcing the overthrow of the Castro regime. The world is unified and at peace under the benevolent rule of the Great Powers, the League of Nations, and the World Science Council. Planning and technology will deal with the natural economic dislocations of the postwar era. Nothing can go wrong.

(See *GURPS Alternate Earths* for further details.)

Outworld Operations

The I-Cops' primary mission in Gernsback is to oppose the large-scale Centrum operations here. Centrum's obvious strategy is to rapidly evolve the WSC into a technocratic world government mirroring Centrum's own gray elite. Then Centrum could easily mount a decapitating coup and rule the worldline. Gernsback is a favorite of the Centrum radicals who argue for partnerships with other timelines. If the dimension war were quieter, they might even win their point: the WSC is close to many "correct" Centran attitudes and could be a formidable ally indeed.

Therefore, the Patrol gives covert aid to anticolonial movements around the world, while hoping to avoid the fearsomely competent (and jut-jawed) gadgeteering WSC Special Tasks Agents. Although Homeline physicists are fairly sure that Gernsback is nowhere near discovering parachronic technology, nobody wants to make any bets against the heirs of Tesla.

The I-Cops also prevent would-be Homeline inventors from surfacing in Gernsback. These troublemakers fall into two types: those who want to invent the transistor in Gernsback and make a billion dollars, and those who are sure that the WSC will fund their perpetual motion machines.

The last I-Cops task is to assist stranded tourists – even with the best backups and safeties that the WSC can devise, zeppelins do burn up and air-cars do crash. Tours to Gernsback seem to attract the oddest tourists in Homeline – some Patrolmen still recall with horror the trouble they had rounding up all the stray Klingons from a Homeline SF convention held in Gernsback's New York. Other popular tourist attractions include the Skydeck of the Mile-High Building, the Cumberland Gap Aircar Steeplechase, zeppelin cruises to the Amazon Hilton, and the Orient Electrical Express (Paris to Peking in 36 hours). The biggest draw, however, are the Tesla Day (July 10) festivities at WSC headquarters in Queens (centered on the 1939 World's Fair Perisphere and Trylon), which feature parades, scientific demonstrations, and some really spectacular fireworks.

White Star Trading sells light metals in bulk, medicines, and seedlings from new crop varieties in Gernsback. They primarily buy different plant varieties, superscientific alloys, and cultural artifacts – there is a big Homeline demand for original Hitler watercolors, Frank Paul oils, and science fiction by Gernsback's versions of Poul Anderson, Robert Heinlein, and Isaac Asimov.

The U.S. and European governments are under increasing pressure from civil rights advocates, feminists, and others concerned about Gernsback's blithe acceptance of widespread race and sex discrimination. However, there are only a few tiny groups in Gernsback attempting to propose alternatives, dismissed as isolated cranks by the mass of public opinion. Thus, Homeline activists, hampered by Infinity's enforcement of The Secret, have as yet been unable to devise an effective approach.

HELL WORLDS

ARIANE

In 1915, a mutant influenza virus (possibly a version of the “Spanish flu” that decimated Homeline history around that time) wiped out 99.9% of the population, leaving fewer than two million people alive on this Quantum 5 Earth. Homeline medical science rapidly discovered a cure for the Ariane Flu, and after a rapid survey, Infinity opened Ariane up for full colonization as a Class O10 world in 2012 (its local year 2002). Homeline settlement is a mixture of separatist and manor colonies; most of the separatists are Western cultural conservatives, including “Reconstructionist” groups interested in settling and restoring 1915 Paris, London, New York, and other urban centers. (A splinter sect of ultraconservative Catholics has a religious colony in Rome and Florence.) Some of the manor settlers paid a substantial premium for surviving (or rebuilt) structures like the Kremlin, the White House, and the Taj Mahal. The only surviving autochronous culture is the

isolationist TL4 theocracy that rules Tibet (off limits to Homeliners by Infinity Development fiat); the rest of Ariane’s natives are barbarian tribes who raid Homeline colonies. Most colonies allow indenture of the natives, which seems more decent than exterminating them or leaving them out in their Stone Age cold to starve.

THE GOTH PARALLELS

When the Scouts discovered Gotha-1 on Quantum 7, they thought they had stumbled on a particularly dark Dark Ages parallel; Visigothic berserkers had apparently burnt out every city in France. Small fortified manor communities of only a few hundred souls held out, surrounded by bands of marauding killers who slew anyone they encountered. Later, Patrolmen discovered the same pattern on another Quantum 7 parallel, in a eighth-century India ravaged by Thuggee. Civilization hadn’t always broken down in the medieval era,

either; ruins on some parallels showed technologies from TL1 to TL8!

After a few more surveys discovered new “Gotha” worlds, an appalled Infinity Patrol discerned the common element – on each of these parallels, the pneumonic plague had somehow mutated into (or become symbiotic with) a prion-based disease that spread through any concentrated population of over a thousand or so people. Below that threshold, the mutation usually couldn’t take hold. Cities became impossible, and only manor farms and homesteads could survive and propagate themselves, ruthlessly purging their own populations to keep the plague at bay. The infected, however, became bloodthirsty cannibals (eating each other if need be) with social organization closer to baboon troops than human tribes, holding onto whatever cultural pattern fit their horrific fate in their own diseased minds. Millennial death-cults blossomed in every corner of the globe touched by the pestilence. On some of the Gotha parallels (mostly those with divergence points before 1000 A.D.), the Americas and Australia remain uninfected so far, but on most of them, civilization has collapsed on any level above the fortified township.

The 19 known Gotha parallels include eight worlds on Quantum 6, four worlds each on Quanta 7 and 5, and three alternates on Quantum 4. Infinity doesn’t know if Centrum has discovered any on Quantum 8 or higher. Nor do they know what caused the crossworld outbreak. Perhaps a civilization on one of the Gotha parallels once invented parachronics, and unwittingly created a mutant disease pool across the worlds. Perhaps the mutation (although biologically inexplicable to Homeline scientists) is a natural one on worldlines where the physical laws, or evolutionary epidemiology, differ slightly from Homeline normal. Paranormal explanations, such as a Cabal attack or the death throes of a telepathic god, can’t be ruled out either; as much as most Paralabs experts would like to. The Patrol has taken no risks, however; the plague virus has been completely wiped out on Homeline.

Gotha Zombies

-102 points

The Gotha virus is a super-virulent pathogen (2d minutes delay, HT-6, 1d toxic damage, 24-hour interval, 28 cycles) spread, like the pneumonic plague from which it somehow mutated, as a respiratory agent. It is very contagious, with an additional -2 to any of the contagion modifiers from p. B443. Once a sufferer has lost 2/3 of his HP to the disease, he becomes infected, and begins regaining HP at the rate of 1 per day. Those infected become “Gotha zombies,” in the callous slang of the Patrolmen who have to enter a Gotha parallel for some horrible reason.

Their Night Vision is a 0-point feature, as per p. 176.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+1 [10]; DX+1 [20]; IQ-2 [-40].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Per+4 [20]; Basic Move+3 [15]; Basic Speed+1 [20].

Advantages: High Pain Threshold [10]; Less Sleep 4 [8]; Night Vision 5 [0]; Temperature Tolerance (Cold) 3 [3]; Unfazeable [15].

Disadvantages: Bad Smell [-10]; Bad Temper [-10]; Berserk (Battle rage, +50%) [-15]; Bestial [-15]; Bloodlust [-10]; Cannot Learn [-30]; Dead Broke [-25]; Delusion (Chosen by Death) [-15]; Ham-Fisted (-6 to skill) [-10]; Hidebound [-5]; Innumerate [-5]; Social Stigma (Monster) [-15]; Uncontrollable Appetite (Blood and brains) [-15]; Weakness (Bright light, 1d per 30 minutes; Fatigue Only, -50%, Variable, -40%; -80%) [-3].

LENIN-2

The Chinese chronicles – nearly the only ones surviving on this Quantum 6 parallel – call the first wars after the Second American Revolution the Springtime Wars. The railroad strikes of 1876 destroyed the corrupt Grant administration and ushered in a worker's collective in Chicago; with the Barbary Coup and the Christmas March on Wall Street, the United Socialist States of America stretched from sea to shining sea. A lengthy campaign against the recalcitrant South ended just like the last one, with the stronger North winning through total war; the remaining capitalists and reactionaries fled to Canada and Australia. America's example once more fired the workers of Europe; Germany, France, Italy, and Russia all went Communist in the next 20 years. Only reactionary Britain and Japan held out, spreading the virus of capitalism to Sun-Yat Sen's Chinese Republic.

The Summer Wars of the 1950s brought down the British and Japanese monarchies, but the victorious powers quarreled over the spoils and failed to extirpate China's booming economy, which as always relied very little on overseas trade. By the late 20th century, the stresses of socialist economics had badly damaged the environment. Just as the Homeline Soviet Union poisoned whole river basins and lakes, in Lenin-2 the entire industrial world (except, oddly, China) began to choke on its own filth. The Communist powers blamed the Chinese capitalists, of course, and declared the Autumn War in 2000 as a crusade to end capitalism and defeat pollution. In fact, the Bolsheviks in Russia, the DKAP in Mitteleuropa, and the Christian Communist Congressional Party in the USSA fought each other almost as much as they fought the Chinese. The nuclear exchanges didn't do nearly as much damage as did the total ecological collapse. The Gulf Stream shut down and shifted global weather patterns. Catastrophic warming melted the ice caps and flooded the coastlines; mega-storms tore through the desertified continental interiors; mass extinctions wrecked the few surviving farms and forests.

Most of the few million poisoned, dying survivors in the current year 2021 are at TL3 at best. The Chinese remnants along the drowned coastlines and interior districts are at TL4/7 thanks to (barely) surviving industrial technology; China was probably at TL8 by the Autumn War, with desperate experiments perhaps reaching TL10. At least one Chinese Orion-drive (nuclear-explosion propelled) ship lifted off in 1999 for an unknown destination; others may have escaped during the war. A few Chinese received experimental genetic grafts, hopefully allowing them to survive ecological disaster. Although Miracle Workers and the Patrol are trying to repair Lenin-2, the chances look grim; talented locals such as Xing La (p. B322) receive priority for outtime recruiting, to save a few people before the inevitable choking doom as the last of the plankton die off.

LEVIATHAN

In this Quantum 6 world, humanity fights a losing battle against a mysterious TL(1+8) undersea civilization. The local humans on this parallel call the 'ANthleioi the "Atlanteans," due to their undersea origins, and perhaps because of the likeness in names. These aliens, however, have little physically in common with the Poseidon-blooded human Atlanteans on Orichalcum (p. 139), and may be native to some other dimension or parallel Earth worlds away. The Infinity Patrol provides some weapons to the human resistance where it can, but outworld aid can do little to turn back the flood tide of defeat short of full-scale intervention by a national government on Homeline.

The War Against The Water

It all began on August 10, 1797, when the 'ANthleioi attacked Newburyport, Massachusetts. American militia put up a brave, but futile resistance. By that fall, the whole eastern seaboard was in nonhuman hands and 'ANthleioi probing raids had come ashore in both Britain and France. Savants speculated on the possible genesis of such fearsome creatures, and on their strategy, but



did not challenge their apparent self-identification as survivors of the drowned continent Atlantis. In retrospect, many disappeared ships had likely gone down to the "Atlantean" depths; many more vanished that winter, and survivors told of strange radiations playing about the rigging as sudden maelstroms sucked 74-gun warships below.

Over the next decades, the Atlanteans grew better and better at working on land, hauling water tanks into position, blasting out reservoir craters with odd-colored radiance, and putting sweating human slaves to work digging canals into the interior. By 1812 (the current year), the United States is only a few military governments under Andrew Jackson's command, pulled back into the Appalachians and the southwest. Britain and France are long gone, with the other kingdoms of river-riven Europe. Trapped in Egypt by the Atlantean menace in the Mediterranean, Napoleon Bonaparte has declared an "Empire of the Sands" deep in the Sahara; he leads an army of Zouaves, Bedouin, and Tuareg with a hard core of French veterans under Murat. The Russians are a few columns of armies, Cossacks, and monks deep in the steppes; the Chinese are warlords on the fringes of the Tien Shan and Himalayas.

'A'Nthleioi ("Atlanteans")

165 points

Amphibious humanoids with pale, shiny, hairless skin, the 'A'Nthleioi show every sign of having been genetically engineered from a mixture of human, piscine, and alien DNA. They can interbreed with humans, although some of the descendants of such matings eventually respond to their genetic triggers and revert to "pure" 'A'Nthleioi, gaining subcutaneous fat and striated muscle (eventually almost 100 lbs. worth). They have large, bulbous eyes, long arms, stubby legs, and clawed and webbed hands and feet. Their skin and eyes are a pale greenish-gray, though their bellies are white. They have scaly ridges on their backs, jaws, hips, and joints, and over their prominent gill slits. They prefer salt water to fresh, but can survive in either. Their mysterious acoustic and metallurgical sciences attain TL(1+8), but 'A'Nthleioi warriors remain most comfortable with the sword and trident, at least on Leviathan.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+3 [30]; IQ+3 [60].

Advantages: Amphibious [10]; DR 1 [5]; Doesn't Breathe (Gills) [10]; Immunity (Starvation) (Drops into torpor rather than dying, -50%) [5]; Nictitating Membrane 1 [1]; Night Vision 9 [9]; Peripheral Vision [15]; Pressure Support 2 [10]; Talons [8]; Telesend (Racial, -20%, Telepathic, -10%; -30%) [21]; Temperature Tolerance 4 (Cold) [4]; Unaging [15].

Disadvantages: Dependency (Immersion in water, daily) [-15]; Dread (Swastikas) [-5]; No Empathy [-20]; Overweight [-1].

Quirks: Prefers salt water to fresh [-1].

Racially Learned Skills: Swimming-12 (HT+2) [4].

Outworld Operations

On Leviathan, the Patrol claims to be visitors from Mars, trying to help out as best they can in the struggle. (Centrum, probably correctly, considers the world a lost cause and has seemingly washed its hands of it.) Unusually for a hell parallel, this world is only Class R5 – the Infinity Council has decided that the opportunity to learn about these aliens is greater than the (so far minimal) risk to Homeline security their invasion poses.

MADLAND

This truly bizarre and inhospitable Quantum 4 parallel is high-mana with very-high-mana pockets, deformed by innumerable reality quakes (which have even disrupted the star patterns; Madland's current present year is unknown) and by the actions of its malign, insane gods. These gods, which match no known human pantheon, are twisted and animalistic, capricious and predatory. The glaciated, forested, inhospitable peninsulas

and islands where the few, cringing human natives live barely support agriculture or fishing at a TL0 level, although some tribes practice basic ironworking. Most of the cultures on Madland seem similar to Lapps or North American Indian or Siberian tribes, albeit made paranoid and fatalistic by the actions of their psychotic deities.

(See *GURPS Fantasy 2* for further details.)

TAFT-7

The Patrol isn't sure what to make of this Quantum 5 parallel, and will likely never resolve the issue because Infinity has declared it completely off limits to all travelers. (All complaints are referred to the worldline's ISWAT case officer, Dr. William Headley (p. B314).) The Scouts who discovered this worldline in 2023 named it Taft-7 because its sterilizing radiation count matches that of Taft-3 (p. B528). Its local present is 1952, judging by the stars, but the human race either never evolved here or died out long ago. Nonhuman archaeological remains (dated as best Paralabs can to about 16 million years ago) dot the continental shelves and some upthrust islands in the Pacific. The continents themselves are scarred by thousand-mile stretches of basalt that make no tectonic sense but may indicate a kind of focused chain of reality quakes ripping across the Earth's surface. What animal life survives are deformed grotesques, mutated by the radiation level; the plants are mostly carnivorous or twist themselves in search of light in invisible spectra.

JOHNSON'S ROME

The dynasty founded by Mark Antony and Cleopatra did not possess Augustus' genius, but it was in no danger of falling to an urban mob, either. Unlike Rome, Egypt could feed itself; unlike the Romans, the Egyptians knew better than to question their divine kings. The legions still watched on the Rhine, but Antony saw no point in conquering empty German forests

when he could emulate Alexander and rule the East. Rome's energies drove east and south, adding Nubia and Parthia, Sarmatia and Arabia Felix, to the Empire. The emperor Marcus Ulpius granted a very promising tribe in Sarmatia, the Goths, immediate *foederati* status and transferred them wholesale to the Bactrian border to guard the exiled Jews, which solved

several problems the cheerful, optimistic Antonine emperors never even knew they had.

Gaul and Britain fell eventually, but they were reconquered eventually, too. Plagues and famines tore through the remoter provinces, but the Egyptian granaries and Nubian gold mines kept the eastern core of the Empire alive, if not always healthy.

Rome on XXV Denarii a Day

When Alex A. Johnson, the founder of Johnson Crosstime Incorporated (JCI; see p. 38), arrived in Rome from Homeline in 1192, he found the second-biggest city of a cosmopolitan empire just hitting its second peak. The city of Rome compensated for its "second city" status by being very, very traditional and very, very decadent at the same time. Johnson fell in love immediately.

He introduced a number of improvements as he built up his local power base, from the telegraph to ice cream to hand-rolled cigars. (He had to bribe a Roman admiral to discover America first, but for lifelong cigar-smoker Johnson, it was more than worth it.) As governor of Pannonia, he drove off the Pechenegs with horse artillery and light infantry, and the ensuing military revolution is spreading to the more conservative generals in India and Gaetulia, stabilizing imperial defenses at a substantial cost savings.



Outworld Operations

Johnson Crosstime owns an amazing amount of the Roman Empire outright, second only to the imperial family as the biggest holders of land and gold in the realm. Much of its liquid capital goes to bribes, of course; the rest is plowed into upkeep for the

President Franklin Roosevelt wasn't in the best of health during the 1944 election campaign. In fact, he was barely holding on by his fingernails. On Homeline, he was able to summon the stamina to fight the Axis. There, he

Johnson's Rome, 1206

Current Affairs

Crossworld terrorism endangers a tourist paradise where Rome never fell.

Divergence Point

31 B.C.; Mark Antony and Cleopatra win the Battle of Actium; Roman center of gravity removes to the east.

Major Civilizations

Roman (empire with satellite states), Steppe-Chinese (empire with satellite states), Indic (multipolar), Mississippian-Roman (empire with satellite states).

Great Powers

Roman Empire (dictatorship, CR4), Khitai (dictatorship, CR5), Chola Telugu (oligarchy, CR4), Pagan (dictatorship, CR4), *Lenapea* (clan/tribal, CR2 for *Lenapii*, CR4 for *subject tribes*).

Worldline Data

TL: 4 (medicine, TL5/8) **Mana Level:** no mana

Quantum: 5 **Infinity Class:** O9

Centrum Zone: Inaccessible

luxurious villas, galleys, and baths JCI maintains for its Homeline tourists. Packages range from the "Seven Wonders In Seven Days" shuttle (stealthed hydrofoils and hovercraft whisk visitors from the Colosseum to the Pyramids to the Hanging Gardens, rebuilt after substantial JCI bribes to the Babylonian city governor) to the adults-only "Capri Month in Emperor Tiberius' legendary palace of pleasure" (in this worldline, of course, Tiberius Claudius wasn't an emperor, and didn't become a deranged degenerate, but it *was* his summer villa). Even Time Tours has given in, running its own tours of slightly higher-toned settings (for a substantial license fee to JCI, of course). Roman citizens have grown used to seeing flocks of tall, doughy barbarians with outrageous accents and lots of spare silver; "Jonsonius' guests from overseas" *usually* don't get knifed and rolled.

If they do, of course, the Vigiles come down on the offenders' patron like a ton of marble; the I-Cops' Security Division essentially runs the Vigiles (in Rome, Alexandria, and Babylon anyway) as a local branch office. The Patrol is mostly concerned with chasing down terrorist cells based here, especially the ones training the rebels in Persia, Mauretania, and Hibernia. In these provinces, the slackening brutality of the Imperial governors (part of Johnson's well-meaning reform plans) has encouraged overtaxed natives to rebel. And they have help: a spate of naphtha-bombings in Babylon, Carthage, and Rhodes has all the fingerprints of out-time planning. The FBI office in Rome provides full cooperation to the Patrol, and even assists with the occasional "sweep and capture" raid through the plebeian neighborhoods.

LENIN-1

even had the lucidity to drop the embarrassingly left-leaning Henry Wallace from the Democratic ticket in favor of the blunt anti-Communist machine politician Harry S. Truman. On another worldline, with his health

(or his judgment of vice presidents) a little worse, he left the intensely pro-Soviet Wallace a heartbeat away from the Oval Office. On both Homeline and Lenin-1, he died in office on April 12, 1945.

Lenin-1, 1989

Current Affairs

The United States is the last capitalist power in a world gone Communist.

Divergence Point

1944; Roosevelt leaves Vice-President Wallace on the ticket instead of Truman, and the dedicated pro-Soviet Wallace becomes President after FDR's death in office.

Major Civilizations

Orthodox (empire with satellite states), Western (multipolar), Chinese (empire with satellite states), Indic (empire).

Great Powers

Soviet Union (dictatorship, CR5), People's Republic of China (dictatorship, CR6), United States (representative democracy, CR4), People's Republic of India (representative democracy, CR5), Republic of Great Britain (oligarchy, CR4).

Worldline Data

TL: 7 (space, TL(7+1)) **Mana Level:** no mana
Quantum: 5 **Infinity Class:** Z4
Centrum Zone: Inaccessible

The West Is Red

Homeline's leftist historians were right, in a way; without the aggressive American stance in the 1940s, there was no Cold War. The Soviets occupied Germany and Japan, and propped up Communist governments in France, Italy, Iran, and Greece as the United States concentrated on social reform, disarmament, and economic readjustment. When China fell to Mao's Communists in 1949, Republicans squawked about "losing China," but couldn't sell a land war in Asia to the American people, even if there had been somewhere left to fight it. (Korea, Indochina, and the Philippines had all gone Communist as well.) Churchill couldn't keep the British in the containment business either: India became an independent socialist republic, Malaya, Kenya, and Aden fell to Communist rebels, and Nasser steered Egypt into the Soviet camp alongside socialist Israel. The 1952 elections dethroned the "lion in

Other Communist Worlds

Although worlds with successful Communist revolutions are not particularly rare, worlds in which Communism managed to exceed its not inconsiderable effect on Homeline's history are, with only five known including Lenin-1 and Campbell (p. 119).

Lenin-2 is an ecodisaster hell parallel (p. 129).

On **Lenin-3** (Q6, current year 2004), Mussolini stayed Communist and his government supported the Catalan workers, who were the anti-Soviet, anti-Fascist "third force" in Spain during the 1936-1939 War. Mexico's Cardenas brought his own socialist government into Mussolini's "anti-Moscow Socialist Axis" in 1938, and Mussolini's Axis stayed neutral during "the inter-fascist struggle" of World War II. The U.S.-U.K. alliance took an increasingly technocratic stance after the war, and launched a series of huge government "Manhattan Initiatives." Government scientists intended projects like the Moon shots, the fuel-cell car (caused by concern over Iran's socialist government joining the Axis in 1953), the Concord stratojet, and so forth to maintain the West's lead, even after the Soviet collapse in the 1960s. This uneven development path leaves Lenin-3 TL6 in some areas (like personal electronics and agriculture), TL7-8 in most things, and TL9 in high-profile gadgets like moon colonies, fuel cells, and supersonic aircraft.

On **Lenin-4** (Q6, current year 2027), a more severe Western recession in the 1970s forced *perestroika* a

decade early, with the United States in a position of weakness. The U.S. and USSR agreed to cooperate industrially and economically to dominate the Earth and space. They are challenged by a nonaligned movement centered in Brasilia, the United Peoples of Earth, and by a newly formed aerospace megacorporation, Terradyne, Inc.

The Patrol carelessly uses the "Lenin" prefix to note other worlds with important variances from Homeline socialist history. On **Lenin-5** (Q5, current year 1965), Bukharin, not Stalin, took over the Soviet Union in 1924. Bukharin did not purge the Red Army, which easily threw back Operation Barbarossa in 1941, causing a Wehrmacht coup against Hitler that aborted the War. General Zhukov took over after Bukharin's death in 1956, denouncing him and revealing the gulags to the West. Zhukov is pursuing full rapprochement with the U.S. against Mao's China; fascist Germany remains neutral.

On **Lenin-6** (Q3, current year 1922), Bakunin won the dispute over Marx at the 1872 First International, and socialist anarchism remains the progressive wave of the future among the intelligentsia. Kropotkin's Bakuninite soviets overthrew the czars in 1918; the resulting collectives are fighting a desperate, unorganized war against British and Japanese invaders, who are allied with Marxist death squads directed by Lenin, Trotsky, and Dzerzhinsky.

winter"; Churchill retired and accepted a history professorship at Fulton College in Missouri.

The United States did respond to Communist movements in the Western Hemisphere: President Eisenhower overthrew Arbenz in Guatemala, and landed the Marines in Havana in 1959. President Nixon continued this aggressive stance in the Dominican Republic and Peru, but accelerated Eisenhower's domestic statism even further as the postwar economy slowly ran out of steam. Great Britain became a socialist republic in 1974, the same year that India formally became a People's Republic (and detonated an atomic bomb to announce its independence

from both the Soviets and the Chinese). In 1981, Mexico went Communist, drawing no response from President Kennedy. America tightened its belt, accepted malaise and decline, and hunkered down to wait for the end. Either the Communist superpowers would destroy themselves (and everyone else) in a nuclear war, or the inevitable dialectic of history would sweep capitalism aside and the United States would join Russia, China, Europe, and India in grim, egalitarian poverty.

Outworld Operations

Homeline China has no great love for this parallel's Beijing government, which continues policies of mass star-

vation and industrial collectivism well out of favor in Homeline's Politburo. It takes an active hand in planning the few Patrol operations trying to defuse the suicidal politics of Lenin-1's Kremlin, which is reaching the end of its economic rope trying to stay in control of Europe, the Middle East, and Africa while keeping its armies at full strength to defeat China and overawe India. After all, Homeline's Chinese point out at Infinity Council meetings, who else has more experience reversing "left diversionism"? Although they suspect China of wanting to take over Lenin-1 wholesale, UNIC lacks any better alternative. The Patrol hopes for the best, and plans for Lenin-1's transition to hell parallel status.

On June 30, 1908, a black hole fragment slammed into the Earth. On Homeline, it hit the Tunguska valley in remote Siberia. On another worldline, the planet had revolved six hours further when the bolide struck. St. Petersburg, Russia was instantly obliterated, killing the Czar and the entire royal family. Russia collapsed into chaos, and Germany moved into the wreckage to salvage what it could.

After the Skyfall

In the radioactive ruins of St. Petersburg, the scientists of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institut (assisting with the occupation of a disintegrated Russia) found something they didn't expect. They discovered the keys to the future – strange elements they dubbed "astronium" and "petrinium." Astronium could be built into super-bombs that froze the balance of power, especially after the discovery of astronium in ancient meteor craters in Mexico, the Belgian Congo, and Mesopotamia. Petrinium could be used to power cities with electric force, lighting them up for the cost of the wire. And either could fuel the core of Willy Ley's torch ships that flew to the planets, somehow defying the conventional laws of action and reaction.

The great powers moved into space, using rapid planetary colonization and exploitation as a psychological "safety valve," full-employment program, and subsidy to big businesses after the

stock market panics of 1929 and 1930. The U.S., Germany, Britain, and Japan have space stations in low Earth orbit (*Jefferson*, *Valhalla*, *Victrix*, and *Yamato*, respectively); the outer system holds an Italian shipyard on Io and a German base on Ganymede, and Britain's Ceres Station is "halfway to everywhere," as the Royal Space Force (RSF) proudly says. Britain's Marsport colony dominates that dry,

canal-latticed world; France explores the soda-water oceans of Venus; the Italians prospect the boiling mines of Mercury; all the powers have moon-bases with lunar artillery trained on the Earth's capitals. In spaceports from Pearl Harbor to Singapore, leather-jacketed spacers with cosmic-ray tans swagger proudly, knowing that they are the inheritors of the future.

LUCIFER-5

Lucifer-5, 1938

Current Affairs

Bold German, American, and British airmen explore the planets in their atomic torch ships, as Imperial Japan and the other powers scramble for space.

Divergence Point

1908; Tunguska bolide levels St. Petersburg, Russia, leaving Germany supreme in Europe by default, and introducing a superscientific element to the dawn of the air age.

Major Civilizations

Western (multipolar), Japanese (empire)

Great Powers

German Empire (dictatorship, CR5), British Empire (representative democracy, CR4), United States (representative democracy, CR3, CR5 for blacks), Japanese Empire (dictatorship, CR5), Fascist Italy (dictatorship, CR5), France (representative democracy, CR4).

Worldline Data

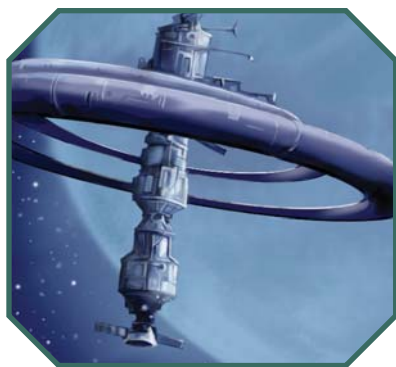
TL: 6 (power and aerospace, TL6[^])

Mana Level: none on Earth, low on Mars, normal on Venus.

Quantum: 6 **Infinity Class:** R9 **Centrum Zone:** Orange

Outworld Operations

Centrum and Homeline duel for influence in this parallel, but rather than choose up sides and fight a proxy war, both Interworld and the Patrol are trying to infiltrate the space forces of all the powers. Centrum believes that the RSF, the Raumwaffe, the United States Space Corps, and their French, Japanese, and Italian counterparts have what it takes to form the core of a new Centrum, an aerospace elite capable of dictating terms to the Earth below them. Infinity believes that this is pernicious nonsense, but can't deny the logic that command of the ultimate high ground carries with it command of this worldline. The two sides also compete to analyze and control the many strange artifacts, ruins, reality shards, and anomalous phenomena scattered throughout Lucifer-5's solar system.



"Now I am become Death, destroyer of worlds."

– Robert Oppenheimer, witnessing the Trinity atomic test, July 16, 1945

Dr. Oppenheimer quoted those words from the *Bhagavad-Gita* on Homeline and elsewhere, but only on one worldline did he unknowingly complete a necromantic ritual by doing so. On the world known as Merlin, Oppenheimer ripped open the fabric of reality and a mighty banestorm blew in . . . and stayed. The "Hellstorm," a sorcerous tornado two-miles tall, blew oz particles (p. 74) across a 2,000-mile stretch of North America. The "Manafall" awoke the world's magic, especially in the 200-mile radius around Alamogordo, New Mexico. That "Manabelt" became the

Other Lucifers

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which did weaken the nations!

– Isaiah 14:12

Infinity initiated the "Lucifer" designation to refer to worlds that have suffered devastating cometary or meteoric impact. With the discovery of Lucifer-3, the Patrol broadened their usage to encompass other sorts of interstellar disasters.

A "dinosaur-killer" meteorite struck **Lucifer-1** (Q7, current year 1991) in 1888, obliterating human life everywhere except New Zealand. Continued volcanism in the Northern Hemisphere has rendered almost the entire atmosphere nearly unbreathable; the New Zealand survivors are reduced to TL2 savagery.

On **Lucifer-2** (Q3, current year 1492) the "Canterbury Event" (a meteorite swarm striking the Moon in 1178) missed the Moon and plowed across the Eastern Hemisphere, wiping out urban civilization and ushering in a new Ice Age. The dominant civilizations are the Aymara Empire along the Brazilian coast and a Muskogean confederation in the Ohio Valley, both TL2.

In **Lucifer-3** (Q5, current year 2004), radiation from a nearby supernova or gamma-ray burster sterilized the surface of Earth in 1979. Homeliners are systematically looting the ruins of its TL7 human civilization for surviving art treasures and refined raw materials.

Lucifer-4 (Q3, current year 64,403,225 B.C.) is a late-Cretaceous parallel where the iridium meteorite has just fallen in the Yucatan (p. 84).

On the normal-mana world **Lucifer-6** (Q3, current year 747 B.C.) an eccentric comet entered an "Earth-grazing" orbit around 2350 B.C., causing catastrophic weather shifts every 400 years. Babylonian and Egyptian wizards plan to invade and conquer the comet when it comes back around next year.

MERLIN

heartland of America's postwar growth industry: magic.

The Magic Returns

In the final analysis, the Manafall merely made the United States even more overwhelmingly powerful in Merlin's history than it was in Homeline. With almost the entire Manabelt on American soil, and with the unbridled forces of capitalism unleashed on the marvelous new toys magic brings, it wasn't even close. Teleportation spells put America's *Hermes* station in orbit in 1968. Dragon-riding "Black Berets" and the 101st Spellborne Division rolled up the Communists in Vietnam and installed a pro-American strongman in 1974; flying carpets carried U.S. special

forces into Teheran in 1979; the Berlin Wall vanished into thin air in 1990; in a covert 2000 Afghanistan operation, a more supernaturally savvy CIA salted the Dead Brotherhood zombies planning to destroy the World Trade Center. Even a stronger, more prosperous Mexico redounded to America's benefit. The Chinese government has embraced traditional values and capitalism even more fervently than on Homeline; the most dangerous Communists left in the world are the warlords following a reanimated Josef Stalin in Belarus and the Caucasus, and a hive-mind of sorcerous penguins in Antarctica. Only fascist Argentina, ruled by an undying Evita Perón and supported by the Nazi sorcerers in the Condor Group, remains a threat to the

Merlin, 2004

Current Affairs

In a world of magic and technology, the United States faces the challenges of the new millennium with the best of both.

Divergence Point

1945; Trinity detonation unleashes the Hellstorm, a massive, permanent banestorm raising global mana levels. A second detonation in Antarctica unleashes an even larger one in 1949.

Major Civilizations

Western (empire with rivals), Chinese (empire), Orthodox (empire with rivals), Indic (empire).

Great Powers

United States (representative democracy, CR3), People's Republic of China (dictatorship, CR5), Russian Republic (oligarchy, CR4), Mexico (representative democracy, CR4), India (representative democracy, CR4), Argentina (dictatorship, CR5).

Worldline Data

TL: (7+1) magitech **Mana Level:** high (within 200 miles of Alamogordo, New Mexico and within 1,600 miles of Queen Maud Land, Antarctica); normal (everywhere else)

Quantum: 3 **Infinity Class:** Z2 **Centrum Zone:** Inaccessible

free world – Argentina's victory in the Falklands War gave new impetus to magical neo-fascist movements from Rumania to Egypt.

Foundation scholarship) gives her plenty of excuses for legitimate cross-world travel – and cover for her regular trips back to Merlin to report.

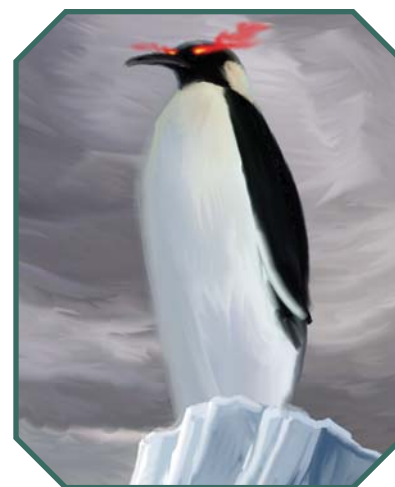
Outworld Operations

Infinity discovered Merlin in its local year 1992, when the Patrol sent a recovery mission to New Mexico in search of a stranded conveyor thrown askew by an attempted angel-summoning. Paralabs finds the magic of Merlin refreshingly technological and scientific, and is eager to learn more. Only the inherent difficulties of infiltrating a TL8 world (especially one with magical mind-reading) restrict Scout missions from gathering information on every possible topic. Even unclassified civilian magitech bought from a Merlin Wal-Mart has led to useful theoretical advances back on Homeline.

Unknown to Infinity, however, beginning in 1998 (Homeline year 2021), Merlin's CIA has sent agents of its own to investigate and infiltrate Homeline, using top-secret planar travel spells. Among their top agents in place is Georgia Bush; her cover (working toward a Ph.D. in medieval clionamics on a Duncorne

Unknown to Infinity or to Merlin's CIA, the Condor Group in Argentina has cut a "Perón-Penguin Pact" giving them access to the Queen Maud Land Hellstorm. To their surprise, not only did they acquire some very interesting artifacts and magical insights, they made contact with the Armanen Order from Reich-5. Since early this year, Merlin's Buenos Aires has hosted a Raven Division safe house (and an Amt Z Kern: see p. 67), beginning what could be a very dangerous friendship.

(See *GURPS Technomancer* for further details.)



Other Merlins

Infinity has discovered two more normal-mana worlds with Hellstorms since 2015, both of which received a Merlin designation; Merlin is therefore officially Merlin-1.

On **Merlin-2** (Q3, current year 2027), a Hamas splinter group nuked Jerusalem in 2012, unleashing the "Manaclysm" and turning everything from Cairo to Damascus into a high-mana zone. Another terrorist nuke, detonated in an oil tanker in Galveston Harbor in 2016, obliterated Houston utterly in the resulting Hellstorm, but made a vast stretch of the American West high-mana as well; a third nuke might well destroy the worldline. The Patrol, as well as most local governments, is in a nonstop race against terror, while chimeras and monsters wander an America both magical and enraged.

The Patrol discovered **Merlin-3** (Q3, current year 1942) only last year; its Hellstorm swallowed Nuremberg, Germany in 1919. The high-mana zone is almost entirely German or German-occupied (Alsace-Lorraine and Bohemia), giving Germany a sorcerous edge in this worldline's ongoing Second World War. Infinity is cautiously trying to support the Western Allies without giving The Secret away to suspicious military intelligence warlocks. The Patrol is also trying to infiltrate and divert Merlin-3's atomic research programs, which it suspects could destroy the worldline if successful! (See *GURPS WWII: Weird War II* for further details.)

MYTH PARALLELS

BURTON

This high-mana Quantum 3 worldline parallels the Arabian Nights, with djinn and flying carpets, Muslim Chinese emirates, and islands of glass in the all-circling Ocean. Needless to say, the Abbasid Caliphate at Baghdad is by far the pre-eminent power, stretching from Marrakesh to Mongolia, TL3 in everything picturesque, and TL4 in everything comfortable or convenient. The few Frankish, Byzantine, or Zanj kingdoms in the west and south, or the pagan elephant-worshippers in India, seemingly exist solely to provide someone for the caliph's armies to vanquish, and places for exotic maidens to hail from. Burton attracts all kinds, from Cabalists looking to bottle djinn to tourists eager to soak up local color in the souk.

The strangest thing about Burton is that it exists in a 23-year time loop lasting the length of Harun al-Rashid's reign, from 786 to 809 A.D. (Some anachronisms, like the Order of Assassins, exist on the fringes of the Caliphate.) When the Caliph dies, lamentations are heard for 40 days; then, the muezzins announce that Allah has sent the people a new Caliph, Harun al-Rashid. Other major figures leave around then, also; Sindbad is always out on his last voyage in 809 A.D. and returning from his earliest apprenticeship in 786 A.D., 40 days later. Many of the locals seem to understand this, and hope to take part in a story sufficiently glorious to let them live forever young and interesting; otherwise, they will live, marry, have children, and die like background characters.

CAMELOT PARALLELS

In **Camelot-1** (Q5, current year 437 A.D.), history follows the path set out by the Arthurian Vulgate Cycle; King Arthur rules a TL3 Logres and is preparing for the Battle of Badon Hill to break the power of the Saxons. Lancelot has returned to the Round Table with Tristram, and Galahad and

Percival are both three years old. The rest of Europe is under the Roman Empire, with some Saracens in Spain and Africa. The world is high-mana, but magicians are still very rare.

When the Patrol discovered the normal-mana parallel **Camelot-2** (Q7, current year 469 A.D.), they thought that the question of Arthur's historical existence was settled at last. On this worldline, a general named Artorius became the Riothamus, or High King, of Romanized Britain by marrying the daughter of Vortigern, and defends civilization against Saxon invasions. A grubbily unromantic TL2 that nearly bankrupted Time Tours when bad word of mouth depressed ticket sales for the overhyped 2014 (457 A.D. local) tour, this worldline seemed to bear out the speculations of some Homeline writers such as Geoffrey Ashe in every detail. However, other equally "realistic" Arthurs awaited discovery, and the partisans of "Riothamus" have returned to obscurity.

Camelot-3 (Q4, current year 551 A.D.) is perhaps not the most "mythical" of the parallels with a known King Arthur, but it is by far the most popular with crossworld tourists. In this normal-mana worldline, the fracture zone around 535 A.D. (p. 77) churned up reality in a major fashion, leaving Arthur's knights clad in TL4 Renaissance plate mail, living in TL3 13th-century castles, and fighting a cruel TL2 Roman Empire ruled by giants. Although Arthur has begun the Grail Quest, Homeline scholars are completely at a loss about how the rest of his reign might go.

(See **GURPS Camelot** for further details of these three worldlines.)

Shortly after discovering Camelot-3 in 2017, Infinity abandoned the "Camelot" designation. Analyzing the 535 Event helped Paralabs to develop the theory of reality quakes, and the new parachronic physics predicted that tens, or even hundreds, of "Arthurs" waited to be found. On any parallel with a current date between 410 and 660 A.D., the Patrol by now routinely expects to discover the "real Arthur" in a North Welsh hill fort, a Scottish border wall, or a detachment

of Roman cavalry, dying nobly under a nuclear winter cloud, practicing Goddess-worship in a pagan paradise, battling rude French knights, or turning into a bear during full moons in Ireland.

Just out of curiosity, however, the Echo Surveillance Division of the Penetration Service is keeping a very close eye on Echo 1502 Minus.

MANDEVILLE

This Quantum 3 worldline matches the 14th-century traveler's tales of Sir John Mandeville, a famous liar and plagiarist who in Homeline history may never have traveled any further than Belgium. The current year appears to be 1336, although readings vary wildly in the "Empire of Prester John," a bizarre, wealthy, Christian realm stretching across a somehow wider Central Asia between Cathay and Persia. Prester John claims the allegiance of the thousand kingdoms in the Indies, as well, including Chana (where people worship the first thing they see in the morning), Natumera (an island of dog-headed folk), Pentoxere (home of the talking birds), and so forth. The Arimaspians (one-eyed men) live in the Mountains of the Moon in central Africa, and the Amazons have several matriarchies and cities on the fringes of Prester John's empire and in the myriad islands between Europe and Japan. (There are no American continents, although both California and Brazil are large islands in roughly the same place as their Homeline counterparts.)

The European nations and Cathay are normal-mana and TL3 (except for high-mana lands like Cockaigne); Prester John's very-high-mana realm is TL4. Although the dangers of this parallel keep it officially off limits (rated R4), its many nexus portals, plus the Fountain of Youth in the city of Polumbum, the Valley of Jewels, and similar enticements, draw plenty of unauthorized travelers.

NOTTINGHAM

Infinity nitpickers still argue about whether this low-mana Quantum 6



parallel is a historical anchor (or close parallel) or a myth parallel. On the side of history, the “Robin Hood” who battles the Sheriff of Nottingham (and robs the papal tax collectors who batten on the weak King Henry III) lives in Barnsdale Wood, not Sherwood, and the current year is 1244, almost 50 years after the death of the mythic Robin’s liege lord Richard I. On the mythic front, he most definitely has a Maid Marian accompanying his Merry Men, and Homeline scholars are unanimous in agreeing that she is a late French addition to the legend cycle. His true identity might settle things (if he’s a common poacher, he’s likely historical; if he’s the disinherited Earl of Locksley or Huntingdon, he’s probably mythic), but given that he’s

under a sentence of death, Robin is reluctant to broadcast his true name to anyone. Regardless, Time Tours does a nice bit of business in Nottingham’s Nottingham, keeping an annual Fair there and doing their own part to rob from the rich (on Homeline) and give to the poor (on Nottingham). Less their cut, of course.

SHERLOCK PARALLELS

In the close parallel **Sherlock-1** (Q5, current year 1910), Sherlock Holmes apparently died at Reichenbach Falls in 1891. Just to be on the safe side, Infinity takes extra precautions when visiting **Sherlock-2** (Q6, current year 1888) where both Holmes and Moriarty are still alive and awaiting their fatal contest; other Victorian characters such as Dr. Jekyll and Abraham van Helsing are also alive on this worldline.

The anchor parallel **Sherlock-3** (Q6, current year 1897) was once a major covert Infinity-Centrum battleground, which the Patrol cleared out four years ago. It is now a popular Time Tours destination in which

“Sherlock Holmes” is one of several actors (one or two of whom have real criminological experience) hired by Time Tours to impersonate the Great Detective. For a well-paying outworld clientele, he “solves crimes” in an appropriately foggy Victorian London slowly coming under the financial sway of Denarius Holdings (which is also trying to stave off World War I in this timeline). Not all the crimes are bogus, however; not only does one or another “Holmes” get the occasional local client with a genuine problem, they now have an arch-enemy. Time Tours is desperately trying to keep the activities of a Centrum Unattached agent (who, having apparently done his research, goes under the name “Moran”) from attracting the attention of either the Patrol (which would close the reality if it knew Centrum was attempting to penetrate it again) or Scotland Yard. Interestingly, since “Moran” doesn’t want the Patrol interfering, either, he keeps his outrages to a minimum and keeps them “in genre” – thefts of submarine plans, airship piracy, conspiring with wicked female agents from the Continent, and that sort of thing.

In a single reign, King Shalmaneser III of Assyria managed to abort monotheism and democracy on his worldline, and make a fairly savage dent in capitalism and literacy. In 854 B.C. on the shores of the Orontes River, his armies slaughtered the Hebrews and Syrians without mercy, marching across the river on the bodies of the slain. While one detachment destroyed the Hebrew capitals of Samaria and Jerusalem, the main armies wheeled west and caught Tyre and Sidon unprepared. Captured Phoenecian ships carried the Assyrian armies to the Phrygian flank and secured the empire’s rear. The later obliteration of the few Greek oil-and-wine trading cities on the Aegean didn’t even get a whole paragraph on the triumphant stelae of Shamshiadad V. Tyre and Sidon foolishly attempted a revolt that ended with both cities destroyed; their strange “alphabetic” script survives only in a few potsherds on the Coele-syrian coast.

NERGAL

Nergal, 1678

Current Affairs

The dark sorceries of the Assyrian priests draw a shadow across the world as the icy gates of hell slowly creak open.

Divergence Point

854 B.C.; Assyria defeats Aram and Israel at the Battle of Qarqar, eradicates Hebrews entirely.

Major Civilizations

Neo-Assyrian (empire with rivals), Irano-Indic (multipolar), Steppe-Chinese (multipolar), Meso-American (multipolar).

Great Powers

Sixth Assyrian Empire (dictatorship, CR5 for Assyrians, CR6 for subject peoples), Kanavashya (feudal, CR3), Tujue (dictatorship, CR5), Nerwa (oligarchy, CR4), Denehtec Empire (theocracy, CR5).

Worldline Data

TL: 2-3 (no gunpowder or paper)
Quantum: 5
Centrum Zone: Inaccessible

Mana Level: normal
Infinity Class: P7

The Terror That Was Asshur

Even the Assyrian tyranny could not last forever, although it lasted long enough to drive the Medes and Scythians back east, to pillage softer targets in India and China. (Tujue, the Turkish marcher state in China, is the latest inheritor of their barbaric empires.) But when it fell, all future empires remembered the murderous glory of Assyria and emulated it ever after. The newest Assyrian Empire (the Sixth) reigns in efficient terror from Persia to the shores of Italy. Its cruel priests trade gangs of slaves between their basalt ziggurats, and read the entrails of those slaves fortunate enough to be offered to the gods . . . a Phoenician custom, unlike coinage, that the Assyrians did adapt. The deadly efficient war machine of the dark

lords of Asshur presses against the Persian caste-lords in Kanavashya and the other Indian kingdoms, and against the human-sacrificing Nerwa in Gaul, whose tall ships scour the Atlantic looking for slaves in the New World. So far, the Denehtec in Mexico have held out against the Celtic pirate raids, but new plagues are spreading over the land, and no matter how many hearts are torn out on the altars of Kokopetl, nothing seems to bring back the sun. Winter is coming to the world, and only the cruel will survive. This is the will of all the surviving gods.

Outworld Operations

On this world, the Infinity Patrol operates almost openly; Nergal's primitive industry poses no threat to The Secret, and frankly the Patrol would like to cause as much cultural

contamination here as possible. The Council has rejected simply conquering this parallel and deposing its homicidal empires by force, but the Patrol has taken over southern Africa and built a thriving TL3 Xhosa-Tamil society along its coasts protected by "the sky gods." (The interior is TL8 mining camps, a climatological research station studying the anomalous Ice Age in progress, and a large Paralabs magical research center on the site of Homeline's Great Zimbabwe.) Every so often, a Patrol "wizard" – or even a genuine wizard, usually from ISWAT – recruits a band of adventurous locals and lead them into one or another dark realm to liberate slaves, destroy arms factories, and otherwise psychologically destabilize the rulers of this nightmare parallel.

NOSTRADAMUS

The French pharmacist and astrologer Michel de Nostredame did a good business in almanacs and horoscopes, while cultivating true prophecy. In Homeline's history, he gained the patronage of Catherine de' Medici, the true ruler of France. In the worldline named for his Latin pseudonym, Nostredame's scholarship brought a further reward, the Iamblichan Words of Power used by initiates in the Egyptian Mysteries. He incorporated them into his Prophecies, and after his death in 1566 (which he predicted), Catherine had his manuscripts seized by her court magi and suppressed elsewhere. She began manipulating events to match the prophetic Words. In short order, Catherine had raised her son Charles to the throne of the Saint-Empire Romain and purged her enemies before they even knew of their own plots. In this history, France would have no civil war or Huguenot revolt.

Au Milieu de Branches

Her position secure in France, Catherine used Prophecy V:49 ("Not Spain but ancient France will be elected for the trembling ships") to supplant Spanish naval power; the French Armada crushed English

Protestantism in 1578 with Prophecy V:96 ("Upon the world's center, the Rose . . . At the time of need help will come too late.") Other prophecies, and a certain amount of old-fashioned Medici power politics, raised France and its ally Venice to power in Italy (Prophecy VIII:11 "The great one

of Valencia defeated, when Venice and more take up the affair") and brought the Dutch to heel (Prophecy VI:100 "Daughter of the breeze . . . You will be captive, and more than four times."). As Nostredame's elixirs kept Catherine alive, she kept France supreme in Europe.

Nostradamus, 1602

Current Affairs

Nazis from Reich-5 conquered Mesopotamia on this world where prophecy is a weapon; they use it as a base to strike deep into the continuum.

Divergence Point

1555; the seer Nostradamus somehow incorporates Words of Power into his prophecies, to the immediate benefit of Catherine de' Medici of France.

Major Civilizations

Western (multipolar), Islamic (empire with rivals), Chinese (empire).

Great Powers

Neubabalon (military dictatorship, CR5 for Nazis, CR6 for everyone else), Saint-Empire Romain (dictatorship, CR4), Ottoman Empire (dictatorship, CR5), Ming China (dictatorship, CR5), Safavid Persia (dictatorship, CR4).

Worldline Data

TL: 4 (Nazis, TL8)

Quantum: 3

Centrum Zone: Inaccessible

Mana Level: normal

Infinity Class: Z1

Outworld Operations

One whom the infernal gods of Hannibal

Cause to be reborn, terror of mankind:

The ultimate horror worse than any paper can tell,

They will come from Babylon toward the Empire.

— Michel de Nostredame, Prophecy II:30

Outside Europe, however, the ultimate horror landed in Babylon in 1599. SS Raven Division (p. 64) machine guns mowed down scimitar-waving Janissaries, helicopter gunships destroyed the Turkish artillery parks, and the Armanen Order controlled “New Babylon” from Basra to Aleppo. At the Austrian court negotiating an alliance against Turkey, the SS learned of the “mysterious quatrains”

used by Catherine’s sorcerous diplomats to reshape Europe. A quick Gestapo operation brought the secret back to Neubabalon. Catherine’s secret weapon was no secret to invaders from a history where Nostredame’s prophecies were tabloid copy. Ahnenerbe rune magicians rapidly deduced Catherine’s methods, and invoked Prophecies II:30 and X:86 (“The King of Europe, accompanied by men of the North, leads the red and white against the King of Babylon”) to cement their own control.

The Order seeks to keep the Turks and French off balance, and to fully secure the Chronobahn (p. 79), which on this world runs from the Taurus Mountains in southern Anatolia almost due east to Sinjar, in the Iraqi desert west of Mosul, and from the Pontic Mountains just south of Trebizond on the Black Sea to the val-

ley of Baalbek in the Lebanon. The two roads cross at Carchemish, on the Euphrates northeast of Aleppo. Much of this roadway remains Ottoman-controlled, or under Kurdish or Armenian border lords who revolted after the SS destroyed the Ottoman armies in the region. The western end of the Chronobahn leads to the Friedrich worldline (p. 124), a crucial pawn in Raven Division strategy. Exploring the Chronobahn is possible – no local force can stop an SS recon unit. Conquering it is more difficult; the Kurds, especially, seem eager to resist the Nazis. The Patrol has noted what might be Merlin-2 U.S. Spectral Ops forces working with the local Kurds, and speculates that Nostradamus also has a possible world-gate to Merlin-2 (p. 135) somewhere in the Middle East.

ORICHALCUM

On this worldline (and perhaps a few others) Atlantis exists, and just as Homeline’s Plato reported, it is indeed a great island empire out beyond the Pillars of Heracles, founded by Poseidon, god of the sea. At the height of its power, arrogance, and glory, Atlantis’ rulers are bent on world conquest, with only the Republic of Athens to stop them.

A Great and Wonderful Empire

Atlantis is a roughly diamond-shaped island, lying just over 600 miles west of the Straits of Gibraltar. It is just over 1,000 miles long north to south, and about 800 miles at its widest from east to west. (The Azores and Madeira do not exist on Orichalcum, although other Atlantic islands do, most of them under Atlantean control.) Its geology is complex and irregular, with marshlands and several volcanic mountain ranges, but also some fertile lowlands, including the broad central plain where the capital city, Poseidonis, is located. The mountain ranges run right up to the coastline in many places, creating rocky, inhospitable coasts; Atlantis’s few ports, especially the capital, are highly valued. The climate is broadly Mediterranean; the equinoctial rain

and volcanic ash (and perhaps Poseidon’s blessing) make the island amazingly fertile and thus amazingly wealthy.

Atlantis dominates western Europe up to the Italian city-states, where it competes with Athens (and to a lesser extent, Athens’ rivals Knossos, Thebes,

Sparta, and Argos) for influence, and Africa to the borders of Khem. This pyramid-building kingdom rules Egypt from its capital at Thebes of the Hundred Gates well up the Nile Valley. An Amazon outpost in Cyrene between Atlantean and Khemite territory is the only non-Atlantean city in

Orichalcum, 9590 B.C.

Current Affairs

Atlantis and Athens square off for the favor of the gods and the mastery of the seas.

Divergence Point

10,400 B.C.; the 10 sons of Poseidon found the kingdom of Atlantis. (The variant geography indicates another possible divergence point around 50 million years ago, but the Patrol would prefer to blame Poseidon’s magic rather than anomalous continental drift in this case.)

Major Civilizations

Atlantean (empire), Hellenic (empire with rivals), Egyptian (empire), Amazon-Hittite (multipolar).

Great Powers

Atlantis (feudal dictatorship, CR4), Athens (technocracy, CR6), Khem (theocracy, CR5), Themyscira (dictatorship, CR4), Troy (dictatorship, CR4).

Worldline Data

TL: 1-2 (some Atlantean tech, TL4)

Quantum: 6

Infinity Class: R5

Mana Level: normal

Centrum Zone: Yellow

Africa outside Egypt. The Amazon matriarchy centered on the “Black Island” of Themyscira north of Anatolia dominates the rest of the Middle East south to Canaan (which is a buffer zone between Khem and the Amazons) and west to Troy. East of the Amazons, various lesser states spread out toward the Indian kingdom of Nysa, ruled by the demigod Dionysos (see *Active Gods*, p. 68).

(See *GURPS Atlantis* for further details.)

Outworld Operations

Like many “high fantasy” myth parallels, Orichalcum is a pocket

multiverse, complete with gods on a paradimensional Mount Olympos, the Egyptian Duat, and so forth. Generally speaking, the Patrol supports Atlantis and the Amazons; Centrum backs the proto-fascist “Platonic Republic” of Athens and the similarly orderly empire of Khem. Both sides step gingerly around the gods, who take an alarmingly active role in this worldline.

Ordinarily, both the Patrol and Centrum would leave a primitive, dangerous, god-plagued worldline like Orichalcum alone, except that it’s the only known source in the infinite worlds for the wonder metal orichal-

cum. Lighter than bronze, strong as steel, the Atlanteans use orichalcum as a decoration (beaten with copper, it makes a gorgeous red-gold flash on the rims of Atlantean temples and palaces) and to power the occasional magical construct such as the bronze giants that guard Poseidonis’ harbor. (More to Infinity’s interest, it is also a warm-temperature superconductor, and if alloyed with titanium increases its tensile strength ninefold.) Although CMU prospectors have been busy looking, so far the only orichalcum mines are in Atlantis itself and Spain, far too close to the eyes of the gods for open mining operations.

PUZZLE WORLDS

BLIP

This low-mana Quantum 4 timeline seems to have a different time-flow speed. To put it mildly. A day spent there is equal to only six minutes and 12.5 seconds elsewhere. The world is inhabited; its people are currently at TL3, but they’re advancing quite rapidly! Assuming that the civilizations of Blip (which seems to be dominated by a Byzantine-Hunnic codominium between the Danube and the Jaxartes) develop at roughly the speed Homeline did, they should be splitting the atom within the next 14 months, and possibly inventing parachronics a few weeks after that . . .

ENIGMA

On local date July 12, 1982 – 26 years ago – the entire population of the no-mana Quantum 7 alternate Earth called Enigma . . . vanished. The Infinity Patrol discovered this timeline in 2012, 11 years after the disappearance. Up until that July, Enigma appears to have been a close parallel. The most notable difference was that the Ramones never toured England, and apparently as a consequence, the band The Clash never formed. Six months of careful study produced no evidence as to what happened – no millennial tension, no upsurge in UFO sightings, no banestorm, no Second Coming, no global dust-plague – and nothing like it has happened before or

since on any other worldline in Penetration Service records. The Infinity Council closed the investigation, but has declared the world a Class Z1 alternate, just to be on the safe side.

MICROWORLD

In this Quantum 3 parallel, something very strange happened in the year 1892. Up until that summer, this alternate had been a fairly close parallel, with a few literary and dietary differences. But it diverged rapidly over a period of a few weeks: all mankind shrank by a linear factor of about 70, to an average height of a little over an inch, and average weight of around an ounce. (Many domesticated animals shrank by the same factor.) Their scientists never managed an explanation, and as yet neither have Infinity’s! (A very bright comet did appear in the skies over Microworld in May, 1892, and not over any other known alternate.) The various laws of physics that would seem to make “tiny people” impossible have somehow been bypassed, although the square-cube law and so forth still hold for inanimate objects. Microworld is low-mana, but the effect does not seem magical, at least not as Paralabs understands magic to operate.

After an initial period of panic, and global wars of extermination against the un-shrunk rats, Microworld recovered and is now in many ways very prosperous; there are far more

resources to go around! Ocean and air travel are much harder, of course, since weather is now a much greater hazard. Wars between humans have resumed (beginning with a war against an expansionist Communist Microhungary in the 1920s), but there is very little nuclear threat, since the smallest possible atomic bomb is inconveniently large for inch-tall combatants. The Micro year is 1970; they are in late TL7.

Observation of Microworld has been very limited, initially on the assumption that the existence of “giants” would probably crush these peoples’ spirits. Given that the tabloids in Microworld now sell off the stands with “giant sightings,” that fear may have been overwrought, as was the fear that the shrinkage might somehow be contagious – it seems to be totally unique to Microworlders. More importantly, Microworld is one of the more difficult parallels to covertly infiltrate, for obvious reasons. However, a Patrolman’s serendipitous discovery of an abandoned laboratory in the Q3 parallel Klaatu did produce a chemical reagent, the Carey Formula, that can allow a Microworlder to survive while shrunk even on worldlines with more conventionally consistent laws of physics. The Patrol and ISWAT have each recruited a few Microworlder agents, especially in the wake of hurricanes and other disasters, when, as all devoted Microreaders of the *Midnight Star* know, “giants” are known to roam the Earth.

Microworlders

-39 points

The inhabitants of Microworld are normal humans on their own worldline, and would use normal templates in a Microworld-based game. (Un-shrunk rats, on the other hand, would have ST scores above 40!) Elsewhere in the infinite worlds, however, they use the following template. Without bionics, magic, or other enhancements, a Microworlder's maximum ST and Basic Move are 1.

Attribute Modifiers: ST-9 [-90].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Basic Move-4 [-20].

Advantages: DR 20 (only against falling damage, -60%) [40]; Hard To Kill 5 [10]; Microscopic Vision 1 [5]; Pressure Support 1 [5]; Reduced Consumption 4 (Require three meals a day, -25%) [6]; Resistant (Alcohol and environmental hazards, +8) [10]; Silence 7 [35]; Tunneling 1 (Soil only, -50%) [18].

Disadvantages: Cannot Float [-1]; Dependency (Carey Formula, monthly) [-30]; Gluttony (12) [-5]; Vulnerability (Poison gas or spray, ×3) [-30].

Skills: Riding (Birds) (DX+2) [8].

Features and Taboo Traits: Size Modifier -11; maximum ST and Basic Move 1.

Möbius

This seemingly normal parallel breaks the fundamental rules of quantum parachronics by existing in two quanta simultaneously. Conveyors from Homeline travel to Möbius by projector, as if going to Quantum 4. However, once in the parallel, an unassisted conveyor can reach Quantum 7 worlds, as if Möbius were on Quantum 7. Infinity doesn't believe that Centrum has discovered Möbius, and they don't believe that a conveyor can "reverse engineer" the process and reach Homeline, since that would (theoretically) require a projector, which can't work on either Quantum 4 or Quantum 7. Of course, in theory, the "quantum knot" in Möbius' worldline should be impossible!

Other than its bizarre topospace, Möbius seems perfectly average; it's a world where Ferdinand and Isabella died besieging Granada in 1492, Spain broke up, and Cabral discovered America for Portugal by accident in 1500. The Portuguese Empire dominates the world's sea lanes after sweeping the English and Dutch fleets from the Caribbean in 1578; the current year is 1590. It does have packs of neo-troodons (p. 149) living in the Amazon rainforest, but as best Infinity can determine, they (and the other

surviving "dinosaurs" in the New World) are perfectly normal, if not at all likely. They have become a common feature in European menageries, and are roughly as intelligent as apes.

RUSTIC

In this Quantum 3 world, although it is a no-mana alternate, no technology higher than "simple mechanics" works. Rustic is in its current year 1882, and recovering from a global hantavirus epidemic that devastated Eurasia and the entire Pacific Rim, including the Chinese colonies in western North America, allowing Virginia and Navajo to expand to the Pacific. (The other major powers in the wake of the pestilence are Drakensberg, a Hessian corporate mining empire in South Africa, and the Jesuit states in South America.) These powers have progressed to TL4 (early TL5 in some areas) and seem unlikely to get any farther.

Essentially, it is impossible to produce an artificial electrical discharge on Rustic. This timeline was discovered by a world-jumper; if a conveyor had gone there instead, it wouldn't have been able to return, and Rustic would no doubt have been written off as a deadly setting.

VANISH

Within the Patrol, this name is a darkly humorous running joke, albeit one in questionable taste. At last count, 41 projector/conveyor settings show all the signs of validity – in other words, the math and the readings from Homeline instruments seem to correspond to real timelines. But nothing has ever returned from a trip to these worlds. The persistence of "Reality Vanish" helps explain why Infinity sends drones through to a new reality, where possible, ahead of manned Scout missions. But such reconnaissance is not always feasible, or unambiguous, and every so often an empty coffin gets buried on Mount Eisenhower for a Patrolman "posted to Reality Vanish."



Some researchers speculate that these are worlds where the physical laws are very different, killing visitors immediately and crippling their machinery. Some superstitious Patrolmen claim to believe that lost drones are "sacrificed to the god of Vanish," and "Vanish it!" has become a popular curse even among the hardest-headed Patrolmen. Of course, no such elaborate explanation is necessary; if a conveyor pops into the heart of a volcano, or an atomic explosion, perfectly normal physical laws will destroy it instantly. But Paralabs knows that some worlds have alien physical laws; it's easy to imagine that some of these might be deadly.

WYVERN

This Quantum 4 parallel (current year 1904) was originally thought to be a close parallel to Homeline's Edwardian era with an odd fixation on dragons. The Scouts classified it a P9 world, and moved on. Only after two years of perfectly ordinary tourist trips, White Star trading missions,

and so forth did Infinity realize that the dragons on Wyvern were actually real – and that they could sorcerously dominate human acolytes and apparently whole nations without even leaving their caves. The Patrol clamped a Z classification on Wyvern and is frantically tracking down every Homeline visitor to this parallel to assess the possibility that The Secret might have

accidentally slipped to reptilian monsters. Of course, covert Cabal trips to this worldline increased dramatically – many Cabalistic formulas call for dragon's blood, and dragons are imaginary (or worse, extinct) on *most* Earths . . .

(See Chapters 7 and 8 of *GURPS Dragons* for further details.)

REICH-2

A less resolute government than Churchill's might easily have decided that the military situation was hopeless in 1940, after the fall of France, and that Britain's only chance of survival was accommodation to the new order. The man who almost led Britain to such a peace was Edward Frederick Lindley Wood, Lord Halifax, who had been Neville Chamberlain's foreign secretary and was his preferred successor. On Homeline, Halifax turned down the job, fearing that leading the government in the House of Commons would be impossible for a titled peer.

On Reich-2, he put such qualms aside to save England as best he knew how. Lord Halifax was *not* a Nazi sympathizer, and his government was never a German ally. He used the armistice to build up the British military, especially the Royal Air Force. However, the military effect of peace in the west was to give Hitler a freer hand in the east. The Anglo-German Armistice ended the chances of the United States getting involved in the European war, since many Americans saw little to choose between Nazis and Soviets.

The Kalter Krieg

With Britain sidelined, the Germans and Soviets fought to a stalemate and a 1943 armistice that left Nazi tanks in the Ukraine and Baltic States, but put Moscow well out of reach. Lord Halifax detached Japan from the Axis by selling them oil and rubber, and acquiescing in their conquest of China, Indochina, and the Dutch East Indies. With the oil embargo broken, the Japanese never attacked Pearl Harbor, and the United States never went to war; the

charismatic President Joseph Kennedy, Jr. is the first Democrat since Roosevelt in the White House, and the first to seek a renewed international role for America.

The possibilities of that role are simultaneously constrained and wide open. The British atomic bomb of 1949 and the German orbital rocket in 1950 left the balance of power frozen for a time; with all five great powers orbiting nuclear missile platforms, any open war would rapidly end civilization. The five powers shift alliances and interests frequently; the Anglo-Japanese alliance broke down over India and Malaya (Japan has been supporting anti-British rebels in both colonies; Britain responds by

running weapons into Japanese-occupied China from Hong Kong). With Hitler gone to his Valhalla and the considerably more practical (if equally ruthless) Führer Heydrich in the Reichschancellery, the Russian armistice line has settled down almost to a formal border, complete with rail links, showy "cultural exchanges," and crossing points at Kharkov, Mogilev, and Pskov. British commandos have aided Communist partisans in Occupied Serbia, and hunted them in the German Kongo. President Kennedy's father is a famous admirer of Nazi Germany, but his party prefers Premier Gromyko's Soviet Union despite the rumors coming out of Communist Iran and Afghanistan.

Reich-2, 1961

Current Affairs

Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, and the British Empire fight an ever-shifting cold war of espionage and sabotage as the United States and Imperial Japan jockey for position and allies.

Divergence Point

1940; Lord Halifax becomes Prime Minister of Britain instead of Churchill, and negotiates an armistice with Germany and an alliance with Japan.

Major Civilizations

Western (multipolar), Orthodox (empire), Japanese (empire).

Great Powers

German Reich (dictatorship, CR4-5 for Germans, CR6 for subject races), British Empire (representative democracy, CR4, CR5 in colonies), Soviet Union (dictatorship, CR6), United States (representative democracy, CR3, CR5 for blacks), Japanese Empire (military oligarchy, CR4-5 for Japanese, CR6 for subject nations).

Worldline Data

TL: 7 (aerospace, TL(7+1))

Quantum: 6

Infinity Class: Z3

Mana Level: no mana

Centrum Zone: Red



Other Reichs

On **Reich-1** (Q4, current year 1952), Germany forced an unequal peace on Britain after destroying the BEF at Dunkirk, and went on to defeat the Soviet Union while the United States ignored Europe and crushed Japan. Neither has yet developed nuclear weapons, although both have active research programs. After Hitler died in 1949, Himmler purged the Party and took sole power. He began the next war by occupying Britain, despite the warnings of his admirals that Germany was not yet ready to challenge the Americans. Sure enough, the United States is currently blockading the entire Atlantic coast of Europe, American jets proving equal to the best the Luftwaffe can field. Battles against the Wehrmacht in India and Siberia have been less successful, but America is slowly assembling a gigantic invasion force in Iceland, and as yet the Germans have no idea of its intended target.

On **Reich-3** (Q5, current year 1970), Japan struck Russian Vladivostok rather than Pearl Harbor in 1941. The isolationist United States stayed out of war and never fully funded nuclear research. Japan and Germany divided Eurasia, isolating the United States still further. Most of South America is German-aligned (though Ecuador and Venezuela are Japanese clients, and Brazil is ostentatiously neutral). Only Canada and Mexico remain closely allied with the United States (Canada, with a large voting base of U.K. refugees and their children, is in fact far more committed to resisting the Axis powers than the U.S.) But the United States still wields influence in the Caribbean that Germany covets, and its continued possession of Hawaii strikes Japan as an affront. While conflict between the two

Axis empires is rising along their common borders, they have thus far determined to table those issues until the last of the Anglo-Saxon powers can be properly humbled.

On **Reich-4** (Q4, current year 1988) the Wehrmacht broke Leningrad's defenses in 1941. By 1945 only Germany and Japan succeeded in developing nuclear weapons, which they used to cement their victory. Heavy investments in anti-aircraft defenses by the United States were negated by the German ballistic missiles, whose first nuclear strike destroyed industrial centers and troop formations alike. American resistance was brave, but ultimately futile. The Japanese provided the bulk of the occupation troops from their empire, and the Axis powers split North America between them. Without a common enemy, the two superstates, each convinced of the supremacy of their ruling race, soon turned on one another. In 1979, dispute over Persian Gulf oil rapidly escalated, and triggered a German first strike that decapitated the Japanese Empire and destroyed enough of its nuclear capability to leave Germany as a functioning state. But the de facto ruler of the world, after heavy losses, is finding it difficult to find the personnel to administer its new territories. (And, on viewing the devastation, the Germans are likewise finding it difficult to summon the wherewithal to bother; Nazi doctrines regarding *lebensraum* and the racial destiny to rule notwithstanding.)

Reich-5 (Q3, current year 2010) is covered on pp. 57-67.

The Republicans backed the British, and the Anglophile Yalies in the American OSS continue to support MI6, the greatest spy agency in the world, regardless of who sits in the Oval Office. MI6, however, isn't always sure which side to support themselves.

Outworld Operations

The same is not quite true of the Infinity Patrol; they still support the

Western democracies, despite their discomfort with British colonial methods in Kenya or American peacekeeping efforts in Nicaragua and the Philippines. Centrum seemingly hasn't picked a side yet; the Interworld Service has moles throughout both the British and Soviet intelligence services, and may have hopes of subverting Nazi Germany from within. With all five powers on nuclear hair triggers, the Patrol and Interworld

operate almost like freelance espionage agencies or international criminal rings. (Both Patrol and Interworld use local spy agencies as cover stories, and occasionally as the source of forged local identities.) The lines get blurred during gold heists from pro-German Argentina, while running crossworld Maserati smuggling rings out of Mussolini's Palermo, or during heroin runs into Japanese-occupied Shanghai.

ROMA AETERNA

Although the dynastic name is the same, the Julio-Claudian Emperors in this parallel are entirely different from Homeline's after Augustus himself. Drusus, who did not die on campaign in Germany in this worldline, replaced his older brother Tiberius as Augustus' successor. Drusus' son Germanicus, who in Homeline history died young (apparently poisoned) survived to succeed him. These two proved to be wise rulers; Germanicus, in particular, was beloved by the people. Germanicus' eldest son Nero (not the same as the Homeline Emperor) instead of dying after imprisonment by Tiberius, received the name Britannicus after his conquest of Britain, and eventually

followed his father to the purple. The line continued for two generations more before Nero Drusus, the last of the line, died without issue. Thus, Roma Aeterna was spared the reigns of the mad emperors Caligula (a younger son of Germanicus) and Nero, son of Germanicus' daughter Agrippina.

Empire Without End

Instead, the Julio-Claudian emperors gave Rome stable borders in Europe, and, with their patronage of the Heronian Academy in Alexandria, primitive industry as well. This parallel also had no chaotic "Year of Four Emperors" and no Flavian dynasty of military despots. The adoptive

Antonine emperors who immediately followed the Julio-Claudians graced the Empire with three centuries of remarkably able rulers, whose brilliance masked real decline until the first succession war in 400 years finally broke the illusion of permanence. The Empire fractured in civil war and barbarian invasions. It took two centuries to reunite a shrunken Second Empire, by successive dynasties using the sea power of North Africa. New machines of war enabled the emperors – more often from their second capital at Alexandria than from Roma itself – to reconquer the East and push into India. New ships discovered the Hesperides across the Atlantic Ocean, and legions conquered, then colonized, the rich lands of the Maiae.

While the First Empire had collapsed dramatically, the Second Empire had a slower, more painful decline. Disease and invasion were met with increased centralization from the new capital at Alexandria, buying a respite at the cost of cultural petrification. Imperial control eroded from the fringes, passing to local military or barbarian immigrants. The 13th-century Mongol invasions broke the last pretensions of imperial unity.

The main exception to the darkness of the Long Night was across the ocean. The Roman colonies in the Hesperides traded among themselves and expanded into the fertile volcanic lands in central Hesperia. Their Heronian Academies rediscovered the steam engine and fueled a rebirth of nostalgic Roman glory. In the 18th century, the European provinces recovered enough to resume trade with the Hesperides, sparking rivalry and war. The Hesperians got the better

Roma Aeterna, 1893

Current Affairs

A conservative new dynasty from the Mexican provinces has restored the Roman Empire to its eternal glory. Harnessing steam and gunpowder, Rome expands once more!

Divergence Point

9 B.C.; Drusus does not die on campaign in Germany, and becomes emperor in 29 A.D. (possibly disrupting Jesus' crucifixion with a general pardon for all prisoners); his heirs are *not* insane, depraved halfwits, unlike the historical Homeline Julio-Claudians.

Major Civilizations

Roman (empire), Chinese (multipolar), Andean (empire).

Great Powers

Third Roman Empire (dictatorship, CR4 for Roman citizens, CR5-6 for subjects), Taehan (dictatorship, CR6), Huaraca (theocratic dictatorship, CR6).

Worldline Data

TL: 5 (some weapons, TL6)

Quantum: 6

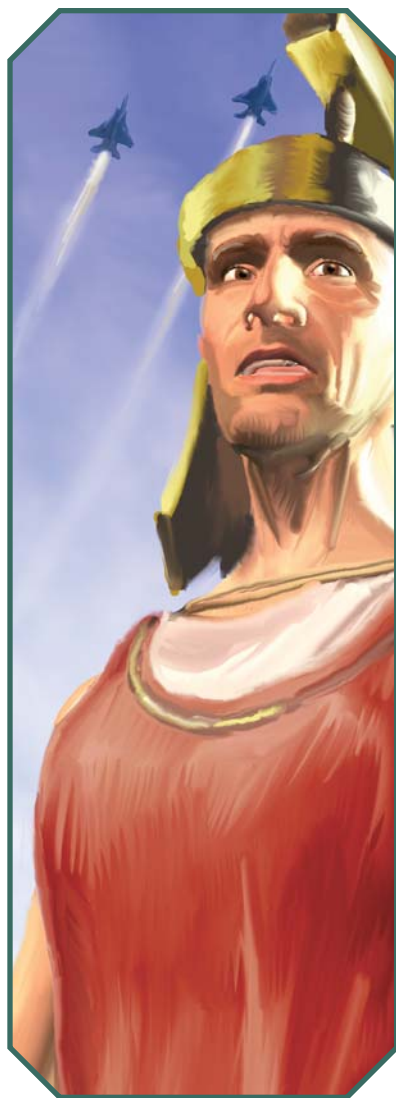
Infinity Class: P4

Mana Level: low

Centrum Zone: Yellow

of Britannia (the leading European province) and invaded Europe with a massive steam fleet. Superior Hesperian technology combined with the ideological appeal of a rebirth of Roman glories to make the conquest irresistible. By 1806, the Hesperian general Corineus Junius Selauchis had entered Roma and proclaimed the Third Empire.

After claiming the eternal city, the new rulers often found their progress becoming as much a triumphal march as a military campaign. Egypt, whose rulers still claimed the imperial title, joined the new Empire without a fight after a Hesperian show of force in the harbor of Alexandria. Even before the reconquests in Europe and Africa had been assimilated, the third of the new emperors turned his attention to Persia, and his successor went one better by inaugurating the reconquest



of India. Today, the Empire has at least duplicated or surpassed its former maximum extent on every front, and its star is still rising.

(See *GURPS Alternate Earths* for further details.)

Outworld Operations

Roma Aeterna was formerly the destination for several popular vacation packages offered by Time Tours, Ltd. It isn't as decadent as Johnson's Rome, but there was a clientele that preferred to see a world based more around Roman ideals than Roman decadence. All of that went by the wayside in 2022 after a group of Time Tours employees stumbled upon

Centran agents in Alexandria. Before managing to get their group to safety, they found evidence that Centrum had thoroughly infiltrated the local power structure. Infinity reduced the parallel's Access Rating (p. 83) from 9 to 4, and investigated.

Infinity had assumed that Centrum would suffer its standard linguistic handicaps (see *The Language Barrier*, p. 47) when operating in a Roman worldline. Thanks to a living classical tradition, however, Centrum had fielded agents capable of working in Roma Aeterna without difficulty, and they did such an effective job that the I-Cops still aren't sure how far their control extends.

Other Romes

Roma Aeterna was the third Roman-dominated parallel discovered by Infinity, hence its official designation "Rome-3." Rome-2 is Johnson's Rome (p. 130).

On **Rome-1** (Q5, current year 954), the Emperor Justinian succeeded in reuniting the empire and his successors moved the capital back to Rome from Constantinople; the legions conquered Germany and Bohemia and hold the borders against Magyars, Vikings, and Turks. The shorter dark ages have moved Rome into high TL3, or even TL4 in some areas (but with no gunpowder as yet).

On **Rome-4** (Q6, current year 1741), the rebellions of Sertorius and Spartacus fragmented Roman civilization in 74 B.C., but the Roman successor republics still overmatched all their neighbors. Despite turns to despotism in the third and 15th centuries, most of the TL6 Roman states from Cuba to the borders of the Afghan Empire are quarrelsome, independent republics.

On **Rome-5** (Q4, current year 404 A.D.), the Chinese expedition to Parthia under Pan Ch'ao met the Romans under Trajan in 97 A.D. Roman-Chinese wars led to cultural interchange, which paid off when Galen accidentally invented inoculation while studying acupuncture. This medical revolution (now at TL5) enabled both Rome and China to survive the third-century crisis essentially intact at TL2, and spoiling for a religious war between Roman Catholicism and Chinese Nestorian Christianity.

Rome-6 (Q7, current year 248 A.D.) is a normal-mana (with uneven spots both low and high) close parallel of Homeline's TL2 Rome, except that Christianity (if it exists) is even farther underground, and magic seems to work as the Romans believed. This may make Rome-6 a myth parallel, or it might have some connection to the Cabal, who claim to have ruled in Rome right about this time. (See *Roma Arcana* in *GURPS Fantasy* for further details.)

Rome-7 (Q4, current year 180 A.D.) has not yet outlasted Homeline's Rome, but it has entered a full-scale Industrial Revolution triggered by Vespasian's commissioning Hero of Alexandria to build steam-powered siege machines to destroy Masada in 73 A.D. Oil-driven TL(2+3) aeolians battle in the Colosseum, and the spoiled sons of patricians drag-race down the Appian Way as the legions drive into India.

The Infinity Patrol has identified at least a dozen powerful Roman senators and equestrians as Centran agents, mostly wealthy merchants but including an important general and the governor of Libya province. These agents do not appear to form a political faction – indeed, they publicly oppose each other on several issues. The Patrol doesn't know exactly what their plan is, except that they do seem to be attempting to place agents at court. Centrum exercises influence through secret societies as well. The

mystery cults of Horus Regnans (in Aegyptus) and Angerona, goddess of silence (in Italia) appear to have fallen under their full control. They have also introduced their own secret society, the Order of the White Way (Ordo Albae Viae), a magical sect prominent in the industrial centers of Hesperia. On a few occasions, they have simulated magical powers, including “miraculous” cures through antibiotics, within these front organizations.

Having been caught flat-footed, the I-Cops are trying to recover.

Infinity has limited its activities in the Empire to intelligence operations, trying to discover the scope of Centran influence and its ultimate purpose. The Patrol is building a power base of its own among the Chinese traders who sail to the Indian Ocean from the Serican petty kingdoms in east Asia, which Centrum would have extreme difficulty infiltrating. Plans to form a secret society front organization under Infinity control are under consideration.

SHIKAKU-MON

The history of this Quantum 3 parallel diverged in the early 16th century, when the heir to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain survived to ascend the throne as John III. Without the dynastic union of Spain and Austria under the Habsburgs, European history took a different shape during the crucial era of the Reformation. On the other side of the globe, the Jesuits were successful with their campaign of Christian proselytization in Japan. Under the Oda chancellors, Japan never “turned away from the gun.”

Instead, it began the adaptation of Western culture that was eventually to give the Chrysanthemum Throne total dominance of East Asia.

Today, the name for the parallel itself comes from the local version of Japanese: *shikaku-mon*, from the native word for “square” and their French loan-word for “world,” is a common term for the quadripolar balance established in the 20th century. Japanese control of the eastern half of the globe is balanced by the economic power of Brazil, the

frightening totalitarian Swedish Empire, and the technological achievements of the Kingdom of France, risen from the ashes of military defeat to seize the high ground of space. Despite technology superior to Homeline's in many areas, societies cling to archaic aristocratic forms that no longer function in the modern world. Social tensions between the haves and the have-nots have disrupted society in much of the world and increase steadily.

Four Temple Gates Under One Moon

Japan began to supplant Portugal in the east in the early 17th century, just as Sweden unified northern Germany under its control and became a great power. In the next century, France allied with Sweden to defeat Britain, Spain, and the Dutch, becoming the paramount state in Europe as the Industrial Revolution took hold. The Rationalist Movement, parallel to the Enlightenment on Homeline, expressed and created a new secular outlook on the world, but failed to create an era of revolutionary politics. A Republican movement sputtered to life in Portugal (driving the royal family to Brazil to found an independent Empire there) and England's Virginia colony, but French vigilance kept aristocracy supreme.

In 1861, France lost its global dominance to a rising alliance of Sweden, Brazil, and Japan, which had defeated China for hegemony over east Asia and divided India with Britain. The

Shikaku-Mon, 2027

Current Affairs

The balance of a cyberpunk world shifts between four great powers: the Japanese Empire, the Swedish Empire, the Empire of Brazil, and the Kingdom of France.

Divergence Point

1497; the son of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain survives to become King John III, weakening the Habsburgs and causing Portugal to focus its attention overseas on Brazil and missionary activities in Japan. As a consequence, Japan converts to Christianity, never turns away from the gun, and begins expanding in the 1590s.

Major Civilizations

Japanese-Western (empire), Western (multipolar).

Great Powers

Japanese Empire (oligarchy, CR4 in Home Islands, CR3 elsewhere), Swedish Empire (technocratic oligarchy, CR6), Empire of Brazil (corporate state, CR1), Kingdom of France (dictatorship, CR4).

Worldline Data

TL: 8 (aerospace and electronics, TL9)

Quantum: 3

Centrum Zone: Inaccessible

Mana Level: no mana

Infinity Class: Z3

powers, now roughly equal, competed for colonies and trade, drawing each other into a complex, unstable system of secret alliances that virtually guaranteed a general war. The Pyrrhic War of 1927-1932 began over India, but expanded across the globe, killing millions but ending in stalemate. The Allies (Britain, Sweden, and Japan) discovered that victory was meaningless when they found themselves mired in colonial rebellions and economic depression while the Coalition powers (Brazil and France) recovered. Edvard Bagare's Synarchist Party (based on the strangely compelling theories of Kiyoshi Shibata) won control of the Swedish Riksdag and created the first totalitarian state the timeline had ever seen.

Sweden's attempt to create the second synarchist state, by intervening in a coup d'état in Britain, ended in tragic farce; the Swedish atomic bombing of Britain in 1964 left the

British Synarchist Party in control of a shattered, impoverished Swedish satellite state.

The use of atomic weapons inaugurated the current era of covert struggle between the four remaining powers. A case could be made that the so-called "Silent Struggle" did not actually begin until the following year, when Brazil exploded its own fission bomb. In any event, the era has seen continuous tension between the powers, with occasional flare-ups into proxy wars where spheres of influence overlap – most violently in Persia and southern Africa.

So far the quadripolar balance has been able to surmount even such crises as the Swedish defiance of the French ban on orbital travel and the collapse of Brazilian domestic authority during the "Red Tuesday" events shortly after the millennium. Sweden underwent a spasm of political purges in the early 2020s, but its

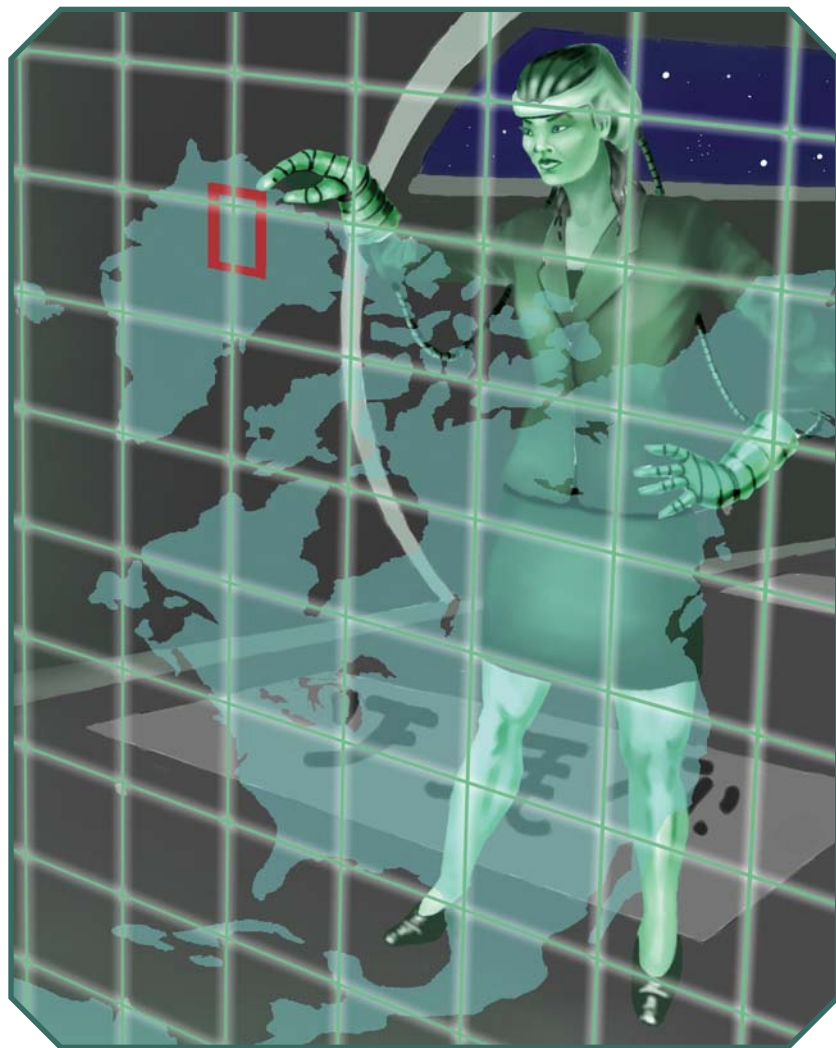
"neo-Synarchist" government seems just as repressive as ever, despite officially denouncing its predecessor. Sweden now aggressively supports "Islamossynarchist" fanatics against both Mahdist Cairo and the Ottomans, Nationalist Louisiana's isolation from the global data Tapestry has begun to spawn some ugly rumors, and the environment isn't getting any better as global weather patterns start to deform, raising the ever-present specter of famine.

(See *GURPS Alternate Earths* for further details.)

Outworld Operations

Since the first days of parachronic travel, the Infinity Council has worried about the day when a timeline capable of building projectors would be discovered within reach of Homeline. Since Shikaku-mon is at the exact same local time as Homeline and Centrum, a majority of theorists believe that it represents such a threat. It does not help matters that Shikaku-mon technology is slightly more advanced than Homeline's, nor that the parallel is dominated by corrupt, paranoid elites. The only bright aspect to the Shikaku-mon headache is that it is beyond the reach of Centrum projectors; thus, the only way Centrum might gain access to the timeline is through agents in Homeline or world-jumpers.

The Infinity Patrol is the only Homeline organization permitted to operate in Shikaku-mon, and it is being very cautious about its investigations. Overall policy toward Shikaku-mon is still being debated at the highest levels of Infinity and UNIC (there are rumors that Van Zandt himself is involved). Infinity wants to keep Shikaku-mon from developing parachronics, and secondarily prevent them from destroying themselves. One frightening possibility: could Shikaku-mon have a counterpart of Paul Van Zandt, the man who invented parachronic technology? In Homeline, his family originated in northern Germany and immigrated to New England, which would make him a Swedish citizen in Shikaku-mon. Relatively few Homeline natives have doubles in Shikaku-mon – but if Van Zandt were one of the few, the results might be disastrous.



So far, Infinity operations have only tried to set up corporate front organizations in the Americas. Infinity desperately wants to find out if a projector can function in Shikaku-mon, both to test parachronic theory and to open up further quantum levels to exploitation. However, the timeline is pervaded by spies working for the governments, secret agents working for the corporations, and even “peepers” spying as a hobby. Anything that looks interesting is sure to attract attention from some group, and even amateurs have surveillance technology equal to the best Homeline equipment. The I-Cops get ulcers imagining what the professionals must use, but they have not yet been able to get samples of classified technology. They have already had to send several too-inquisitive natives to Coventry, and the ongoing missing persons investigations are yet another focus of anxiety for Patrol operations.

Shikaku-mon strongly tempts Homeline governments and corporations, given the advantages that would accrue to any group that duplicated this worldline’s superior computer or surveillance technology. More dangerous yet, such tech might be viewed as offering a possible “balance” to Infinity Unlimited’s monopoly of parachronic technology. Since a Japanese university research team discovered the parallel, the Infinity Council has not been able to keep its existence secret. Travel to Shikaku-mon is very illegal; Infinity has declared unauthorized incursions punishable by revocation of access to all parachronic technology from the offending group – or nation. UNIC has quietly informed some troublesome governments that it concurs with this judgment.



UNITED STATES OF LIZARDIA

Lizardia was the first truly weird parallel discovered by the Infinity Patrol, and Homeline theorists are still wrestling with its implications. Some scientists who have been studying this world for 25 years still don’t *believe* it.

In many ways, this Quantum 4 world is a very close parallel of Homeline history up to its present date of 1991. Major languages and cultures are nearly identical, and many nations have similar or identical names. The major North American

nations are the United States of America, Canada, and Mexico, and they call their world Earth . . .

But the intelligent race on this world is a lizardlike creature, apparently evolved from a bipedal dinosaur. The basic stats of the race are

human-average in all ways, though they have distinct racial traits (see box). They lay eggs, but the egg normally hatches within a day.

This is not just an echo where everybody has scales and tails. That would be *easier* to understand. The USL's history is like ours in general, but it has played out with completely different actors. They had a World War II, but no Hitler, Churchill, or Roosevelt . . . they have space programs, but the first man in orbit was named Andrei Popov, and, of course, he was a giant lizard. They had no Shakespeare, no Rembrandt, but the world of the USL has produced equally great talents.

Nobody even *pretends* to explain any of this without talking about "gods with a weird sense of humor." The situation is sometimes compared to that of Goblin (p. 151), which also features a nonhuman race and a history like ours, but at least the Goblins are humanoid and their twisted version of Europe has leaders with familiar names.

Outworld Operations

Oddly, USL is one of the worlds where some members of the Infinity Council would like to reveal The Secret and make contact. The technically sophisticated but obviously spiri-

tually minded neo-troodons the Patrol observes seem cultured, funny, playful, and almost human at times. (The violent, pack-ridden, obsequious saurians on this parallel seem no less human, but don't inspire quite the same sympathy.) Most Patrolmen who spend any time on USL come back

wishing that just this once they could tear up The Secret, materialize in front of the Black Hills Longhouse, step out into a crowd of scaly, bug-eyed friends, and say "Take us to your leader. We have much to learn from each other."

United States of Lizardia, 1991

Current Affairs

On a world without the Cretaceous meteor strike, dinosaur democracy faces new challenges.

Divergence Point

65 million years ago; there is no Chicxulub meteor strike, so some dinosaurs continue to evolve and adapt to changing weather conditions rather than die out.

Major Civilizations

Saurian, unknown varieties.

Great Powers

Substantially identical to those of Homeline, circa 1991: the United States is the world's superpower, watching in apprehensive satisfaction as the Soviet Union falls apart.

Worldline Data

TL: (0+8) (odd blend of acoustics, biotech, and fluidics)

Mana Level: low

Quantum: 4

Infinity Class: P4

Centrum Zone: Inaccessible

Neo-Troodons

28 points

Canadian paleontologist Dale Russell proposed in 1982 that the Cretaceous raptor *Troodon* might have evolved into a sapient species, based on its high brain-to-body mass ratio. He was gratified to learn, as an expert on a surveillance trip to USL in 2001, that his theory was correct in many particulars. The neo-troodons of USL do not precisely match the "dinosauroid" model he predicted, however, having (among other things) tails and a lower posture. Infinity has encountered other neo-troodons on other worlds, including Shikari and Möbius (where they are roughly as intelligent as baboons), but USL is the only worldline known where they have developed a civilization.

Neo-troodons are seven-foot bipeds, slender and somewhat birdlike in movement and posture. Their smooth skins range from pale green to almost black; they have scales (usually in a complementary color) along the backs of their limbs, spine, scalp and cheeks. Their huge eyes are black and liquid; they have three

fingers and a long thumb on their hands, and three toes and a sickle-shaped claw on their tough feet. Their inability to resolve non-moving objects is a neurological effect, not an optical one, so corrective lenses do not mitigate their Bad Sight.

Attribute Modifiers: DX+1 [20]; HT+1 [10].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP-1 [-2].

Advantages: Acute Hearing 1 [2]; Acute Taste and Smell 2 [4]; Discriminatory Smell [15]; Long Talons (Heels only) [11]; Nictitating Membrane 1 [1]; Night Vision 3 [3]; Sharp Teeth [1]; Striking ST+4 (Kicks only, -20%) [16].

Disadvantages: Bad Sight (Nearsighted; Non-moving objects only, -20%) [-20]; Colorblindness [-10]; Compulsive Behavior (Siesta)(6) [-10], Curious (15) [-2]; Gregarious [-10]; Skinny (No skill penalties, -40%) [-3].

Skills: Brawling (DX) [1].

Techniques: Kicking 2 [3].

Racial Quirks: Attentive; Carnivorous [-2].

YRTH

Yrth is a fantasy parallel, home to elves, dwarves, and orcs. One faction of elves attempted a mighty ritual to rid their world of the pestilential orcs. It backfired, and instead summoned an enormous banestorm that lasted a century and a half, which brought tens of thousands (eventually hundreds of thousands) of humans to Yrth from Homeline, or from a worldline with a very similar past. (It also brought other nonhuman races from other parallels, in lesser numbers.)

A Magical World

Most of these humans came from western Europe or the Middle East between the years 1050 and 1200; they established kingdoms and resumed their interrupted crusades. Banestorms continue sporadically on Yrth, bringing a few hundred new people every so often, with a major resurgence in 1551, which brought thousands of people from 16th-century France.

The largest human kingdom on the continent of Ytarria, the Empire of Megalos, has a secretive order, the Ministry of Serendipity, devoted to hunting down new arrivals and interrogating them for information about changes on Earth. Megalos restrains any new scientific or technological developments – especially gunpowder – fearing the inevitable culture shock would tear it apart. Unknown to almost all outsiders, the Ministry of Serendipity maintains a secret tome, the *Liber Terranum Primus*, which describes the current state of the original Earth as best it can – but if the banestorms bring “visitors” from more than one Earth, the Ministry may know that still more Earths exist. And if the Earth that the banestorms visit is Homeline, the Ministry of Serendipity may know all about Infinity, too . . .

(See **GURPS Banestorm** for many further details.)

Outworld Operations

Yrth is a quantum sargasso; world-jumpers and conveyors can enter it,

Yrth, 2004

Current Affairs

Various sovereignties contend for power on a magical world populated by storms blowing across the dimensions.

Divergence Point

Unknown; possibly 150 million years ago, when Pangaea split differently. But the moon is different, too.

Major Civilizations

Western (empire with rivals), Islamic (bipolar), Dwarven (empire), Elvish (diffuse).

Great Powers

Megalos (feudal dictatorship, CR4), Al-Haz (theocratic dictatorship, CR4), Zarak (feudal oligarchy, CR3 for Dwarves), Al-Wazif (feudal dictatorship, CR3), Caithness (feudal dictatorship, CR3), Cardiel (feudal oligarchy, CR3).

Worldline Data

TL: 3-4 (gunpowder suppressed; some TL3/6+ elements from newcomers)
Mana Level: normal with variations
Quantum: 5
Infinity Class: R2
Centrum Zone: Inaccessible

but they can only leave by using magic, a nexus portal, or (of course) a banestorm. Ted Gruberman, a world-jumping Patrolman, discovered Yrth on a blind hop in 2017, and it took him 14 months to find a magical raft that could sail to another world he could actually leave. When he finally returned to Homeline in 2020, his description of the immense banestorm that struck Yrth a millennium ago caused an immense storm of its own in Infinity headquarters. A second, slightly better prepared, Scout

mission took only five months to find its way back to Homeline, and only lost one man in the process, providing substantially more information about the situation on that worldline.

On Yrth, of course, The Secret is out. Everybody knows that parachronic travel is possible; it's how most of their ancestors got to Yrth, after all! Some Yrth factions may know more than that. There is some indication that the Templars (who arrived on Yrth on Halloween night, 1310, just ahead of the French

*Unknown to almost all outsiders, the Ministry of Serendipity maintains a secret tome, the **Liber Terranum Primus**, which describes the current state of the original Earth as best it can.*



inquisitors) had harnessed a banestorm for parachronic travel, or at least knew enough to hunt one down on their Earth. (Any unpleasant connection between Yrth's Templars and the Nazi-tainted Templars on Friedrich is probably just coincidental. Probably.) The Jesuits of Yrth also seem to have peculiar artifacts of mysterious ori-

gin – could they have been snatched from another worldline? The Dark Elves, of course, have likely not given up on their researches, and nobody quite knows what to make of the djinn or the dragons.

Infinity has decided that the possible connection between Yrth and Homeline (or a close Homeline echo) required the closest possible

Paralabs study. A small permanent staff of “Sheldrake Section” would-be wizards, Paralabs field surveyors, and I-Cop guards set up shop in the border city of Tredroy, bringing along a White Star merchant family to provide gold and cover for their odd behavior. In the House of the White Star, the Homeliners work to understand this strange new world.

Other Fantasy Parallels

In addition to the “historical fantasy” myth parallels such as Burton and Mandeville (p. 136), or borderline cases like Orichalcum (p. 139) and Rome-6 (p. 145), some worldlines hew more to the dictates of 20th-century fantasy fiction. There are myth parallels closely resembling the works of Robert E. Howard, Robert McLees, Terry Pratchett, and Andre Norton, for example. Most such worlds likely diverged at least 150 million years ago, as few of them share Earth's continental outlines. Some of these worlds have divergent starfields, implying either severe reality quake damage to the heavens, a vastly far-past (or future) current year, or that they exist in an entirely different cosmos. Some few of them rest on flat Earths, or inside hollow ones! Hence, dating fantasy parallels is often a matter of piecemeal interpolation and wild assumption.

Agents on Yrth have identified that Banestorms from yet further worlds originally snatched some of the nonhuman races. The locations of these worlds – **Loren'dil**, a forested realm of halflings, giants, and

centaurs, **Olokun**, a planet mostly covered in oceans and with very high tides, home to merfolk and other aquatic beings, and **Gabrook**, an arid world inhabited by goblins, reptile men (possibly cousins or alternate versions of USL's neo-troodons), and kobolds – remain to be found by Infinity. They are evidently *radically* divergent worldlines, and may form part of a skerry (p. 89) with Yrth – and perhaps one of the missing echoes from Q6 is the Earth from which the Banestorm took its humans!

A firmly located fantasy parallel is **Brekilien** (Q4, current year 701), one of the worlds continuously reshaped by mighty elven magics that harness banestorms for the play of the elf-lords.

Goblin (Q5, current year 1830) is inhabited exclusively by a different sort of goblins, but is otherwise a very high-inertia, close (if filthy) parallel of Homeline's late Regency era. (See *GURPS Goblins* for further details.)

CHAPTER FIVE

... AND TIME

Although I was used to his shabby appearance by now, the greasy cynicism of his voice still took me aback. "Don't tell me. Only I can save the world."

"That's right. How did you know?"

"You think you're the first one of you to tell me that?"

"You think I'm the first one of me to hear you say that?"

That got his attention, and he rubbed his unshaven jowls thoughtfully.

"No, you look too tired to be from the first loop. Sit down, take a load off."

"I can't. We have to go."

"It won't do any good. Trust me."

"But -"

"No good. Just sit down. What's a couple of minutes going to matter?"

A brief guilty surge took me, but I shrugged it off and sank into the armchair with a grateful sigh. "It feels like I've been on my feet forever."

"Now maybe you see why I don't hop up whenever one of you jokers comes in here."

"Yeah, my dogs are really barking. Got anything to drink around here?"

"You know I do. Help yourself and pour me one."

I got up long enough to pull the whiskey bottle out from behind the cereal, and poured a splash into two jelly jars. They didn't look clean, but I couldn't really catch anything strange from him, now, could I?

"Cheers." "Cheers."



We drank in companionable silence, and then he stretched and popped a video into the player. Charlton Heston came on, striding down the street in Tijuana as Orson Welles' camera kept pulling back and back and back.

"Hey, this is my favorite movie!"

He gave me a look. "Maybe you are from that first loop, after all."

As we watched the screen, he took another swallow, and spoke more kindly. "Mine, too."

About halfway through the movie, when Janet Leigh was in some dire peril or other, the door opened.

We looked up at the very familiar stranger on the stoop, and said as one: "Don't tell me. Only I can save the world."

TEMPORAL PHYSICS

A lot of stories have been written about time travel, and it seems like no two of them use the same machinery or rules of operation. Before we can go anywhen, we have to know how we're going to get there, and what we can (and can't) do once we arrive. What follow are not rules as such, but an outline of the kinds of rules a GM must decide on when he creates a new system of time travel. They combine setting questions and the mind-knotting complexities of temporal physics, with the aim of answering the first and evading the second wherever possible.

THE PHYSICAL SETTING

The first question: how does the time machine or crossworld railway "work," as a layman might explain it? This is not a question of rubber science (yet) but of physical description. Possibilities include:

Stage: The traveler stands on the platform of a monster machine, and technicians at a console start pushing buttons. There's a blue flash (or a low hum, or a monstrous subsonic belch) and you're there. In this case, the "time machine" does not travel at all, and the travelers have less control over their journeys. In particular, they cannot bounce around freely in time; they're at the mercy of Mission Control (p. 210). The harried GM may find this limitation very useful.

Portal: A "door" opens between two points, bridging the gap between times or worlds. Perhaps it's one-way, perhaps two-way. Perhaps anyone or anything can walk through; perhaps it accepts living flesh only, or dead matter only. The extent of the traveler's control over his return is this: if he can get back to the gate, he can come home . . . maybe. Some gates are only open at certain times; some can be opened only by the volition of an operator at the other end (making them more like a "stage" device). In the Infinite Worlds campaign, crossworld portals and roads exist with any or all of these criteria.

Devices: The time machine is a "vehicle" which may also be able to travel in space. This vehicle may be a huge temporal battleship or a one-man capsule. It may not even be a vehicle as such; it may be a belt, harness or magic amulet that the user wears on his person. This sort of travel usually implies that the traveler has a great deal of freedom to visit different times at whim. For some sample devices, see pp. 162-163.

Combination: The above effects can be combined in various ways. The Time Sphere on p. 163 combines the stage, portal, and device, for example. In the default Infinite

Worlds campaign setting, both conveyors (devices) and projectors (stages) may be used, and must be combined for a really long jump.

Nothing at all: If the time or crossworld travel is psionic, magical, or super-powered in nature, there may be no gadgetry at all involved. However, there may be a need for ritual of some sort. Alternatively, the psionic energies, magical spells, or super time-traveling hyper-speed may require fuel or an apparatus to "boost" or "focus" its power or to send the traveler to a specific date in time to kill Hitler or steal the Hope Diamond.

Can of Infinite Worms

Adding time travel to an Infinite Worlds campaign isn't impossible. As it happens, there are plenty of time travel devices, such as the Gates of Thoth, already littering the quantum landscape. At the bare minimum, the possibility of time travel should stay open in case the GM or the players want to shift the Infinite Worlds PCs into a "future Earth" or SF setting with reliable human faster-than-light travel (see *Where Are the Starships?*, p. 72), or just one with a calendar date well past the mid-21st-century setting of Homeline. If the Gates of Thoth don't appeal, there's always the option of mysterious transhuman entities, such as Poul Anderson's Danellians, who recruit Patrolmen for a crisis "in a future world."

What the GM should only introduce into the Infinite Worlds if he's ready to do a lot of sweating is *reliable* time travel, under the control of the players. This rapidly sets up not only a tangle of twisting paradoxes (can you retroactively alter an echo?), and the danger of aborted mysteries or emergencies draining the game's narrative tension, but a real mare's nest of research problems. One of the key features of the Infinite Worlds is GM control – he always knows what world loyal Time Patrolmen will visit, because it's the worldline they've been assigned to visit! Even swagmen or criminals will operate in a fairly confined circle of parallels, ones that the GM can map out in some detail. Reliable time travel knocks those struts out from under the campaign, leaving it hanging high in the air with no visible means of getting back down.

Of course, some GMs enjoy the high-wire act, or have every possible alternate history alteration ready to go at the tip of their fingers. However even those GMs may find that their players become dumbfounded and tentative with all the history of every possible world to explore. They may make a few prods, to test the GM's improvisational skills, but even success there runs the risk of making the vast vistas of time seem humdrum. We can't stop you from adding time travel to the Infinite Worlds – just remember, you can't go back in time and undo your decision!

PARADOXES

Altering history may sound like good clean fun, but it sets up some famous paradoxes more philosophy than physics. These are the ones that everybody from the *Twilight Zone* to Robert Heinlein has used, and any player with any interest in time travel will at least vaguely recall them. The good news is that there are plenty of work-arounds for them, if you're willing to give up only a little freedom of action – or your meager human notions of causality.

The Grandfather Paradox

A man gets into a time machine and travels back a century or so. He finds his (as yet unmarried) grandfather, and shoots him in the head, killing him instantly. Since his grandfather can now not meet and marry his grandmother, the time traveler will never exist, and thus never shoot his grandfather in the head, and thus will have existed, and so forth.

The Free Lunch Paradox

A man gets into a time machine with a copy of Shakespeare's *Complete Plays and Poems*, and travels back to Elizabethan London, where he presents the volume to the Bard. Like all writers, Shakespeare is desperately behind on deadline and has already spent the advance, so he gladly copies out the plays from the anthology and goes out drinking all night with his cronies. Who wrote Shakespeare's plays? Not Bacon, not Oxford, not anybody. Shakespeare merely copied them from a later copy of his earlier copies. He got a free lunch, in other words, and we all know that there ain't no such thing.

SOLUTIONS

The usual answer to one or both of the above is that time simply can't be altered. This is Fixed Time. Your gun will jam, or you will miss your bus, or your research will be wrong, or your grandfather will get the drop on you and kill you instead, or he will turn out to be bulletproof, or your grandmother will marry his long-lost identical twin instead, or your grandfather will

turn out to have been the mailman all along. If you try to give Shakespeare the *Plays*, you might have a series of horrible accidents trying to find Shakespeare, or the book will turn out to have been written in Esperanto, or Shakespeare's pen keeps getting clogged and he throws you and the book out in the street in a tantrum. Shakespeare, and your grandfather, still have free will – everybody has free will in the present; it's only time travelers who keep running into Fixed Time in other people's presents. It's just that they will never freely choose to alter history, or if they do, something will prevent them.

However, if the past can't be altered, it becomes a considerably less interesting place to visit. (On the other hand, perhaps only *history* can't be altered – the past can change, as long as nobody knows any different. For all we know, Shakespeare might indeed have gotten his plays from nowhere! See *The Observer Effect*, p. 159.) Any campaign background must contain a specific solution to this problem. To examine several *general* solutions:

Plastic Time

The past is freely alterable, but at the risk of "editing out" the future that you came from. Your actions change the future. There are several possible results:

Traveler at Risk: The traveler himself may be changed (or even fade out of existence). This isn't too suitable for gaming unless the players enjoy creating new characters.

World at Risk: The traveler may be unchanged, but return to a changed (perhaps extremely changed) world. This is entertaining for the players, but puts a burden on the GM.

Past or Traveler at Risk: This option combines the two above; a time traveler can change the past as long as nothing he does *significantly* (or perhaps noticeably) effects the future society he came from. Change things too much, and *you* change, or even vanish! This is an excellent constraint for games of time-traveling conspiracy – on the surface, nothing has changed, but now it was the Templars who killed Kennedy, not the Adepts of Hermes.

Return Blocked: The traveler may be unchanged, but stuck in the past,

unable to return unless he can somehow undo the change. This is quite playable, because the PCs will be grossly inconvenienced, but not killed or transmuted, if they accidentally change history. And they have a chance to fix it.

In any event, there are no paradoxes. If you make a change in the past, it really happened.

Chaotic Time

An extreme version of "plastic time" draws on modern chaos theory. If you travel back in time, any change you make propagates wildly. If you go back as far as WWI, the act of buying a newspaper in London would reverberate down the timeline, and national boundaries would be different when you returned. If you go to the Permian Age, just stepping out of your time machine would make a difference in local weather . . . which would propagate globally . . . and when you return to the year 2000, the ruling species wouldn't be human.

This is hardly suitable for an ongoing campaign, but might make a very spooky one-shot adventure.

Plastic Time With High Resistance

This is the opposite of chaotic time. The past is still alterable, but it's hard to alter it. Small changes are canceled out by the background noise of history. Big changes, or small changes made with exquisite timing, can change the future.

Recall the theory of time as a river: if you drop a twig in a river, the water is momentarily disrupted, but it continues to flow around the anomaly. And the anomaly begins to flow with the stream until it is, in effect, part of the stream. So you could postulate that though you went back and killed Thomas á Becket at the base of the high altar at Canterbury (rather than the four knights doing the job just outside the Mary Chapel), the time stream could adjust so that the end result (death of Becket, martyrdom, canonization, and even the presence of four knights who were subsequently despised) would be the same. And historians looking at the incident would record it the way we are told it happened. And perhaps it didn't

Chronobabble

Players desiring a brief scientific explanation for time travel may be referred to this section. It may or may not be complete doubletalk, but it is nevertheless real doubletalk. Any student of general relativity will recognize the sources and follow the argument; some will even agree with the conclusions. Those who have not studied general relativity should not worry about it. The authors are indebted to Dale F. Reding for providing this material.

From the senior undergraduate physics text *Principles of Geometric Dynamics*, by D.F.R. Skinner, 2080:

“Like flight, the idea of travel in time has fascinated man since early days. On sound principles of physics it was ‘proven’ that manned flight was impossible, and indeed, man cannot fly like the birds. Yet flight was achieved by methods far different from those used by the birds. Similarly, our common sense experience with special relativity categorically disallows the possibility of travel in time. But here, though special relativity may still apply, common sense may not.”

Time travel in and of itself is impossible within the physics of everyday phenomena. However, as the theories of relativity deny us the existence of a global inertial reference system, quantum mechanics deprives us of the fiction of a deterministic development of space in time. Underlying the Hamiltonian structure of local physics is the remarkably good approximation of the Poincar group to the underlying local symmetry group, exploited in canonical quantization schemes, for distances on the order of Fermi’s length (10^{-15} m).

However, in the absence of associated matter, significant extraordinary local effects appear due to the fluctuations in the local 3-geometry on the order of Planck’s length ($L^* = [h^{(3)}/(2\pi c^3)]^{1/2} = 1.6 \times 10^{-35}$ m). The fictions of space-time and time are exposed as neo-classical approximations.

Centuries of research, from Newton to Weinkoff, converge upon the simple observation that the dynamic object of study, in physics, is 3-space. $^{(3)}\gamma$, super-space, the totality of all 3-spaces, becomes the primary structure of physical theory. Simplistically, the 3-geometry is itself seen as a “carrier of information about time” (Wheeler, 1962).

In a deterministic world, we replace space-time with a *foliation*. That is, a 3-space development is tracked as a series of sharply defined, infinitely thin “leaves,” or foliations, defining time development. At a quantum level, the resulting picture is replaced by a “fuzzy” view of history with leaves of finite thickness. On the order of Planck’s length, the system undergoes quantum fluctuations in its 3-geometry. In a classical view, we have the development of the local physics proceeding as a series of “yes” and “no” geometries. Ordering the “yes” geometries provides a local view of the 4-geometry. However, quantum theory defines an associated probability amplitude $\psi = ^{(3)}\gamma$ with each 3-geometry. The amplitude is greatest along the classical path, with a sharp degradation on either side of the foliation. One may say that for a small period of time the state of the 3-geometry is indeterminate. Simplistically, one may view this as fluctuations in the background 3-space, in analogy with the well-known phenomenon of vacuum fluctuations in the electromagnetic field (the so-called zero-point fluctuations).

This is the theory as applicable in a vacuum. However, in the presence of a large spinning mass, or the provision of considerable energy, the background fluctuations in 3-space may be set into resonance and a temporarily stable local deviation from the classically predicted 3-space then occurs. At each foliation, all physical 3-geometries are possible. Therefore, it is possible to generate the appearance of “time travel” by temporarily moving to an alternate 3-space. Such an arrangement is, however, unstable, and will ultimately require a “snapping back” into the proper 3-space.

The beauty of this solution is that Special Relativity is inviolate as no information is determined about the “true” 3-space, only about that in which you are currently residing. As such, the popular fears of marrying your grandmother or shooting yourself are impossible, as it is not really yourself that you are meeting, only a “fading” copy. However, some arguments have recently been presented in the *Journal of Geodynamics and Astrophysics* suggesting feedback from alternate 3-geometries is possible. Most practical physicists consider this to be unlikely.

happen the way history recorded it in the first place! This relates to the *Observer Effect*, on p. 159.

If the future is changed, the results on the time traveler are as described above. High-resistance plastic time makes even “Traveler at Risk” a more playable option, because PCs won’t vanish unless they make a real blunder.

Paradox-Proof Time

This is Fixed Time, but with an interesting special effect. If you start to do something that would change history, boom – there you are, back in your own time. The universe is not at all subtle about preventing paradoxes. And if you return to a time where you have already been, you cannot com-

municate with your earlier self in any way, because that would create a paradox. You can’t even send a friend back to warn yourself. What’s done is done.

This is a playable option. Getting slammed back to their own time can frustrate some groups. Others may welcome it as a safety net, even though it means some missions can’t be completed.

New Timelines

This lets travelers change history . . . but not their own history. Whenever a time traveler (or group of travelers) arrives in the past, they cause a new worldline to split off from the original, identical in every respect up until the moment of arrival. After that point, however, nothing that happened in the original line is bound to happen in the same way, or at all. The new timeline may be very similar to the old one, or chaotically different, as described above. (Perhaps there is no way to know in advance what the “rule” will be for that new timeline!)

A key point, however, is that everything is duplicated except the travelers. They have left their original line (not necessarily permanently – more on this in a moment). In other words, you can’t really go “back in time” at all, or have any effect on your own history. You can only create a new world, whose future you are free to alter because it hasn’t happened yet.

It may or may not be possible to return to the “original” worldline. If it is possible, you can only return to the moment you left, or possibly some later time. You can’t return to any earlier point, because that would give you the possibility of making changes to your own past.

This gives a traveler absolute freedom from time paradox. You can kill your grandpa, or even your younger self; it only means that in the duplicate line you won’t get born, or won’t grow up to be a meddling time mechanic. You cannot, however, make infinite copies of yourself, because you leave the original line each time you time-jump. You can exist in two places at once, by going back to a point within your natural lifetime, but no more than that – because any subsequent trips take you into a new, “blank” copy of the worldline. (Unless you let the new parallel branch off from the one you just created, with two of you in it. Good luck with that.) You can leave the original line any number of times, but you can only arrive in a particular line once.

Yes, this is difficult to follow. Because our logic is causality-based, and therefore time-dependent, this sort of thing always happens when you consider the implications of time travel.

There is no privileged past . . . There is an infinitude of Pasts, all equally valid . . . At each and every instant of Time, however brief you suppose it, the line of events forks like the stem of a tree putting forth twin branches.

– André Maurois, “If Louis XVI Had Had an Atom of Firmness”

This approach owes something to the time-theory in David Gerrold’s *The Man Who Folded Himself*, and a little to the “superstring theory” of modern physics. In Gerrold’s book, the tripper was duplicated along with everything else. Paradoxes were ignored, because almost anything that might happen could and did happen in one of the braided worldlines; multiple versions of the hero could and did meet, and the issue of whether one could return to one’s original line, or only to one indistinguishable from it, was considered but never solved.

The dramatic drawback to this system is the old problem of “If anything can happen, who cares?” The travelers can shoot Genghis Khan, shoot Shakespeare, shoot their own double; it isn’t their universe, after all. This might become tiresome, but on the other hand, it can open up some very interesting questions of morality and responsibility. Interested players should read *Corrupting Dr. Nice* by John Kessel (about a society that can create new timelines at whim), or *Glimpses* by Lewis Shiner (about a single traveler who can). Either as nihilism or experiment, new timelines can be fun while they last, especially for those who know some history and want to play around with it.

Parallel Worlds

Another possibility is that what we choose to call “time travel” is actually parallel-world travel; you’re not going to “our” World War II, but to an existing alternate universe in which World War II happens to be going on “now.” The world may otherwise be exactly identical to Home Time, or have differences so tiny as to make no difference (President Roosevelt’s middle name is Douglas), or major and important

divergences (Russia is still a monarchy). It may or may not be possible to return to one’s line of origin – or there might be so many almost-identical worlds that one could never tell.

In this case, nothing you do in the parallel world will affect your own timeline – unless you stumble into a dimensional war with people who can find your timeline. This is the basis of the default Infinite Worlds setting.

OTHER USEFUL POSTULATES

Although neither required nor contradicted by most of the metaphysical constructions above, these next three axioms appear in time travel fiction and some time travel theory. Implementing any of them limits the way time travel works, and constrain player action. (Implementing them all is fairly restrictive, compared to most gamers’ assumptions about time travel, so explaining things early is helpful.) This can be good or bad, depending on the gaming group’s instincts, but it does help harried GMs maintain some control over story developments.

The Linearity Principle

This law applies when time travelers must operate from a “home base,” rather than jumping freely around in time. It states that time moves forward at the same speed for the agents in the field and the machine operators at home. If the team spends two weeks in the past, they return two weeks after they left. Conversely, if the agents request information or assistance from Mission Control, and it requires two days to research the data or prepare the backup team, the help arrives two days after it was requested.

The real reason for this rule is, again, to prevent the team from solving problems by “magic.” Mission Control’s inability to scan freely back and forth should be given some mechanical explanation, preferably one that can sometimes be bent a little to save the day. One possibility: Control must maintain a “fix” on the agents, which moves forward as they do; to scan back to some earlier moment risks breaking the fix, losing all communications with the team until they can be located again. (See *In the Cube*, p. 29, for more detail.)

Obviously, where linearity applies, agents can’t make “pickups” in the field. If you have been out for five years, you can *talk* to someone who left home just a year after you did. But when you go home, it will be five years later; no way around it.

Oscillating Time

This is an interesting limitation to apply to time travel of any sort. Suppose that the energies of time – whatever they are – vary in a predictable way. You can only travel between points that have the same “chronal charge.” Result: the time machine can only make jumps of a certain length. This might be a month, a year, or a century. Perhaps there are only a few points in all of history that the machine can reach – in that case, it’s more like a “time gate” or a “time subway” that only makes stops with a lot of commuter traffic.

Time travelers are thus presented with some interesting problems; they can never depend on going right to the time they want to see. In particular, they can’t even *think* of bopping to last week to tell themselves “Don’t do that!” This can make a campaign more manageable. Note that such a system automatically conserves linearity.

The Recency Effect

This assumes that, for some reason, the travelers cannot visit their immediate past. The “Recency Barrier” can be a week ago, a year ago, within the lifetime of the time traveler, or centuries in the past. If the GM wants to avoid troublesome alterations to the campaign’s recent history, this is the way to go. This may be justified by rubber physics like the Time Corps’ “Arbatov Barrier” (p. 218), or by an oscillation

effect that limits the availability of all past time.

While this doesn’t make all paradoxes impossible, it limits the travelers to historical periods instead of bothering their last-week selves. If this is the kind of campaign the GM plans to have anyway, a Recency Effect is a good thing to introduce.

TALKING TO YOURSELF

Nothing can create a really messy (and unplayable) paradox quite as quickly as a time traveler who visits himself. He can tell himself what to do . . . or what not to do . . . or show up and argue with himself.

For gaming purposes, the question becomes “What sort of logical explanation, or rubber science, will prevent this from happening?” This prevents characters’ visiting the same era again and again, either to “work on the problem till we get it right” or to multiply themselves into armies. It also means that Time Agents cannot return home “before they left” and give themselves advice on how to deal with the mission.

Paradox-Proof Time

As described above, this type of reality simply bounces a traveler back to his origin as soon as he starts to create a paradox. If he avoids paradox, he can do anything he likes.

Temporal Exclusion

In this sort of cosmos, it is simply impossible for a traveler to clock into a period he already occupies. If you try to travel to a time where you have “already” (in your own absolute past) been, several things can happen, none of them good:

You can bounce. The attempted trip fails, leaving you mentally stunned.

You can wind up in a parallel world at the same time. If it’s a close parallel, it may be a very long while before you find out you’ve gone astray.

You can wind up at the wrong time. Usually you go farther back than you planned – sometimes a lot farther back. But you might wind up just before, or just after, the stretch of time you already occupy.

You can travel randomly through time and/or space. Use the Random Present Table on p. 86 to determine a destination year, and pick a real nasty location in space to fit the result.

You can wind up in Limbo. Limbo is just a theory . . . a term to describe the place travelers go when they vanish and are never seen again.

If an imprecise method of time travel is being used, temporal exclusion can happen by accident when somebody tries to cut things too close.

What if you clock into a period just *before* one you already occupy, and wait until the “younger you” appears? If something happens to the younger you, a paradox is created. Therefore, the older self – who is the one responsible for the problem anyway – should feel the effects. (This is the most playable answer, but if the GM can find a way to make the younger self feel the effects of a decision the player hasn’t taken yet, go ahead!)

Temporal Snarls

This rule is essentially Temporal Exclusion that can be “bent” once in a while, but within strict limits. It assumes that history is resistant to change and paradox, but allows someone to be in the same time more than once . . . as long as no interaction takes place!

If you try to interact with an “earlier” version of yourself, you’ll probably be frustrated; you are trying to create a “temporal snarl” in your own past. This sets up probability oscillations, and you start suffering fatigue and other effects as you exert effort in opposition to your current existence.

If someone tries to alter his own past drastically (say, by shooting himself), he should either fall unconscious or pop into another time. This takes care of the Grandfather Paradox. Note that it is the *size* of the alteration, not its subtlety, which matters. Going back 500 years and convincing your many-times-great-grandmother to become a nun would have exactly the same effect; you can’t do it.

Any attempt to set up a “free lunch loop” in time is also doomed to failure – or, at least, to having no effect on the outcome of the adventure. (This is offered purely for playability. In terms of physics, there’s no reason why it couldn’t be done.)

If you try to meet and talk to yourself about something relatively minor, it should still be painful – say, 6 FP and -2 IQ for the duration of the meeting and the rest of the day.

But a *minor* attempt to alter your own worldline is possible. If you want to send yourself a cryptic note, the cost might be a mere 3 FP.

If the GM allows this at all, he should assess fatigue (and other) costs based on the size of the paradox or change the traveler is trying to create. A general guideline: the more headaches it causes the GM, the harder it is for the character to do!

Of course, an *accidental* meeting with yourself should be good for a Fright Check at -2 or worse. If you see yourself with injuries or changes, the penalty should be much bigger!

In campaigns involving parallel universes, the rule is not needed and should not be used. This allows parallel versions of a character (who may well not be friendly) to meet and interact.

COMMUNICATION AND OBSERVATION

In “Time Agent” campaigns, the GM must decide what communications are available between Mission Control and the Agents in the field. In campaigns where the travelers are free to bounce around as they wish, the question of communications must still be settled, but it is less central to the adventures.

No Communication

This is the simplest assumption, and in many ways the easiest to manage. The agents are entirely on their own, and cannot ask for help or information. They also cannot move again in time, unless the machine travels with them. They must be brought home either after a fixed amount of mission time – a useful way to keep the action moving – or through some automatic mechanism (see *The Time Corps*, pp. 217-228, for an example). No “recall signal” is permitted – if a device can send a beep, it can send Morse code.

Limited Forward Communication

The agents can send messages to Mission Control, but not freely: the messages are limited in length, or format (e.g., they must be sent in Morse), or can only be sent at specific times or from specific places (say, the team’s arrival point). Control cannot send messages to the agents at all.

But note that even if there is no handy Time Radio, there are ways to get word to the future. (See the box above)

We Will Have Warned You in the Past

How can someone in the past communicate with the presentday? Without a handy Time Radio, or a time-fax to transmit a note a few hundred years uptime, a resourceful traveler can still pass information or even call for help. The longer it will be before the message is read, of course, the harder it is to be sure it will get there.

Message Drops

A message can be left in a predetermined place if someone uptime is looking for it. For a period of a few years, a safe-deposit box could be used . . . but it is important that nobody ever look in it during the intervening years!

For longer durations, a time capsule can be buried in a safe place. With access to high technology, time capsules can be put in very remote places . . . in orbit, for instance, or at the top of the Great Pyramid. Even with “ordinary” technology, creative solutions are possible. (The recovery of a message can be an adventure for the uptime team, too!)

Active Delivery

If nobody expects your message, you just have to create a message that seeks out the person you want it to go to. This is much harder, but not impossible.

Lawyers: With an appropriate advance payment, a law firm will hold a message and deliver it in the future – even a very long time in the future. Pick a law firm in a city that you know will remain prosperous and unconquered until the day the message needs to be delivered. (Other organizations than lawyers can do this kind of task, but a good lawyer won’t even blink at the request.)

Message in a Bottle: Bury the message where you hope it will be found at the appropriate time, nested inside two envelopes. The outer envelope says, “Deliver to Such-and-so for an appropriate reward.” The inner one says, “If you get this message before (whatever the date is), *do not tell anybody, and don’t open it before that date.*” Thus, you have at least a chance that the message will arrive safely, and will not be read before it should be. (Reading it early could create a possible paradox.)

Limited Reverse Communication

The simplest reverse communication is to let Mission Control continue to send things and people back in time. There are not, however, very many messages worth sending if Control cannot receive requests for information.

Full Forward Communication

Mission Control can look over the team’s shoulders constantly, either

through a time-transmitting camera carried by the agents, or an “area viewer” like the screen on *Time Tunnel*. They cannot, however, send into the past. If you use this option, we suggest the “time camera” – which may be unreliable, or easily damaged; if you use the viewer, we strongly recommend that Control be able to “fix on” and see only the immediate vicinity of the agents. The reason for this is that unrestricted time-viewing simply makes Control too powerful (see *Time Viewers*, p. 160). If they could see anything at any point, it would be possible to examine every possible obstacle to a mission – worse, it would be possible to watch the mission before the agents had been sent! Time paradoxes again . . .

Full Two-Way Communication

There is the equivalent of a radio or TV link between Mission Control and the field. The agents can ask for information or assistance, and (subject to the equipment remaining undamaged, a “fix” being maintained, etc.) they receive it fairly promptly.

One interesting way to limit this is to allow full two-way communication only from one specific point. The agents have a “time phone,” but it cannot be moved. If they’re away from the phone, they’re on their own!

Another way to limit this is to restrict Mission Control – if the present can’t send anything else back to the past until the agents return, communication becomes somewhat less game-breaking. (“Control, this is Alpha Team! We’re being attacked by tigers!” “We’ll make a note of that for the next mission, Alpha Team. Tiger repellent all around next mission.” “Control, next mission is to the Arctic Ocean.” “Can’t be too careful.”) The Time Sphere on p. 163 has this kind of limitation.

THE OBSERVER EFFECT

The Observer Effect, stated most briefly, says “An observed event cannot be changed.” There are no paradoxes. Known history cannot be changed.

Now, if this were entirely accurate, time travel would be much simpler and safer. But the Observer Effect says that a successful intervention can occur. History *can* be changed. But it is *very* difficult. And usually any attempt to change an established fact results in failure.

“I Don’t Want To Know!”

But to a good Time Agent, the Observer Effect means that any event that was *not* observed *can* be changed. And the observations of the locals on the scene don’t count. The observer from the future is the one that matters, because only he can create a paradox. (Thick volumes on physics and epistemology have been written to explain this, and they haven’t done a very good job yet.)

Basically, though, all of the details of past history can be considered “in flux” until they are observed by someone from the Absolute Now. There are two possible explanations for this:

Time is fixed, but we still have free will. We don’t know for sure what really happened in the past, and until we know what happened, we can try to change it. We’re part of history.

Time is not fixed until it’s observed. The act of observation is necessary for the event to be final. It’s like Schrödinger’s Cat, which is neither alive nor dead until someone opens the box to check . . . In this sense, the observer from the future *creates* the event, and makes it real, by observing it. It’s not real until then.

Either way, an observed event is very hard to change. An unobserved event is subject to change.

This means that if an intervention – or a counter-intervention – is bungled, it is *very* hard to fix. Sure, another team could be sent to the same time. But they can’t do anything that contradicts the first team’s observations.

The exception, ironically, comes if the first team failed completely and was wiped out. If they didn’t report their observations back to their successors, they didn’t “determine” history. This has some interesting effects:

Agents are reluctant to report failure . . . which sometimes means

they don’t flee or call for help when they should.

Agents on both sides are merciful to defeated enemy agents. If they make it home to report defeat, that defeat becomes more nearly irrevocable.

Agents hate to observe the death of a friend. Sometimes an agent will walk away from a wounded “native” ally, rather than risk checking and finding out he is dead. If the death isn’t reported, there is a chance that help might arrive in time. Fanatical agents might commit suicide rather than report failure. Even less fanatical agents might ask: “Would you die to give another team a chance to run the mission?”

Degrees of Observation and Loopholes

An agent can never undo anything he witnessed. The only hope – and sometimes it is a significant hope – is that he didn’t witness it correctly.

Witnessing a film or photograph isn’t *quite* as final. Films and photographs can be faked. Digital images can be *easily* faked. Still, unless Mission Control believes that something was faked, it’s not likely to risk an agent.

An observation reported by another agent is as trustworthy as that agent is. A “real-time” report by a historical native is as trustworthy as that native is.

Published reports, memoirs, etc., are often not reliable at all. If the newspaper says the parade started at noon . . . well, maybe the paper was wrong!

Paradoxes and the Observer Effect

The Observer Effect says that there are no paradoxes. So what happens when something occurs which seems to be a paradox?

For instance, an agent is in Ford’s Theater on April 14, 1865. He observes Booth’s attempt to shoot Lincoln. He watches in sorrow as the assassin steps forward . . . and in horror as a beam of green light slices through Booth’s gun arm. In the ensuing turmoil, Lincoln is hustled out of the theater under heavy guard. Clearly, history has just been changed in a big way. Or has it?

There is no one right answer. In fact, the “real” right answer may depend on what the PCs do.

The obvious thing would be for them to start working to kill Lincoln and to leave a historical record that showed he had been assassinated on schedule. This would be very difficult, especially since there is obviously some sort of futuristic intervention already going on.

They might decide that, whatever is really going on, it's too much for them to handle – and concentrate on riding it out without becoming a part of it. This would require an iron will and a blind faith that History Will Sort It Out.

They might also decide that this is the sort of event that shouldn't be observed, since observation makes events real. The obvious answer is that it's time to go AWOL, rather than ever reporting in. (This is really a different approach to History Will Sort It Out.)

Or they could go running home to report. If Home is still there, it tends to prove that the Observer Effect is still valid. If they can't get home, it's a sign that perhaps the rules have changed (an evil GM at work, no doubt). If they've somehow been thrown into a parallel timeline, then there is still no paradox, but they have a whole new problem.

If they *do* get home, they often report in doubletalk or opaque sentences, in an effort to beat the Observer Effect: “I would suggest sending a heavily armed team to Ford's Theatre starting at least a week before the play.” The usual effect is to make it harder on the follow-up team, without beating the Effect in the least. The only time that seems to work is when the original observer isn't around to be debriefed when the shooting is finally over.

Working Around the Observer Effect

Suppose that a Time Agent has the misfortune to be accused of witchcraft in 1650. He is captured and tortured, but escapes. He reports back to base, which determines that the head witch-hunter is probably an Evil Time Agent.

Now, the one thing that Mission Control *cannot* do is send a team back to terminate the witch-hunter before

1650. He was observed in 1650. The Observer Effect says that we can't take him out before then. We know he was there. Except . . . if it matters enough, we could try to eliminate him and substitute an exact double, to do those things that the original was observed doing . . . including torturing the original agent!

What if the double tries to cheat history? He'd better not. The double has to make sure that he does everything he was observed doing. If he tries not to, something *will* happen – he will go mad and think he is the witch-hunter, or he will be secretly killed and replaced by another enemy agent . . . or something equally bad. (The GM can have a lot of fun thinking up disasters when PCs try to cheat observed fate.)

However, it is perfectly safe for Control to send someone to 1645 to keep an eye on the witch-hunter and report what he does. Sometimes it's a good idea, sometimes it's not. Knowledge is power, but every little bit of knowledge limits what you can do in your own future. The Observer Effect is a two-edged sword.

TIME VIEWERS

The biggest problems with time viewers – devices that can see through time – are that they screw up physics, and they can screw up your game. (A time viewer without a good long Recency Effect also becomes a machine for potentially totalitarian surveillance. This may be a desired effect, of course.) Let's take the easier one first, the physics: by “seeing” something in the past, you're transmitting information to the past (at least if quantum physics is correct). Any reasonably scientific time viewer can thus become a time communicator, even if it's just a matter of “viewer on” and “viewer off” in Morse code. (Which, as a binary code, can theoretically transmit computer programs, or any other kind of data – oh, it's just too horrible to contemplate.) Once you're doing that, all the paradoxes from actual time travel come back to bite you, and as long as you have to have the paradoxes anyhow, you might as well get the fun of racing around in fur undershorts waving a sword at Romans.

The simplest way around this is to ignore quantum physics; the time viewer works by some other means than subatomic particle transfer. Magic is always good, or pseudoscientific mysticism such as reading the “Akashic Record.” This psychic recording of all events, future and past, in Earth's history, is kept Somewhere (the Astral Plane, a monastery in Tibet, the DNA of the Messiah) by Someone (monks, Lemurians, energy beings, angels), and is available only to the Worthy (whoever the GM wants). However, with suitably laid-back players, the GM can simply decree that quantum physics is wrong, or doesn't apply the way physicists think it does, and the invention of the time viewer (which can't, no how, no way) communicate with the past proves it, despite its being ever so scientific.

This brings up the issue of game control and game balance. If the GM only lets the PCs' superiors (or enemies) have a time viewer, he needs to wrestle with the issues implied by an all-seeing Mission Control (some of which are addressed on p. 210). He should also decide if the Observer Effect applies, and if there is a Recency Effect for time viewing as well. Even in games without an official Observer Effect, seeing the past has consequences for the observer and his decisions about it. Players are experts at asking awkward, but eminently reasonable, questions like “Can you trace the movements of the bad guy after he thwarts us, and send us back to thwart him when he's asleep?”

All of this caution applies in spades if the PCs have a time viewer. They will naturally use it for complete reconnaissance of their missions, checking up on the identity of that one shadowy assassin who got away in the past, and so forth, thus destroying suspense and action in one go. A good general rule is, if you must have time viewers, they should never be superior to going and looking in person – and should ideally have weaknesses (or blank spots in coverage) that can only be addressed on the ground. Failing that, they should be balky, uncooperative, foggy, inconvenient things, or impossible to get time on for piddling details (rather like radio telescopes). Otherwise, the

GM will find himself presiding over a series of thrilling narrations of things seen on the time viewscreen, rather than an actual game.

Having said all that, here are two possible time viewers.

Pythagorean Chronovisor

TL7[^]

This device, according to (genuine) occultist legend, uses the Pythagorean harmony of the spheres – which postulates that no sound is ever lost, merely subsumed into the eternal music of geometrical creation – to capture images and sounds from the past. In 1952, Father Pellegrino Ernetti, a musicologist (and exorcist!) working in Venice, developed a method of “tuning in” to sounds from the past using sensitive recording equipment and an antenna constructed from a harmonious blend of three metals. With the assistance of various pious physicists (including, says the rumor, Enrico Fermi), Ernetti improved his device, adding an oscilloscope to let him focus on a specific era, and a television viewer. Although the pictures were blurry, and the sounds muddy, Ernetti was able to view speeches by Napoleon and lost plays in ancient Rome. Father Ernetti abruptly stopped his research in 1978, after the death of Pope John Paul I, for reasons unknown.

The Pythagorean Chronovisor (which may work on similar principles to an Akashic Time Camera supposedly built in the 1940s and 1950s by the spiritualist Baird T. Spalding) works on mystical principles, but constructing it requires a Physics/TL7[^] (Acoustics) roll, and using it requires an Electronics Operation/TL7[^] (Temporal) roll. Tuning it into a specific time period involves a lengthy period of searching (1d+2 hours), which can be cut by a third with a suitable History or Area Knowledge roll (or to one hour on a critical success) while watching the display pan back and forth. It can view any scene that took place within radio range (10 miles) of its antenna. With an Electronics Repair/TL7[^] (Communications) roll, it can be modified to receive from anywhere within 1,000 miles, but takes

four times as long to “home in” on a specific time period and location, and all rolls to use it are at -4 to skill. It is very balky and sensitive; add -2 to any negative modifiers for choral storms, atmospheric disturbances, reality quakes, etc. To take usable photographs or recordings from it is a Photography or Electronics Operation/TL7 (Surveillance) test at -6!

At the GM’s discretion, of course, building or using it might also, or instead, require rolls against Occultism, Philosophy (Pythagorean), or Musical Instrument (Chronovisor)! If it channels the Akashic Record, or the songs of the angels, or some other spiritual archive, the user may need to be Blessed, have a suitable Power Investiture, or at least possess Clerical Investment. (It might also merely be a psychotronic enhancer, and the user must have Psychometry to make it work.)

It cost at least \$50,000 to build (and that’s only because the Pope made Enrico Fermi help Ernetti for free); it weighs 30 lbs.

Timescanner

TL9[^]

A timescanner is a device that can be used to see into the past; it is useful for archaeologists, detectives and genealogists. When activated, it provides a holographic image of whatever is occurring within a two-yard radius centered around the scanner, at some point in the past. Nothing outside that area can be seen – it can’t be used as a “window” to scan the surrounding landscape. The place being scanned is relative to the nearest mass of continental size. Thus, a timescanner can only be used to scan planetary surfaces.

Of course, the Observer Effect applies to anything seen by timescanner. But in a background where history can be changed, you might see something different the next time you scan the same period!

A timescanner must be set for an arbitrary point in time in the past – e.g., 31 years, 84 days, 11 hours and 50 minutes ago. Make a skill roll against Electronics Operation (Sensors). A successful roll means the scanner has locked onto the correct period. Failure means that the mark was missed by

10% times the amount failed by (plus or minus, roll randomly). A critical failure means that it could be seeing anywhen . . . Other than actual evidence (“Why are they wearing togas – are you *sure* this is 1945?”) there is no way to tell *when* the scanner is actually focused, only *where* – the same place it is in the present.

The more distant the period to be scanned, the longer the scanner takes to reach it. It takes 90 minutes to focus on anything in the last 24 hours, three hours to focus on anything in the last six days, six hours to focus on a point three months distant, 12 hours to focus within the last 2 1/2 years, 24 hours to focus on something in 25 years, two days to focus on something in 250 years, and so on. Each tenfold increase in temporal distance doubles the amount of time that the scanner takes to reach that period.

After the scanner is ready, it projects the visual image of the area occupied by the scanner, and continue in “real time” until deactivated. This can be unhelpful if, in the time being scanned, the area presently occupied by the scanner is filled with solid material.

For example, archaeologists take a timescanner to the ruin of an ancient palace. They set it up, and choose to go back to a day exactly 3,200 years ago, the approximate date it was built. It takes four days for the scanner to reach back that far (whether it shows brief glimpses of intervening periods is up to the GM); then it starts relaying images. The scientists used astronomical data to make sure they focused in during the early morning. What they see is two halves of different rooms – a wall once bisected the area now occupied by the scanner. One is furnished, a bit of rug extends out, and the corner of a chair. In the other, they can see half a bed with the bottom half of someone sleeping under a fur cloak. If they want to see more, they would have to wait for someone to come into the timescan field, or they could try again, either resetting the time (by as little as a few hours, perhaps) or physically moving the scanner itself. Moving the scanner breaks the lock.

A timescanner costs \$800,000, and weighs 5 tons.

TIME MACHINES

Machines that actually transport things or people into the past (or future, if a future actually exists yet) will probably operate (have always operated?) on the same general principle. A large amount of energy, focused to a point or a line, opens a wormhole between two points in space-time. That wormhole, then, draws the object at its focus (usually the time machine and its pilot or crew) through itself either instantaneously or at a high years-per-second rate. Some wormholes are “open” to the outside, moving the time machine through some sort of hyperspace outside regular material existence. Others are fully self-contained, admitting nothing – not even light or air – to the machine and its crew during the passage, which must be carefully calibrated to avoid smothering the time travelers. Long trips into the past or future may need to be done in stages, or the time machine should be fitted with oxygen masks and breathing equipment like a bathysphere. Some machines (or theoretical models) “skip” the machine through a rapid series of wormholes, admitting photons and oxygen molecules every thousandth of a second (as experienced by the time traveler).

Conventional science throws up its hands at the request to design a time machine. In 1974, physicist Frank Tipler devised the closest thing to a working design; it involves a light-years-long cylinder of neutronium spinning at three-quarters of the speed of light. Not only is such a time machine inconvenient, bulky, and expensive, it can only send the user back as far as the moment of its own creation. However, the determined time traveler has options that do not rely on conventional science.

Chronic Argo

TL5^

This device, first invented in 1888 and later perfected in 1895, works on an analogous principle to an optical periscope. Rather than redirect the flow of light, it redirects the ambient time flow of the universe by means of a precise geometrical relationship among several control bars of varying materials (bronze, ivory, ebony, rock

crystal, and nickel). By moving the bars forward or backward, the device travels forward or backward in time, remaining stationary relative to the Earth’s surface.

It requires no power plant or energy input, but a sufficiently powerful force field or temporal distortion might prevent its rods from precisely redirecting the time flow. As built by its inventor, it rests in an open-frame chassis on two long brass rails; there is one seat for the pilot, and dials demarcated in days, thousands of days, millions of days, and billions of days provide some notion of temporal location. Its top temporal speed is 800,000 years per hour.

Time Belt

TL6^

On June 30, 1908, something struck the Siberian forest in the Tunguska River valley, emitting a flash visible hundreds of miles away. It was a piece ejected from a spinning dark star, thousands of light-years away. Most of this bolide disintegrated on impact, but tiny fragments remained. The time belt contains a submicroscopic sliver of such a fragment, suspended in a powerful magnetic field. By adjusting the field strength with a dial, the wearer can increase the resonance between this sliver and the original dark star. This imparts the dark star’s “Kerr spin” to the fragment, and thus to the belt’s wearer and anyone in physical contact with him. The wearer can only travel to dates before June 30, 1908, and once in the past must “snap back” to the present before traveling elsewhere.

No Machines!

You can build an interesting campaign around the idea that, for whatever reason, time travel works only for living beings. (Say, inanimate objects have too strong an entropic field, or lack temporal self-identity, or whatever.)

The most obvious result is that time travelers always arrive naked, with no equipment at all. Under these circumstances, the Time Corps recruits very healthy, self-reliant sorts with little body modesty. In most periods, the first job is stealing some clothes . . .

This works especially well with psionic time travel (pp. 166-169), and also makes an interesting malfunction for a “normal” time travel system.

The belt weighs 15 lbs., and is usually worn with a harness and a battery pack (good for 24 hours of continuous use) on the back to power the magnetic containment field. The belt and battery pack have DR 1 and 5 HP each. Should the field be breached or shut down, the belt becomes too heavy to lift or wear (doing 4d crushing damage to the wearer; if any), snaps back to the present (or, if critically damaged, to 1908), and cannot be used for time travel until repaired or recharged. Time travel using the belt is instantaneous, although arrival on the exact date desired requires a critical success on an Electronics Operation/TL6^ (Temporal) skill roll. A successful roll results in an arrival 2d days on either side of the target date; a failed roll results in missing the target by 2d×10 days; a critical failure misses by 2d×1,000 days. The traveler does not move in space relative to the Earth’s surface. The belt cost its inventor \$320,000, which included the cost of finding and extracting the dark star sliver from the gravelly Siberian countryside.

Time Machine Table

TL	Vehicle	ST/HP
TL5^	Chronic Argo	36
TL7^	USS Eldridge	460
TL7^	Time Sphere	68
TL8^	DMC-12	55

[1] The *Eldridge* has 11 feet of draft.

[2] Cost includes two plutonium slugs at \$80K each.

Rainbow Effect Coils

TL7^

In 1940, the U.S. government established Project Rainbow to study the military potential of Nikola Tesla's power field theories. By July of 1943, the prototype "Rainbow Effect" device, a large series of Tesla coils nested in a complex geometrical series, attached to a complex antenna array along the ship's mast and superstructure, had been installed on the destroyer escort *USS Eldridge* in the Philadelphia Navy Yard. In theory, the device would make the *Eldridge* invisible; what it actually did (on August 12 or October 28, 1943, depending on which report one believes) was rotate it out of conventional space-time and into a hyperdimension. Witnesses saw the *Eldridge* disappear from Philadelphia – and reappear 15 minutes later in Norfolk, Virginia, a distance of 300 miles. Also during that 15 minutes, some members of the *Eldridge* crew traveled up to 50 years into the future. Others, unfortunately, "phased" into the deck and died horribly, or went mad from the stress.

The Rainbow Effect coils on the *Eldridge* weighed one ton, and required a 500 KW generator; the "Philadelphia Experiment" seems to have generated speeds of 1,200 miles, and 200 years, per hour. Further testing would no doubt improve this performance, and reduce the hazards of hyperdimensional travel. Project Rainbow scientists reportedly conducted a series of land-based tests of the Rainbow Effect at Camp Hero (later the Montauk Air Force Station) in Long Island until 1984, and the Navy may have used the *Eldridge* to project American power throughout the time stream during the secret war against Nazi time travelers. The

Rainbow Effect apparatus weighs 2,000 lbs. and costs \$1,300,000 independent of the vehicle size; the antenna array weighs 200 lbs., costs \$16,000, and uses 50 KW per point of Size Modifier covered (minimum +1).

Time Sphere

TL7^

The Reiss-Jäger time apparatus, invented in 1959 by a former Luftwaffe weapons scientist, uses a fixed time projector to lower a converted bathysphere into the time stream. The 5' sphere is suspended from a thick cable (350' long) above the projector platform. When the zero-point energy source in the apparatus power plant is engaged, the platform opens, and a winch lowers the sphere through the yawning vortex below. The gravity fields of the Earth and sun interact with the zero-point field, and the controller (who remains in the present) homes in on the desired location in space-time using a series of handsome Bakelite dials and verniers. This homing process takes 3d×5 minutes and a successful Electronics Operation/TL7^ (Temporal) skill roll (3d minutes on a critical success). During this period, the raw energies of the time stream buffet the sphere; anyone outside the sphere is chronally disincarnated.

The sphere can only travel to locations within the inner solar system before solar gravity becomes too attenuated to power the vortex. The crew of the sphere can use a telephone hookup braided through the cable to speak with the controller or anyone else at the control station. The sphere has one very thick porthole, and a hatch set into the side next to it. While in the past, it rests on four thick, stubby legs; the cable stretches away into a

twisty nothingness. The winch in the present can haul up the sphere at any time, but the sphere dangles suspended from its cable in midair in the past for 1d minutes before returning to the projector. Any number of "landings" are possible without a return to the present, as long as there is sufficient oxygen for the crew to breathe.

Flux Drive

TL8^

This device simply channels an energy discharge (1,210 MJ) into a point, opening an instantaneous time gate to a preset destination, at the same relative point on the Earth's surface. The initial version of the flux drive uses two magnetic plutonium slugs to force a subcritical reaction, which opens the gate; the plutonium instantly decays to lead during a time shift. Like the Rainbow Effect coils, the flux drive is normally mounted in a vehicle, especially since it requires a high rate of local speed (between 85 and 90 mph) to activate. A vehicle with a steel or steel-alloy construction is best, since it creates its own Faraday cage, preventing outside objects from being sucked into the vehicle's temporal wake. The flux drive weighs 15 lbs. and costs \$393,000; energy generation equipment and fuel are extra.

The following table gives vehicle statistics for the Chronic Argo, the *USS Eldridge*, the Time Sphere, and a 1981 DeLorean DMC-12 equipped with a flux drive. Prices all include temporal translation equipment as well as base vehicle costs. Operating any of these time machines requires an Electronics Operation/TL (Temporal) skill roll, plus relevant Piloting or Driving rolls for their vehicle mounts.

Hnd/SR	HT	Move	LWt.	Load	SM	Occ.	DR	Range	Cost	Locations	Notes
–	12	–	0.5	0.1	+2	1	1	–	\$5,960	E2Rs	
-3/4	11f	2.5/20	1,240	448	+10	186+14A	60	7,000	\$2,100,000	gMS3t4X	[1]
–	12	–	2.8	0.3	+1	2P	400	–	\$590,000	g	
+1/4	10f	4/62*	1.8	0.4	+3	1+3	5	450	\$603,000	g4W	[2]

DANGERS

Depending on the nature of time travel, it might be completely safe and instantaneous (except in the 1% of cases when the traveler vanishes forever), or the equivalent of a climb up Mount Everest, requiring days of effort, specialized gear, breathing equipment, and a lot of luck. Any of the dangers of jump space, hyperspace, or the continuum (see *The Spaces Between*, p. 74) might also apply to the time stream.

Chronal Storms

Time travel might also have its own dangers, from ultratemporal monsters dwelling between the microseconds to storms of pure chronal energy that batter time machines around like tin cans. Chronal storms might arise for any number of reasons; the GM should decide on his reasons, decide which ones apply to the time travelers' planned destination, and add up a total Severity Level (SL) for the storm front they will pass through. (For even more trouble, the GM might want to figure out if their route leads through any other storms on the way.) The Severity Level can be a pure game-rules abstraction, or an actual unit of measure used in the Rainbow Project labs!

Some possible chronal storm causes include:

Battlefields: The spirits of the warlike dead, or the collision of historical possibilities, churns the time field around major battlefields. Determine the order of magnitude of the battle deaths; Bunker Hill killed 1,200 men (fourth magnitude), Shiloh killed 24,000 (fifth magnitude), Passchendaele killed 570,000 (sixth magnitude). Add 2 to the SL for every order of magnitude above third. (The GM can apply the same metric to other historical cataclysms such the Great Fire of London or the Rwandan genocides.)

Cosmic Energies: Nuclear explosions, volcanic eruptions, the Tunguska impact, and other "big bangs" might have also torn up the time stream, along with the atmosphere and the climate. Add 2-4 to SL.

Historical Murk: Perhaps part of what drives temporal disturbance is

Staying in Period Character

A time traveler (or crosstime agent) must be able to fit in with his background, down to the smallest detail of dress and speech. Depending on the circumstance, this requires a roll on IQ-5, Acting-2, or Savoir-Faire (of the appropriate specialty)-3.

The GM sets frequency of checks, based on the traveler's general level of training, his experience with the period and its difference from home-time society, and the circumstances of the mistake. A trained Time Agent who has visited the period more than once might never have to check for trivial errors, only for major social provocations. An absent-minded civilian might have to check every time he entered a crowded public place, or did anything unfamiliar.

A player who fails a minor roll should be allowed to "cover" with a little roleplayed fast talk: "Begad, sir, can't imagine why I said 'siege of Cawnpore,' I meant 'Mafeking,' of course. Funny how the port makes the memory play tricks, eh?" Be sure the cover-up is appropriate; there are social situations in which an apology fixes almost anything, and others in which it only makes matters worse. Make a Reaction Roll for the NPC involved, with modifiers for exceptionally good or poor excuses. Even if the excuse fails, a minor slip only results in the NPC thinking the character is somewhat odd.

A failed major check irreversibly gives away that the person is not who or what he claims to be. This does not mean that the NPC realizes he's dealing with an "alien"; most people have no notion that time travelers (or crossworld agents) exist. (Exceptions would include other time travelers, friendly or enemy; locals who had been recruited by the Time Corps and let in on *The Secret*; and the occasional genius/crackpot who believes all kinds of crazy things. This last sort, if used carefully, can be a very entertaining NPC nuisance.) Instead, the affected NPC guesses that the liar is concealing his identity for some plausible reason – is a spy, perhaps, or a commoner pretending to be a nobleman.

Someone who fails a major check may still attempt to control the damage with smooth talk. "I fear you have me, monsieur – indeed, I never served with the King's Musketeers. But I assure you I am a loyal Frenchman – and my orders come from the Cardinal Richelieu himself!" It may even be possible to turn a neutral NPC into an ally – people love the idea of conspiracies, especially if they can gain some advantage thereby.

the uncertainty of the events in the disturbed era. This could give PCs an actual motive to go back and solve historical mysteries – if they finally figure out who wrote Shakespeare's plays, they can more easily time travel through 1598 London! An significant controversy about the facts but little about the outcome (such as Columbus' exact route) adds 1 to the SL, vague but controversial guesses (Arthurian Britain) add 3; total historical ignorance (much of the history of central Africa) adds 5.

Magic Use: Major spells, banestorms, angelic interventions, or other supernatural manifestations might disrupt Tiplerian space-time, adding 1-5 to the SL. Time traveling on magically significant dates (Halloween, Midsummer Eve) might add another 1 or 2 to the SL.

Overlaps: Entering a time that you have already visited in person runs the risk of personal timeline tangles. It might add 1 to the SL for every such overlap.

Recent Time Shifts: Alterations to history (by rogue time travelers, say) no doubt roil the continuum. Altering a minor cultural trend adds 1 to SL; reversing a Presidential election might add 3 or so; eradicating or seriously deforming a world-historic event or (Christianity, the United States, WWII) could add 5 or more. See *Tampering*, p. 86, for one set of modifiers based on historical tampering levels.

These Severity Levels are purely arbitrary: a GM's individual campaign may evaluate the effects of temporal disturbances entirely differently. Add all the SLs from the various applicable causes together for the era's total SL potential. Roll 2d and subtract it from the potential SL to get the final SL for the chronal storm in the travelers' path (if any). If Navigation (Temporal) exists as a skill in the campaign (or Navigation (Hyperspace) applies to time travel), a successful roll might avoid a storm altogether, or at least brush past a weaker cell of it and try to avoid an accident (lower the final storm SL by 1 for each point of success).

Temporal Accidents

Temporal storm or stowaway sabotage: whatever causes it, a temporal accident means unexpected trouble – which is to say, adventure. An adventure can simply start with the accident, stranding the players in the story from the beginning. On the other end of the inevitability index, the GM can make time travel relatively risk-free, with only minor consequences for accident, such as the failure rules for the Time Belt (p. 162, above). Other possibilities include adapting the parachronic conveyor failure table from p. B531 (possibly substituting a temporal error of some magnitude for the focus error in those results), or tossing the travelers into a parallel world. The system below presents another possible group of bad results.

Traveling in time requires a skill roll, usually against Electronics Operation (Temporal). *Modifiers:* -3 or worse for damaged equipment. Chronal storms make time travel more perilous: -1 per point of final storm SL. Electrical or gravitational disturbances at the departure point might also interfere with some

machines: -2 for a severe electrical storm, -6 for a nuclear blast, -10 for a black hole passage! Paradox wrecks time travel for everyone; penalize travel attempts -1 for every paradox or causality violation committed by any crewman or passenger on their last time trip (much more for major violations like killing one's grandfather or quoting *Macbeth* to Shakespeare as a boy).

Apply the operator's final modified margin of failure to the following table, adding 1 for every extra passenger above the time machine's rated capacity.

- 1 – Go nowhere. The time machine remains at its original point of departure. Hopefully, the travelers weren't leaving in a hurry.
- 2 – Temporal error. The time machine winds up off course by 2d days either earlier (1-3) or later (4-6) than its intended destination.
- 3 – Spatial error. The time machine winds up out of position on the Earth's surface (not up or down) by 2d miles in a random direction.
- 4 – Temporal and spatial error. Combine 2 and 3, above.

- 5 – Diverted by decision point. The time machine winds up drawn to just before a historical decision point near the intended destination. For example, if the travelers intended to visit Leonardo da Vinci while he paints the Mona Lisa in 1507 Paris, they might wind up just before the death of Cesare Borgia at Viana the same year instead.
- 6 – Serious temporal error. The time machine winds up off course by 2d×10 days earlier (1-3) or later (4-6) than its intended destination.
- 7 – Serious spatial error. The time machine winds up out of position on the Earth's surface (not up or down) by 2d×10 miles in a random direction.
- 8 – Serious temporal and spatial error. Combine 6 and 7, above.
- 9 – Diverted by historical crisis. The time machine winds up drawn to just before a historical crisis point within 15 years of the intended destination. For example, if the travelers intended to visit Leonardo da Vinci while he paints the Mona Lisa in 1507 Paris, they might wind up in 1519 Tenochtitlán just before Cortés enters it.



- 10** – Major temporal error. The time machine winds up off course by 2d×1,000 days earlier (1-3) or later (4-6) than its intended destination.
- 11** – Major spatial error. The time machine winds up out of position on the Earth's surface (not up or down) by 2d×100 miles in a random direction.
- 12** – Major temporal and spatial error. Combine **10** and **11**, above.
- 13** – Diverted by major decision point. The time machine winds up drawn to just before a world-historical event within a century of the intended destination. For example, if the travelers intended to visit Leonardo da Vinci while he paints the Mona Lisa in 1507 Paris, they might wind up in 1588

on the deck of a warship in the Spanish Armada.

- 14** – Catastrophic temporal error. The time machine winds up off course by 2d×10,000 days earlier (1-3) or later (4-6) than its intended destination. (At the GM's discretion, this can be a "dinosaur error" that hurls the time machine back to the Cretaceous in traditional style.)

- 15** – Catastrophic spatial error. The time machine winds up out of position on the Earth's surface (not up or down) by 1d×1,000 miles in a random direction. (At the GM's discretion, this can be a "Mars error" that hurls the time machine to Mars – hopefully bedecked with canals – in traditional style.)

- 16 or more** – Catastrophic temporal

and spatial error. Combine **14** and **15**, above. (Dinosaurs on Venus!)

The listed consequences last until the travelers can successfully fix their craft and escape. Although campaign specifics can vary, the duration likely depends on an Electronics Repair (Temporal) skill roll, suitably modified for inadequate tools, distractions, previous damage to the machine, and jury-rigged equipment. To milk the above table for the best adventure potential, perhaps a critical success allows another Electronics Operation (Temporal) roll in 2d minutes, while a success repairs the time machine in 1d hours. A failed roll forces a delay for an additional 1d hours for each point by which the roll failed; a critical failure strands the travelers for 2d days!

PSIONIC TIME TRAVEL

Time travel does not always require a time machine. Many stories (and quite a few allegedly true tales) deal with travel through both time and dimensions, using only the powers of the mind . . . with or without a little help. Mental time travel abilities may be considered simply "super" in nature, rather than "psionic," if that best fits the campaign. The only real difference in game terms is that truly psionic time travel can be blocked or interfered with using antipsi or various psychotronic gadgets (which might also boost psionic time travel, of course), and is affected by psionic Talents. Physical time-jumping falls under the Teleportation Talent; mental time-jumping falls under the Telepathy Talent.

PHYSICAL PROJECTION

This mode is essentially identical to those using machines, except that the machine is the brain. "Time Police" and "Time War" campaign types can use it, though it is stylistically more appropriate to freelance travel, especially in campaigns with a magical or occult theme.

Not everyone can time travel, although possibly everyone has the potential. Something not readily

available (that is, something under the GM's control) should be required, unless the campaign milieu is a wild postmodern society where everyone can go anywhen. (That might be kind of fun, but like most games with few constraints on time travel, it runs the risks of being exhausting for the GM and eventually boring for the players.) The time travelers have some version of the Jumper (Time) advantage (p. B64). Depending on the campaign

rationale, this advantage may also require an Unusual Background or the Trained By A Master advantage, although if everyone in the party is a jumper (which seems both sensible and likely), such requirements should not count against any disadvantage limit.

Psionic time-jumping can come from any combination of the four possibilities below.

The Time Draft

The idea of psionic time travel leads to an interesting campaign possibility . . . one in which the time travelers are not at all willing.

Secret government experiments have proven that mental time travel exists, and can affect history (or, alternatively, can bring back valuable information and relics). Unfortunately, only one person in hundreds of thousands has the "time gene." Time travel is considered so important to national security that, as these people are identified, they are rounded up and removed to the maximum-security Time Laboratory, where they are "encouraged" to serve their country on missions into the past. The draftees aren't sure they like the idea – but even if your mind has the freedom of time, it's hard to argue with someone who's got your body locked up . . .

The idea here is that the time travelers are entirely unwilling, and constantly looking for a way to escape. (If they're willing to cooperate with their captors, it's an ordinary Time Agent campaign.) This might be part of a broader campaign in which all psi users, not just time-travelers, are hunted by governments that wish to exploit their powers. Some government agents might be sympathetic, and help the "underground," while some psis assist with the roundup.

Inborn Talent

Time travelers are born, not made. Some bizarre genetic twist gives certain people the power to travel in time. The ability may always have existed, being kept secret by its users, as in Poul Anderson's novel *There Will Be Time*. Or it may be a recent mutation, perhaps along with other super-powers. It could be even a mutation of a post-nuclear future – although we'll say this once for the record: Mutations take place only in the generations born after the triggering event; once you're born, you can't mutate. (At least that's true of radioactivity, but a biological weapon might conceivably "mutate" victims immediately, especially under pressure of dramatic necessity.) Or it might be a latent trait in all mankind, waiting only for the global radiation count to rise enough to activate it.

An interesting short campaign could be built around the holocaust's survivors trying to gather the temporally gifted mutants and train them for a mission into the past, either to recover unobtainable supplies or possibly even to prevent the disaster (and create a whopper of a paradox, but one imagines that post-apocalypse

won the SJ Games prize drawing at Origins. Tripping-through-training usually involves joining a secret elite, who are either sworn to uphold good or (as with the Cthulhoids above) are fleeing the rest of the group, which is sworn to do them in. Just try explaining *that* to the cops.

Gadget Required

Time travel requires some kind of augmenting device, either a machine (which may answer any of the descriptions of time machines, from pocket-sized to Pentagon-sized) or a special drug or chemical (which you can't get at the local Boots or Walgreen's, even with a prescription). This tends to make it the result of a government, or super-government, project – perhaps secret and highly experimental, perhaps well-established. The treatment may not work on everybody, and it may have drastic effects on those who can't make the grade. See the "Richard Blade in Dimension X" series of books, by several authors using the name Jeffrey Lord, in which only Blade is tough enough to survive being transmitted into the big X – at least, in the early books.

The past is never dead. It's not even past.
– William Faulkner, *Requiem For a Nun*

societies have bigger fish to fry). And the mutation might be inheritable, which means that it might have been "caused" by the future disaster, but show up in plenty of human bloodlines throughout the past as mutant time travelers spread the love.

Special Training

Anybody can time-trip if they know how; the problem is getting the training, which is the closely guarded secret of a group of Tibetan monks/Cthulhu worshipers/Knights Templar/mad game designers. Our heroes learned the technique when their plane crashed in Tibet/they were inducted into the cult, which is now hunting the renegades/they met one of the last defenders of the Faith, who passed on the secret while dying/they

Ritual Required

Time travel requires a ritual of some kind: a magical spell, a prayer to the Three Fates, or the achievement of perfect satori to cast oneself loose from the material world. Perhaps the ritual must be performed at a place of power: a Stonehenge or Siege Perilous or Mystery Hill. The PCs don't even have to know the ritual to trigger it; maybe an ancient coven of Druids cast most of the spell before being surprised (fatally) by a Roman legion. The PCs unwittingly hum a U2 tune while in the stone circle, completing the ritual and shooting themselves back to Whenever. If the travelers have stumbled through the doorway by such an accident, they have to find the right place, the rest of the ritual, and anything the ritual might have

required (the Golden Fleece, or the Holy Grail, or the blood of a sphinx), to get home again.

All of the Above

You can combine any or all of the above elements to suit your individual campaign flavor. Perhaps anyone in a certain bloodline can time-jump, as long as he holds an ancestral mirror. Perhaps only those with years of training can comprehend the ritual for time-transfer. Perhaps anyone has the potential to time-jump, but has to eat a specific kind of berry that only grew in the Sahara grasslands 8,000 years ago.

Jumping With Equipment

Mental trippers usually have tighter limits on equipment than their hardware-driven counterparts. They should be limited to what they can carry on their persons. The Jumper advantage on p. B64 prescribes an absolute mass limit. This includes clothing, tooth fillings, and everything that isn't the person's own cellular material. The GM may limit this further. Perhaps the tripper arrives in the past exactly as he came into the world, without even the tooth fillings (never mind the eyeglasses, hearing aid, toupee . . .), as in *No Machines!* on p. 162.

Such mental time travel offers an ideal way to (literally) strip off the hardware and force the players to figure out solutions to their problems, rather than simply pointing a gadget (technological or magical) at them. On the other hand, if the GM feels the campaign works better if large artifacts can move through time, he can always allow stretching of the limits. One possibility involves the Extra Carrying Capacity enhancement to Jumper on p. B64. Other enhancements to, and variations on, the Jumper advantage appear on p. 174.

MENTAL PROJECTION

So far, we've assumed that "time travel" means physically going whenever-it-is, with flesh, blood, bone, and whatever equipment the GM grants in

support. Another possibility is to send only the mind, the consciousness, while the body remains behind. This is the Projection limitation to the Jumper advantage (p. 174).

This does not necessarily mean adventuring as a disembodied spirit. In most mental time travel stories (such as most episodes of *Quantum Leap*), the projected consciousness can occupy the physical body of a temporal local. Usually, the local's own mind lies dormant during the possession, providing only minimal background information. If it's too minimal, this can lead to more complications, as the time travelers need to explain their sudden weird behavior. In a time when people believe in demonic possession – and a great many people do, even today – this could be rather a touchy subject.

Having the native's mind remain active could be interesting, but puts a heavy strain on the GM and players both; there would be a set of NPCs, as large as the players' group, on stage and talking constantly. One solution might be to let each player take the role of the body possessed by the player to his right. Another solution, of course, is to leave the host personality quiescent, and forget the “I hate peas!” “Well, now you love peas!” and “fighting your own hand” routines between host and ghost. Used once or twice, there's a good laugh in it – but the “sophisticated” time traveler repeatedly telling the terrified peasant's mind to shut up and stay out of the way can take a cruel edge that will likely not to be funny or comfortable for long.

The mechanics of the projection can take any form or use any preconditions that psionic physical time travel does: genetics, rituals, magic places, chemicals, training, and so on. The only difference is that the physical body stays in the present. The bodies are in suspended animation while their spirits are away. They need no food, but are vulnerable to physical destruction. (If this doesn't fit with the GM's chosen method of projection, of course, the bodies can lie in bed somewhere, requiring constant attention . . . and even more vulnerable.)

In most campaigns, the Linearity Effect holds true: the time that passes in the present is the same amount of



time that seems to pass while the spirit is in the past. This keeps book-keeping down, and avoids weird experiential time lag in the traveler's brain. (Although an interesting variation would be to allow weeks or months of adventure in the space of a single night; the travelers may end up wondering if it was all a dream!)

Past-Time Characters

The GM should create characters for the host bodies. This requires as much care as designing any other important NPCs, since the players are carrying around their hosts' reputations as well as their bodies – though they may have to find out the hard way just what those reputations were. (“Giacomo the Jester is also the world's deadliest and most cunning assassin.” “Now he tells me.”) The hosts may be somewhat spread out, both socially and physically, so the players' first task is to locate and identify one another – and their second is to explain why the King's Astrologer is suddenly a buddy of an illiterate Gascon cowherd. But don't overdo it; nobody needs to start an adventure with two-and-a-half strikes against them. If the GM wants to make things

a little easier on the team, which is a good idea the first time or two, assume that “like minds seek like bodies,” and the hosts are not vastly different from the spirit's home bodies – at least, not in ways that make the spirit's abilities completely useless.

ATTUNEMENT

Some conceptions of psionic time travel depend on the traveler somehow “attuning” himself to the time in question. Traveling back to the 19th century in the Christopher Reeve tearjerker *Somewhere In Time* depends on the traveler entirely dismissing the modern world from his person! In other campaigns, it might merely be necessary to use an antique item, or the best possible equivalent, to attune a traveler to his temporal destination. (This is the Attunement Required limitation to Jumper, on p. B64.) In still other games (such as those using *No Machines!* on p. 162), perhaps time travelers can bring only suitably attuned items with them into the past. Using such metaphysics, the likelihood of such attunement depends on how “authentic” the antique or item in question is.

The following set of rules and modifiers is one possible arrangement to reflect this conception. What precisely a success indicates depends on the campaign rules and metaphysics, and on what the travelers are actually attempting to do. In theory, these same rules could apply to the most rigidly technological time travel devices: if the “chronal signature” or the “tachyonic emission rate” or the “sidereal radiation count” of the “destination object” or “wormhole anchor” isn’t exact, there will be hell to pay.

Carrying Items to the Past: A successful roll brings the item in question along. A roll that misses by 1 leaves the item behind in the present when the traveler leaves. If he returns safely, he may try to use it again. A failure that misses by 2 or more simply causes the item to vanish entirely; a critical failure might send the item somewhere else in the past, either to alert the traveler’s enemies to his arrival or to set up an ugly temporal paradox to hammer him with later.

Attuning for Physical or Mental Projection: A successful roll allows the relevant time travel roll (an IQ roll for a Jumper, a Electronics Operation (Temporal) for a time machine, or the spell roll for a magical ritual) to proceed unmodified. A roll that misses by 1 adds a -1 penalty to the relevant time travel skill or trait. A failure by 2 or more prevents the time travel from happening at all, either until the auras can be cleansed with a new item, or for 24 hours, or until the next new moon, or whatever the campaign cosmology indicates. On a critical failure, the item sends the travelers somewhere entirely different, either somewhere related to its real manufacture

(a modern replica might send the travelers to 1993 Hong Kong instead of to 1614 Amsterdam), or a temporal accident based on the table on p. 165.

Modifying Other Travel Methods: Alternately, the GM can apply the modifiers in parentheses to the relevant time travel roll, using the worst applicable description of the best available item. These modifiers are cumulative with any other modifiers applied. Successes and failures follow the standard rules for whatever the actual time travel method may be. The GM should feel especially free to reset the “zero point” of these modifiers to fit his own notion of appropriateness and accessibility.

Item Authenticity

Roll 3d, using the worst applicable description, but using fairly generous definitions of “period” (25-100 year windows seem appropriate for most games):

Genuine antique from the targeted period: Automatic success. (+5)

Item is new but wholly natural to the targeted place (e.g., uncured tobacco; an uncarved stick): Succeeds on a 15 or less. (+3)

Item is a genuine antique that was repaired or restored, at some point, with an out-of-period material: Succeeds on a 14 or less. (+2)

Item is a painstaking modern reproduction of a period item, made using authentic methods and materials: Succeeds on a 14 or less. (+0)

Item is a good modern reproduction of a period item, made using at least one modern method or material: Succeeds on a 12 or less. (-2)

Item is a quick modern reproduc-

tion of a period item, made using mostly modern methods and materials: Succeeds on a 10 or less. (-4)

Item is out of period due to style or design, though not technology: Succeeds on a 9 or less. (-5)

Item was not yet invented at the targeted time: Automatic failure. (-8)

Modifiers

Item had been invented but was not truly of the period because it was not in common use: -2.

Item is not native to the target place or culture: -3.

Item is not native to the targeted place or culture, but items like it were often used there: -1. (For example, an 1880 Chinese lacquer box inherited from one’s English aunt is “native” to both 1880 China and 1880 England, since that box was in both places. An 1880 Chinese lacquer box bought in a Shanghai junk shop is “native” to 1880 China, but would only take a -1 for trips to Victorian England, since such items were common there as well. A Chinese lacquer box from 180 A.D. would take a -3 modifier for trips to the Roman Empire, however, since the Romans used almost no Chinese handicrafts besides raw silk.)

Item was made (or, for an antique, significantly repaired) by the carrier’s own hands: +1 to +3. (The +3 should apply only to heroic efforts, such as sewing a costume out of cloth you had spun and woven yourself!)

Item has been in the carrier’s possession, or his family’s, for more than 20 years: +1 per generation, up to +5.

THE FUTURE

Travel into the future is easier than traveling into the past; we’re all doing it at the stately pace of one second per second. Except on Mondays, when we’re doing it more slowly. Time travel games involving the future have roughly the same concerns with paradox as those involving the past, and essentially the same solutions.

We are all interested in the future, for that is where you and I are going to spend the rest of our lives. And remember, my friends, future events such as these will affect you in the future.

– Criswell, *Plan 9 From Outer Space*

GETTING THERE FASTER

Although suspended animation, or cryonics, or making a braintape to be played in a millennium, or a long Rip Van Winkle nap, don't feel as slow, they're actually no faster than normal living. They also have the disadvantage that they don't work in reverse so well. This can be a boon for a GM bound and determined to leave the old campaign behind ("You wake up a million years later, and your magic sword is rusted into goo.") but kind of irritating for time travelers.

Accelerating to near the speed of light and letting time dilation do its relativistic thing can also work, if you have spaceships capable of such behavior or convenient black holes that somehow don't rip you to atoms. Unless the black hole is a "Kerr black hole" complete with Tiplerian spin, though, you're still not getting back in a timely fashion.

In short, you have the same options for traveling forward that you have for traveling backward: time machines, psionics, or magic gateways. You might also get kidnapped by a time traveler – perhaps for the same reasons present day time travelers timenap historical figures (p. 72), or perhaps just to work in the soylent fields.

PHYSICS

Future travel not only shares a mechanism with past travel, but most of the paradoxes, possibilities, and options emergent from temporal physics. These apply both to physical travel to the future and any form of future knowledge, whether finding a time-lost diary, Precognition, Death Vision spells (p. B251), or hearing it straight from a chatty time traveler killing time in the bar until the Super Bowl starts. (That last one can be kind of fun: "Oh, are you *the* Greg Kettler? Can I get your autograph? No, I'm not supposed to say anything about your future; it's against the rules. But just between you and me, congratulations on that Nobel Prize, and don't trust any guy with an eye patch.")

Paradoxes

The traveler goes into the future to find out from his grandson that he met grandma by accident in a bookstore. He returns to the past and hangs out at the bookstore so much that grandma thinks he's a loiterer and calls the cops on him. Or he pays so much attention to recreating their destined meeting that she thinks he's a phony and has no interest in him. Who left grandpa alone and bitter? His grandson, who now doesn't exist. The Free Lunch paradox, and communication paradoxes in general, explicitly depend on future involvement and foreknowledge.

Possibilities

Fixed Time: If the future can't be altered, that's depressing, and not a lot of fun for roleplayers or GMs, except in horror games, or the kind of fantasy game with lots of prophecies.

Plastic Time: Far more comforting; you can alter your destiny even if you see it. Paradox doesn't exist, either because altering your actions creates a new worldline (as with Parallel Worlds), or because the future is still a cloud of potential (as in Chaotic Time). When you go back to the future, it's different. The options are indistinguishable, unless you can travel between worlds, too. For the Traveler at Risk option, assume that changing the future causes all memory of the future to vanish – or to change to match the new future retroactively! Return Blocked is even easier; of course you can't travel back to a future you just altered! This, of course, can become Paradox-Proof Time, retroactively.

Plastic Time With High Resistance: As with pastward travel, this is the most dramatically satisfying option. It lets GMs build a fun or scary future history, but avoids railroading players while giving them a strong incentive to involve themselves in the world.

Absolute Now: There isn't a future, yet. It just doesn't exist. This is a stark, radical version of Plastic Time, but it's undeniably final and simple. See p. 219 for further discussion of this phenomenon.

Options

The Linearity Effect and Oscillating Time are easily conserved in future travel, and carry roughly the same reasons and advantages as pastward travel.

The Farsight Effect: Essentially the Recency Effect for future travel, it prevents a lot of monkeying around with the PCs' own lifespan, jumping forward to read their own after-action reports, and so forth. Remember that cloning, immortality or anagathic treatments, and other methods may inconveniently extend PC lifespans; records may last for an annoyingly long time on DVD or molecular computer files. Putting a nice nuclear war or some other disaster between the PCs and the accessible future is one solution, although that may cause the problem of goosing right-thinking time agents into trying to avert it. More simply, it may just be against Time Corps regulations to read your future personnel file, as it tends to create choral storms or unleash the Hounds of Tindalos.

The Observer Effect: This phenomenon can operate just as easily (if no less confusingly) in the future. Travelers cannot alter any observed future event, but can try to change its meaning or context all they like. In one sense, this is what the Greek heroes had to go through whenever they got an oracle predicting doom or death in some specific circumstance. (Akin to that, an Observer Effect can accidentally give a traveler a Destiny; see p. B131 and tread carefully.) If time travelers from the future are wandering around in the present, the GM can either rule that the more futureward observation counts, which involves a lot of bookkeeping about who from when saw what, or choose the marginally simpler rule that anyone from another time counts as an Observer. This can turn into a weird, acausal headache if the GM isn't careful, and possibly even if he is; make absolutely sure you want a bunch of future travelers Observing things into stasis before you combine future travelers with the Observer Effect.

CHAPTER SIX

INFINITE CHARACTERS

Lord Byron limped into the room, brandishing his sword-cane. "Which of you renegades has been impersonating me?" he demanded of the group standing around the fireplace. The eerily familiar men, in slightly varying degrees of theatrical posture and widely varying costume, drew themselves up and began to respond in a veritable Babel of aristocratic drawls and alcoholic sputters.

"Impersonating you? Tchah, fellow, you've been 'personating me!"

"None of you can possibly claim to be inconvenienced, compared to what poor Augusta has gone through."

"As if I'd bother impersonating someone in that ridiculous cravat."

"Begad, sirrah!"

Before matters could come to blows, one of their number fired a pistol into the ceiling. Into the silence, he said, in the clear, ringing voice they all shared (when sober, at any rate), but with more than a hint of a Scots burr: "I have no idea who you gentlemen are, but I'm fairly sure we're none of us Billingsgate fishwives. Do let us

sit down and discuss this matter as befits men of quality. I am Sir George Gordon, heir presumptive to the Earldom of Urquhart. I returned to Edinburgh from a swimming jaunt to find that someone had been forging cheques in my name."

"Swimming, eh?" said a florid, but recognizably similar, gentleman in a blue broadcloth coat. "I swim meself; but I'm no laird. I was Captain Gordon of the Protector's Ship *Perilous* until two days ago, to find some impostor had resigned my commission right in the middle of our scrap with the bluidy Danes!"

"Danes? You're a drunkard as well as an impostor, 'Captain Gordon.' Everyone knows our war is with the Turk, over Greek independency!"

"It was with the French, over Pitt's investments and fear of radical revolution, and it's been over for years!" insisted another dark-haired man, dressed more shabbily than most. "And I, Citizen Byron, am proud of the part I played in it, and very much resent whichever buffoon it was who published a blatantly monarchist poem over my name in the *Saturday Review*!"

"Poem?" Three of the more lavishly dressed men perked up their ears at this, and began a storm of argument about meter and scansion and which of them had plagiarized from the other.



"Gentlemen!" A new voice interrupted them, setting their nerves a-jangle somehow. Another figure, much like themselves, only far paler than even the most artistic of the poetical disputants, stood in the doorway. "You are all George Gordon, and many of you are Lord Byron, as am I. I have taken your lives for mine. You all share a certain native skill with sword and pistol, and have a gift for words, whether political speeches, seductive whispers, lyric poems, or naval reports. I require these talents in order to redirect the very course of history on a score of worlds." The Byron speaking seemed to grow taller, the shadows around him darker, and his teeth sharper, with every sentence. "You shall be my instruments, blood of my blood, and you shall open the floodgates of time to forces far darker than anything any of you have ever dreamed, forces . . ."

The words choked off with a meaty scraping sound as a length of cherry-wood emerged from the speaker's chest.

"You have no idea of my dreams, brother," gritted a contralto voice from behind the now-desiccating corpse. The dust fell away to reveal a slender, raven-haired beauty dressed in the height of Court fashion, clutching a sharpened billiard cue. "You, my brothers, on the other hand, shall hear quite a bit of them, I expect. I am Lady Georgia Byron, and I believe you can guess why you are called here tonight."

A time travel or cross-dimension campaign allows for the widest possible variety of characters – not just NPCs, but player characters as well. Gamers can draw characters from any world – past, present, future, or wholly imaginary – all in the same campaign!

Character backgrounds depend on the campaign frame. In a campaign built around the missions of the Infinity Patrol or similar cross-universe agency, the PCs are likely to be highly trained Patrol members. Some may be technical specialists and historians, while others are "agent" types. If the adventures concern freelance time meddlers who acquired their machine by accident, the characters may be from almost any background.

The one thing all travelers need is versatility. One never knows when one will have to ride a horse, drive a Persian chariot, or fly a P-51 Mustang against the Luftwaffe – maybe in the same adventure. Interpersonal skills are also very useful . . . for instance, when trying to convince the captain of the *Titanic* to reduce speed *right now*.

ADVANTAGES, DISADVANTAGES, AND SKILLS

This section discusses advantages, disadvantages, and skills as they apply in a time travel or parallel-worlds campaign. As always, the GM has the last word on any interpretations, enhancements, and so forth in his campaign.

ADVANTAGES

Alternate Identity

see p. B39

Having an alternate identity on another world (or time) than the "base world" (or "local present") for the campaign, legally or illegally, is worth only 5 points per identity, unless the law enforcement agencies of that other world or era play a major role (appearing on a 12 or less as Enemies, for example) in the campaign.

Claim to Hospitality

see p. B41

Depending on the campaign, all time travelers or dimension jumpers

may have a 5-point Claim to Hospitality on each other, as fellow "strangers in a strange land." Swagmen and members of the Cabal in the Infinite Worlds have this advantage, although not with each other. There aren't enough retired Patrolmen outside Homeline and the colony worlds for this advantage to apply to active Patrolmen; the Patrol either has safe houses available, or nothing.

Clerical Investment

see p. B43

The GM should decide whether there are enough worlds with similar religious hierarchies to make this advantage worth taking for cross-world adventurers. Most Earths with a Roman Empire and Jesus Christ eventually develop a Roman Catholic Church – but church privileges, vestments and uniforms, and even theology ("In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Mother . . .") may differ very widely!

Contact Group

see p. B44

Time travelers may take a Contact Group across time as long as they remain within the same organization and the same city, as per the rule on p. B44. A priestly Contact Group in the Vatican might go back for millennia!

Contacts

see p. B44

These two Contact types might well occur in time travel or crosstime campaigns:

Academic. If you don't know enough history to find the Black Bird or have the anthropological know-how to track down the killers from a tattoo, you go to the university and talk to a professor. The most useful academic skill set includes Anthropology, Archaeology, History, and Research, but Paleontology (to prep for those dinosaur hunts), Occultism (to fight vampires in 17th-century Hungary), or Economics (to

find out what stocks to buy in 1920s Shanghai) might also come in handy. A busy undergraduate has skill 12; a specialized grad student or academic librarian has skill 15; a tenured professor has skill 18; a renowned authority on the subject has skill 21.

Collector. These are dealers in (or producers of) rare or collectible items, from this world or another, or from many worlds. They are the natural employers, brokers, and advisers of crosstime or time-hopping smugglers. Specific items might include antiques, art, old magical equipment, strange gadgets, weapons, books, or fine wines. They can provide information about items, other collectors and their collections, who needs cash fast, and who seems to always find the best stuff. Specific skills include Connoisseur, Current Affairs, and skills associated with certain collections. A bottom-feeder or someone in a small market has effective skill 12; a major broker has skill 15; a respected authority in the field or the main player in a large market has skill 18; the undisputed top collector has effective skill 21.

Cultural Adaptability

see p. B46

Applies across worlds at no extra cost; it's a cinematic ability, after all.

Centrum's single-culture ideology prevents Centrants from taking this advantage without a hefty Unusual Background.

Cultural Familiarity

see p. B23

No matter how familiar you may be with your own culture, you will be wrong-footed while dealing with its ancestral past. Various eras can become cultures (Modern Western, Renaissance Western, Medieval Western) for no penalty. Even without such a time-bound familiarity, cultures give smaller unfamiliarity modifiers for those familiar with their descendants (or antecedents).

Apply a -1 unfamiliarity modifier for every two TLs away from your own era's TL. A modern TL8 American with Culture Familiarity (Western) would only suffer mild "past shock" in TL7 WWII America, but someone

brought forward from colonial times (TL5) is at -1 in that same setting. A modern American dropped into Shakespeare's London (TL4) is at -2; one in medieval France (TL3, but still Western culture) might as well be in a whole different culture. However, that medieval Frenchman finds things the same for centuries on end from, say, 700 A.D. to 1500 A.D. – and in some parts of France, until 1800 A.D.!

At the GM's discretion, this penalty can also apply to alternate or parallel versions of your culture even at the same TL. Although the Nazi Germany of Reich-5 and Homeline America are both TL8, an American trying to blend into Reich-5's Berlin is going to be at a -1, at least. Save a -2 for parallels that diverged at least three TLs ago; a Homeline TL8 North American is at -2 for a visit to the Tenocha Empire on Ezcalli (which diverged in 508 B.C., TL5). The GM should loosen this restriction for close parallels, myth parallels, and other familiar settings.



Detect

see p. B48

The GM should determine the rarity of dimensional highways, nexus portals, or time-gates in his campaign. In the default Infinite Worlds setting, they are Rare.

Duplication

see p. B50

In essence, the Many Worlds Interpretation (p. 20) implies that we all have this advantage, but we don't know about it and can't use it. This could be a very creepy advantage for a world-jumping "pod creature" or "viral being" to use, as it leaves duplicates of itself wherever it goes in the worlds.

Special Enhancement

Construct: Your Dupes are material projections under your mental control. When you dispel them, they vanish, leaving you with your current

– not average – FP and HP. You also enjoy the benefits of No Sympathetic Injury, and need not buy this separately. Finally, the death of a Dupe isn't permanent: you can generate a replacement by taking one second and a Concentrate maneuver. This costs 10 FP. But there is only one "true you," and if you die, all of your Dupes die with you! This modifier is incompatible with Digital and Shared Resources. +60%.

Special Limitation

Sequential: You and your Dupes are chained together in a specific order. Number them from one (the original you) on up. When a Dupe dies, all higher-numbered Dupes vanish as well! This limitation lets you create a character who can summon copies of himself from one possible future, with "later" copies dependent on the survival of "earlier" ones. Add Construct, above, if you can replace dead Dupes with copies from other possible futures. -40%.

Fugue

Some time-jumpers can send themselves back in time for a few minutes in order to create a double, specifically for purposes of combat. It only works under combat stress; an attempt to fugue to (for instance) send yourself a message always comes to naught. When the immediate fight ends, the doubles, dead and alive, wink out of existence – they were closed causal loops of alternate history. Damage to the doubles, ammunition they expended, etc., does not affect the "original you" at all, since you are both the earliest and the continuing "you." (Yes, this appears to violate a number of different versions of the physics of time travel. The GM is free to prohibit it entirely – or say "It's a wild talent, and it works." Either way, don't worry about it!)

For the ability to generate up to five fugue Dupes, take Duplication (Construct, +60%, Linked, +10%; Emergencies Only, -30%, Sequential, -40%; +0%) linked to Duplication 4 (Construct +60%, Linked, +10%; Emergencies Only, -30%, Sequential, -40%, Unreliable (8 or less), -40%; -40%) for a total of 119 points. Remember, without Jumper (Time), this does not allow actual travel in time!

Jumper

see p. B64

This advantage may well play a major role in a time travel or cross-world campaign. The GM may charge an Unusual Background cost to take this advantage in a campaign (like Infinite Worlds) in which technological or otherwise assisted time- or world-jumping is the standard. In the default Infinite Worlds campaign, jumping between worlds on the same quantum costs 1 FP; jumping to a world one quantum away costs 3 FP; jumping to a world two quanta away costs 7 FP; jumping to a world three quanta away costs 15 FP, and so forth, doubling the added cost each time.

New Version: Spirit-Jumper

This is the form of Jumper that many members of the Cabal possess. In the default Infinite Worlds campaign, the astral plane has normal mana, and has openings to many different worlds (usually via battlefields, cemeteries, haunted houses, or particularly gruesome murder sites). However, to get from one world to the other usually involves a long, dangerous journey through the astral plane. You cannot interact in any way with the material plane, and are invisible to those on it, while on the astral plane; you can only perceive the material plane dimly (-7 to any Sense roll) unless something like a haunted house opens an “etheric window” from the material world. Any skill roll to use a higher-tech item in the spirit realm is at -5 per item TL above 4.

Jumper (Spirit): You can bodily move to and from “spirit worlds” such as the astral plane. In these worlds, you are a spirit – you can interact normally with other spirits, are affected by anything that would affect a spirit, and can use any ability allowed by the world’s laws. To initiate the transition, use the standard rules for the Jumper advantage; each attempt costs 1 FP. On a success, you shift between realms. On a failure, you stay in your current world and are at -5 to use your ability again in the next 10 minutes. The results of a critical failure are up to the GM . . . you might attract evil spirits, end up adrift between worlds, or go to the wrong world (e.g., Hell). The special modifiers available to

world-jumpers are available to you, but not all of these are meaningful in every setting. 100 points.

A number of new enhancements and limitations can apply to various forms of the Jumper advantage, depending on the campaign metaphysics:

Special Enhancements

Mass Jump: You can work with other jumpers to move much larger masses. If several jumpers concentrate together, you can move a mass equal to the total of their individual allowances times the number of people involved. All jumpers involved must have this enhancement. +100%.

No Concentration: You can jump in one second by spending FP and making an IQ roll. +15%.

No Fatigue: You don’t have to spend any FP to jump. +20%.

Reliable: Your ability is unusually stable. For each level of this enhancement, add +1 to both the IQ roll to use Jumper and the automatic failure threshold (e.g., two levels would give +2 to IQ and mean a roll of 16 or more always fails). +5% per +1, to a maximum of +10.

Uncertain Encumbrance: You can jump while encumbered, but must make the IQ roll at a penalty equal to twice your Encumbrance level. On a failed roll, you leave your cargo behind; on a critical failure, you lose 1 point of IQ for each Encumbrance level you attempted as you “burned out” that part of your brain temporarily. You recover after sleeping. +25%.

Special Limitations

Attunement Required: In order to jump, you must use an artifact made or used at your destination to attune yourself to the time or world you intend to jump to. The GM may want to use the Item Authenticity table on p. 169 to modify the IQ roll for jumping. This form of Jumper often comes with the Preparation Required limitation on p. B114 as well. This is the mandatory version of the Tracking enhancement on p. B226. -20%.

Duration: Your jump takes several minutes or hours of experiential time rather than being instantaneous. The GM must set the speed (in minutes per year or minutes per intervening world) of jumping.

You cannot recover fatigue during a jump, but depending on the campaign, you may or may not be able to eat, bind your wounds, reload a pistol, or engage in other minor personal activities. The GM sets the value of this limitation in his campaign depending on your freedom of action while jumping and the relative speed of other available means of time or dimension travel. If you have relatively free action, and the speed of jumping is similar to other methods of travel, this may be a -0% special feature, since you essentially have a “bolt hole” to hide in! If, however, air molecules cannot reach your “jump space” and you must hold your breath or use scuba equipment or Metabolism Control while jumping, this limitation is worth at least -10%.

Limited Access: Only available for Jumper (World) or (Spirit). You can only jump between two *particular* worlds – your home world and one specific parallel, the material world and Hell, etc. The size of this limitation depends on how many worlds exist in the setting. If there’s only one, it’s meaningless (-0%). If there are many, it might be worth -20% or more, at the GM’s discretion. In the default Infinite Worlds campaign, there are thousands of Earths – and a number of spirit worlds, afterlives, and so forth clustered around many of the individual Earths, all themselves connected via the astral plane. Access to only two Earths is a -25% limitation; access to only the astral plane (from any Earth) is a -10% limitation.

Limited Quanta: This limitation applies to world-jumpers only. You cannot jump across any number of quantum levels, but have a restricted range. The value of this limitation depends on how limited your range is. A two-quantum limit is worth -5%; a one-quantum limit is worth -10%; being able to jump only between worlds in the same quantum is worth -15%.

Past Only: You cannot jump into the future. This limitation applies only to time-jumpers. -20%.

Projection: You travel not physically, but psychically (though not necessarily psionically). Your body falls unconscious and a projection of yourself appears at the destination. Your body remains in the physical

world, vulnerable to material threats – if it dies, you are trapped outside it forever. Your projected form is visible but intangible, as if you were using Insubstantiality, and subject to anything that would affect insubstantial entities. If you have Insubstantiality, you can “reverse” your ability in order to become solid; if you have Possession (Spiritual, -20%), you can possess a resident of the target world. -50% if you cannot affect your destination at all without Insubstantiality or Possession; -0% if you can affect your destination with spells, mental abilities, and Maledictions as a projection.

Psionic Teleportation: Your ability is part of the Teleportation psi power. (The GM may decide that Jumping belongs under a different power; Jumper with the Projection limitation would fit well under ESP or, if the GM has created such a thing in his campaign, an Astral Projection power.) -10%.

Recency Effect: You cannot jump to a time since the “Recency Barrier,” whenever that is. This limitation applies to time-jumpers only, and *only* in campaigns where the Recency Effect (p. 157) does *not* apply to all time travel. Usually, jumpers with this limitation cannot use the Fugue enhancement to Duplication (p. 173). -10%.

Research Required: This limitation applies to time-jumpers only. You can only jump to a time that you have memorized, unless you “hitch a ride” with another jumper. This requires at least two weeks of intensive research (the GM may require rolls against History, Archaeology, Research, and so on), and spending character points building up an applicable skill such as Area Knowledge (Classical Rome), Egyptology, or History (American Civil War). At the GM’s discretion, visions of the past using Psychometry, Racial Memory, or magic may reduce the research time (though not the character points) required. This may make jumping to the future difficult, if not impossible! Jumping to that era defaults to the relevant skill, rather than to the jumper’s IQ. -25%.

Special Movement: You must be able to freely move to jump. The value depends on how stringent the requirements are. If you merely have to walk

a few steps and be free of anything that restricts your movement (like manacles or grappling foes), that’s -10%. If you need to enter orbit and accelerate past the speed of light with expensive advantages like Flight (Space Flight, +50%) with Enhanced Move 27 (Space), that’s -40%.

Special Portal: You need a particular sort of “gateway” to jump through, such as a reflective surface, a natural cave opening, or a sacred stone circle on a moonlit night. The value of the limitation depends on how rare the required gateway is; a reflective surface is -20%, as is a relatively common geographic feature or any doorway. “Only in a certain sacred spot at a certain time of the year” is a -80% limitation.



Language Talent

see p. B65

This is an incredibly useful advantage for time travelers or crossworld adventurers alike, in the absence of superscience “universal translators,” anyway.

Centrum’s single-culture ideology prevents Centrals from taking this advantage without an Unusual Background.

Languages

see p. B23

Languages shift slightly from parallel to parallel, even at the same relative point in history, as slang, loan words, and jargon differ depending on any number of culturally specific factors. Over a century or more (or

between two worlds separated by a century or more of divergence), these differences accumulate, reducing even Native speakers to Accented. The next break point comes before mass printing standardizes the language; a modern Homeline English-speaker speaks English (Broken) in the 15th century, or on a parallel Earth that diverged in the 15th century or before. At the GM’s discretion, closely related ancestral tongues (such as Oscan and Italian, or Old Norse and Icelandic, or Middle English and English) can be spoken or read as Broken versions of their relatives. The GM should decide how tough to make language divergence between closely related “sister” tongues like Spanish and Italian, or English and Dutch, especially across centuries or parallel worlds. Characters with Language Talent (p. B65) should get the benefit of the doubt on such rulings. A language that is identical across non-parallel worldlines should indicate that crosstime travel (if only in dreams or visions) is happening; suitable languages for such weirdness might include Ancient Egyptian, Navajo, or Tibetan.

The Patrol practices intensive language training; all regular Patrol personnel speak English at Native level (in addition to their own language, if any) and at least three others, usually including Cantonese and Latin. (Other languages the Patrol emphasizes include Aramaic, Arabic, Armenian, French, German, Hindi, Koiné Greek, Lingua Franca, Russian, Spanish, and Swahili.) Centrum, by contrast, is still playing catch-up thanks to their single-language ideology of cultural unity; a Centrum agent rarely knows any language besides Centrum English (which acts as an Accented version of Homeline English, and vice versa), although classical scholars may know Classical Greek, Latin, and Hebrew.

Cabalists often know one or more magical or sacred languages in addition to their own, such as Ancient Egyptian, Goidelic, Homeric Greek, Hebrew, Latin, Old Norse, Sanskrit, or Tibetan. Swagmen speak Strine, a thieves’ cant based on Australian slang, Romany, tinkers’ argot, and Cantonese profanity. It has a weird grammar evolved to handle confusions about time and worldlines better than most normal tongues.

Legal Enforcement Powers

see p. B65

On Homeline or its colonies, Infinity Patrolmen have the 10-point version of this advantage. Since they can essentially operate outside the laws of other worlds, and (usually) escape the consequences of their actions with impunity, they retain this advantage even in campaigns set entirely outtime. ISWAT agents have the 15-point version, as do agents of the Gestapo and SD of Reich-5.

The Interworld Service has no law enforcement powers of any kind within Centrum or the colony worlds; on Zone Green worlds (those with natives under Centrum control), I.S. enforcers have the equivalent of 15-point powers against natives, and 5-point powers against Centrum citizens. Outside Zone Green, of course, Centrum laws do not apply, and Interworld Service members have free rein to bring those worlds within the Zones of Control however they see fit, constrained only by their superiors' orders. The only exceptions are Grade 7 Unattached I.S. agents, who (like all Grade 7s) can command any Service as a Grade 5 member. In a campaign centered on Centrum, Grade 7 Unattacheds have the equivalent of 10-point Legal Enforcement Powers.

Magery

see p. B66

Depending on the campaign, the "magical awareness" of Magery 0 may grant the ability to spot nexus portals and dimensional highways. In the default Infinite Worlds campaign, many but not all such gates are magical, especially the Gates of Thoth (or Psais; see p. 79) and many banestorms.

Night Vision

see p. B71

As an advantage, Night Vision is the ability to see under low-light conditions as well as under normal illumination. If you can see at night better than by day, because normal sunlight dazzles you, this is a 0-point feature, found for example in orcs and owls. Specify how many levels of Night Vision you have, as usual. At

that lighting level you can see normally. You are at -1 to Vision rolls and visually guided tasks for each level by which your environment is either dimmer or brighter. You still can't see in total darkness.

Example: Morlocks have Night Vision 6 as a feature. At -6 illumination (roughly a moonlit night) they can see perfectly. At either -3 or -9 they make Vision rolls at -3; under full daylight they make them at -6. In total darkness they're blind.

Oracle

see p. B72

In some campaigns, reading the omens also reveals the opening (and perhaps the location) of a nexus portal or dimensional highway, especially a transient one: "Travelers from beyond the world approach."

Patron

see p. B72

Most time- or parallel-spanning organizations have "unusual reach in time or space," making them not so unusual as all that in a time travel or dimension-hopping campaign. In such campaigns, the GM should only apply that +50% modifier to organizations or beings with a truly astonishing reach across the worlds, such as an active god. By similar logic, organizations or figures restricted to a single worldline (or a single era in time) take at least a -50% modifier as Patrons in heavily crosstime games: King Henry II can't do much for you on any worldline except the one where he rules England, and only for a few decades in that one!

The Infinity Patrol is a very powerful organization, appearing (as a Patron, anyway) fairly often (9 or less) in an Infinite Worlds campaign, making it a 20-point Patron. Centrum's Interworld Service is larger, but less likely to appear (6 or less), making it a 13-point Patron. Neither usually serves as a Patron for its field agents – Patrolmen and Interworld agents alike know that the worlds are tough, and that they pay a price for their freedom of action and initiative. The Patrol and the Service are more likely Patrons for scientists, researchers, historians, and other, less rowdy types.

ISWAT, the Homeline CIA, the SS, and most other secret agencies have even less in the way of institutional loyalty – agents are expendable. They almost never serve as Patrons, although an individual supervisor ("The Professor never abandons a man.") might wind up as a 15-point Patron in some games. Skorzeny is such a patron for proven ISWAT team members. The same is true of the Cabal as a whole, or of Infinity Unlimited itself, both incalculably wealthy (but rarely appearing) 15-point Patrons; an individual Cabal Grand Master (base 20 points) might take a more (or less) active hand.

Corporations vary. Time Tours has a very good reputation for looking after its own. As a powerful organization it appears on a 15 or less in worlds it operates on, and on a 12 or less in general, making it a 30-point Patron in a general campaign, and a 45-point Patron in games set entirely on worlds like Johnson's Rome. Most transworld corporations are very powerful or extremely powerful but exert themselves for a normal employee only rarely (6 or less).

Possession

see p. B75

This is the advantage used by most mental time travelers in the genre, even nonpsionic ones like the hero of *Quantum Leap*. You can use the Spiritual limitation with this advantage for mental time or world travel even if you do not take the Spirit meta-trait. If it is Linked (p. B381) to Jumper, it can use the Psionic Teleportation limitation (p. B257) rather than Telepathy limitation from p. B257. (If the GM has created an Astral Projection psi power, or some other psi power incorporating both Possession and Jumper, no link is required.)

Special Enhancement

Death-Snap: Normally, if a possessed body dies, you die! With this enhancement, if your host body is killed, you instantly "snap back" to your own time or world, and must make an immediate Fright Check (p. B360). After an accidental death, or a peaceful death in your sleep, roll at no penalty, providing there was nothing especially horrible about it. Roll at a -2

penalty for an ordinary combat death. A messy or lingering death requires a roll at -5. A death by torture, or involving a Phobia (a long fall for an acrophobe, say) forces a roll at -10 or even worse! Your first “death” always adds an extra -10 modifier, your second an extra -5, and your third a -2. Should you acquire a mental disadvantage as a result of the Fright Check, it should be related to the circumstances of your proxy “death.”

Once you recover from the results of your Fright Check, you may immediately attempt to rejoin your companions, if you choose. Of course, they won’t know who you are until you identify yourself! Thus, it’s a good idea to work out passwords in advance. +25%.

Special Limitation

Bloodline Only: You can only possess your own blood relatives (or, for world-jumpers, those of your parallel self or parallel family) out to the second cousin level, or anyone that closely related to one of your lineal ancestors. -40%.

Rank

see p. B29

Ranks in Centrum’s Interworld Service (and indeed, in all the Services of Centrum) replace Status, and are 10 points/level. (Centrum is a classless

meritocracy; see the box on p. B28.) High Rank grants Status in Reich-5 as given on p. B28; Infinity Patrol Rank grants +1 to Status on Homeline at Rank 5-7, and +2 to Status at Rank 8. Both SS and Patrol Rank are worth 5 points/level, as is Cabal Rank, which (usually being secret) grants no Status.

Resistant

see p. B80

The value of Immunity to Timesickness is equal to the value of the default effect of Timesickness based on the rules on p. 181, assuming a campaign in which time or dimension travel is a common occurrence.

Infinity and Centrum have genetically engineered therapies that confer Resistant to Disease +8 on their agents. Centrum injects all its agents with its Aesculapius Factor (a genetically engineered antibody complex); Infinity restricts use of polymaxin (a quasi-symbiotic “kamikaze” retrovirus) to those on lengthy outtime deployments and to Miracle Workers on plague duty, since its long-term health effects are unknown.

See Invisible

see p. B83

“See quantum flows” is an example of this advantage. It not only allows

you to locate nexus portals, dimensional highways, banestorms, and other disruptions to the normal quantum stream; it also allows you to detect incoming parachronic conveyors as well as a man-portable parachronic detector (p. B532).

Special Enhancement

Paralocator: You can always tell which worldline you are in, as long as you have been there before; if the worldline is entirely strange to you, you know that it’s unfamiliar. This enhancement only applies to See Quantum Flows (or the equivalent version in another alternate-Earths cosmos). +30%.

Special Limitation

ESP: This is a special ability within the ESP psi power. -10%.

Serendipity

see p. B83

Even if the conveyor gets lost, the time machine crashes, or the reality quake drops Camelot out from under you, you will probably wind up somewhere pretty neat.

Temporal Inertia

see p. B93

This advantage can be very useful in some time travel games; the GM may rule that it damps out the negative effects of any paradox you cause, since reality simply “defaults” to your memory and existence. In the default Infinite Worlds campaign, it increases your likelihood of surviving a reality quake, banestorm, or other crosstime disaster. At the GM’s discretion, a native of an echo with this advantage may be able to sense Centrum (or Infinity Patrol) tampering before the effects become noticeable to others.

Unaging

see p. B95

You take less damage from exposure to the raw time stream (p. 75) than a normal person. In general, any such damage or negative effect is *halved* for you, after DR or other reductions, and the GM may rule that you are totally immune to some chronal effects.

Rank Table

Rank	Infinity Patrol	SS	Cabal
8	Director	Oberstgruppenführer Obergruppenführer Gruppenführer	Grand Master
7	Commissioner	Brigadeführer	Master
6	Colonel	Oberführer Standartenführer	Philosopher
5	Captain	Obersturmbannführer Sturmabführer	Practitioner
4	Lieutenant	Hauptsturmführer Obersturmführer	Theorist
3	Special Agent	Untersturmführer	Adept
2	Agent	Oberscharführer Unterscharführer	Novice
1	Patrolman	Rottenführer Sturmmann	Initiate
0	Cadet	Mann	

Interworld Service ranks are simply “Grade 1” through “Grade 7” with the grade number matching the level of Rank. The Forum Chairman, the presiding officer in Centrum’s senior council of coordinators, would theoretically have Status 8 but only Rank 7.

Unusual Background

see p. B96

By definition, time travelers or crossworld visitors already have an unusual background, and daily meet others with unusual backgrounds. For this sort of campaign, the only sort of background sufficiently unusual to be worth points would be one that gave *very* special abilities, such as magic, super-abilities, or psi.

In a campaign where only a few PCs have access to time travel or alternate worlds, the GM should consider this to be a significant Unusual Background. The cost should be at least 20 points . . . more, if the time or dimension travel is easy and powerful. (In most such campaigns, all PCs are travelers from time to time, but not all can control the means of travel.)

DISADVANTAGES

Addiction

see p. B122

Both tobacco and marijuana are illegal in Reich-5's Germany (and in any Germany where the Nazis won the war), making them -10-point addictions for campaigns set primarily around such worlds. Both are legal in Centrum, along with a wide panoply of other (mostly artificial) drugs. No addict to any incapacitating drug (including alcohol) can advance above Grade 2 in the Interworld Service, however (unless they take an appropriate Secret).

The value of this disadvantage varies not only with the drug and its legality, but with the world and the era of the addiction. The same addiction to the same drug is worth a different amount as the drug's cost responds to the supply and demand generated by, for example, a drug craze.

Introducing drugs (especially drugs from other worlds) to a population with no social mechanism to incorporate them is a sure way to cause a craze, in which use of the drug seemingly spirals out of control and all society (or at least its drug-using segment) is completely disordered. The "Gin Craze" in 18th-century England and the "crack epidemic" in the 1980s share identical etiologies with other drug crazes: discovery,

enthusiasm, price spike, destruction of existing drug markets, hypercompetition among sellers (often violent, and involving organized crime in the case of illegal drugs) driving the price down, government involvement (either prohibition or licensing, or sometimes both), and eventual social adjustment until the new drug becomes just another ongoing feature (good or bad) of the society. If the drug confers a social cachet (as cocaine did in the 1980s), it stays relatively expensive. Most drugs intended for mass consumption get very expensive dur-

ing the "fad" phase until the market establishes itself, and then very cheap, barring government intervention to increase prices (either to control use, or to tax a new revenue source). Even some seemingly exotic drugs get priced to move to the masses once the craze shakes out: heroin, for example, is a cheap addiction in 21st-century America.

One excellent example of a fairly long-cycle drug craze is the refined sugar craze that began in northern Europe around 1550. Refined sugar, to populations living in areas too cold

Wealth, Status, and Reputation

In a campaign where much of the action takes place "at home," all these social advantages are important and may be used normally. For instance, in the Order of the Hourglass campaign frame (p. 212), wealth and social position can be very important in preparing for a trip, or in defending from enemy Time Circles at home.

However, in most campaigns Status is of no importance: whoever you may be in your home time means nothing in the past or future. (Of course, some hereditary titles are ancient – but imagine telling the second Earl of Pottleby that you're the 17th Earl, and would he mind putting you and your friends up in the family manor for a few days?)

Growing up with high Status is not useless – there still may be a bonus to Savoir-Faire skill rolls – but it is no longer "cost-effective," for those who worry about such things. The GM must determine skill modifiers for attempts to pass oneself off as historical nobility (or even one's own ancestors).

Reputations, similarly, count for little in most time campaigns; characters are not likely to meet anyone who knows them 500 years before they're born. Exceptions to this occur in games with many time travelers, and "recurring villains." In the *Dr. Who* universe, for instance, the Gallifreyan Time Lords have a Reputation, not always good, among the cultures that know of their existence. It is also possible that time travelers who do not keep a low profile become "legends" in later eras. It can be more than a little complicated to deal with people who think you are a mythic hero reborn. Some travelers likely have Reputations to other time travelers; the GM should decide how frequently such folk appear.

Wealth can be an advantage if the players must finance and equip their own time expeditions. A pocketful of gold can work wonders almost any time (though it might be a good idea to melt down those Krugerrands before trying to spend them in the Renaissance). Poverty is rarely a handicap for time travelers.

In some backgrounds, it is very easy to become rich if you can travel in time and across worlds. In particular, the Jumper and Snatcher abilities could make it easy to become rich. The GM should require jumpers and snatchers to purchase the Filthy Rich advantage if they plan on using their powers to gain wealth.

to make wine (or who do not otherwise habitually consume fruit sugars), is *highly addictive* with regular use (a sugar addict uses 10 to 40 lbs. annually). At TL2-3, refined sugar is *expensive* (10 lbs. of sugar costs about \$7 at TL3 in northern countries). During TL4-5, improved transportation and refining techniques (and the discovery of new tropical growing areas) increase supplies, but the much larger pool of potential addicts increases demand, driving the price higher in a classic craze; 10 lbs. of sugar is about \$100 in mid-TL5, now a *very expensive* addiction. (The Golden Age of Piracy was, to some extent, driven by competition over sugar-growing islands in the Caribbean; the pirates were the Crips and Bloods of the 1680s.) By TL6+, industrial progress ensures that refined sugar is a *cheap* addiction, even with millions more addicts creating demand, unless the government taxes its use prohibitively.

Code of Honor

see p. B127

A number of the groups in the default Infinite Worlds setting maintain codes of honor; for example:

Cabalistic Code of Honor: Do not betray the existence of the supernatural to the unknowing; expand the knowledge and power of the Cabal; avenge your *passers*. -5 points.

Centrum Code of Honor: Defend and expand Centrum, at the cost of your own life if necessary. Do not allow sentiment or prejudice to cloud your judgment; take the long view. Order and reason are the prime virtues; success justifies ruthlessness in their pursuit. Obedience creates order. -5 points.

Infinity Patrol Code of Honor: Defend the Patrol, The Secret, and Homeline to the death if necessary. Don't complain, don't play politics, don't embarrass the Patrol or your buddies. Don't fully trust anyone who isn't Patrol. Go down swinging. Leave all other allegiances aside when you put on Patrol blue and black. -5 points.

SS Code of Honor: Be tough to the point of ruthlessness, lead from the front, obey the Reichsführer without question. The SS, the Führer, the Reich, and the race are things to kill or

die for; the only mercy is a quick death. -10 points.

Swagman's Code of Honor: Never betray a fellow swagman or reveal his scams; help out if he waves you in, stay out if he waves you off. Stay bought when possible. Don't go straight. Say nothing useful to outsiders. Warn your mates of trouble. -5 points.

Alternative Outcomes troopers maintain the Soldier's Code of Honor on p. B127, with the addition of "leave no man behind dead or alive." Time Tours staffers keep to the Professional Code of Honor on p. B127, with the addition of "try not to let the idiot customers get themselves killed."

Dependents

see p. B131

In general, PCs in a crosstime or crossworld campaign should get no points for Dependents unless the Dependents appear essentially all the time, and are part of the party. Otherwise, their usual antagonists have no idea the Dependent even exists, let alone be able to capture or threaten them.

For example, the inventor of the time machine could bring his eight-year-old son along for lack of a better place to park him. Or the inventor could be the dependent. He's brilliant but quite incompetent; the PC is his grown daughter, who leads the party.

Clients, Researchers, etc., as Dependents

In some campaigns, only agents and trained technicians go into the field. Other games may involve the agents chaperoning groups of historical researchers, or even tourists. These people are rarely as well trained as the agents, but the agents are responsible for their safety (and for keeping the amateurs from dangerous meddling). Such people also count as Dependents, though the actual individuals may be different from game to game. The actual point value depends on several factors, and is based on the usual adventures the agents have:

Competence of the persons to be protected. Are they reasonably competent and intelligent people (-1 or -2 points) or bumbler who actively cause

trouble (-10 points)? If they have special trouble-causing potential (high rank, psionics, vampirism) and little real intention of cooperating with the team, that's the -15-point level. The GM should be fairly loose about point totals, and consider potential for trouble when assigning these point values: a brilliant psionic historian might actually be worth more points than a Patrolman, but if he's Absent-Minded, Lecherous, and Alcoholic, his potential for trouble is vast indeed!

How often the auxiliaries appear. Use the usual rules (p. B131) for frequency of appearance. Note that if non-agents are sent along only under unusual circumstances – fewer than one in three missions – taking care of them is part of the Agency Duty, not worth points separately. Thus, the "quite rarely" frequency should not apply.

How closely they must be protected. The Agency may insist that the agents put the auxiliaries' lives above their own (×2); require the agents to protect them wherever possible, but not to die for them (×1); or consider them to be traveling at their own risk, requiring only that the agents repair any damage they do to the time stream (×1/2).

Numbers. If a team of several agents only has to escort and protect one person per mission, halve the value. For two Dependents or up to half the team, use the normal value. And if the Dependents outnumber the trained members (as with a tourist group) double their value.

Examples: A Time Tours guide deals with well-meaning incompetents (-5 points) almost all the time (×3). They must be protected wherever possible (×1), and outnumber the tour guides in the party (×2). He gets -5×3×1×2, or -30 points.

A single dinosaur shikari escorts competent hunters with no dinosaur experience (-2) quite often (×2). They travel at their own risk (×1/2). Such parties have more than two members (×2). He gets -2×2×1/2×2, or -4 points.

A team of Patrolmen bodyguards an important but elderly academic researcher (-5 points) fairly often (×1). He must be protected at all costs (×2), but there is only one of him to worry about (×1/2). Each Patrolman gets -5×1×2×1/2, or -5 points.

Duty

see p. B133

Membership in crosstime military or paramilitary organizations such as the SS Raven Division, the Infinity Patrol, Centrum's Interworld Service, Alternate Outcomes, or a Homeline crossworld special forces unit such as the British SCS (the Special Conveyor Service, or the "Para Paras") or the *Légion d'Outretemps* is always Extremely Hazardous for front-line personnel. Rear-echelon staff duty, even in the Infinity Patrol, only occasionally involves mortal danger, at least after graduation from the Academy.

Enemies

see p. B135

Certain groups have time- or dimension-traveling foes who show up often enough to be taken as Enemies. The Cabal, the Infinity Patrol, ISWAT, and Centrum's Interworld Service are wide-ranging enough to be "utterly formidable" in the Infinite Worlds; the base value of any of them as an Enemy is -40 points. The SS of Reich-5, or a Homeline agency with crossworld access such as the CIA, are worth a base -30 points. Criminal groups have a harder time getting crosstime access solely for the purpose of hunting you; even the Russian Mafiya (which can piggyback on Yugorovsky Group mining and prospecting trips with relative impunity) is only worth a base -20

points, the same as a single Lodge of the Cabal.

No Enemy restricted to a single time or world is likely to be able to reach a traveler often enough to be worth any points, unless the campaign uses that world as a recurring (more than half of all adventures are set there) setting.

Evil Twin

This version of Enemy can be as common as the GM wishes. In a campaign where parallel worlds and selves are both common, the GM may reduce the normal -3 reaction penalty toward you, since people don't *necessarily* assume that it was *you* who left your fingerprints all over the dead Girl Scout's dresser.

Honesty

see p. B138

An Honest character, in a different time or place, acts as though the laws and morals of his own home were still in force. This is sure to cause interesting problems!

Intolerance

see p. B140

Many natives of Centrum, although thoroughly indoctrinated against race, class, gender, and religious discrimination, are intolerant of all outtimers – Homeliners very much included – for a disadvantage worth -5 points. Right-thinking Germans of

Reich-5, especially SS members, have total intolerance of "non-Aryans," despising anyone (including the descendants of the actual Aryans in Iran and India) who is not of pure northwestern European stock. This is worth -10 points.

Mundane Background

see p. B144

Many Homeliners possess this background; it is up to the GM whether his campaign involves enough magic or weirdness to make it a valid disadvantage. Every native of a no-mana world has it, except possibly the delusional ones!

Phobia

see p. B148

Time Travel (Chronophobia): Just as some people on our own Earth are afraid of flying, some Homeliners are afraid of dimension travel. They do not voluntarily take a conveyor anywhere, and face required crosstime travel at -5 to self-control rolls without lots of calming medication (or booze). No normal Patrolman, White Star rep, etc. has this phobia, but it can be entertaining for NPC specialists whose expertise is vital for a given mission. *-15 points if time (or world-line) travel is common, -10 if it is uncommon, -5 if it is essentially unknown. Adjust the cost for the self-control number.*

Secret

see p. B152

A corrupt Patrolman (which happens more often than anyone likes to believe, but not nearly as often as one might expect given the infinite opportunities) has a -5-point Secret if the corruption is restricted to feathering an outtime nest or smuggling minor collectibles. One taking bribes from (or secretly working for) a Homeline government, a criminal organization, or the like has a Secret worth -20 points.

Sense of Duty

see p. B153

Many Patrolmen feel a Sense of Duty to fellow Homeliners on other worlds (-5 points). Almost all



Patrolmen feel a Sense of Duty toward the Patrol (-5 points).

Social Stigma

see p. B155

On both Centrum and Homeline, natives of other (non-colonized) Earths are Second-Class Citizens, even within the Interworld Service or Patrol. On Homeline, this stigma is officially discouraged, but no less real.

Timesickness

see p. B158

This is an expanded treatment of the “standard” disadvantage.

In some stories, time travel is no more stressful than walking through a door; in others, there are serious mental and physical effects. When inventing new forms of time travel, the GM may set both the frequency and severity of Timesickness (or “jump sickness” in a parallel-world campaign). A roll against either Will or HT may be required to avoid its effects, depending on whether the campaign’s time travel is primarily mental or mechanical in nature.

Another option is to link Timesickness to the machine operator’s skill: in this case, the Electronics Operation (Temporal) success roll determines whether the travelers are disoriented. The GM may still allow an individual roll to avoid the effects.

If Timesickness is unusual, then it counts as a disadvantage. If Timesickness is normal in the campaign, then it is not a disadvantage; instead, Resistant to Timesickness is an advantage, as described on p. 177. You can have Timesickness at a level worse than normal for the campaign. Calculate the value of “normal” Timesickness for the campaign, and of the increased level, as described below. The difference in point costs is the value of the disadvantage.

Example: Frequent, Mild Timesickness is the default in the campaign. It has a value of -5 points, but that is not a bonus to normal characters. (Immunity to Timesickness becomes a 5-point advantage, however.) However, a character with Acute, Severe Timesickness has a malady which, from the rules below, is worth

-20 points. The difference, -15 points, is the actual disadvantage value to that character.

In a campaign where there are different forms of travel with different effects, use the disadvantage value for the least harmful common method of travel. A character who gains access to a form of travel without side effects should be required to buy off his Timesickness disadvantage.

To find the point value of a given level of Timesickness, multiply the severity of the effect by the frequency with which it affects you, as follows:

Severity

Nuisance: You are mentally stunned, and roll for recovery at -5 with only one attempt allowed per 10 seconds. This has little effect unless the travelers arrive in the middle of a hostile situation. -2 points.

Mild: You are mentally stunned and lose 2d FP. -5 points.

Severe: You must make a HT roll. On a success, you are mentally stunned for 1d×10 minutes. On a failure, you are stunned for 1d hours. Double this on a critical failure! -10 points.

Very Severe: As above, but you also take damage: 1 HP if the duration is under an hour; 2 if it is an hour or more. -15 points.

Nightmare: This is a mental effect, most appropriate for psionic time travel. On a missed Will roll, the victim has monstrous visions. Go to the Fright Table and roll as though he had just missed a Fright Check by twice that amount. -15 points.

Critical: The victim takes 1d of damage, and makes a HT roll (even if the save was on Will); if failed, he takes another 1d. Shock and Knockdown effects are exactly as normal injury (crippling is ignored, however). This can kill you. -20 points.

Frequency

Rare: Travelers are affected on a critical failure only. ×1/2.

Frequent: Any failure affects a traveler. ×1.

Very frequent: A critical success is required to avoid effects. ×1.5.

Acute: No saving roll allowed; all travelers are automatically affected unless they are immune. ×2.

Generally, the more common Timesickness is, the less severe it should be.

Unique

see p. B160

Although this disadvantage in its standard form is not recommended for time-traveling PCs, it can be modified suitably.

Special Enhancement

McFly’s Syndrome: A time paradox that would ordinarily wipe you out of existence still does so – but in delayed fashion. Once the paradox has occurred (and the GM is just going to have to bite the bullet and determine what simultaneity means in these circumstances), you begin to lose HT at the rate of 1 point per hour. At 1/3 of your original HT, you begin to desolidify and “fuzz out” of view; although you are not reliably intangible or invisible enough to receive any game benefit, your DX-based skills drop by one-third, and lose a further skill point each hour. The only way to restore this HT and skill loss is to undo the time paradox that eliminated you, or to create your own paradox or a branching timeline that will restore you to existence. +0%.

SKILLS

In general, many skills practiced in a certain specific fashion on one worldline often differ subtly (or not so subtly) on other parallels. Natives of one worldline receive a -1 to -5 familiarity penalty on such skill rolls if interacting with the skill as used on another parallel. A Homeline-trained accountant is not at any penalty to keep his own books on Roma Aeterna, but suffers a -3 familiarity penalty to understand the financial records of a Syrian merchant from that worldline, even if he can read Aramaic. Worldlines that diverged from each other later in history generally have smaller penalties than those that diverged earlier; a -1 penalty per 300 years of divergence is a decent rule of thumb. Some worlds (especially close parallels) may have no familiarity penalty at all – driving a 1998 Studebaker and driving a 1998 Ford differ only in minor respects.

This penalty is usually subsumed in the TL penalty for TL-dependent skills, or in the unfamiliarity penalties for specific weapon, technical, and vehicle skills; the GM may rule otherwise in borderline cases.

Skills (or specific uses of skills) that may take some familiarity penalty include: Accounting, Administration, Carousing, Combat Art or Sport, Connoisseur, Crewman, Erotic Art, Finance, Forgery, Gambling, Games, Gesture, Heraldry, many Hobby Skills, Intelligence Analysis, Law, Market Analysis, Merchant, Occultism, Panhandling, Performance, Politics, Propaganda, Public Speaking, Religious Ritual, Savoir-Faire, Soldier, Sports, Streetwise, and Typing. Artistic skills such as Architecture or Cooking take no penalty to practical uses such as finding secret doors or cooking pork safely, but may take a penalty to uses that depend on knowledge of current styles and fads, such as designing a building in Confederate Neo-Bourbon or cooking in Dragon Dynasty style. Most academic, scientific, and professional skills also take such a penalty – for the purposes of discussion with others in the field at least.

Archaeology

see p. B176

At the GM's discretion, the Archaeology skill (with a suitable focus or optional specialty in a given culture) may justify taking a Cultural Familiarity for a historical culture. A specialist in Hittite archaeology should be able to justify purchasing Cultural Familiarity (Hittite), for example.

Area Knowledge

see p. B176

Area Knowledge can apply across parallels, especially close parallels. In general, a close parallel is -0 or -1 to skill plus any time modifiers. For an echo, use the appropriate modifier for the time differential (p. B530) between the echo and your native world. For a farther parallel, use the time differential modifier for the time since the divergence point between your Earth and the parallel world.

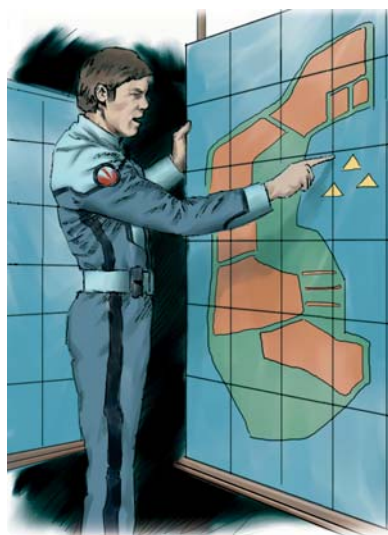
In some campaigns, Area Knowledge can include the location

and destination of any crossworld or crosstime gates in the area; in other campaigns, such knowledge is Hidden Lore (see below).

Current Affairs

see p. B186

Current Affairs usually does not apply on parallel worlds (or takes double the normal time-and-distance penalties, at the GM's discretion) except for the very closest parallels and echoes – the details of who's sleeping with whom and which baseball team is the threat to watch can vary wildly from world to world.



Expert Skill (Cliodynamics)

see p. B193

This is the Expert Skill governing historical change, used to analyze parallels to spot divergence points, push echoes toward a desired goal, pick which Civil War general to kill so that the South can win the war, and so forth. It can stand in for Current Affairs, Economics, Geography, History, or Sociology to discover change points (historical or potential) in a worldline, determine what kinds of causes will bring about desired (or feared) effects, and detect such historical changes currently underway. It can also work as Intelligence Analysis or Market Analysis for this purpose (only). (In some schools, it is called "psychohistory" or "cliology.")

It is more commonly taught to agents of the Centrum Interworld Service than to Infinity Patrolmen. Most Cabalists consider it beneath them, and it is irrelevant to the conquests of Reich-5 . . . for now.

Gadgeteer

see p. B475

If you suspect that you might be hurled back in time by a lightning bolt or a blow on the head, or yanked into an alternate Pennsylvania by a parachronic undertow, this is the advantage to buy. Without it, your chances of bringing the telegraph, printing, the pike formation, and whiskey to the ancient Romans, or anywhere else, dwindle to almost nil. A *Connecticut Player Character in King Arthur's Sourcebook* or *Lest Darkness Fall* type campaign can be a lot of fun, either played for laughs or as a deadly serious race against time and ignorance to defeat the onrushing hordes of Tamerlane.

Geography

see p. B198

Although Geography (Political) for an area varies widely from world to world (with game effects similar to those for Area Knowledge or History), Geography (Physical) only suffers penalties on worlds with widely divergent climate, plate tectonics, and so forth.

Hidden Lore

see p. B199

Some Hidden Lore (Demons, Things Man Was Not Meant To Know) are probably quite similar on various parallels, while others (Conspiracies, Spirits) are less likely to have specifics in common. Hidden Lore (Faerie) may be in either group, depending on the cosmology of the campaign. In most campaign worlds, knowledge of gates between worlds, time portals, and so forth is a quintessential body of hidden lore – Hidden Lore (Gates). This may include their locations, how to find them, and even some knowledge of their destination ("The gate in the cemetery leads to a world where Lincoln wasn't assassinated."). It does not convey the ability to construct such gateways.

History! (IQ)

This optional wildcard skill (p. B175) replaces all specialties of Anthropology, Archaeology, History, and Paleontology, and covers the historical versions of Area Knowledge, Current Affairs, Geography, Heraldry, and Sociology, and the “academic” and historical elements of the various artistic skills. (“Why, this is a lost Leonardo masterpiece, Billy!”) It also removes Cultural Familiarity penalties for all historical eras, and halves them for parallel histories. It is up to the GM whether this wildcard skill also encompasses Cliodynamics.

This is the skill possessed by such great time travel pioneers as Mr. Peabody, Professor Phineas Bogg, and Mr. Spock.

History

see p. B200

Historians suffer no penalties to skill rolls concerning parallel world histories before the divergence point with their own world. For history after a divergence point, apply the time differential penalties on p. B530 to the difference between the year being studied and the divergence point, but do not multiply for TLs that both histories crossed! For example, a Homeline military historian specializing in World War II is theorizing about the Pacific War in Dixie-1, 85 years and one TL boundary after the divergence point between Dixie and Homeline. The Long-Range Modifiers table on p. B241 gives a -6 penalty for distances up to 100 miles (years, for this purpose). Ordinarily, this would become a -12 modifier based on the rule on p. B241, but since both Homeline and Dixie-1 crossed the TL5/6 boundary, the historian can take those differences into account. The modifier remains -6.

This skill can also be used to determine whether a traveler notices something different in the past or in a parallel world from history as he learned it. He makes a History skill roll, with a bonus or penalty appropriate to the importance of the change. Realizing that Benjamin Franklin was never President is easy (for an American historian, anyway); recognizing that the *Andrea Doria* should not have made it to port is a bit harder . . . Of course, a difference may just mean that history, as taught in schools or seen in the movies, is often wrong! A roll at a further penalty, and possibly

some research time, should be required to check this. (Yes, Genghis Khan really *did* have red hair and green eyes, and didn't look Oriental at all . . .)

Literature

see p. B205

Literature across parallel worlds is the same before the divergence point. Each century of divergence usually adds -2 to any modifier to Literature rolls made by students of another worldline's literary tradition. At the GM's discretion, Current Affairs or History may default to Literature-4 in a myth parallel.

Naturalist

see p. B211

On some worlds, and in some campaigns, this skill may allow characters to find gates to other worlds, by spotting outtime plants or specific parachronozoidal spoor (p. 74). The GM may rule that such knowledge counts as Hidden Lore (Gates) in his campaign.

Research

see p. B217

Research rolls take the same penalties across worlds as do Area Knowledge rolls (p. 182). To return to the example above under *History*: the Homeline historian researching Dixie-1's Pacific War in a standard Homeline library (not one specializing in parachronic history like the Patrol

library system) is at -12 (-6 for the 85 years between the divergence point, doubled for the TL5/6 shift) to his Research skill to find anything useful at all. Research into eras before the divergence point is unaffected, of course – many Homeline libraries (with full computer cataloging and data storage) are much better places to research Dixie-1 medieval history than any library in that world! This is *not* a universal verity: for example, since the Hamburg and Dresden of Dixie-1 were never firebombed, there are surviving medieval documents in Dixie-1's archives that aren't available anywhere on Homeline! The GM should always take the subject matter, availability of information, and state of historical knowledge into account when adjudicating Research rolls on crosstime subjects.

Tracking

see p. B226

Like Naturalist, on some worlds and in some campaigns, this skill may allow you to find gates to other worlds – perhaps even by finding animal tracks that suddenly disappear in mid-stride! Again, The GM may rule that such knowledge counts as Hidden Lore (Gates) in his campaign.

TECHNIQUES

Anachronistic Training

Average

Defaults: Special (see below).

Prerequisite: Any one TL skill; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

This technique allows you to use the prerequisite skill without suffering a TL penalty for antique or anachronistic methods. Each level of this technique removes one level of TL penalty; a TL8 Patrolman with Anachronistic Training (Artillery)-2 would take no TL penalties for Artillery/TL7 or /TL6 rolls, and would make Artillery/TL5 rolls at the -1 penalty for skills one TL lower. Anachronistic Training *cannot* be used to remove the penalty for futuristic gear or methods. The GM may still enforce a familiarity penalty for unfamiliar equipment. You must buy this technique for each skill separately.

Historical Familiarity

Average

Defaults: prerequisite skill-4.

Prerequisites: Archaeology, Egyptology, or History; cannot exceed prerequisite skill.

Your intensive training in ancient societies gives you some familiarity with the overall geography and cultural norms (such as manner of dress and certain styles) of a certain period of time. You may default to the relevant Area Knowledge (or, at the GM's discretion, Current Affairs) from Archaeology, Egyptology, or History instead of IQ, and gradually buy off the -4 default. Each historical specialty is a separate technique.

Alternate Selves

One gimmick that works especially well in a time-travel or crosstime campaign is to let the players play *themselves*. To forestall arguments about what George's IQ *really* is, all PCs are built on the same point value. Players keep their own names, their own quirks, professions, and so forth, and add skills and abilities they would like to have, or like to have at a higher level – Broadsword good enough to stake one's life on, for instance. The GM can assume that all the players are (for instance) five years older, and have had time to develop their abilities, or are themselves from the "next Earth over."

Then let them all get recruited by the Time Patrol, or find a loose time machine, and go! If the Time Patrol teaches additional skills, these can be covered by a Duty to the Patrol.

ALTERNATE HUMANS

Although most of the humans on the Infinite Worlds fall well within the general bounds of *Homo sapiens sapiens*, there are worlds – and human species – outside those most familiar limits. The following variant human races appear through several different lenses, usually depending on their native TL or era. Lens point values are given as net changes to the basic racial template. Sufficiently advanced (or perverted) magic can, of course, bring about such changes without recourse to biology, and on some worlds the laws of evolution run at higher speed, or down a different road, than on Homeline. The GM is perfectly within his rights to refuse to allow any of these species as PCs in a Patrol game, or to require an Unusual Background advantage for alternate human characters.

Dark-Dwellers

-2 points

This human species has evolved living without natural light, probably in underground caves, asteroid habitats, bomb shelters, or worlds with the sky burned black by horrific experiments gone wrong – or horrific wars gone all too right.

Their Night Vision is a 0-point feature as described on p. 176.

Attribute Modifiers: HT-1 [-10].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Per+2 [10].

Advantages: Absolute Direction [5]; Night Vision 4 [0]; Temperature Tolerance (Cold) 1 [1].

Disadvantages: Appearance (Unattractive) [-4]; Intolerance ("Sun people") [-5]; Phobia (Open spaces)(12) [-10]; Skinny [-5].

Skills: Climbing-12 (DX+2) [8]; Stealth-12 (DX+2) [8].

TL0-4 (-18 points): Pre-industrial dark-dwellers might be the "Hidden Race" of Arthur Machen novels or 19th-century anthropology, hiding in the hills and mounds from taller, stronger invaders. Such a race might give rise to legends of troglodytes, kobolds, or even dark elves. Such a race might survive for centuries undetected. Add IQ-1 [-20], another 4 levels of Night Vision [0], and Survival (Caves) (Per) [2].

TL5+ (+30 points): At this TL, dark-dwellers need to be able to maintain machinery. Sometimes, it is this very task that has consigned them to the depths; they might be deros, Morlocks, or dwarves from a dark steampunk world or a "manapunk" future. Add IQ+1 [20] and Artificer 1 [10]. Urban homeless "mole people" should use the TL0-4 lens, above, but change Survival (Caves) to Urban Survival.

Outer Space (+12 points): Dark-dwellers in outer space habitats perforce get used to swings in gravity and variable air circulation.

After all, if the lights won't stay on, probably the other systems aren't working too well either. Add G-Experience (All) [10] and another two levels of Temperature Tolerance (Cold) [2].

Regardless of home milieu, a noticeable percentage of dark-dwellers might have disadvantages like Dwarfism, or advantages like Flexibility, especially those living in cramped tunnels or caves. Nasty dark-dwellers always seem to wind up with the Odious Racial Habit (Eats other sapient beings).

Mutants

-40 points

After a nuclear war or some other catastrophe irradiates and poisons the Earth, at least three species will survive: cockroaches, rats, and mankind. These are the survivors.

Attribute Modifiers: IQ-1 [-20]; HT-1 [-10].

Advantages: Acute Taste and Smell 3 [6]; Breath-Holding 1 [2].

Disadvantages: Skinny [-5]; Xenophobia (12) [-15].

Racially Learned Skills: Survival (Radioactive Wasteland)-9 (Per) [2].

First Generation (-19 points): Born just after the Fall, this generation of mutants barely sustains the species. Apply another IQ-1 [-20],

but add Per+3 [15] and HP+2 [4], Reduced Consumption (1/3, Cast-Iron Stomach) [1], Low Empathy [-20], and Scrounging-12 (Per) [1]. **Rebuilders** (+15 points): Adapted to their surroundings, they seek to make their hell a home, but have yet to lay secure foundations for the long climb back up. Add Radiation Tolerance 5 [10] and Resistant to Poison 3 [5].

Like nasty dark-dwellers, spiky-haired mutants may develop the Odious Racial Habit (Eats other sapient beings) and file their teeth into Sharp Teeth (p. B91).

Neanderthals

0 points

On Homeline, *Homo neanderthalensis* died out around 32,000 years ago, but on some Earths, he won the competition with our Cro-Magnon ancestors. Neanderthals have large jaws and beetle brows, and are short and stocky (like weightlifters or wrestlers), but do not fit the stereotyped hunched, brutish “cave man” image. They have larger cranial capacities than *Homo sapiens sapiens*, which equates to a “weird-looking” skull shape. If they had evolved, they might well have turned out smarter than we did; genre convention (but no archaeological evidence to speak of) paints Neanderthals (both evolved and primitive) as a less individualistic, more collectively focused species.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+2 [20]; DX-1 [-20].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Per+1 [5].

Advantages: DR 1 (Skull Only, -70%) [2]; Temperature Tolerance (Cold) 1 [1].

Disadvantages: Overweight [-1]; Sense of Duty (Tribe) [-5]; Short Lifespan [-10];

Skills: Armoury/TL0-11 (Melee Weapons) (IQ+1) [4]; Gesture-10 (IQ) [1]; Naturalist-8 (IQ-2) [1]; Survival (choose)-10 (Per) [2].

Taboo Traits: May not take any language at better than Broken.

Evolved (+0 points): This presumes that Neanderthals became the dominant species on Earth, evolving much as their Cro-Magnon competitors did. Substitute IQ+1 [20] for the Per bonus, add Gregarious [-10], and remove the Sense of Duty, the DR bonus, the skills, and the limitation on languages.

Homo erectus (-49 points): This lens goes the other way, and can serve as a stand-in for Peking Man, Java Man, and other pre-Neanderthal hominids. Add IQ-2 [-40], increase Short Lifespan by a level [-10], and remove Overweight.

In a primarily *Homo sapiens* milieu, Neanderthals have Unusual Features (Beetle brow and prognathous jaw) 3, and might even be

downright Ugly. (This may lead to Shyness.) The GM may decide that Neanderthals have a greater chance for psionics than modern humans, or a flat limit on their Magery, or anything else not provable from the archaeological record.

Super-Soldiers

39 points

This human race has been bred, or built, to be warriors first and humans second, if at all. At TLs before TL6, it presumes a chance discovery of Mendelian genetics by some culture (or secret society) capable of molding society to fit its ideals. Such cultures – and such ideals – may well come into conflict with the Infinity Patrol and its ideals.

Attribute Modifiers: ST+3 [30]; HT+1 [10].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: Will+1 [5]; FP+1 [3].

Advantages: Combat Reflexes [15]; Fit [5]; High Pain Threshold [10].

Disadvantages: Bully (9) [-15]; Callous [-5]; Duty (Military; 15 or less; Extremely Hazardous) [-20]; Fanaticism (The Cause) [-15].

Skills: Brawling-12 (DX+2) [4], Hiking-11 (HT) [2], Soldier/TL-10 (IQ) [2], Spear-12 (DX+2) [8].

TL1-5 (-23 points): Historical cases of attempted super-soldier breeding include the Spartan warrior caste, the Janissary soldier-slaves of the Ottomans, and the grenadier guards in some German princely states. Add Bloodlust (12) [-10], Hidebound [-5], and Susceptible to Disease (-2 to HT) [-8].

TL6-7 (-19 points): After Mendel but before Watson and Crick, “cut and try” notions of human genetics begin to come into play, from Dr. Moreau to Dr. Mengele. This template implies some measure of success has emerged: a method in their madness, if not a super-serum per se. Add HP+1 [2] and another FP+2 [6], and add Lifting ST+1 [3] and a cocktail of mental disadvantages worth -30 points.

Example: Bad Temper (12) [-10], Nightmares (12) [-5], Paranoia [-10], and Post-Combat Shakes (12) [-5].



TL8+ (-15 points): With the DNA molecule unlocked, true bioengineering becomes possible. This is only the beginning. Add HP+3 [6] and FP+3 [9]; and add Appearance (Unattractive) [-4]; Lifting ST+3 [9]; Increased Consumption 1 [-10]; Killjoy [-15]; and Short Lifespan 1 [-10].

Tenshi (+143 points): This is the package for Japanese super-soldiers as used by various generals and *keiretsu* cartels on Reich-5 (p. 57). It should be taken as a maximum design for somewhat realistic settings. Add DX+1 [20], HP+3 [6], FP+3 [9], Basic Speed+2 [40]; Absolute Direction [5], Absolute

Timing [2], Acute Hearing 5 [10], Acute Vision 5 [10], DR 2 [10], Lifting ST+3 [9], Night Vision 8 [8], Oxygen Storage (25x, -50%) [10], Peripheral Vision [15], Rapid Healing [5], Sanitized Metabolism [1], and Super Jump 1 [10]; add Increased Consumption 1 [-10], Killjoy [-15], and Short Lifespan 1 [-10]; replace Brawling with Karate-13 (DX+2) [12]. To construct a full-blown *tenshi*, apply this racial template to the Alternate Outcomes Mercenary template on p. 189 with the appropriate adjustments for Imperial Japan (use the disadvantage package from the SS Trooper on p. 193).

Some breeders may instill Slave Mentality in their subjects, or (purposely or accidentally) give their soldiers Addictions to combat stimulants, steroids, or super-drugs, or even a full-fledged Dependency. Many soldiers, super and otherwise, hold to a Code of Honor; most super-soldiers have Extremely Hazardous Duty. Programs with racial motives (such as the Nazis) or aesthetic ones (such as Prussian grenadier guardsmen, or a supervillain's female assassins) may aim for Attractive or better appearance, at the risk of Off-the-Shelf Looks (p. B21).

CHARACTER TEMPLATES

INFINITY UNLIMITED

Intervention Service (I-Cop)

155 points

Depending on the campaign, players should add 30 or so points to this template (for I-Cops) or the one following (for Scouts) to build a Patrolman who has graduated from the Academy and served a year or so in one division of the Patrol. The Basic Skills and Background Skills sections (plus the first three advantages) model Academy training; the Division Skills section gives sample packages for each division of the Patrol. Given Infinity's preference for breadth of service rather than depth, the GM should encourage players to build experienced Patrolmen by adding other division modules to characters, as well as improving skill levels.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 13 [10]; Per 11 [0]; FP 14 [9]; Basic Speed 6 [5]; Basic Move 6 [0].

Advantages: Combat Reflexes [15]; Fit [5]; Language Talent [10]; Legal Enforcement Powers [10]; Patrol Rank 1 [5]; and two languages at Native besides your own (one of

your Native languages must be English, however) [8].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Patrol) [-5]; Duty (Patrol; 15 or less; Extremely Hazardous) [-20]; Sense of Duty (Patrol) [-5]; and -30 points from among Addiction (Tobacco) [-5], Bad Sight (Mitigator: Glasses, -60%) [-10], Bad Temper [-10*], Chummy [-5], Fanaticism (The Secret) [-15], Honesty [-10*], Impulsiveness [-10*], Insomniac [-10 or -15], Overconfidence [-5*], Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10], Post-Combat Shakes [-5*], and Stubbornness [-5].

Basic Skills: Electronics Operation/TL8^ (Parachronic)-12 (IQ+1) [4]; First Aid/TL9-13 (IQ+2) [4]; Guns/TL9 (Pistol)-13 (DX+1) [2]; History (choose specialty)-12 (IQ+1) [8]; Karate-12 (DX) [4]; Soldier-12 (IQ+1) [4]; Shortsword-13 (DX) [4]; Stealth-12 (DX) [2]; Survival (Plains)-12 (Per+1) [4].

Division Skills: Add 12 points in skills relevant to your Division. For example:

- †1. Academy: Sports (choose)-11 (DX-1) [1], Teaching-12 (IQ+1) [4], and 7 points in any other skills as instructional specialties [5].
2. Customs and Inspection: Electronics Operation/TL8 (Security)-12 (IQ) [4] and Search-13 (Per+2) [8].
- †3. Internal Affairs: Accounting-10 (IQ-1) [2], Detect Lies-11 (Per) [4],

Interrogation-12 (IQ+1) [4], and Intimidation-13 (Will) [2].

4. Justice: Criminology-12 (IQ+1) [4], Forensics-11 (IQ) [4], and Law (Police)-11 (IQ) [4].
- †5. Liaison: Diplomacy-12 (IQ+1) [8] and Savoir-Faire (Military or Police)-13 (IQ+2) [4].
- †6. Logistics: Administration-12 (IQ+1) [4], Armoury/TL8 (choose)-12 (IQ+1) [4], and Electronics Repair/TL8^ (Parachronic)-12 (IQ+1) [4].
- †7. Morale: Propaganda/TL8-12 (IQ+1) [4] and Psychology-12 (IQ+1) [8].
8. Nexus Oversight: Area Knowledge (Quantum 5)-13 (IQ+2) [4]; take 4 points in any Driving or Riding skill [4], and bring Electronics Operation/TL8^ (Parachronic) up to 13 [4].
9. Security: Intelligence Analysis/TL8-12 (IQ+1) [8] and Electronics Operation/TL8 (Surveillance)-12 (IQ+1) [4].
10. Special Operations: Clidynamics-11 (IQ) [4], Guns/TL9 (Rifle)-14 (DX+2) [4], and Tactics-11 (IQ) [4].

Background Skills: Vacc Suit/TL8 (DX)-12 [2]; take 8 points in any one skill as your "aptitude skill" [8].

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† Duty is merely Hazardous; take another -5 points in disadvantages.

Penetration Service (Scout)

155 points

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 14 [10]; FP 14 [9]; Basic Speed 6 [10]; Basic Move 6 [0].

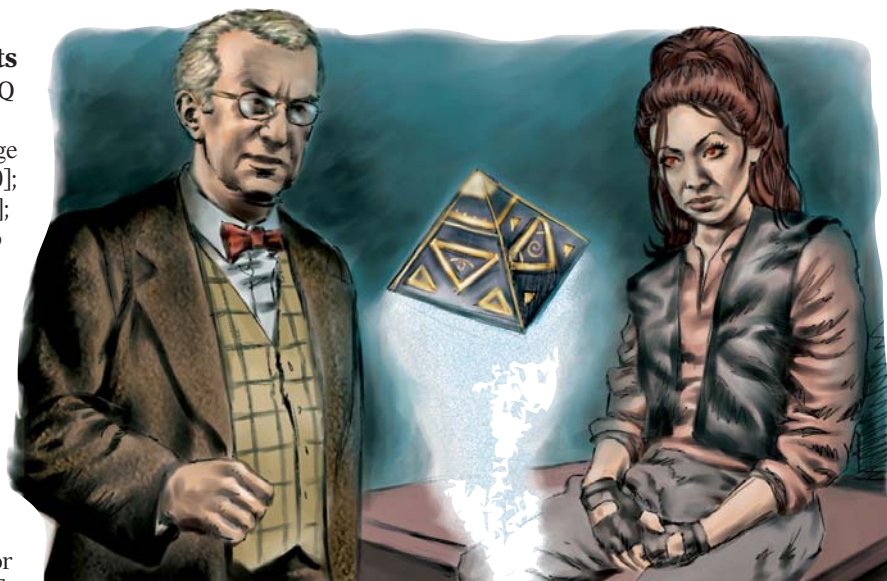
Advantages: Combat Reflexes [15]; Fit [5]; Language Talent [10]; Legal Enforcement Powers [10]; Patrol Rank 1 [5]; and three languages at Native besides your own (one of your Native languages must be English, however) [12].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Patrol) [-5]; Duty (Patrol, 15 or less; Extremely Hazardous) [-20]; Secret (From another Earth) [-20]; Sense of Duty (Patrol) [-5]; and -25 points from among Careful [-1], Charitable [-15*], Curious [-5*], Fanaticism (The Secret) [-15], Honesty [-10*], Insomniac [-10 or -15], Intolerance (Some outtime society or custom) [-5], Loner [-5*], Overconfidence [-5*], Pacifism (Cannot Harm Innocents) [-10], and Post-Combat Shakes [-5*].

Basic Skills: Electronics Operation/TL8[^] (Parachronic)-13 (IQ+1) [4]; First Aid/TL9-13 (IQ+1) [2]; Guns/TL9 (Rifle)-13 (DX+2) [4]; History (choose specialty)-12 (IQ) [4]; Karate-12 (DX+1) [8]; Knife-13 (DX+2) [4]; Soldier-12 (IQ) [2]; Stealth-13 (DX+2) [8]; Survival (Plains)-15 (Per+1) [4].

Division Skills: Add 12 points in skills relevant to your Division (note lens 8 is built on 13 points). For instance:

1. Communications: Cryptography/TL8-12 (IQ) [4]; Electronics Operation/TL8 (Comm)-13 (IQ+1) [4], and take 4 points in any Driving, Piloting, or Riding skill [2].
2. Contact: Acting-12 (IQ) [2], Anthropology-12 (IQ) [4], Diplomacy-12 (IQ) [4], and Savoir-Faire-13 (IQ+1) [2].
3. Echo Surveillance: Area Knowledge (station)-14 (IQ+2) [4], History (echo era)-12 (IQ) [4], and Shadowing-13 (IQ+1) [4].
4. Intelligence: Clidynamics-12 (IQ)



[4], Finance-11 (IQ-1) [2], Intelligence Analysis-12 (IQ) [4], Interrogation-12 (IQ) [2].

†5. Records and Research: Administration-13 (IQ+1) [4], Linguistics-12 (IQ) [4], and Research-13 (IQ+1) [4].

6. Search and Rescue: Climbing-12 (DX+1) [4], Swimming-12 (HT+1) [2], add 4 points in any Boating, Driving, Piloting, or Riding skill [4], and bring First Aid up to 14 [2].

7. Survey: Camouflage-14‡ (IQ+1) [2], Observation-15 (Per+1) [4], Photography/TL8-12 (IQ) [2], and bring Stealth up to 14 [4].

†8. Technical Analysis: Electronics Operation/TL8 (any)-13 (IQ+1) [4], Engineering/TL8 (any)-12 (IQ) [4], and Electronics Repair/TL8 (any)-13 (IQ+1) [4]. Mathematics/TL8 (applied)-10 (IQ-2) [1].

Background Skills: Vacc Suit/TL8 (DX+1)-12 [4]; take 8 points in any one skill as your "aptitude skill" [8].

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† Duty is merely Hazardous; select another -5 points in disadvantages. These Divisions also usually don't need to maintain a cover on another Earth, and so may not be eligible for the Secret disadvantage, either.

‡ Bought from Survival.

Homeline Agents

The above templates can also serve as the basis for capable crosstime law-

enforcement and national security agents of Homeline governments, whether overt (such as the RCMP or FBI) or covert (such as Mossad or the CIA). Homeline agents have Duties, Codes of Honor, and Senses of Duty commensurate with their nationality. In lieu of Language Talent and languages, they usually have skills in Law (Police) and national law codes, along with Criminology, Guns/TL8 (Pistol), and Judo.

ISWAT Operative

There is no "standard" ISWAT operative. ISWAT's teams of pulp heroes, supers, legendary figures, faeries, undead, and so forth hew to no common template and have only two traits in common: Legal Enforcement Powers [15] and Duty (ISWAT, 15 or less; Extremely Hazardous) [-20].

If you wish to build an ISWAT "grunt," base him on the Centrum Unattached template on p. 192, with the "ISWAT package" listed above in lieu of Centrum-specific cultural traits, and Patrol Basic Skills (from the I-Cop template on p. 186) instead of the Centrum Primary Skills set. The GM should reshuffle the Centrum Background Skills as follows: leave Running and Swimming alone (as broadly useful skills that reflect intensive physical training) and replace the others with 14 points in skills that reflect the operative's world background. An ISWAT operative is seldom below 250 points.

Paralabs Field Researcher

101 points

Although wandering through alternate Earths is the Patrol's job, Paralabs needs technicians "in country" surveying banestorms, charting reality quakes, measuring quantum flux along dimensional highways, and studying the myriad other aspects of "reality geology" central to parachronic research. This template is designed with a bias to such field researchers, rather than the academic theoreticians or parachronic engineers who stay at home and determine the meaning or application of what the "glitch-hunters" have found.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 11 [2]; Will 13 [0]; Per 14 [5]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Fit [5]; Mathematical Ability 1 [10]; and 15 points from among Absolute Direction [5], Absolute Timing [2 or 5], Eidetic Memory [5 or 10], Intuition [15], Lightning Calculator [5], Magery 0 [5], more Mathematical Ability [10/level]; Single-Minded [5], and Unfazeable [15].

Disadvantages: Duty (Infinity, 15 or less; mostly Nonhazardous) [-10]; Pacifism (Reluctant Killer) [-5]; and -20 points from among Absent-Mindedness [-15], Bad Sight (Mitigator: Glasses, -60%) [-10], Code of Honor (Professional) [-5], Combat Paralysis [-15], Curious [-5*], Intolerance (Some outtime culture or custom) [-5], Jealousy [-10], Loner [-5*], Oblivious [-5], Obsession (Proving a theory) [-5 or -10*], Shyness [-5 or -10], Stubbornness [-5], and Weirdness Magnet [-15].

Primary Skills: Computer Operation/TL8-13 (IQ) [1]; Electronics Operation/TL8^ (Parachronics)-14 [4]; Electronics Operation/TL8 (Scientific)-14 [4]; Mathematics/TL8 (Applied)-14† (IQ) [4]; Physics/TL8^ (Parachronic)-13† (IQ-1) [4].

Secondary Skills: Geology/TL8-12 (IQ-1) [2]; Mathematics/TL8 (Surveying)-13† (IQ-1) [2];

Meteorology/TL8-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Research/TL8-13 [2]; Survival (Desert)-14 (Per) [2].

Background Skills: Astronomy/TL8-12† (IQ-2) [1]; Cartography/TL8 (IQ-1)-12 [1]; Navigation (Land)/TL8-12 (IQ-1) [1].

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† +1 from Mathematical Ability.

Miracle Worker

85 points

The staff of Miracle Workers runs the gamut from do-gooding "angels of mercy" to coldly efficient triage agents who separate the salvageable from the walking dead. Some have bleeding hearts full of charity and outrage; others have only eyes with the "thousand yard stare" of a hundred worlds' plagues, genocides, and famines. None of them have given up, though, and gone back to Homeline. That says a lot more than any personal philosophy, to Patrolmen who see them in action.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 14 [10]; Per 12 [0]; FP 13 [6]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Resistant to Disease +8 [5]; and 25 points from among Charisma [5/level], Clerical Investment [5], Empathy [5 or 15], Fearlessness [2/level], Healer [10/level], High Pain Threshold [10], and Less Sleep [2/level].

Disadvantages: Duty (Infinity, 15 or less; Nonhazardous) [-10]; Sense of Duty (Innocent victims) [-15]; and -20 points from among Addiction (Stimulants or tobacco) [-5], Bad Sight (Mitigator: Glasses, -60%) [-10], Callous [-5], Charitable [-15*], Code of Honor (Hippocratic Oath) [-5], Compulsive Generosity [-5*], Disciplines of Faith [-5], Guilt Complex [-5], Honesty [-10*], Insomniac [-10 or -15], No Sense of Humor [-10], Odious Personal Habit (Moral posturing) [-5], Pacifism [-5 to -15], Timesickness [-10], Truthfulness [-5*], and Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Driving/TL8 (choose)-11 (DX+1) [4]; First Aid/TL9-14

(IQ+2) [4]; and select three skills from among Diagnosis/TL9-12 (IQ) [4], Epidemiology-12 (IQ) [4], Farming/TL8-13 (IQ+1) [4], Hazardous Materials/TL8 (choose)-13 (IQ+1) [4], Pharmacy/TL9 (Synthetic)-12 (IQ) [4], Physician/TL9-12 (IQ) [4], or Surgery/TL9-11 (IQ-1) [4].

Secondary Skills: NBC Suit/TL8-11 (DX+1) [4]; and select two skills from among Electronics Operation/TL9 (Medical)-12 (IQ) [2], Freight Handling/TL8-12 (IQ) [2], Packing-12 (IQ) [2], or Teamster (Equines)-12 [2].

Background Skills: Diplomacy-12 (IQ) [4]; Leadership-12 (IQ) [2].

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

UNIC

Crisis Ministry Troubleshooter

115 points

To the Patrol, there's nothing less welcome than the dapper fellow with the \$200 Park Avenue haircut and the clean fingernails showing up "from the Ministry to have a look 'round." The Patrol suspects that these troubleshooters' job is to interfere with Patrolmen doing their job, and to justify their own salaries. While a certain amount of both goes on, their real task is threat assessment. If the locals on Damocles seem a little too happy with the nearby robotic mining compound, or if the U.S. government on Taft-2 is getting strangely cozy with the British Comintern, it may warrant a genteel look-see and a surreptitious report back to Homeline. Political instincts honed in Turtle Bay (the Patron advantage reflects some juice with the higher-ups in UNIC) get a workout outtime, and even if nothing looks remotely strange on the surface, "the man from the Ministry" can sniff out deep currents indeed. Whether UNIC then alerts the Patrol or calls in its own big guns depends on what the troubleshooter sees coming in on those currents.

Attributes: ST 9 [-10]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 10 [0].



Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 10 [2]; Will 13 [0]; Per 14 [5]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Administrative Rank 3 [15]; Charisma 1 [5]; Patron (UNIC Undersecretary, 9 or less) [15]; Smooth Operator 1 [15]; two languages at Accented [8]; and 20 points from among Alcohol Tolerance [1], Appearance (Attractive) [4], more Charisma [5/level], Cultural Adaptability [10], Diplomatic Immunity [20], Empathy [5 or 15], Fashion Sense [5], Photographic Memory [10], Security Clearance [10], another level of Smooth Operator [15], Status [5/level], Unfazeable [15], and Wealth [Varies].

Disadvantages: Curious [-5*]; Duty (UNIC, 12 or less; Nonhazardous) [-5]; Pacifism (Reluctant Killer) [-5]; Reputation -2 (Rear-echelon bureaucrat) [-5]; and -30 points from among Addiction [-5 to -10], Bad Sight (Mitigator: Glasses, -60%) [-10], Cowardice [-10*], Extra Sleep [-2/level], Greed [-15*], Jealousy [-10], Odious Personal

Habit (Condescension) [-5], Overconfidence [-5*], Paranoia [-10], Selfish [-5*], Sense of Duty (U.N.) [-10], and Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Acting-14† (IQ) [2]; Body Language-14 (Per) [2]; Detect Lies-14† (Per-1) [2]; Diplomacy-14† (IQ) [4]; Psychology-13 (IQ) [4]; Public Speaking-15†‡ (IQ) [2]; Savoir-Faire-15† (IQ+1) [2].

Secondary Skills: Administration-13 (IQ) [2]; Computer Operation/TL8-13 (IQ) [1]; Fast-Talk-14† (IQ) [2].

Background Skills: Accounting-12 (IQ-1) [2]; Law (International)-12 (IQ-1) [2]; Politics-13† (IQ-1) [1]; Research/TL8-13 (IQ) [2].

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† +1 from Smooth Operator.

‡ +1 from Charisma.

Psiberocrat

Certain imaginative gossipmongers have taken it upon themselves to spread scurrilous rumors of a permanent, covert “psiberocracy” nurtured within the red-tape warrens of UNIC. If the GM decides that these laughable allegations are true, one of the following packages can be added onto the troubleshooter template above:

ESPer Package (+30 points): Clairvoyance (Sight Only, -10%, ESP, -10%; -20%) [40]; Secret (Psi spy) [-10].

Precog Package (+31 points): ESP Talent 2 [10]; Precognition (ESP, -10%) [23]; Secret (Psi spy) [-10]; Fortune-Telling-15 (IQ+2) or Intelligence Analysis/TL8-14 (IQ+1), both [8].

Telepath Package (+30 points): Mind Probe (No Memory, +10%; Racial, -20% Touch-Based, -20%, Telepathic, -10%; -40%) [12]; Mind Reading (Racial, -20%, Touch-Based, -20%, Telepathic, -10%; -50%) [10]; Telepathy Talent 2 [10]; Secret (Psi spy) [-10]; two more languages at Accented [8].

Alternate Outcomes Mercenary

190 points

This template can also serve for crosstime Homeline special forces such as the U.S. Ranger Force Tau, the French *Légion d'Outretemps*, or the Russian Spetsnaz, or for outtime special forces of similar caliber.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 13 [0]; Per 13 [0]; FP 12 [3]; Basic Speed 6 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

Advantages: Combat Reflexes [15]; Fit [5]; Military Rank 1 [5]; Resistant to Disease +8 [5]; and 20 points from among Acute Senses [2/level], Breath-Holding [2/level], Danger Sense [15], Deep Sleeper [1], Fearlessness [2/level], Hard to Kill [2/level], High Pain Threshold [10], HT+1 [10], Night Vision [1/level], and ST+1 [10].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Soldier's) [-10]; Duty (The Battalion, 15 or less; Extremely Hazardous) [-20]; and -20 points from among Bloodlust [-10*], Callous [-5], Chummy [-5], Compulsive Gambling [-5*], Fanaticism (The Battalion) [-15], Flashbacks [-5], Intolerance (Civilians) [-5], Nightmares [-5*], Overconfidence [-5*], and Truthfulness [-5*].

Primary Skills: Artillery/TL9 (Cannon)-13 (IQ) [2]; Brawling-13 (DX) [1]; Electronics Operation/TL8 (Comm or Surveillance)-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Gunner/TL9 (Machine Gun)-13 (DX) [1]; Guns/TL8 (LMG)-13 (DX) [1]; Guns/TL9 (Rifle)-14 (DX+1) [2]; Savoir-Faire (Military)-13 (IQ) [1]; Shortsword-13 (DX) [2]; Soldier/TL9-13 (IQ) [2]; Spear-13 (DX) [2]; Tactics-12 (IQ-1) [2]; Throwing-13 (DX) [2].

Secondary Skills: Armoury/TL9 (Small Arms)-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Camouflage-13 (IQ) [1]; Explosives/TL9 (Demolition)-12 (IQ-1) [1]; First Aid/TL9-13 (IQ) [1]; Guns/TL9 (GL)-13 (DX) [1]; Guns/TL9 (LAW)-13 (DX) [1]; Guns/TL9 (Pistol)-13 (DX) [1]; Stealth-13 (DX) [2]; Survival (Mountain)-14 (Per) [4]; Traps/TL9-13 (IQ) [2].

Background Skills: Climbing-13 (DX) [2]; Hiking-12 (HT+1) [4]; History (any military)-12 (IQ-1) [2]; Jumping-13 (DX) [1]; Navigation (Land)-13 (IQ) [2]; Swimming-12 (HT+1) [2].

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.



THE PRIVATE SECTOR

White Star Trader

111 points

This template reflects a relatively open and above-board White Star merchant factor in a TL4 city on a parallel Earth. For a more gray-market White Star employee, see the Smuggler package in the Criminal template on p. 196.

Wealth never falls below Comfortable, barring Visigothic invasion, since a White Star employee gets paid (and paid well) in Homeline and can usually flip a high TL8 salary into a quite luxurious local lifestyle. The GM is justified in requiring a White Star character to purchase extra levels of Wealth if much of the campaign is set on worlds where White Star purchasing power is similarly inflated.

White Star Trading does not have Merchant Rank; there are too few traders on any given world for any

issues of precedence to arise once market boundaries are set by Infinity Development or by White Star corporate headquarters.

Attributes: ST 9 [-10]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 10 [2]; Will 13 [0]; Per 13 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Business Acumen 1 [10]; Contact Group (local merchants, skill-18, 9 or less, usually reliable) [30]; Cultural Adaptability [10]; Wealth (Comfortable) [10]; two languages at Accented [8]; and 20 points from among Charisma [5/level], Empathy [5 or 15], Favor [Varies], Intuition [15], Language Talent [10], Lightning Calculator [2], Reputation (Honest merchant and/or Quality goods) [Varies], and more Wealth [Varies].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Professional) [-5]; Pacifism (Self-Defense Only) [-15]; Secret (From

another Earth) [-20]; and -20 points from among Addiction [-5 to -10], Bad Sight (Mitigator: Glasses, -60%) [-10], Bad Temper [-5], Chummy or Gregarious [-5 or -10], Compulsive Behavior [-5*], Enemy (Business rival) [Varies], Greed [-15*], Honesty [-10*], Impulsiveness [-10*], Laziness [-10], Overconfidence [-5*], Overweight or Fat [-1 or -3], and Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Accounting-14† (IQ) [4]; Detect Lies-13 (Per) [4]; Market Analysis-14† (IQ) [4]; Merchant-15† (IQ+1) [4]; Savoir-Faire-14 (IQ+1) [2].

Secondary Skills: Administration-14† (IQ) [2]; Fast-Talk-13 (IQ) [2]; Freight Handling/TL8-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Freight Handling/TL4-13 (IQ) [2]; Propaganda/TL4-13† (IQ-1) [1].

Background Skills: Area Knowledge (local city)-13 (IQ) [1]; Computer Operation/TL8-13 (IQ) [1]; Connoisseur (choose)-12 (IQ-1) [1];

Current Affairs/TL4 (Business)-13 (IQ) [1]; Gambling-13† (IQ-1) [1].

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† +1 from Business Acumen.

Denarius Group Special Banker

Adept at financial manipulation in the capital cities of parallels just getting a handle on capitalism, a Denarius Group special banker is less concerned with the nitty-gritty of buying and selling, and more concerned with consolidating control. Make the following adjustments to the White Star template above:

Denarius Group (+45 points): Change Contact Group: (Royal or imperial government, skill-21, 15 or less, usually reliable) [24]; remove Cultural Adaptability but add Cultural Familiarity (Local culture) [1]; increase Wealth to Very Wealthy [30]; replace two languages at Accented with language of local government at Native [6]; change Pacifism to Reluctant Killer [-5]; replace both Freight Handling skills with Finance-15† (IQ+1) [8]; increase Propaganda to 15† [3].

Time Tours, Inc.

Tour Guide

70 points

This is one of the young, personable, remarkably unflappable and well-informed guides employed to gently replace the dollars, yen, euros, and yuan of Homeline tourists with priceless memories of a world somehow more romantic and exciting than the one where they earned the fare. Good guides take the time to immerse themselves in local history and custom; bad guides take the opportunity to help themselves to romance and small valuables.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 11 [-5]; Per 13 [5]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Cultural Adaptability [10]; Patron (Time Tours, 12 or

less; less useful resources, -50%) [15]; local language at Native [6]; and 15 points from among Absolute Direction [5], Alcohol Tolerance [1], Appearance [Varies], Charisma [5/level], Common Sense [10], Contact Group (Local merchants) [Varies], Language Talent [10], Less Sleep [2/level], Luck [Varies], Unfazeable [15], and Voice [10].

Disadvantages: Broad-Minded [-1]; Code of Honor (Professional) [-5]; Dependents (Tour group) [-30]; Pacifism (Self-Defense Only) [-15]; and -20 points from among Bad Sight (Mitigator: Glasses, -60%) [-10], Chummy or Gregarious [-5 or -10], Combat Paralysis [-15], Honesty [-10*], Kleptomania (15) [-7], Lecherousness (15) [-7], Light Sleeper [-5], and Sense of Duty (Clients) [-5].

Primary Skills: Acting-13 (IQ+1) [4]; Area Knowledge (Tour site)-13 (IQ+1) [2]; Electronics Operation/TL8^ (Parachronic)-11 (IQ-1) [1]; Fast-Talk-12 (IQ) [2]; History (Tour era)-12 (IQ) [4]; Public Speaking-13 (IQ+1) [4].

Secondary Skills: Beam Weapons/TL9 (Pistol)-13 (DX+3) [8]; Electronics Operation/TL8 (Media)-11 (IQ-1) [1]; Holdout-12 (IQ) [2]; Observation-13 (Per) [2]; Search-13 (Per) [2].

Background Skills: Computer Operation/TL8-12 (IQ) [1]; First Aid/TL9-12 (IQ) [1]; Research/TL8-11 (IQ-1) [1]; Savoir-Faire (Servant)-13 (IQ+1) [2].

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Dinosaur Hunter

130 points

Time Tours employs not only urbane guides, but rough and ready Cretaceous shikaris. They would certainly never dream of engaging in an unlicensed expedition to a preserve timeline. It's only their dislike for excess paperwork that prevents them from reporting such an offer right away.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 12 [40]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 13 [10]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 6 [5]; Basic Move 6 [0].

Advantages: Patron (Time Tours, 12 or less; Less useful resources, -50%) [15]; and 15 points from among Absolute Direction [5], Acute Senses [2/level], Alcohol Tolerance [1], Combat Reflexes [15], Danger Sense [15], Fearlessness [2/level], Less Sleep [2/level], Luck [Varies], Peripheral Vision [15], and Unfazeable [15].

Disadvantages: Careful [-1]; Code of Honor (Professional) [-5]; Dependents (Hunting party) [-4]; and -30 points from among Claustrophobia [-15*], Demophobia [-15*], Guilt Complex [-5], Light Sleeper [-5], Loner [-5*], Low Empathy [-20], Odious Personal Habit (Whistling tunelessly, obsessively checking weapons, etc.) [-5], Overconfidence [-5*], Secret (Illegal dinosaur safari) [-10], Sense of Duty (Clients) [-5], and Truthfulness [-5*].

Primary Skills: Area Knowledge (Cretaceous America)-12 (IQ+1) [2]; Guns/TL9 (Rifle)-17 (DX+5) [16]; Survival (Plains)-13 (Per) [2]; Tracking-13 (Per) [2].

Secondary Skills: Camouflage-12† (IQ) [1]; Electronics Operation/TL8 (Surveillance)-11 (IQ) [2]; First Aid/TL9-13 (IQ+2) [4]; Hiking-12 (HT+1) [4]; Stealth-13 (DX+1) [4]; Traps/TL8-12 (IQ+1) [4].

Background Skills: Paleontology/TL8 (Paleozoology)-11 (IQ) [4].

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† Bought from Survival.

CENTRUM

Every mature Centran has 1 point in each of the following skills learned at his district Lyceum: Administration, Computer Operation/TL8, Mathematics/TL8 (Applied), Physics/TL9, Research/TL8, Running, Savoir-Faire (Centrum), and Swimming.

These Lyceum skills appear in the Background Skills section of the templates below. Primary skills in these templates reflect the Interworld Service College curriculum.

Interworld Service Agent

155 points

Like his Patrol counterparts above, this is an Interworld Service agent who has completed Service College and spent about a year in the field. Unlike Patrolmen (who send any and all Academy graduates – and plenty of other folk – outtime, regardless of Patrol rank), all Service agents allowed outside the Centrum and its colonies must attain Grade 3. Hence, many I.S. personnel transfer into Interworld from other Services after reaching Grade 3 in their original Service (usually Justice, Education, or Energy, with the few transfers from Military Service mostly for personal reasons). Their College term counts against their probationary time-in-grade for their new Service, and they can enter the field as new-minted Grade 3s.

Some I.S. Grade 2s (who work rear-echelon support and logistical duties until promoted) advance, of course, and there is a good-natured (but serious) rivalry between the “Saxons” (those who started out in Interworld) and the “Normans” (transfers). An agent who loudly champions one or another side may develop a Reputation good for getting beaten up in the wrong bars (or helping administer beatings in the right ones, of course).

The Radio advantage in this template is the encrypted radio implant that all Interworld Service agents have built into their jawbones. Many other bionic implants are common in I.S. agents; the GM may wish to add such devices even to seemingly low-grade Servicemen.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 14 [5]; Per 13 [0]; FP 12 [3]; Basic Speed 5.5 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

Advantages: Centrum Rank 3 [30]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Fit [5]; Radio [10]; Resistant to Disease +8 [5].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Centrum) [-5]; Duty (The Service, 15 or less; Extremely Hazardous) [-20]; Intolerance (Non-Centrum)

[-5]; Sense of Duty (Centrum) [-10]; and -20 from among Bad Temper [-10*], Callous [-5], Chummy [-5], Curious [-5*], Fanaticism (Centrum) [-15], Hidebound [-5], Honesty [-10*], Impulsiveness [-10*], Oblivious [-5], Odious Personal Habit (Narrow-mindedness) [-5], Overconfidence [-5*], Secret (From another Earth) [-20], and Stubbornness [-5].

Primary Skills: Beam Weapons/TL9 (Pistol)-13 (DX+3) [4]; Brawling-13 (DX+2) [4]; Clidynamics-11 (IQ-2) [1]; Electronics Operation/TL8^ (Parachronic)-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Electronics Repair/TL8^ (Parachronic)-12 (IQ-1) [1]; First Aid/TL9-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Guns/TL9 (Pistol)-13 (DX+3) [4].

Billet Skills: Take 12 points in skills suitable for your billet. For instance:

1. Enforcer: Holdout-13 (IQ) [2], Interrogation-13 (IQ) [2], Knife-12 (DX+1) [2], and Stealth-12 (DX+1) [4].
2. Importer: Acting-13 (IQ) [2], Forgery/TL8-13 (IQ) [4], Merchant-13 (IQ) [2], and Streetwise-13 (IQ) [2].
3. Researcher: 12 points in personal area of specialty (IQ-based skill).
4. Surveyor: Diplomacy-12 (IQ-1) [2], Observation-14 (Per+1) [4], Urban Survival-13 (Per) [2], and 4 points in any Piloting skill.

Background Skills: Administration-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Computer Operation/TL8-13 (IQ) [1]; Mathematics/TL8 (Applied)-11 (IQ-2) [1]; Physics/TL9-10 (IQ-3) [1]; Research/TL8-12 (IQ-1) [1]; Running-12 (HT+1) [4]; Savoir-Faire (Centrum)-13 (IQ) [1]; Swimming-13 (HT+2) [4].

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Unattached Agent

710 points

Unattached agents are generic troubleshooters outside the Service hierarchies, appointed and assigned by Forum committees. One is typically assigned to lead a multi-Service project, or given the touchy assignment of internal investigations. A

single Unattached agent is expected to be able to shift the balance of worlds, with or without Infinity opposition. Their rare failures usually cause turmoil within the Forum, since few Unattached are without a political agenda – if only something like “disgrace those Forum members whose political agendas harm Centrum.”

The Reputation an Unattached agent receives usually balances out. Within the Centrum, he is honored as a valuable member of society; in Patrol circles, he is reviled as a ruthless agent of a hated foe.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 13 [60]; IQ 14 [80]; HT 13 [30].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1 (2d/4d-1 with right arm); BL 24 lbs.; HP 16 [10]; Will 16 [10]; Per 14 [0]; FP 16 [9]; Basic Speed 7 [10]; Basic Move 7 [0].

Advantages: Centrum Rank 7 [70]; Combat Reflexes [15]; Danger Sense [15]; Hard to Kill 2 [4]; High Pain Threshold [10]; Intuition [15]; Legal Enforcement Powers [10]; Patron (Interworld Service, 9 or less) [25]; Radio [10]; Reputation +4/-4 (Implacable agent of Centrum) [0]; Resistant to Disease +8 [5]; Unfazeable [15], Very Fit [5]; and 200 points in other advantages, usually representing bionics, for example: *Bionic Arm* (+120 points): Acute Touch 2 [4]; Arm DX 15 [24]; Arm ST 21 [30]; DR 7 (Hardened 1, Right Arm Only, -20%) [32]; Innate Attack 3 (Impaling; Armor Divisor 2, +50%; Melee Attack Reach C, -30%; +20%) [29]; Payload 1 [1]. *Bionic Eye* (+80 points): Acute Vision 5 [10]; Hyperspectral Vision (Extended Low-Band) [33]; Microscopic Vision 1 [5]; Nictitating Membrane 2 [2]; Telescopic Vision 6 [30].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Centrum) [-5]; Duty (The Service, 15 or less; Extremely Hazardous) [-20]; Intolerance (Non-Centrum) [-5]; Sense of Duty (Centrum) [-10]; and -20 from among Bloodlust [-10*], Callous [-5], Curious [-5*], Enemy (Rival Unattached agent, 9 or less) [-5], Fanaticism (Centrum) [-15], Loner [-5*], Low Empathy [-20], Overconfidence [-5*], Secret (From another Earth) [-20], and Workaholic [-5].

Primary Skills: Beam Weapons/TL9 (Pistol)-18† (DX+3) [8]; Brawling-16 (DX+3) [8]; Clidynamics-17 (IQ+3) [16]; Electronics Operation/TL8^ (Parachronic)-16 (IQ+2) [8]; Electronics Repair/TL8^ (Parachronic)-14 (IQ) [2]; First Aid/TL9-13 (IQ-1) [1]; Guns/TL9 (Pistol)-18† (DX+3) [8]; Leadership-15 (IQ+1) [4].

Unattached Skills: Take 60 points in a broad variety of mission-relevant skills. For instance: Acting-14 (IQ) [2], Artillery/TL6 (Cannon)-13 (IQ-1) [1], Climbing-14 (DX+1) [4], Crewman/TL7 (Airshipman)-14 (IQ) [1], Crewman/TL5 (Seamanship)-14 (IQ) [1], Diplomacy-14 (IQ) [4], Disguise/TL8-13 (IQ-1) [1], Driving/TL6 (Automobile)-12 (DX-1) [1], Electronics Operation/TL8 (Security)-13 (IQ-1) [1], Electronics Operation/TL8 (Surveillance)-14 (IQ) [2], Forgery/TL8-12 (IQ-2) [1], Holdout-14 (IQ) [2], Intelligence Analysis/TL8-14 (IQ)

[4], Interrogation-14 (IQ) [2], Intimidation-16 (Will) [2], Knife-17† (DX+2) [4], Merchant-13 (IQ-1) [1], Observation-14 (Per) [2], Piloting/TL7 (Light Airplane)-12 (DX-1) [1], Riding (Equines)-13 (DX) [2], Riding (Camels)-12 (DX-1) [1], Saber-15† (DX) [2], Search-14 (Per) [2], Stealth-15 (DX+2) [8], Streetwise-13 (IQ-1) [1], Survival (Desert)-14 (Per) [2], Tactics-14 (IQ) [4], Thrown Weapon (Spear)-15† (DX) [1].

Background Skills: Administration-14 (IQ) [2]; Computer Operation/TL8-14 (IQ+1) [1]; Mathematics/TL8 (Applied)-12 (IQ-2) [1]; Physics/TL9^ (Parachronic)-14 (IQ) [4]; Research/TL8-15 (IQ+1) [4]; Running-16 (HT+3) [12]; Savoir-Faire (Centrum)-14 (IQ) [1]; Swimming-16 (HT+3) [12].

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† One-handed DX skill based on bionic arm DX.

REICH-5

SS Raven Division Trooper

71 points

This template builds a standard Reich-5 Waffen-SS trooper, assigned to Raven Division by the luck of the draw. Aside from the quality of their equipment, the Waffen-SS are no more or less “elite” than any unit of the Wehrmacht. That goes double for Raven Division, which operates in the Burgundian backwater state outside the direct oversight not only of OKW, but of the main SS headquarters in Berlin. Although the Ordenführer of Burgundy desperately wants (and needs) to upgrade the quality of Raven Division, that would involve explaining in excruciating detail – to very suspicious superiors – what, exactly, a landlocked SS Ordensstaat needs with elite soldiers.

The GM can also use this template to build adequately trained, battle-blooded conscript soldiers in any industrial-era or later army.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 11 [0]; Per 11 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 5.5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Combat Reflexes [15]; Fit [5]; Military Rank 1 [10].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (SS) [-10]; Duty (SS, 15 or less; Extremely Hazardous) [-20]; Intolerance (Total, Non-Aryans) [-10]; plus -20 points from among: Bloodlust [-10*], Bully [-10*], Callous [-5], Fanaticism (The Reich, the SS, or the Order) [-15], Gullibility [-10*], Overconfidence [-5*], Poverty (Struggling) [-10], and Sadism [-15*].

Primary Skills: Artillery/TL9 (Cannon)-10 (IQ-1) [1]; Brawling-12 (DX+1) [2]; Gunner/TL9 (Machine Gun)-11 (DX) [1]; Guns/TL9 (LMG)-12 (DX+1) [2]; Guns/TL9 (Rifle)-12 (DX+1) [2]; Knife-11 (DX) [1]; Savoir-Faire (Military)-11 (IQ) [1]; Soldier/TL9-12 (IQ+1) [4]; Spear-10 (DX-1) [1]; Tactics-10 (IQ-1) [2]; Throwing-10 (DX-1) [1].



Secondary Skills: Armoury/TL9 (Small Arms)-10 (IQ-1) [1]; Camouflage-11 (IQ) [1]; Driving/TL9 (Automobile)-10 (DX-1) [1]; Driving/TL9 (Motorcycle)-11 (DX) [2]; Engineer/TL9 (Combat)-9 (IQ-2) [1]; Explosives/TL9 (Demolition)-10 (IQ-1) [1]; First Aid/TL9-10 (IQ-1) [1]; Guns/TL9 (LAW)-11 (DX) [1]; Mathematics/TL8 (Applied)-10 (IQ-2) [1]; NBC Suit/TL9-10 (DX-1) [1]; Stealth-10 (DX-1) [1]; Survival (Mountain)-11 (Per) [2]; Traps/TL9-10 (IQ-1) [1].

Background Skills: Climbing-11 (DX) [2]; Hiking-10 (HT-1) [1]; Jumping-11 (DX) [1]; Navigation (Land)-10 (IQ-1) [1]; Riding (Equines)-10 (DX-1) [1]; Scrounging-11 (Per) [1]; Swimming-11 (HT) [1].

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

“Nazis. I Hate These Guys.”

GMs who nevertheless want “elite Nazis” for the Patrol to face off against can raise the template IQ and DX by one point each, and then bring all one-point skills up to 2 points. This adds 62 points to the template; GMs can then add 20 points of advantages from the Alternate Outcomes Mercenary template options (p. 189), and raise Rifle to 15. (Make sure that your “elite Nazis” never take an Aim maneuver with their assault rifles, though, or that high Rifle score will make hamburger out of your PCs. Or, failing that, make sure that they always take an Aim maneuver *reeeeaaal sloooow* while standing out in the open like big Nazi idiots.) Finally, add the “Habits and Expressions” quirk. This brings the template to 156 points and parity with the Patrol templates, and justifies all those cries of “You vill die now, *Infiniter schwein!*”

Gestapo Amt Z Agent

120 points

This is a Gestapo agent from “Amt Z,” the Gestapo office in Burgundy that handles covert operations in the other timelines (p. 67). Amt Z has no official existence outside Burgundy, and is officially tasked with “project security” for the various SS research programs in the Ordensstaat. This slows down recruitment and leaves big holes in staffing, since new agents

need to be brought in carefully to avoid blowing the Armanen’s secret to the Gestapo at large. It’s especially difficult to cover up the increasing number of dead agents killed in crosstime operations; at some point, Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse is inevitably going to get suspicious enough to risk embarrassing high Party bigwigs, and move into Burgundy in force. Until then, the average Amt Z crosstime operative is still fairly competent, if not necessarily the historical and linguistic polymath that the Patrol or Centrum send to infiltrate their own target worldlines.

His Secret applies on Reich-5 itself, where he keeps The Secret of Ordensstaat parachronics from his fellow Nazis (including, possibly, his own superiors), and on any other world where he might be stationed in secret as a spy or saboteur. It doesn’t apply on worlds like Friedrich or Nostradamus (p. 138), where the Order operates openly as conquerors and overlords, but such worlds are unlikely to be the center of the campaign.

Attributes: ST 11 [10]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-1/1d+1; BL 24 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 14 [10]; Per 13 [5]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5.25 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Legal Enforcement Powers [15]; Military Rank 3 [15]; and 20 points from among Charisma [5/level], Combat Reflexes [15], Danger Sense [15], Indomitable [15], Intuition [15], Hard to Kill [2/level], Language Talent [10], Less Sleep [2/level], Security Clearance [10], Voice [10], and Wealth [Varies].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (SS) [-10]; Duty (The Order, 15 or less; Extremely Hazardous) [-20]; Intolerance (Total, Non-Aryans) [-10]; Secret (Varies) [-30]; and -15 points from among Bad Sight (Mitigator: Glasses, -60%) [-10], Bad Temper [-10*], Bully [-10*], Bloodlust [-10*], Callous [-5], Fanaticism (The Order) [-15], Lecherousness [-15*], Overconfidence [-5*], Sadism [-15*], and Sense of Duty (The Order) [-5] or (Aryan race) [-10].

Primary Skills: Electronics Operation/TL8 (Surveillance)-14 (IQ+2) [8]; Guns/TL8 (Pistol)-12 (DX+1) [2]; Interrogation-13 (IQ+1) [4]; Intimidation-14 (Will) [2]; Search-13 (Per) [2]; Shadowing-14 (IQ+2) [8]; Stealth-13 (DX+2) [8]; Streetwise-13 (IQ+1) [4].

Secondary Skills: Acting-12 (IQ) [2]; Area Knowledge (station)-13 (IQ+1) [2]; Criminology-13 (IQ+1) [4]; Guns/TL8 (LMG)-11 (DX) [1]; Holdout-12 (IQ) [2]; Intelligence Analysis/TL8-12 (IQ) [4]; Lock-picking/TL8-12 (IQ) [2]; Observation-14 (Per+1) [4].

Background Skills: Broadsword-11 (DX) [2]; Boxing-12 (DX+1) [4]; Computer Operation/TL8-11 (IQ-1) [1]; Driving/TL8 (Automobile)-11 (DX) [2]; Soldier/TL8-12 (IQ) [2].

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.



Maulesel (“Mule”) Jumper

As yet, the Order is unable to reliably implant the world-jumping ability into anyone without horrible consequences. Nazi science has never been shy of horrible consequences, of course, but these consequences are perforce falling on heretofore ideal examples of the Aryan genotype rather than various squalid *Untermenschen*. (Nobody, least of all the *Ordensführer*, wants to accidentally create a bunch of Slavs or Gypsies with world-jumping abilities.) From the ranks of volunteers from Raven Division, the torturers

select a subject with suitable physical strength and stamina, and then sear the world-jumping code into his biochemistry. (For a sampling of their methods, see p. 65.) The result – if he survives – becomes a shattered husk, a grotesque upon whose twisted bones and sinews the armies of the Reich travel to other worlds. He becomes *ein Maulesel*, a “Mule,” both pitied and scorned by his former comrades. Some Mules (those with the Mass-Jumper enhancement, usually) remain in Burgundy to power the dimensional gateways. Others accompany their fellows onto other worlds, to spread the horrors that created them.

Making a Mule

Use the conventional SS Trooper template above, but replace Rank with Courtesy Rank 4 [4], and a Social Stigma (a combination of “freak” and “valuable property”) [-10]. If the GM wishes, he can add +1 or +2 ST [10 or 20] and +1 or +2 HT [10 or 20] to the template to reflect the tougher, stronger selection pool of recruits for Mules. The GM can also justify leaving attributes as is, however, on the theory that the strains of the surgery or side-effects from the injections weaken the subject back to “average” levels.

Add Jumper (World) with suitable enhancements and limitations from p. B64 or p. 174. Other possible limitations include Limited Use, Preparation Required, Takes Extra Time, Takes Recharge, Trigger (Special drug cocktails, -40%), and Unreliable. Almost all Nazi jumpers have the Limited Quanta (Within one quantum, -15%) limitation; almost none of them have the Duration limitation or the Reliable enhancement. The Armanen especially value, and try to select for, Extra Carrying Capacity, Mass Jump, and Tunnel.

Nazi science inevitably results in a slurry of disadvantages from among: Addiction (Painkillers) [-10], Appearance (Unattractive to Hideous) [-4 to -16], Bad Back [-15], Bad Smell [-10], Chronic Pain (usually migraines) [-5 to -15], Epilepsy [-30], Gigantism (+1 SM) [0], Hunchback [-10], Insomniac [-10 to -15], Killjoy [-15], Lameness [-10], Neurological Disorder [-15 or -35], Paranoid [-10], Supersensitive [-15], Timesickness [-10 or worse, see p. 181], and Unusual Biochemistry [-5].

Specific forms of the advantage, and disadvantages to match, vary with the source of the Mule’s ability. The GM should feel free to modify the Jumper advantage as mentioned above. The GM should feel exceptionally free to add horrible limitations and disadvantages to the following packages:

Drugs (+10 points): Jumper (World) (Limited Quanta: Single-quantum, -15%, Psionic Teleportation, -10%, Trigger, -40%; -65%) [35]; and -25 points from the disadvantage options above.

Brain Surgery (+10 points): Jumper (World) (Limited Quanta: Single-quantum, -15%, Psionic Teleportation, -10%; -25%) [75]; Appearance (Ugly) [-8], Flashbacks [-10], Nightmares [-5*], Unnatural Feature (Bulging, scarred head) [-2], and -40 points from the disadvantage options above.

Glandular Implantation (+10 points): Acute Taste and Smell 3 [6], Fur [1], Jumper (World or Spirit) (Limited Quanta: Single-quantum, -15%, Stunning (from agonizing pain in groin), -10%, Takes Recharge (1 hour), -30%; -55%) [45], Night Vision 4 [4], Temperature Tolerance 2 [2]; Appearance (Unattractive) [-4], Colorblindness [-10], Compulsive Behavior (Checking time) [-1], Lecherousness [-15*], Stress Atavism [-15*], Unnatural Feature (White fur on body) [-3].

Demonic Seeding (+10 points): Jumper (World) (Magical, -10%, Unreliable (11 or less), -20%; -30%) [70], Mindlink (Spawn of Tychiron) (Universal, +50%; Magical, -10%, Nuisance Effect (Phantom voices), -5%; +35%) [26], Penetrating Voice [1]; Disturbing Voice [-10], Dread (Thorns) [-5], Frightens Animals [-10], Low Empathy [-20], Phantom Voices [-15], Sadism [-15*], Split Personality (With demonic Tychiron spawn (6); Mitigator: Herbal formula, monthly, restricted, -60%) [-12].

Other procedures exist to enhance Mules:

Steroid Regimen (-19 points): The Order places its Mules on a regimen of anabolic steroids to

increase ST (and, hence, carrying capacity to other worlds). Only Mules for whom steroids would be instantly fatal (those, for example, with Unusual Biochemistry) are exempt. To reflect the SS steroid regimen, add ST+3 [30] and HP+3 [6], and take HT-3 [-30], Bad Temper [-10*], Disturbing Voice [-10], Sterile [0], and lose one level of Appearance [-4].

Chimpanzee Muscle Grafts (+6 points): Promising Mules (those with the Enhanced Carrying Capacity or Mass Jump enhancements) also receive grafts of artificially grown chimpanzee muscle. Assuming they survive the rejection process (p. 65; attribute drain is ST not IQ with success), they add Lifting ST+6 [18]. Unlike steroids, these carry no concomitant disadvantages (except Susceptible to Disease (HT-3) [-12] from the immunosuppressants, see p. B158), and no HP bonus.

OTHER OPPOSITION

Cabalist Mage

120 points

This Adept of the Cabal is a fairly formidable opponent (or ally), especially if he is able to work subtly, without his foes discovering that a mage is scheming against them. GMs or players can modify template cost and skill with spells by taking a higher or lower level of Magery, or by applying a limitation such as Dark-Aspected.

Attributes: ST 9 [-10]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 13 [60]; HT 11 [10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 10 [2]; Will 13 [0]; Per 10 [-15]; FP 13 [6]; Basic Speed 5.50 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Allies (Two ultors, 6 or less) [5]; Cabalist Rank 3 [15]; Claim to Hospitality (Cabalists) [5]; Magery 2 [25]; Patron (Grand Master; 9 or less) [20]; appropriate language (p. 175) at Accented [4]; and one of Eidetic Memory [5]; Reputation +1 [5], Single-Minded [5], Status 1 [5], Versatile [5], or +1 to Will [5].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Cabalist) [-5]; Duty (The Cabal, 6 or less) [-2]; Secret (Cabalist) [-30]; and -30 points chosen from among Absent-Mindedness [-15], Bad Sight (Mitigator: Glasses, -60%) [-10], Bad Temper [-10*], Curious [-5*], Gluttony [-5*], Lecherousness [-15*], Obsession [-5* or -10*], Secret [-5 to -30], Sense of Duty [-2 to -15], and Shyness [-5, -10, or -20].

Primary Skills: Two Hard spells at 15† each (IQ+2) [4], or Very Hard spells at 14† (IQ+1) [4]. Nine more Hard spells at 13† each (IQ-1) [1], or Very Hard spells at 12† (IQ-2) [1]. See pp. B304-306, or *GURPS Magic*.

Secondary Skills: Area Knowledge (Astral Realm)-14 (IQ+1) [2]; Astronomy/TL4 (Observational)-13 (IQ) [4]; Dreaming-12 (Will-1) [2]; Occultism-13 (IQ) [2]; Savoir-Faire (Spirits)-14 (IQ+1) [2]; Thaumatology-14† (IQ-1) [4].

Background Skills: Knife-11 (DX) [1]; Staff-10 (DX-1) [1].

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† +2 from Magery.

Across the Four Realms

These three packages, all 40 points, build three different types of Cabalistic world-crossing ability. Add them to the Cabalist template above for a magical traveler between the Infinite Worlds. Plane Shifters use Plane Shift spells (p. B248) to move from world to world. Spirit-Jumpers have discovered a magical ritual that allows them to step into limpid pools or mirrors and out into other worlds, given a minute to inscribe the correct runes and invoke Candea, goddess of hinges. World-Walkers can simply find and follow the signs from world to world, although such signs may not be as reliable as spells or rituals. Their advantage is that their abilities function even on no-mana worlds.

Plane Shifter: Plane Shift-14 (IQ+1) [4] known for the Astral Realm and for nine alternate worlds, including the Cabalist's home parallel.

Spirit-Jumper: Jumper (Spirit) (Magical, -10%, Preparation Required (1 minute), -20%, Special Movement, -10%, Special Portal (Reflective surface), -20%; -60%) [40].

World-Walker: Omen [15]; See Invisible (Quantum flows) [15]; Hidden Lore (Gates)-13 (IQ) [2], Naturalist-13 (IQ) [4], Tracking-13 (IQ) [2], Weather Sense/TL4-13 (IQ) [2].

Criminal

52 points

This is a petty criminal. For a high-class criminal mastermind who goes about stealing Mona Lisas from alternate Louvres or seducing parallel Catherine the Greats, use the Patron and Disadvantages, and the suitable Primary Skills package, with the Crisis Ministry Troubleshooter template on p. 188. Use the same approach to "criminalize" other templates as desired. For example, for a deadly crosstime assassin, mix this template with the Alternate Outcomes Mercenary.



Attributes: ST 9 [-10]; DX 11 [20]; IQ 11 [20]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 10 [2]; Will 10 [-5]; Per 12 [5]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Contact Group (Street in home city, skill-18, 9 or less, somewhat reliable) [15]; Patron (Crime boss, 9 or less) [15]; and 20 points from among Alternate Identity [5 or 15], Danger Sense [15], Daredevil [15], Empathy [15], High Manual Dexterity [5/level], Luck [15], Night Vision [1/level], Reputation [Varies], and Smooth Operator [15/level].

Disadvantages: Duty (Crime boss, 9 or less, Involuntary) [-10]; Greed [-15*]; pick *either* Enemy (Patrol (Justice or Customs Division), watcher; 12 or less) [-15] and Social Stigma (Criminal Record) [-5] or Secret (Criminal) [-20]; and -20

points from among Callous [-5], Code of Honor (Pirate's or "stays bought") [-5], Compulsive Behavior [-5 to -15*], Cowardice [-10*], Kleptomania [-15*], Laziness [-10], Lecherousness [-15*], Obsession (The big score) [-5*], Overconfidence [-5*], Reputation [Varies], and Selfish [-5*].

Primary Skills: Add 16 points in skills relevant to your criminal pursuit. For example:

1. Looter: Archaeology-10 (IQ-1) [2], Connoisseur (choose)-13 (IQ+2) [8], Research/TL8-11 (IQ) [2], and Search-13 (Per+1) [4].
2. Mobster: Axe/Mace-12 (DX+1) [4], Knife or Guns/TL8 (Pistol) at 12 (DX+1) [2], Intimidation-12 (Will+2) [8], and Shadowing-11 (IQ) [2].
3. Smuggler: Disguise/TL8-12 (IQ+1) [4], Forgery-11 (IQ) [4], Holdout-12 (IQ+1) [4], and Smuggling-12 (IQ+1) [4].
4. Thief: Climbing-12 (DX+1) [4], Electronics Operation/TL8 (Security or Surveillance)-12 (IQ+1) [4], Lockpicking/TL8-12 (IQ+1) [4], Observation-13 (Per+1) [4].
5. Timenapper: Acting-12 (IQ+1) [4], Brawling-12 (DX+1) [2], Fast-Talk-11 (IQ) [2], Sex Appeal-12 (HT+2) [8].

Secondary Skills: Area Knowledge (Home base)-12 (IQ+1) [2]; Filch-12 (DX+1) [4]; Stealth-11 (DX) [2]; Streetwise-12 (IQ+1) [4].

Background Skills: Carousing-11 (HT+1) [2]; Gambling-10 (IQ-1) [1]; Merchant-11 (IQ) [2]; Urban Survival-12 (Per) [2].

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Swagman

To make a criminal a swagman, add the following lens:

Swagman (+40): Add Claim to Hospitality (Swagmen) [5], Smooth Operator 1 [15], Strine (Accented) [4]; Code of Honor (Swagman's) [-5]; Gesture-11 (IQ) [1], Hidden Lore (Confidence games)-11 (IQ) [2], Savoir-Faire (Swagman or Mafia)-12 (IQ+1) [2], and 16 points in any of the skills covered by Smooth Operator (p. B91).

BYSTANDERS

Expatriate

55 points

An expatriate is someone who has voluntarily left his own society to live, usually secretly, in another time or dimension. Many expatriates are renegades – deserters from the Patrol, Time Tours Ltd., or similar agencies.

Expatriates choose many ways to fit in. They may sell their specialized high-tech knowledge – or use it to impress primitives with their “magical” powers. In a time-travel or historical parallel world, an Expatriate can use his knowledge of the future to play the stock markets, win bets, and so on, becoming rich . . . unless he accidentally changes history and makes his foreknowledge useless.

Some expatriates are legitimate – permanent “agents in place” for an organization that crosses time or hops between worlds. And in some campaigns, it may be perfectly legal for a traveler to settle down in a past time or parallel world, within certain restrictions. In that case, Time Corpsmen or I-Cops may be able to call on help from the local “expat” community!

An expatriate may also be a permanent agent for a *criminal* organization – possibly the local henchman of the big-time crook the PCs are chasing.

Yet another type of expatriate is the castaway. He didn't *intend* to settle down, but his means of transport broke down – or perhaps he was accidentally carried away from his home. Anyway, he's there now, and has to make the best of it. Perhaps he wants to return home; perhaps he has been there so long that he wants to stay.

In most campaigns, expatriates are NPCs rather than player characters, because the PCs are traveling, and the expatriate is someone who has chosen to settle down. An expatriate may be the target of a mission, or he may be able to give valuable help. Or he may be a “wild card” whose very presence was not known to the PCs when they started their mission.

An expatriate usually has a Reputation, positive or negative, in his new home.

Attributes: ST 10 [0]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 10 [0]; HT 10 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d; BL 20 lbs.; HP 10 [0]; Will 12 [10]; Per 10 [0]; FP 10 [0]; Basic Speed 5 [0]; Basic Move 5 [0].

Advantages: Cultural Familiarity (Local culture) [1]; Wealth (Comfortable) [10]; the local language at Native [6]; plus 15 points chosen from among Ally (Local sidekick, 15 or less) [9 or 15], Contact Group (Local police or merchants) [Varies], Favor [Varies], Patron (local boss) [Varies], local Status 1 or 2 [5 or 10], and more Wealth [Varies].

Disadvantages: -15 points chosen from among Code of Honor (Professional) [-5], Compulsive Generosity [-5*], Enemy (Whoever chased him out of Homeline) [Varies], Loner [-5*], Sense of Duty (Fellow Homeliners in local area) [-5], Stubbornness [-5], and Xenophilia [-10*].

Primary Skills: Area Knowledge (local area)-12 (IQ+2) [4]; Diplomacy-10 (IQ) [4]; Savoir-Faire-12 (IQ+2) [4]; Streetwise-10 (IQ) [2]; and 10 points in professional skills (Merchant, Physician, etc.).

Secondary Skills: Computer Use/TL8-11 (IQ-1) [1]; Detect Lies-9 (Per-1) [2]; Law (local)-9 (IQ-1) [2]; and 4 points in local vehicle or Riding skills.

Background Skills: Carousing-11 (HT+1) [2]; Cooking (local cuisine)-9 (IQ-1) [1]; Games (local pastime)-11 (IQ+1) [2].

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

Historian

80 points

Historians are specialists at finding information needed by time travelers or crosstime adventurers in the field, using libraries, maps, computer databases, et cetera. But the historian's value lies not merely in what he can look up, but what he already knows. The two generic types of historian are the adventurous type, who enjoys dressing up in period clothes and slipping into the cultures he's studied, and

the academic, who has a very hard time connecting his knowledge to the practicalities of life, even in his own era.

Historians may be generalists, familiar with many periods without deep knowledge of any, or specialists, who know only one era – say, 18th-century London – but can name every street, pub, and lamppost. Or they may be cinematic historians, expert in everything from Brahms' handwriting to the details of Nero's love life, in which case they should have the History! skill from the box on p. 183.

Attributes: ST 9 [-10]; DX 10 [0]; IQ 14 [80]; HT 9 [-10].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-2/1d-1; BL 16 lbs.; HP 9 [0]; Will 12 [-10]; Per 11 [-15]; FP 11 [6]; Basic Speed 4.75 [0]; Basic Move 4 [0].

Advantages: Cultural Familiarity (Era studied) [1]; three languages at Native or four at Accented [12]; and 10 points from among Charisma [5/level], Cultural Adaptability [10], Eidetic Memory [5 or 10], Language Talent [10], Single-Minded [5], +1 Status [5], Tenure [5], Voice [5], Versatile [5], and Wealth [10].

Disadvantages: Code of Honor (Professional) [-5]; and -25 points from among Absent-Mindedness [-15], Bad Sight (Mitigator: Glasses, -60%) [-10], Clueless [-10], Combat Paralysis [-15], Curious [-5*], Duty (University, 12 or less; Nonhazardous) [-5], Hard of Hearing [-10], Indecisive [-10*], Jealousy [-10], Oblivious [-5], and Pacifism [Varies].

Primary Skills: Area Knowledge (Milieu studied)-15 (IQ+1) [2]; Current Affairs/TL8 (Era studied)-14 (IQ) [1]; History (choose)-18 (IQ+4) [20]; History (second specialty)-17 (IQ+3) [1]; Research/TL8-15 (IQ+1) [4].

Secondary Skills: Computer Use/TL8-14 (IQ) [1]; Public Speaking-13 (IQ-1) [1]; Teaching-13 (IQ-1) [1]; Writing-13 (IQ-1) [1]; 8 points in a secondary academic specialty such as Anthropology, Archaeology, Economics, Geography, Linguistics, Political Science, or Sociology.

Background Skills: Administration-13 (IQ-1) [1]; Connoisseur (Antiques or art of era)-14 (IQ) [2]; Literature-13 (IQ-1) [2].

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† Default from other specialty of History.

Student

Students are usually found in the company of academic historians, and often aspire to become such eminent figures themselves. (Others, of course, merely aspire to survive the course and graduate.) If the characters have been thrown into the past as the result of a laboratory accident, one or more of them may be university students. One advantage students have, which should not be overlooked, is that they are relatively young: they may be able to blend in more easily in earlier times, when people aged and died early. A Student might also have a useful background – for instance, someone who had spent time as a Peace Corps volunteer might have an easier time in “primitive” cultures. While most students are Poor, this rarely matters in time travel, and only occasionally in crossworld adventuring (p. 178).

For simplicity’s sake, this lens depicts a history major, but swapping out History for any other academic subject (or for Carousing, in some universities) should be trivial.

Student (-40 points): ST+1 and HT+1, IQ-2 [-20 net]; FP+2 [6]; only one other language at Native or three at Broken [6]; add Appearance [4 or 12], Intuition [15], Less Sleep [2/level], and Musical Ability [5/level] to possible advantages, remove Status and Tenure from possible advantages; replace Code of Honor with Pacifism (Reluctant Killer); add Alcoholism [-15], Compulsive Carousing [-5*], Laziness [-10], Lecherousness [-15*], Overweight [-1], Skinny [-5], and Stubbornness [-5] to possible disadvantages; lower primary History skill to 13 (IQ+1) [8], Research to 12 (IQ) [2], and secondary academic specialty to 4 points; replace secondary History specialty, Administration, Connoisseur, and Teaching with 3 points in

any of Carousing, Gambling, Hobby Skill (any), Musical Instrument (choose), or Sports (choose).

Duncorne Foundation

Ever so slightly enigmatic, the Duncorne Foundation (p. 40) pursues rare books, compiles forgotten lore, and traces the fracture lines crisscrossing reality. Its scholars have more than their share of academic glory, but still act less professorial than inquisitorial at times. A Duncorne Scholar seems to have uncanny access to books reported missing, antiquities reported destroyed, and a few areas seldom reported at all. Depending on the campaign, Duncorne Scholars could also have access to Hidden Lore, spells, or other arcane skills.

Duncorne Scholar (+55 points): Add Contact Group (Collectors, smugglers, or gray market underworld, skill-18, 15 or less, usually reliable) [18] and Patron (Duncorne Foundation, 12 or less) [20] to advantages, and make Latin (Native) one of the three languages; add Intuition [15] and Magery 0 [5] to possible advantages; add Weirdness Magnet [-15] to possible disadvantages; the History specialties must reflect medieval or earlier eras; replace background skills with Archaeology-14 (IQ) [4], Connoisseur (Books)-14 (IQ) [2], Linguistics-14 (IQ) [4], Literature-14 (IQ) [4], Occultism-14 (IQ) [2], Research/TL4-14 (IQ) [2], and Theology (medieval or earlier specialty such as Sumerian, Roman, or Zoroastrian)-14 (IQ) [4].

The new background skills package is the sort of thing all Duncorne Scholars (or at least those who get more than one grant) seem to know . . . possibly picked up at the invitation-only Duncorne seminars. Point-conscious GMs or players can use any of them (except Connoisseur and Research) as the secondary academic specialty and soak up some of those 8 points as well.

LOCALS

Giving templates for every possible resident of every possible alternate world is beyond the scope of this book. Players may create new

characters from any time and place in human history. These might represent “real” individuals who did not rise to prominence and had no great fame or historical impact. This kind of character allows the most flexibility for the player, and is certainly easier to research. With that said, it can be fun and interesting to play not just an outtimer, or even a very skilled outtimer, but a famous outtimer.

One of the greatest opportunities in a crossworld campaign is that of creating a historical character as a PC or important NPC. This works especially well in a parallel-world situation; a PC can be an alternate version of Lawrence of Arabia or Thomas Jefferson or Mata Hari or Socrates, recruited and trained by the world-hoppers. But it can happen in a time-travel background, too. Even if paradoxes are possible, the PC could have been the subject of a “rescue” which saved him from his historical death without leaving evidence. This can range from historical disappearances such as Amelia Earhart, to bodies “burned beyond recognition” on a battlefield, or even the substitution of a cloned corpse for the character by the time travelers!

The result is an “alternate” version of the historical character . . . someone with the same origin, but a different development. (For good fictional treatments of this idea, see the *Riverworld* series by Philip José Farmer, and “Mozart in Mirrorshades,” by Bruce Sterling and Lewis Shiner, in the *Mirrorshades* anthology.)

Players should carefully choose historical PCs. They should be noteworthy enough to be interesting, but not so earthshaking as to unbalance the campaign. Players should choose individuals in whom they have a genuine interest and whose time period they want to learn about. It is the player’s job to research and understand the person well enough to portray them in the game. The more thorough the work, the richer the character (and the campaign) will be because of it.

Even if the GM doesn’t want to open that particular can of worms in a time-travel or crossworld game, he may want to present some “big name” NPCs in walk-on or guest-starring roles.

Building Historical Characters

Assign attributes conservatively, based on your research. Writers, artists, scientists and the like have a higher IQ; athletes and warriors, higher DX. A subject's longevity can be a clue to setting HT, but remember that longevity must be considered in relation to the time period. A score of 11-12 still stands out to contemporaries as above average over time; a score of 13-14 is noticed immediately and marks the figure as a prodigy; 15+ should be saved for "best ever" world-beating types: Newton's IQ, or George Washington's Will, for instance. Use Talents and "aptitudes" such as Charisma, High Manual Dexterity, Mathematical Ability, Versatile, and so forth rather than jacking attributes up. Remember that levels of these advantages higher than 3 also lead to world-beating reputations.

Advantages are any innate talents possessed by the character, or ones gained very early in life. In general, keep the point total for disadvantages below -40; biographers and hostile contemporaries exaggerate many character flaws. Quirks are the most fun; every great person had them, and they can be roleplayed to the hilt and help bring the character to life. Extreme advantages and disadvantages (those worth more than 10 points) are more appropriate for cinematic games than purely historical ones, although narrowly combat-focused advantages (like Combat Reflexes) are usually more realistic even at fairly high levels. Remember to apply Rank and Status, although

this may not matter in a time-hopping game of famous troubleshooters.

Two or three skills are usually prominent – these should be set as high as possible. Keep in mind that a skill of 21+ is the greatest in history: Shakespeare's Poetry or Alexander the Great's Strategy, for example. Skills of 19-20 are the "best in the country": John Wesley Hardin's Fast-Draw. A skill of 16-18 is still enough for lasting fame: Mussorgsky's Musical Composition, perhaps. Then, determine secondary skills – these should be set equal to the controlling ability (DX or IQ), or perhaps a level or two higher. The remaining points can then be spent to round out the character. Remember that "period" skills that may seem useless at first may be very valuable to an agent in a primitive world.



Footnote Characters

Many of the best temporal agents are those who might be called "historical footnotes." They had interesting and distinguished careers . . . but from the vantage point of the 21st century, they are obscure. As a result, they are easier to "rescue" without distorting a world's history. Playing such a character is a good compromise between a truly famous person, and an imaginary nobody.

WEAPONS

The arms and accessories potentially available to crosstime heroes run the gamut from flint knives to planet-busting explosives. This section concentrates on specific firearms encountered in the Infinite Worlds setting.

FIREARMS

All TL9+ weaponry incorporates advanced electronics (see "Smartgun" Electronics, p. B278).

Baker & Alvarez .591 Express Rifle: This is the standard dinosaur-hunting rifle sold in high-end sporting goods stores on Homeline. Adapted from an anti-materiel rifle design, it is illegal to own in most Homeline nations, and even some American states. Hunting agencies often rent them out to customers. All B&A weapons are *very fine* (see p. B280). Fires .591 Express Nitro.

CF/3 "Pandar" Stunner: This "stun pistol" is the standard holdout

Simply thumbing through a biographical dictionary, or even an encyclopedia, gives literally hundreds of possibilities for this type of character – people who were prominent in their own day but not well known now. Research into this kind of character is also very educational, and a great source of ideas for adventures and subtle parallel world divergences of the sort Centrum specializes in.

"I Didn't Think You Were Real!"

With the GM's permission, the players can research and create "historical" characters who never actually lived, or whose reality is in some doubt. In many cases, the "real" version of such a character is a far cry from the legendary or fictional one. King Arthur, Robin Hood, and Hercules are all examples of characters who *might* have been based on a historical individual.

Such people are also very good NPCs, because the first reaction of those who meet them is often "I didn't think you were real!" Some "real" characters will give the same effect. The swashbucklers D'Artagnan and Cyrano de Bergerac, and the gunfighters Wild Bill Hickok and Bat Masterson, fall into this category. They all really lived, but many people know only of the stories based on their exploits, and assume that they were purely fictional. And the truth about some of these people may be surprising . . . Bat Masterson, for instance, was a New York City gentleman for much of his career, and Davy Crockett was a member of Congress!

weapon of the Centrum Interworld Service. Based on a neural disruptor technology that defies Homeline attempts at technical exploitation, the Pandar delivers an affliction attack: the victim gets a HT roll to resist, at a penalty dependent on the weapon and a (2) armor divisor (that is, the victim gets +1 to HT per 2 DR on the location struck). Failure results in paralysis for a number of minutes equal to the margin of failure.

CF/4 "Porpentine" EMW: The Centrum Interworld Service uses this electromag weapon as a multi-purpose firearm that can fire a number of specialized munitions, ranging from anti-personnel diamondoid needle clusters to anti-tank warheads. The ammo chart lists a standard solid "slug" round; other rounds include: beehive (1d-1 imp, RoF x100, Rcl 1, CPS \$4.4), HEDP (9d(10) and follow-up 1d+1[1d], CPS \$3.3), Baton (2d(0.5) cr dkb, Rng 52/156, CPS \$1.1), and HE (7d+2(0.5) and follow-up 4d-1[1d], CPS \$1.1). Fires 20mm C-Hive.

Electrozap Pistol: The "zat" is a high-powered electrolaser carried by Patrol agents and Time Tours guides. Electrozaps are often disguised, and the hapless crosstime native finding a lost zat built into a loaf of bread or

walking stick has become a comedy staple.

Infantry Combat Weapon: Standard issue to the United States military in Homeline (as the M-23A3), the ICW features an "over and under" configuration mating a medium caliber assault rifle with a modular under-barrel mount for grenade launchers, vortex ring projectors, or shotguns. Grenades can be fired on four settings: airburst, delayed impact (for firing through doors to explode inside a room), "window" (a delay for firing through openings), and conventional impact. Fires 6.8mm ICW.

Infinity Service Pistol: Replacing a hodge-podge of 9mm and 10mm pistols, the ISP fires a cutting-edge cased telescoped round with electrothermal-chemical propellant. It has proven popular, but limited production rates and dodgy ammunition quality have

slowed adoption. Fires 10mm Infinity Caseless.

Needler: A small-caliber air gun that usually fires a small dart using nothing more than compressed air. The darts can be tipped with any sort of poison, hallucinogen, drug, paralytic agent, tracking microdot, etc. that Centrum or Homeline ingenuity can devise. Many needles are biodegradeable, and vanish upon striking; the target may not even know he was hit (roll against Per). Fires 5mm Airdart.

StG 03: The Mauser Sturmgewehr 03 is the main infantry weapon for the Reich-5 German military, including the SS Raven Division. It is well constructed and rugged, but requires a lot of preventive maintenance and cleaning. Like the ICW, it features an under-barrel mount for a grenade launcher. Fires 7.92mm Caseless.

Ammunition Table

TL: The Tech Level of the ammunition.

WPS: Weight per shot, in pounds.

CPS: Cost per shot.

TL	Ammo	WPS	CPS
9	5mm Airdart	0.035	\$0.70
9	6.8mm ICW	0.014	\$1.30
9	7.92mm Caseless	0.032	\$2.90
9	10mm Infinity Caseless	0.017	\$3.00
9	.591 Express Nitro	0.39	\$18.00
9	20mm C-Hive	0.054	\$1.10



Weapons Table

TL	Weapon	Damage	Acc	Range	Weight	RoF	Shots	ST	Bulk	Rcl	Cost	LC	Notes
BEAM WEAPONS (PISTOL) (DX-4, other Beam Weapons-4, or Guns (Pistol)-4)													
9 [^]	CF/3 Pandar, 10mm	2HT-4(2) aff	2	200/600	0.36/0.1	3	104(3)	2	-1	1	\$260	4	[1]
9	Electrozap Pistol, 80mm <i>linked</i>	1d-1 burn sur HT-6(2) aff	4	80/240	3.6/1	1	87(3)	6	-3	1	\$12,000	4	[2]
GUNS (PISTOL) (DX-4, or most other Guns at -2)													
9	ISP, 10mm	4d+1 pi+	3	280/3,200	3.4/0.71	10	15+1(3)	8	-2	3	\$1,200	3	[3]
9	Needle Pistol, 5mm	1d-1 pi	1	100/390	2.1/1.1	3	25+1(3)	5	-3	2	\$200	4	
GUNS (RIFLE) (DX-4, or most other Guns at -2)													
9	CF/4 Porpentine, 20mm	7d+2 pi++	2	260/780	22/0.78	1	9+1(3)	4 [†]	-6	5	\$4,200	1	[4]
9	ICW, 6.8mm	6d pi	5	570/3,700	4.8/0.5	15	30+1(3)	10 [†]	-3	2	\$430	1	[5]
9	Express Rifle, 15mm	6d×3 pi+	5	2,600/11,000	37/0.39	1	1(3)	13B [†]	-10	6	\$4,800	2	
9	StG 03, 7.92mm	7d+1 pi	4	1,200/5,300	10/1.8	20	40+1(3)	8 [†]	-4	2	\$1,000	1	[5]

[1] EPS 0.86, C/104 eShots.

[2] EPS 10, D/87 eShots.

[3] EPS 2.3, C/39 eShots.

[4] EPS 19, 2C/9 eShots.

[5] Usually mounts an integral grenade launcher.

CHAPTER SEVEN

INFINITE

CAMPAIGNS

Evening heat shimmer obscured the bronze flashes on the shields, and the clouds of choking dust muffled the sound of 100 pairs of hob-nailed boots striking the arid pan of the desert. The scarlet horsehair crests were gray with windblown Saharan sand.

Even the glint of the spearheads was tamed, although by carefully smeared black oil rather than by rust or dust.

As the soldiers crested the rise, they spread out in professional fashion, staying low and bounding over the ridge, exposing themselves

against the violet sky as little as possible. They crept down the hill, their boots tearing up what little furze clung to its side.

Clodius Terentius Niger watched his men move forward, noting with approval that each man kept his mates in his eyeline but kept his eyes pinned on the next ridge. *We don't want to get surprised by another machine-gun nest.* At the thought, Niger reflexively massaged the old scar on his throat and jaw. One of the men below hissed, and his manipule dropped to the ground, mere unmoving lumps against the rocks of the

Egyptian desert. The whole century followed suit, waiting as the plane buzzed overhead.

Just a recon plane, Niger decided, as the optics buried deep in his cheekbones pulled a magnified view from the sky and threw the resulting schematic against his retinas. *An Me-109 F-5, fitted with cameras instead of guns.* In some ways, of course, that would be more deadly to his men, if the cameras could find them, and if the pictures got to the right people in Rommel's command.

And Rommel would have such people, or the Last Century wouldn't have been sent after his southern flank. That was how the Rules worked. That was how the Game was played.

"Quick-time." Niger hissed to his second, who passed the word down the ranks. At the next ridge, the men leapt over and kept moving, some silence sacrificed for much speed. *We don't have to outrun the plane,* Niger thought. *We just have to outrun the news.* The implants in his thighs poured catalysts into his blood, oxygenating his muscle fibers and making his palms itch for combat. His legs pistoned and again his men leapt forward, keeping up almost effortlessly. *We'll pay for this tomorrow,* came the wry knowledge amid the euphoric rush of speed. *But Rommel will pay for it tonight.*



A crossworld or time-travel campaign is, almost by definition, the most freewheeling sort of game there is. Whatever the bounds of reality, whoever the bad guys are, however harsh the local law enforcement in any particular world, the heroes can always Go Somewhere Else.

Still, such a campaign, whatever its details, must always answer certain questions. The most basic of these are “All right, how did we get here?” – for which see *Interdimensional Travel*, on p. B529, or *Temporal Physics*, on p. 153 – and “What shall we do now that we’re here?”

Roleplaying is about solving problems and taking actions inside a framework of rules. So this book has

To me, all the past is alive with alternatives, and nobody can show, nobody has really attempted to show, that they were not real alternatives.

– G.K. Chesterton,
“On Fate and a Communist”

rules for dimensional and time travel, of several different flavors. It’s very important to understand that the “laws of time travel” or “quantum universes” provided are designed to be (we hope) reasonable and consistent,

like any good science fiction. But they’re imaginary, intended to get the players to use their heads to accomplish their missions. If they don’t suit your game or your group, tweak them to fit.

CAMPAIGN ASSUMPTIONS

The first step, then, is to decide on the rules, or at least some guidelines, for your campaign. In freewheeling genres like time travel, or even (slightly) more constrained settings like the Infinite Worlds, it’s important to get your players to buy into these guidelines, too, before the first die gets thrown. Otherwise, you’re setting yourself up for a game full of picky exceptions, intentional near-paradox, and generally avoidable irritation.

THE HARDWARE DILEMMA AND THE SOFTWARE MISMATCH

Or Why the Biggest Problem Isn’t So Big

The future can hit the past pretty hard. Imagine the effects of a squad of modern NATO infantry, with their assault rifles, grenade launchers, Kevlar body armor, and so on, against a Roman legion. Add in some mortars or medium machine guns, never mind vehicles, and it gets even grimmer. Military analysts Trevor and Ernest Dupuy, attempting to calculate the “absolute lethality” of weapons, have concluded that a rifle is hundreds of times more deadly than a sword.

Because of this imbalance, most game approaches to time travel have tried to come up with some mechanical limitation on the firepower that time-tripping characters may carry into the past. (One rarely sees contemporary characters going into the future and being mown down by combat lasers.) Sometimes the travelers are forbidden to carry metal, or an arbitrary “energy scale” (like the Dupuys’ numbers) is imposed.

But this misses the point: the difficulty is not one of controlling hardware, but matching software – making certain that the GM’s intentions suit the expectations of the players.

If what the players really want to do is face off with panzers against Roman legionaries, then any arbitrary rules designed to prevent the slaughter are going to be resented and dodged. Conversely, if the players are interested in solving historical mysteries with as little violence as possible – and when it’s necessary to fight, meeting the opponents on their own terms, sword to sword, rather than simply blowing them away with futuristic firepower – then a lot of restrictions aren’t necessary; the Time Service (through its loyal representative, the GM) simply says “it’s important that you possess or do nothing that would give you away as time travelers,” and that’s that.

This is not an argument that one sort of play is “better” than another

(though problem-solving gets somewhat more attention in this book than gunfights). It is an argument that the GM and his players need to agree on the sorts of things they want to happen in the game, before launching into adventures.

PARAMETERS

Scale

Scale is the level at which the characters are interacting with the world, and the results of their actions upon it. Are the heroes acting on a *prosaic scale*, living day to day, hoping to sell (or intercept) a rookie Fidel Castro baseball card on Gernsback? Or are they acting on an *epic scale*, saving the continuum and twisting histories like taffy?

Normally, scale maps to character power. Of course, the GM can create compelling, gripping adventure or light-hearted comedy by hurling underdogs into big fights. Or a very high-point game can still have a *prosaic scale*, such as an ISWAT version of *Hill Street Blues*.

The default Infinite Worlds setting is somewhere between *prosaic scale* and *epic scale*; a Patrol team might rescue a tourist one day, and sabotage an SS invasion next week. This is by design; playing change-up with the scale helps prevent the monotony of “another day, another world.” For a

prosaic-scale game, swagmen or petty criminals, Time Tours guides, or academic historians make decent protagonists (or antagonists). A fully epic game calls for really skilled Patrolmen, ISWAT operatives, or Centrum Unattached agents.

Scope

Scope is what the PCs can see, touch, influence, and kill. Where scale refers to why they step through the time gate (To save a life? Or to save humanity?), scope deals with what, who, and (sometimes) how. A campaign that only deals with one village, one decade, or even one worldline is smaller in scope than a campaign with ramifications throughout a civilization, all of history, or the Infinite Worlds. Increased scale usually maps to increased scope, but not always. A campaign of vast scope can chase across two quanta for the prosaic stakes of one kidnapped woman's life . . . or a Paralabs researcher and his assistants can prevent a massive reality quake with a single day trip to a nexus portal in the Turkish desert.

In the default Infinite Worlds setting, the scope is fairly broad. Characters are assumed to do a lot of world-hopping, and the Patrol has wide-ranging responsibilities, with similarly wide-ranging authority. Part of the fun of the Infinite Worlds setting is its broad scope, and the key part played in it by the Patrol – which is to say, the likely PCs.

Boundaries

Boundaries are the edges – implicit or explicit – to the setting, and to the action. If scale answers why, and scope answers who and what, then boundaries are all about where (or, in a time-travel game, when). Where is the action, and where is “off-screen”? Boundaries also constrain the possibilities: how many sorts of time or dimension travel are there? Do magic and psi work, and do the PCs have access to either? This is not a bad thing – an infinity of stories can seem awfully imposing to a GM, and eventually less interesting to the players than a mere “whole lot of stories” joined by some underlying assumption or theme.

The default Infinite Worlds setting has pretty broad, fuzzy boundaries. Almost anything is somewhere, and the GM can make any of it the center for an adventure or a whole campaign. Conversely, the GM campaign can trim the boundaries down to whatever he'd like. He can essentially ignore all the “sideshows” and focus purely on the contest between Infinity and Centrum, or make the game a pulpy rumble between the crew of the *USS Eldridge* (p. 163) and the SS Raven

Division, or present the Duncorne Foundation and the Cabal's contest to decipher the mysteries of reality as the only important question. The GM can even leave whole elements of the setting aside; remove the Cabal, Reich-5, or ISWAT, or magic, and it still functions. Or just never mention them, and assume that they're off on Quantum 3 doing something terribly exciting but somehow not very crucial to the business at hand.

Adding Worlds

The basic assumption of the Infinite Worlds setting is “whatever it is, it's out there, somewhere, even if nobody knows it yet, unless that would wreck your game.” Introducing the Infinite Worlds into an existing game world is as easy as having the Scouts show up and ask directions from your PCs – or having the Interworld Service show up and try to kill them! Introducing an existing game world into an Infinite Worlds campaign is just as easy: any game world can exist somewhere in the Infinite Worlds as a parallel on a seldom-visited quantum, as a pocket universe created by the Cabal, or as the result of Centrum tampering with an echo! If your game world depends on some Vast Cosmic Evil That Transcends Mere Worlds, it can be tied into the reality quakes (or the Cabal) with minimal stress. If your game world has weird magic, or strange technology, rest easy; it's no weirder or stranger than Merlin, and you can always rule that such weird strangeness only works on its home world if you're worried about the Wand of Centrum-Vanishing unbalancing the campaign.

Future Earths

Most existing SF settings, and most potential ones, take place on a future Earth set well past the 2027 “present day” of the Infinite Worlds. There are three basic ways to connect such a future Earth into the Infinite Worlds setting:

Another Anomaly: This future Earth has some odd feature that makes it “safe” for the GM to break the general “no futures” rule of the setting. If the world is on an out-of-the-way quantum, it won't even affect the setting too much, as long as it doesn't get parachronics on a large scale, and as long as nobody can steal its technology very easily.

Parachronics Plus: Add parachronics to the future Earth, and an analogous organization to the Infinity Patrol. This Earth's Van Zandt discovered parachronics 30 years ago, in 2198, and the whole setting moves up a few notches. This is a huge amount of work for some aspects (Reich-5), and fairly transparent for others (the Cabal and Centrum).

Future Branch: The future Earth is the future of some echo, parallel, or other alternate. Perhaps this is the only such worldline with a defined “future,” and all the others are chaotic potentials (p. 170). Perhaps all worlds have futures, but most of them are inaccessible. A Gate of Thoth, wandering timenapper, or banestorm can shift PCs into the future of any Earth with no real harm done to the setting, and similar handwaving can shift them back. A permanent, or recurring, Gate of Thoth is probably the most plausible way to handle multiple commutes if necessary.

PARAPHYSICS

In a sense, the question of the campaign's underlying physics is a boundary question. Who can get where, and how? Examine the options under *Temporal Physics* on pp. 153-165; they shape the stories you can tell. The key is to keep the rules transparent to the players, and to get them to agree to accept them – or to make the quest to undermine them an acknowledged part of the game so that you can prepare for it. One method of setting the paraphysics can be the touchstone rule. Describe your paraphysics in terms of a setting already familiar to your players: “Time travel is like *Terminator*; one way only, and you have to arrive naked.” Make sure you know your touchstone better than your players do, though – you don't want to be trapped into “*Star Trek* time travel” with players who watched *Voyager*.

The default Infinite Worlds campaign sets up some fairly ironclad rules: conveyors can only travel along the same quantum without a projector (i.e., without the GM's permission); there isn't really reliable time travel; the quantum structure keeps troublesome worlds away from your home base. It then sneaks around hinting at loopholes, should the GM wish to explore them: nexus portals, Gates of Thoth, and banestorms blowing Communist penguin mana and Argentine Nazis everywhere, for example.

CHARACTERS

Once the campaign foundations are laid, it's time to think about the characters. Here, even more than the earlier parameters, consulting with the players can pay big dividends for a GM seeking to avoid software mismatch and the ensuing “assumption clash.”

Power Level

At its most basic, this is “how many points are the characters?” In company with scale and scope, this determines much of the feel of the game.

In the default Infinite Worlds campaign, Infinity Patrolmen with about a year of experience are between 180

and 200 points; an average soldier with the same is about 90 points; a special forces soldier is around 220. A skilled civilian with rather more experience varies, but hovers between 100 and 150 points. The GM can move these scores around; for example, special forces can be still more competent, or the Patrol can scrape the bottom of the barrel in its desperate quest for manpower. At the standard levels, this gives a fairly reliable result for Patrol skills; the troubles they face are mostly from the outside, not from their own incompetence. This privileges player tactics over the dice somewhat, but leaves a large dollop of chance.

Niche

This parameter might also be called “role” or “habitat.” Who are the PCs, and why do they hang out together? Were they all kidnapped by time travelers, recruited by Alternate Outcomes, hired by White Star, or (un)lucky enough to be in the path of the banestorm?

The default Infinite Worlds campaign is prejudiced toward characters with at least some moral qualms; even Centrum has a strict code of conduct.

The Infinite Worlds setting presumes some sort of connection to Infinity Unlimited, ideally the Patrol, but it hardly mandates it. No matter what the players' preference, there's someone in the Infinite Worlds who can suit them, or who can be retrofitted with little bother.

Freedom

What can the PCs do? Who stops them, or what? Some of the answers to this question are inherent in the campaign metaphysics: if time travel is impossible, the PCs can't travel in time. Others are inherent in the group's niche; Infinity Patrolmen can't

run drug rings and slaughter out-timers without a qualm. Hopefully, players won't mind a few restrictions on their actions, but they almost always want to understand them up front unless the nature of the restriction is supposed to be a puzzle in the game.

The default Infinite Worlds campaign is prejudiced toward characters with at least some moral qualms; even Centrum has a strict code of conduct and a not entirely contemptible ideology to back it up. However, cheerful amoralists can always find a home with the swagmen; less cheerful ones might work with the Cabal. “Blow stuff up for the hell of it” types may find a socially approved outlet in Alternate Outcomes, at the cost of a tighter T.O.

Edges

Do the PCs have access to anything out of the ordinary – magic, psionics, secret TL10 equipment? In some campaigns, of course, a crossworld gate, or a Zippo lighter, may be their only

edge. In others, the players can pick anything they'd like, in the name of infinite options. One key question the GM should consider, and perhaps get player input on: do their standard foes have such edges, too? Time travelers may have the only time machine in existence, but nothing else special to keep them alive. Psis may attract the attention of evil psis looking for recruits, or for competition. It can be fun to smack the locals around with an unbeatable edge once or twice, but it can get old. Make sure there's enough competition – even with different edges entirely – to keep the adventurers challenged.

In the default Infinite Worlds campaign, like tend to fight like. Infinity battles its ideological opposite Centrum using nearly identical parachronics. The Cabal has magic, but tends to attract magical foes from the cracks in reality. This keeps tactical decision-making fairly rapid, and more importantly, lets players build focused, effective characters without having to load up on Mental Shield and Magic Resistance all the time. If magic or psi show up in the Patrol's life, they are restricted to one world as a special obstacle . . . they don't dog them across the quanta.

GENRE AND MODE

Genre

Essentially, genre is the general kind of story you're telling, and it indicates the broad run of story elements, scenery, and obstacles the players are likely to encounter. While the various worlds of the Infinite Worlds encompass all sorts of genres, the campaign as a whole can rest within one. An Infinity Patrol- or Centrum-centered game is likely to be an SF campaign, with details of dimension travel theory, technical whizbang equipment, and applied clidynamics sharing roughly equal billing. A Cabal-centered game tends toward fantasy (if it emphasizes the magi) or horror (if it emphasizes the monsters). A game set entirely on Lenin-6 (p. 132) is likely to be a war story, dealing with tactical choices and psychological stress.

An alternate worlds campaign depends less on genre than most, although some GMs want the extra thematic unity a single genre supplies, to counteract the unfocusing effect of the wildly various settings. Still, boundaries between genres are fluid at best.

Conspiracy: Conspiracy games are about uncertainty and paranoia. Trust no one; nothing is what it seems. In the Infinite Worlds setting, this can be a "hall of mirrors" type espionage game with uncertain agendas in Infinity Tower, or a straightforward attempt to unravel the tangled works of the Interworld Service (or the Armanen Order) across the quanta.

Historical SF: This subgenre takes the SF emphasis on extrapolation and "What if?" questions and applies it to history. A game like this focuses on the parallels, especially those with only a minimum of magic or psi to distort things. The point of this game is to encounter strange new histories, seek out new cultures and new civilizations, and watch (or direct) their interplay. Changing history may be an objective for players of historical SF games.

Technical SF: This subgenre concentrates on the questions of physics inherent in time or crossworld travel. If the GM has a cosmic turn of mind, the large questions about the origin of the Infinite Worlds, or the nature of reality quakes, might take center stage. Players might want to set up paradoxes on purpose, or have fun outwitting the Observer Effect.

Fantasy: Fantasy games are about the unreal, about magic and things that simply can't exist. Power and wildness range widely. To a large extent, the Infinite Worlds is already a "science fantasy" setting. Don't bother with extrapolation; just ride the banestorm wave to the next parallel and marvel at it. This genre has a lot in common with supers, which is really its own topic.

Mode

The mode is how you approach the genre; if the genre is the searchlight, the mode is the filter on the lens that gives it color. You can combine them, but too many modes leave the game murky, not multi-colored.

Action: All adrenaline and big explosions, in action mode the story is just the reason to have fight scenes, chases, and escapes. Alternate Outcomes campaigns, or commando ops against the Raven Division, or jumps through alternate Second World Wars, feed the action beast.

Cinematic: In this cousin of the action mode, the fight scene always lets the villain escape until the last adventure, the bad guys always discover the hero next to a rank of speedboats, and the escape is always at the last second. Drama is sacred, well above realism. This mode implies larg-

er-than-life heroes, because otherwise, they might lose!

Dark: There is no morality, and power corrupts. Infinity is filthy, Centrum is ruthless, and UNIC is power-mad. The only people PCs in a dark game can count on are each other . . . maybe. Doing the best you can for a world is its own reward, and stopping the power-hungry from making it a meal is a close second.

Gritty: A gritty game is cynical and "realistic." (But not realistic enough to give up parachronics, of course.) History is dirty and smelly; heroes have feet of clay, and bullets kill you in lingering agony crying for a mother on a world you'll never see again. There can be good guys, but not shiny ones.

Hollywood History: When the legend outlives the truth, roleplay the legend. Heroes are heroic and noble and good-looking. There is always a good side and a bad side, and the good side is the PCs and their allies. If Infinity isn't the good guys, beat it with the help of Joan of Arc or Robin Hood.

Investigative: The focus is on solving puzzles. What happened on Enigma? What exactly are reality quakes? Why is Centrum killing the great chefs of Europe? A variant of the investigative mode is the exploratory, or "travelogue" mode; the mystery becomes a pretext to visit new worlds and play in them.

Pulp: A blend of the Hollywood history and cinematic modes, with a dose of campy dialogue and vile, vile villains. Pulp blends Time Nazis, Confederate airships, and Martian heat rays into a game of pace, narrative thrust, and cliffhanging suspense.

Silly: This mode plays things for laughs; it probably works best with freelance heroes. Maybe they're an all-star team of History's Second-Greatest Heroes, or resolutely in-genre private eyes traveling the cosmos in an AI-piloted black 1957 Buick.

Technothriller: God is in the details. Whether it's the perfect crosstime caper thriller or a loving description of alternate submachine guns, it matches narrative thrust and suspense with tactical planning. Anything with a "mission" structure works best for technothriller, from Patrol sting operations to straight-up Nazi hunts.

CAMPAIGN ELEMENTS

A strong overlap exists between alternate-world and time-travel campaigns. Not only are parallel worlds a great way to dodge the restrictions of time travel (p. 156), but thinking about the past (or future) is very similar to thinking about a primitive (or advanced) alternate Earth. In this section, consider much of this material to be advice from both perspectives, options for both sorts of games.

THROUGH THE RABBIT HOLE

Assuming you don't have a crosstime galleon, or a handy conveyor, or an Infinity Patrol to show you around, how *do* you get from world to world? One important subgenre of cross-world or crosstime adventure is that in which the heroes have access to a "gate" between two worlds – and only two. Sometimes they don't even control the gate . . . they just fall (or are pushed) into another world. That's still enough for high adventure!

Accidental Transport

The party is pulled across time or into another world by forces beyond their control. They'll probably never be able to get back, because they'll probably never understand what happened to them.

In the default Infinite Worlds setting, the easy way to do this is with a banestorm (p. 75), or a conveyor or time machine accident (p. B531 and p. 165). The PCs might wind up "oz charged" by the banestorm's ball lightning, crackling between worlds over, and over, and over . . .

Alternatively, the heroes could receive a warning that they are about to be taken to another time or world, perhaps never to return. What do they do in their last day on Earth? What should they pack? (see p. 207 for some possible answers.)

Summonings

Perhaps the party's transport was deliberate . . . but not on their part. They've been snatched from their own time, by magical or ultra-tech means,

to perform some mission. Maybe it's fairly trivial (the wizard just needed hirelings with specific talents). Maybe it's apocalyptic (only they can save the universe).

This works well with a crosstime recruitment gimmick. The campaign is based in any familiar genre – fantasy, space, whatever – but the characters may be drawn from anywhere! Whoever brought them together wanted certain specific talents, and got them. A party might consist of a Roman legionary plucked from a random battlefield, a Victorian mathematician, a Roaring '20s private eye, a cop from the streets of New York in 2010, and an android artist from 2200. Or, for a game in which the recruiters are groupies or snobs, the PCs might be Cleopatra, Wyatt Earp, Merlin, Miyamoto Musashi, and the Comte de Saint-Germain! (See *Locals*, p. 198, for some notes on building such characters.) A lot of the playing time can be spent just letting the characters interact!

Gates

Gates can create a special and limited kind of cross-universe campaign. A gate is a portal to . . . somewhere else. One or both sides may be portable. A gate may work all the time, or only part of the time, or only when someone says the code-word . . . Gates may be technological, magical, natural, or just there. The nexus portals, Gates of Thoth, dimensional highways, and shiftrealms from the Infinite Worlds setting only scratch the surface of the possibilities.

Since world-spanning gates imply very high tech, very strong magic, or better, it is usually best for the campaign if the gate, or gates, simply exist, with no real explanation. The PCs stumble onto, and through, a gate, and what they do next is up to them!

This device works well with the "players as PCs" gimmick from p. 184. If you found an alternate dimension in your closet, would you go in? Who would you tell about it? What would you take?

Time Gates: A time gate exists in two times at once. Anyone who travels

through one side of the gate comes out in the other time – and possibly in another place as well. A gate might come into being, say, between Chartres Cathedral in 1850 and the bathroom of a Chicago tenement in 1990. It lasts 20 years, until the tenement is torn down. During that time, anyone can step through that closet door and be in Chartres precisely 140 years, 19 days and six hours earlier, and vice versa.

World Gates: A world gate is simply a connection between two parallel (or not-so-parallel) worlds. Depending on what worlds it connects, it can be incredibly valuable, a mere curiosity, or totally worthless. Any worlds can be connected. The heroes of a pulp-era campaign could explore an ancient temple and find a gate to the prehistoric world, or the Golden Age of Piracy, or medieval Japan, or fantastic Yrth . . . or to all of them, in a portal dimension like the Horatio Club on p. 229.

A world gate can be used to make a permanent change in a campaign, or it can open once, for a single adventure, and then close again. The travelers can keep whatever items, knowledge or companions they picked up on the other side. Or, if they're on the other side when the gate closes, they're stuck in a new world.

VISITING THE WORLD NEXT DOOR

So once you've got a gate to another world, or a stolen conveyor, or whatever, now what? Parallel worlds are likely to inspire the same sorts of travelers as any strange new land: explorers, missionaries (religious or just humanitarian), and those out to make a fast buck.

The last is probably the largest group, and may be PCs or their adversaries. Large-scale business ventures might involve mining an alternate timeline for raw materials. Arabia's petroleum is too close to civilization, if there is any – even paratime corporations that don't care about revealing themselves are hesitant about "native

trouble” that involves full-fledged armies. The mines of southern Africa are a more likely target. (See p. 37 for some reasons why.) Colonization is the biggest project of all, probably focusing on uninhabited or uncivilized worlds, though the Americas and Australia may be viewed as fair game in a broader set of timelines.

Trade is another way of making a profit (pp. 37-41), and it may shade into theft and looting. Many types of interdimensional travel make stealing far too easy to be interesting – a GM has to provide complications among the victims, the law, or both. Parachronic crime might also involve stealing people (see *Timenappers*, p. 72). We can all agree that someone wanting to kidnap Marilyn Monroe, or even Nikola Tesla, is probably fooling himself if he tries to justify his crime as “providing the victim with more opportunities” than he or she would have had at home. But what to do about the person determined to kidnap all the alternate Hitlers from the streets of Vienna and stash them somewhere they can’t do any harm? Obviously, a parachronic police force like the Infinity Patrol has its work cut out for it.

What to Pack for a Visit

Assuming you don’t know anything about the new timeline, but have the chance to pack, treat it as exploration. Start with standard camping and survival gear: you’ll probably be starting some distance from civilization. Bring a Swiss army knife; actually, as many as you can carry, if you plan to trade for a living. Bring a reliable pen and a few blank journals. Don’t forget binoculars. Bring a radio: if the locals are advanced enough for broadcasting you can find out a lot about them before setting eyes on one. If not, communicators for the entire group. It shouldn’t be necessary to point this out, but your cell phone won’t work on another world, unless it’s a *very* close parallel indeed.

Once you are ready to meet the inhabitants, you’ll need to acquire local clothing, at least outer garments (hope for cloaks). Carry your goods in a “timeless” leather satchel. Silver is the most common coined metal: bring small ingots with a good sharp cutter,

The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.

– L.P. Hartley, *The Go-Between*

or artificially “worn” coins that look like they might once have had pictures on them. Failing that, a selection of plain gold rings is easy to carry (and hide) and easy to turn into cash.

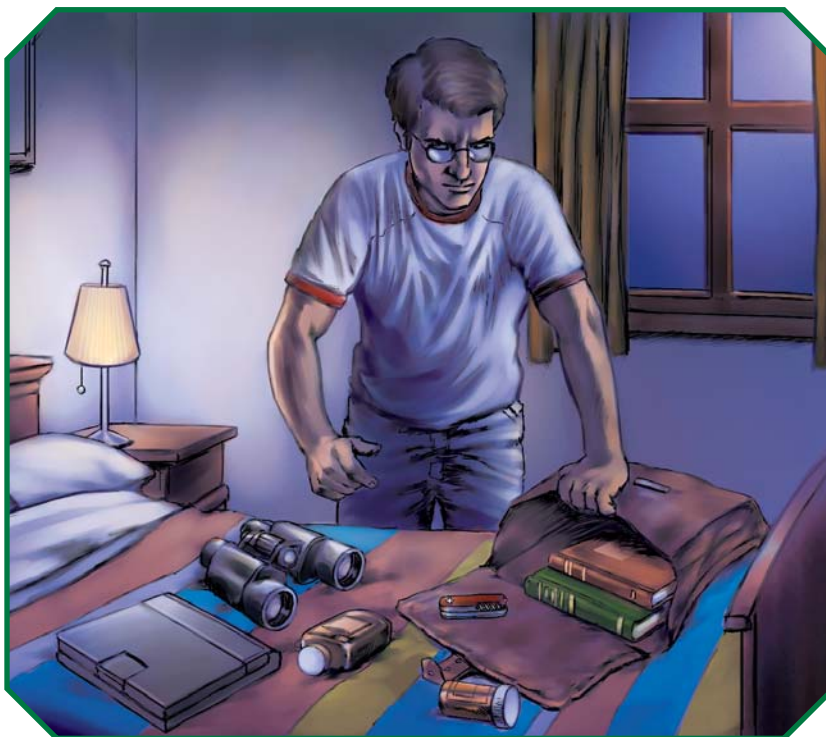
For both initial and later visits, probably the most useful modern tool you can have is a small computer, hand-held if possible, with a historical, geographic, and linguistic database. A digital camera (no film needed) is very useful for retrieving information. Don’t emphasize weapons: you should be avoiding combat. The stunner is the perfect “quiet” weapon if your TL permits it; otherwise you’ll have to make do with dart guns, crossbows, or silencers.

Don’t neglect antibiotics: the odds are very good that a random parallel world is full of diseases your immune system has never encountered. GMs who don’t want to be bothered with disease should make some sort of Immunity to Disease (p. B443) available. Add a snakebite kit, penicillin, and good old aspirin, plus quinine

powder if you plan on visiting the tropics. Make sure your own shots are up to date; thinking of the past, or many parallel worlds, as a Third World country isn’t a bad habit to get into. See *The Bad Old Good Old Days* on p. 210 for specific notes on squalor in the game.

What to Pack for an Extended Visit

If you’re planning to emigrate and have time to prepare, get all the information your home timeline offers about your destination area. Load down that computerized database with maps, climate data, and a profile of the local ecology as well as basic science. Don’t neglect guides to low-TL medicine and chemistry. *The Way Things Work*, *A Barefoot Doctor’s Manual*, and *Henley’s Formulas* can start you off. If you have data on the human inhabitants, take that too – although many alternate histories, including some in this book, have changed so much that such information may not be very useful.



In this situation you'll also want to give serious thought to achieving fame and fortune by "inventing" something the locals haven't yet devised. The options are legion for hard-headed engineer types (see *Things to Invent*, p. below). Other products you might also consider include cosmetics, recipes, and ceramics. Even without consumerism, there are possibilities. For instance, the only really color-fast dye for most of history was indigo: even

one synthetic dye could make you very rich in the textile business.

It is unwise to introduce new weapons – gunpowder, atomics, whatever – to a timeline without them, unless you are prepared for the ensuing military revolution. On the other hand, it can be very comforting (and potentially lucrative) indeed to be the only person in the world who knows how to make gunpowder. (See *Black Powder*, p. 209.)

Worldline Conquest Made (Relatively) Easy

The most extreme adventure in another timeline is outright conquest, though PCs are probably more likely to fight a would-be conquistador group than to *be* one, unless they work for Centrum's Uplift Service (p. 54). Still, you never know what Alternative Outcomes (p. 31) might do, and infinite worlds mean you can't rule anything out.

Things to Invent

There are a number of simple devices, processes and compounds that can make a traveler rich at the right time in the past, or in a primitive alternate world. (Note that if temporal contamination is possible, the introduction of any of these things will do it. By definition, anything that is enough to make its inventor rich is enough to change history.)

Of course, many other things can easily be re-invented . . . by some people. An electronics technician might well be able to build a radio in the year 1400. This box lists things that could be created by anyone, or things so easy to explain that a skilled person could create them from any layman's explanation. To re-invent a specialized device using your own technical or scientific skills, use Gadgeteering (p. B475).

Simple Machines and Basic Concepts

If any of these devices aren't in use yet, you can raise the local technology in that field by a whole TL in about 20 minutes.

- Fire
- Wheel
- Lever
- Container (could be pottery, but could as easily be hollowed-out wood, or even a bag made of leaves)
- Writing or written mathematics
- The zero
- Domestication of animals
- Agriculture
- The bow
- The printing press, adding movable type as soon as possible
- The steam engine

Office Supplies

Don't underestimate the historical impact – and the financial value – of simple inventions that make office

work easier. Each of the creations below certainly seemed obvious after it was developed, and made its inventor a lot of money.

Paper clip (Test yourself. Can you draw it exactly right, from memory?)

Hole punch

Window envelopes

Adhesive tape (For this and the following items, you'd have to hire a chemist to develop the invention from your description, unless you possess Chemistry skill at 16 or better, or are a Gadgeteer.)

Carbon paper

Self-sticking note pads

Correction fluid

Pencil eraser

Simple Comforts of Home

These innovations may not change the entire society – at first – but they'll still be useful and make their creator wealthy if they are properly exploited.

Fermentation, to turn perfectly good grape juice or grain into (gasp) alcohol.

Distilling (the most obvious use is to make strong alcoholic beverages from weak ones, but there are many industrial applications).

Glass lenses. These require the existence of glass, of course. Glass itself is relatively easy to create if sand, soda, and fire are available. Lenses are valuable first for improving vision, then for telescopes and binoculars, and eventually for microscopes and other scientific applications.

Don't Waste Your Time . . .

Some devices, though, are very hard to get right. Only a very skilled mechanic or gadgeteer should attempt to build (for instance) a clock of any kind, a typewriter or typesetter, or anything else involving a great number of precisely machined moving parts.



Black Powder

At any time before its historical appearance (perhaps the 10th century in China, and the 13th century in the West), black powder is one of the most spectacular introductions a traveler can make. Superstitious natives can be overawed with nothing more than fireworks. Simple gunpowder bombs and mines could probably break most medieval armies, and even the Romans or Huns might not stand up to actual cannon. But remember that the secret of gunpowder is so *simple* that, once introduced anywhere, it spreads.

See H. Beam Piper's *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen* and its sequels for the classic treatment of this situation.

The Formula

If you, the reader, ever expect to be dropped into a primitive time or timeline, memorize this . . .

To make black powder, combine 10% sulfur, 15% charcoal, and 75% saltpeter. Mix well and powder carefully without producing sparks. This produces "flash powder" – it primes a gun but won't explode.

Wet the flash powder to form a paste. Air-dry in kernels of the desired size for the job (you'll have to experiment, based on your desired application).

Finding the Ingredients

Sulfur is an element, a yellow powder. In nature, it occurs near hot springs and gives the water a bitter flavor.

Charcoal is produced by burning wood. Different woods and different burning methods give different results. Experiment.

Saltpeter (potassium nitrate) is a crystalline white compound. In a primitive milieu, the easiest way to find it in small amounts is to remove a well-aged pile of manure. The saltpeter is leached out of the manure by rainwater and collects on the ground.

Using Black Powder

Now that you have it, what do you do with it? Sadly, the warlike applications outnumber the peaceful ones. Fireworks and civil engineering are very nice, but the main impact of black powder is for weaponry.

Almost no skill is required to create "mines" and simple "shells" – powder kegs to be lobbed at the foe with siege engines. Mortars and cannon are more difficult, requiring skill in metalwork and advances in metallurgy; handguns are harder still. But any general who sees what black powder can do will be motivated to help your research . . . or to have you destroyed.

For guidelines on conquering a large but more primitive empire, there is no better source of advice than the real-life conquistadors. A large centralized empire (TL1 minimum, and TL2 is better) is a better target than lots of little groups, perhaps harder to take but easier to hold. Finding local allies to multiply your forces is critical: if everybody loves the local empire, seek your fortune elsewhere. In fact, work through native rulers as much as you can until you have a firm grasp of local politics.

Assuming everything goes right, a paratime conquistador could decapitate an empire in just a few decisive battles. Cortés overthrew the Aztecs in three years. Conquering an entire timeline would take far longer, depending on how long it takes to modernize the military of your new empire.

Use local talent but modern organization. You probably know more about strategy and tactics than the locals, and are almost certain to have a better grasp of logistics. If you have time to train a military force of your own, proper discipline is even more important than weaponry. Military *science* also develops. With a good grasp of military history, you have dozens of tactical innovations to offer, even with native weapons, if you can train your army to follow them.

This is not to say that weapons are unimportant: as your basic firearm, consider the Sten gun, a submachine gun that can be produced by fairly primitive workshops. You may also be able to bring a few other ideas into the local arsenal. Many weapons – fuel-air explosives, for instance – *could* have been built long before they were actually invented.

The Bad Old Good Old Days

There are many everyday details of life in many historical eras that we would find distasteful, barbaric, and horrifying. Description of such details – the crowding and smell of a city street before modern plumbing, for instance – is necessary and useful in making the players accept the environment as “the past,” and not just a Hollywood imitation.

Unpleasant details are also useful plot and characterization devices. A group of travelers confronted by a bullying nobleman might follow their natural impulse to teach him a lesson – only to find themselves hip-deep in trouble for it. Someone who loves horses might gain points for demanding that a drunken coachman stop whipping his animals – and even more points if he found a way to do it that would not offend the customs of the time.

But, as with any other device, don't overdo it. A little of the griminess of medieval towns, or the horrors of the Inquisition, or the mistreatment of one class or race by another, goes a long way, no matter how historically correct it is. If the GM constantly describes cruelty and abuses that the characters cannot stop without endangering their mission, the players may quite rightly start to think that they are the ones being provoked. Just say something like, “There's a crowd gathered to cheer the public flogging – but you're professionals; you just look past and keep on walking.”

Use machines that you can repair and keep running with local tools: a P-51 Mustang is about as advanced a plane as you should consider, for instance, and it's probably overkill at that. It need hardly be said that any air power, even a balloon, gives you a tremendous advantage in timelines that aren't accustomed to it. Similarly, if the other side doesn't have radios, you should pack them: instant communications can let you defeat an enemy many times your size. (Not to mention the many non-military uses, of course.) Unless you have a *lot* of backup, we don't advise invading worlds less than three tech levels below yours. How well technological “miracles” work to overawe the natives is really a GM's call – barbarians claiming to be gods, no matter how showy their trinkets, will not impress the very sophisticated and nearly agnostic Roman aristocracy.

Once well started at empire-building, shift your model from Cortés to that other Renaissance man, Machiavelli. The game of power politics focuses on understanding why people are loyal in this culture, so you

can keep your allies and break up coalitions against you. If your new empire has a traditional enemy – one that you haven't already enlisted as an ally, and perhaps even if you have – crushing them is often a good way to win support and gives you a larger empire in the bargain.

Never make the mistake of underestimating the natives: if a charismatic leader and/or military genius appears among your enemies, you *must* eliminate him by any means necessary, and as soon as possible. Primitives aren't idiots, and man for man they're better suited for survival in their world than you are. The last thing you need is for some local Geronimo (or George Washington) to pull guerrilla jujitsu on your paratime mercs, capture some assault rifles, and possibly reverse-engineer them.

MISSION CONTROL

The classic Irwin Allen TV show *Time Tunnel* presented an interesting take on freedom of action and

character creation: the “Mission Control” option. While our two heroes were lost in the past, trying to prevent stock-footage disasters, the Tunnel technicians were digging through their files and throwing switches on their blinking consoles, trying to help them out. (Well, it was two technicians and a General. It was a low-budget show.) Handled with some restraint, the idea of Mission Control works very well in a roleplaying campaign. In fact, it solves one major background problem: the agents no longer have to know absolutely everything about all of history. They still have to have basic Area Knowledge – especially if the communications link goes out – but Control can provide on-the-spot information.

Some suggested limits are as follows:

Only information moves, not objects. Mission Control can receive pictures, and possibly transmit them (useful for sending maps), but if the agents run out of bullets, they're out of luck.

Establish search times. However long it takes Control to find the answer to the agents' question is the amount of time that passes in the field before the answer is received. The limiting factor is then not whether the information exists, but whether it can be recovered in time to be any use.

Some information isn't available. If no one drew floor plans of a building, and the building no longer stands, the team just has to search it the hard way.

Control and Research in a Parallel-World Campaign

In a campaign in which, instead of time travel, the agents are traveling between parallel worlds, the job of Mission Control becomes different. On the one hand, nobody can be sure what happens next in the parallel world. It may seem similar to our history, but nobody really knows for sure.

On the other hand, if there are lots of similar parallel worlds, some types of research become much easier. If the agents must free a comrade held in tightly guarded Castle Wolfram, Control need only dispatch a team to a similar timeline where Castle

Wolfram lies empty. Presto . . . complete and accurate maps – they hope. (Of course, this only works when there are lots of very similar timelines. For Infinity Unlimited, this kind of trick could be used for research on the echo timelines, but very few of the others are similar enough to make it worthwhile. And the echoes have their own hazards!)

THE TIME IS OUT OF JOINT

Time travel and alternate world adventures fall into four general categories. The first three may be actual “missions” in the sense that someone assigned them to the party. But the characters may also find themselves caught up in events by accident, or even tricked by NPCs into performing some sort of dangerous task.

Research Missions

Research missions are sent to find something out: Who was Jack the Ripper? Who really wrote the Zinoviev Letter? What happened to the crew of the *Mary Celeste*? Researchers are usually not supposed to change the past; they are supposed to observe, measure, photograph, perhaps even conduct interviews, and then return, without having any effect on the time stream (or revealing The Secret, or shifting an echo).

By itself, researching isn’t very adventurous. Getting into a fight usually means things have gone very badly wrong. But a research mission doesn’t have to be dull. The suspense and excitement come, not from a string of combat encounters, but from meeting obstacles (some expected, some by surprise) in the path of getting the data and getting back with it.

Often, the PC team isn’t cast in the role of researchers, but of guards and guides to the researchers. The scientists themselves may have hidden goals or personalities that endanger the mission.

Crosstime or crossworld espionage is a special category of research which can quickly become dangerous, since the spies may be opposed, not only by “native” security troops and counterespionage, but also by opponents from their own time or world. Casing

the Forbidden City to loot it before it’s burned in 1860 is technically a research mission, after all!

Repair Missions

Repair missions have the specific objective of making changes to the time stream. Assuming the characters are the “good guys,” this usually means that the past has already been altered, by enemy action or accident, and has to be returned to normal. There are other possibilities, however. The travelers may be present at a historical event – say, on campaign with Julius Caesar in Gaul – in which the outcome of the larger campaign is known, but individual, unrecorded skirmishes may have unknown results. Or the team may be “agents in place,” guarding a historical divergence point such as the Normandy invasion against interference by enemy agents.

Or the status quo may be intolerable to the time travelers – say, a small group of researchers discovers a time-gate, and hopes to use it to overthrow

the past, either for temporary study (in which case another mission may be necessary to replace it) or to save it from destruction. The agents may need to plant a copy of the item, or otherwise create a diversion from the burglary. Sometimes history itself – the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius, the Chicago Fire, the bombing of Berlin – may cover their tracks.

Time thieves, of course, are also on a “recovery” mission! They may face the additional hazard of law enforcement from their own world, especially if their thefts have the potential to change history.

A specific and challenging type of recovery is the rescue of an individual who history says is dead. Time travel organizations recruit some of their best agents this way. Rescues work equally well in an echo worldline where someone’s death can be predicted accurately.

In an alternate worlds campaign, actual trade and exploration missions become possible, and the opportunities for theft expand exponentially.

A specific and challenging type of recovery is the rescue of an individual who history says is dead. Time travel organizations recruit some of their best agents this way.

the oppressive regime. The travelers may even be soldiers of the regime, driven to mutiny by their unending missions of outtime atrocity.

In the Infinite Worlds campaign, a party may be sent on a “repair mission” to undo sabotage by the agents of Centrum. This is not time travel – in that background, they can’t undo the past – but an attempt to redirect the events of the present into a preferred future.

Recovery Missions

Recovery missions are sent to bring something back (forward?) from

Survival

A fourth type of adventure is the non-mission, in which the travelers had no intention of visiting another time or another world (at least, not the one they arrived at). Their problem is simply to survive. There may be a hope of rescue, or they may be doomed to live their lives in the past, or some inhospitable parallel dimension.

Depending on the physics of the situation and their particular resources, their best strategy might be to blend in and not make waves, or to set themselves up as teachers, magicians, or gods.

CHAPTER EIGHT

ALTERNATE INFINITIES

This chapter presents some alternate campaign frames for GMs and players interested in a changeup from the Infinite Worlds setting. Each

frame includes notes on character design and campaign parameters based on the discussion in Chapter 7. These frames are designed to support

extended campaigns, but they can host one-shot scenarios with some sacrifice of detail.

THE ORDER OF THE HOURGLASS

The time is the 1920s. All over the world, daring adventurers are pushing back the boundaries of the explored world: Darkest Africa, lost cities in Central America, the polar caps. But in the centers of the world's great cities, small groups of people are exploring an entirely different frontier.

These “circles” have discovered a kind of mental time travel. Many, like our heroes, are simply curious about their ability, and about the past. Others are intent on using the power for conquest . . . and that may mean eliminating all the temporal competition.

This frame combines time traveling with Roaring Twenties pulp adventure. The adventurers can get into all the usual trouble visiting the past, but their real enemies, both past and present, are other time travelers.



The Coming of Gakuji

The ritual of the Time Circle was brought to the West by explorers who did not fully believe what they had discovered. Though they breathed the herb Gakuji, joined in the chant, and saw the visions of the past, they believed – because they had to believe – that they were only visions . . . hallucinations induced by drugs and hypnosis.

Dr. Albert Wesker Finch, physician and adventurer, brought Gakuji back to America, and began to grow the herb at his Long Island estate. His reputation already damaged by his exotic research, Dr. Finch dared not experiment . . . in public. He brought a group of friends together, and, under observation, recreated the Ritual. The members of the Circle went back to the Finch estate grounds before the house was built; they found an oak sapling and carved their initials into a root, then covered it with earth.

When they returned, Finch led the party to the oak, 200 years older. They exposed the roots. The initials were there. Finch's guests believed, and with a few like-minded Circles they founded the Order of the Hourglass. At first a mere club for time tourists, it slowly evolved into a mutual aid society. Some Circles seek to turn the Hourglass into a weapon against evil Time Circles and others who would misuse the past for vile ends, but for now the Order includes the idly curious and the grimly determined alike.

The Ritual

This is physical time travel through psionic means. No machine is used, and the actual bodies of the travelers are transported. The mechanism is more like a magical ritual than a scientific experiment.

The Circle begins by discussing the time they intend to visit, and doing study to fix the goal in their minds. This includes library research and visits to museums to examine artifacts of the period. Normally the members spend one to two weeks on this research. During this time, they usually acquire relevant and useful period items.

Finally the Circle assembles at some safe place, usually a country house or lodge belonging to one of the wealthier members. A brazier containing the herb Gakuji is lit, and its fumes fill the room. The Circle begins chanting, clearing their minds of everything but the ritual and the target. After about an hour, if all goes well, the present-day images fade. Some members see only darkness and silence; others have strange dreams. When this passes, they are in another time –

sometimes a few years from the target, never more.

Returning to the present does not require the herb, only that the members of the Circle concentrate together and be in reasonably close physical proximity. This takes about 15 minutes if everyone is conscious and close (in the same room, or equivalent); if the separation is wider, or some members are unconscious or dead, it takes more time.

All living Circle members must return together, conscious or not. Dead members may be abandoned, though their bodies return if they are in proximity to the living. Those with a proper Sense of Duty to their comrades must always try to bring their friends home, even though this can create legal problems in explaining the death.

The Ritual can only reach the past, not the future. This is probably due to the enormous difficulty of visualizing the future. (Think about the 1920s and 1930s images of *The World of Tomorrow*, as presented in pulp science fiction magazines and the New York World's Fair. On the other hand, a parallel-world science fiction adventure set in Captain Future's future, or Gernsback (p. 126) might be very entertaining.)

The travelers can bring only items appropriate to the period into the past – no Tommy guns in the Middle Ages – and anyone who can't get hold of proper clothing arrives nude. The more authentic the item, the likelier it is to make the trip successfully (p. 169). Time Circles often, given time and money, acquire a stock of period costumes and furnishings for just such purposes; They can easily claim that the outfits are for a costume party. They arrive with whatever clothing and equipment they had on when they left the present. Travelers can bring things back from the past, up to their Basic Lift.

The Ritual only moves one's body into the past; it does not enable the traveler to speak the language. Remember too that dialects and accents change, even if a language remains "the same" (see p. 175 for guidelines). There was more difference between a 1920 British accent and an Elizabethan one than between contemporary British and American

dialects – and in a time when few people traveled far from their birthplaces, odd dialects stood out even more prominently.

Equipment

As is usual in Twenties adventures, money makes the world go 'round. Either one adventurer is wealthy enough to bankroll his Circle's operations, or the PCs need an eccentric millionaire Patron who can do so.

Naturally, the GM does not have to allow the eccentric millionaire to buy anything he desires. Some things cannot be acquired for any price. Others require time, and flashing money only worsens certain legal entanglements.

Gakuji is extremely rare and expensive. A quantity sufficient for one time-trip (for up to a dozen people traveling together) costs \$5,000 in 1920 dollars (£1,000); this also assumes one has a source, normally an Oriental Herbalist of Mysterious Reputation. Finding such an herbalist requires a successful Streetwise roll in a city with a substantial Chinatown (New York, San Francisco, London's Limehouse; for someone actually *in* the Far East, there is a +2 bonus). Naturally, this sort of dealer takes only cash, preferably gold. This purchases the prepared herb, which can be grown from cuttings but not from seed. Cuttings might be acquired by an expedition into the wilds of Inner Tibet, or from a scientist-adventurer who had made such an expedition. (Perhaps a PC inherits the greenhouse from a relative who died under Mysterious Circumstances.) Even if the travelers can grow the herb themselves, gardening and preparation costs come to \$1,000 per dose – which is used up even if the ritual fails for other reasons.

There are other social complications of handling Gakuji. Though it is not illegal, the police may take an interest because of the sort of people who sell it. Police aside, there are the usual hazards of dealing with such people. And any transaction involving the herb may attract the attention of other, savory Time Circles.

Period clothes can be made to order in two to four weeks, for about \$40 and up (possibly way up, for a visit to the court of the Sun King). Period

weapons may be purchased as antiques for moderate prices (collector mania has not yet struck in the Jazz Age) – though it may take time for a suitable one to appear for sale. They may be custom-made. A wealthy man might have standing requests with an antiques dealer, or the dealer might be one of the PCs. If an aristocrat wants to claim that he has a houseful of old swords and pistols, that's fine (there really are such houses, especially in England and France), but the GM should charge the cost against His Lordship's starting Wealth.

VILLAINS

Not everyone wants to use the power of Gakuji for harmless experimentation and historical research. Some of the Circles intend to twist the past, to make themselves wealthy and powerful . . . possibly to control the world.

These groups are not linked together in a single conspiracy. (If they were, the heroes would hardly stand a chance.) They may grudgingly cooperate, especially to ensure their supplies of the essential herb, but these alliances are for convenience only, and end as soon as someone leaves his back vulnerable to the knife.

To fulfill their ends, the Circles establish bases at key points in history, "safe houses" where they may appear and change into appropriate clothing. For example, a Circle might, using transported gold, purchase a small country villa in Renaissance Italy, where they could appear, equip, and ride into a city in perfectly normal fashion, instead of suddenly appearing from nowhere. The servants at the villa would surely believe that their employers were sorcerers (what else could they think?) but there are always people who can be trusted, or paid, to keep secrets. From such a base, the Circle could attempt to influence the whole course of politics and economics in Italy, and from it Europe.

Usually Circles will try to influence subtly through the "normal" channels of advice and money, though the more changes they make to the past, the less useful their historical knowledge will be. The occasional convenient death may be arranged. (Isn't it suspicious that Napoleon's Chief of Staff fell from a balcony?) Sometimes they may

openly portray themselves as wizards; many stories have "explained" such people as Cagliostro and Saint-Germain as time travelers.

Time travel helps other villainous plans. It is much more convenient and elegant to kill an enemy in the past. If the body does not return, there is nothing for the police to investigate. Even if the victim's fellow Circle members do take him home, there will be no evidence the authorities can follow (or believe), and his friends will likely find themselves in great difficulties explaining his death.

Sometimes, however, direct action is called for. A returning Circle would be in poor condition to deal with a gang of armed killers in their Ritual room (though, on the other hand, the killers would have to be pretty hardened sorts not to be startled by their victims' appearing out of thin air). Anonymous tips to the police might result in a drug raid on the Circle's Gakuji supplier. Properly timed, some of the members might be arrested as well, leading to uncomfortable sessions explaining to Eliot Ness or Gideon of Scotland Yard why they wanted strange Oriental herbs in the first place.

*The time is out of joint; O cursed spite
That ever I was born to set it right.*

– William Shakespeare,
Hamlet, I:v:187-188

The official authorities don't always have to be the PCs' enemy, however. Exposing drug or underworld connections is a game two can play. And if one of the enemy Circles were to involve a master criminal such as Doctor Nikola or a resurrected Professor Moriarty (or one somehow saved from his death in the past . . .), the heroic Circle might find themselves with powerful allies – as they move in ever-higher circles of international intrigue.

Besides villainous Time Circles, the heroes of the Hourglass (p. 212) have discovered two other forces at work malevolently bending the past to their own cruel will.

The Architects

This evil group plans to rebuild society on cleaner, more sensible lines – a world where everyone knows their place, and it's under the Architects' heel. The Architects claim to be descended from the Invisible College of 17th-century England, which tried to unify science, philosophy, and the occult into a single, logical world view, but they have more in common with ruthless centralizers such as Richelieu and Peter the Great. They have agents, minions, and contacts in many of the Masonic orders of 18th- and 19th-century Europe, which (along with their historical foreknowledge and great wealth) let them subtly control police departments, banks, and even royal courts.

They travel back in time using the energy of ley lines, invisible lines of force connecting places of power and mystery on the Earth's surface. Their travel ritual must be performed at a ley nexus with a building on it, and can only take them back to the laying of its cornerstone. Like the Gakuji ritual, the ley network rejects anachronistic devices and technology. However, travelers can travel along the ley network to any other ley nexus

with a structure on it; a party of Architects could leave from Stonehenge and arrive at the Pyramids of Giza, although not before 1850 B.C. when Stonehenge was built. The building need not be intact; the ceremony will function in a ruin, a scrupulously maintained stately home, or an archaeological excavation. The Architects have wormed their way into any number of churches, archaeological societies, and so forth to ensure their access to cathedrals, castles, and historical sites.

The Fang Sing

The insidious Devil-Doctor, the Mad Mandarin, the most fearsome figure in the East, Fang Wu Shih leads a

Triad of devoted, fanatical followers drained from the dregs of Asia and recruited from its most elite temples and courts. Dr. Fang hates and resents the subservient role China plays in the world of the 1920s, when its corrupt Republic is nothing but a toy for rival warlords backed by greedy foreign devils who run opium and guns for their all-important profits. The Fang Sing want to destroy all Western civilization, leaving China supreme in history; nothing they can do to a Westerner is beyond the pale. (The Doctor has decreed that the Japanese are Westerners, at least after the cowardly Meiji rejected tradition in 1868.) They work primarily in the historical Far East, sabotaging and weakening Western interventions and building up their own Triad in the hills and in the twisty alleys of Nanking and Shanghai; occasionally a Fang Sing agent shows up in the West's past, working to spread moral decay and corruption.

Doctor Fang has developed psionic projection to astonishing heights; he can watch anyone, anywhere in the world with his vastly superior mind. Further, he has developed a method of psionic time travel to let his acolytes possess people in the past: the Ch'i Feng Technique. This only allows them to possess people within a mile of the traveler. A Fang Sing traveler in Canton, for example, can only possess someone in Canton in the past. The Hourglass has learned to detect those possessed in such fashion by gazing into their eyes – 10 seconds of eye contact (and a Perception roll) is enough to spot the “glimmer” of another mind behind the pupils. Obviously, people unaware of time travel consider such talk ludicrous – and if the Fang Sing agent in the past has mastered the mesmeric arts, gazing into his eyes may open the traveler up to worse dangers still!

One particularly noxious goal of Dr. Fang's involves the Black Death. He is attempting to breed new diseases capable of wiping out European nations wholesale; his agents sometimes travel back to epidemics to test his new formulas on unsuspecting victims. He also shows great interest in all forms of selective breeding; some of his acolytes set up farms in the distant past to raise and breed vermin. Generations later, his agents have

access to horrifying insects, monstrous serpents, and enormous arthropods of all varieties known to science – and some that science claims are impossible by the laws of God and nature!

THE GREAT WORK OF TIME

History can be changed, but it doesn't stay changed. If an evil Circle has replaced Lorenzo de' Medici as ruler of Renaissance Florence, their rule will last until they leave Florence to return to the present. At that point the people will rebel, or the Milanese will march in, or the Arno will flood, and after the fires and the riots the Medici will have connived their way back into power. If you kill someone's father, he probably won't be born, but if you kill his grandfather, who knows? And back more than two generations, family trees tend to re-graft themselves somehow.

Subtle changes, however, the kind that sneak under the wire or don't make it into the history books – those can propagate robustly. An Architect who sets up a secret society in Charles II's London can step ahead to George III's London and expect to find his conspiracy busily working along, and it will still recognize the passwords and

secret handshakes he set up a century earlier. He may not be able to replace Pitt as Prime Minister; but he will be able to bribe and suborn Pitt's clerks. If he has managed to get an Architect agent made Pitt's history tutor as a child, he might even be able to alter Pitt's attitude toward such pesky things as Parliamentary power. With enough of these subtle changes pointing in the right direction, the Architects hope that they can build up enough momentum to suddenly alter history all at once, like a river breaking its banks and carving out a new channel. Failing that, the Architects plan to set up enough covert power in every nation that they can seize control once some crisis – a stock market crash, or a global war, for example – destabilizes all current governments. The Fang Sing, and certain of the evil Time Circles, have similar hopes and aims.

In game terms, Simple changes (p. 105) can happen with little trouble. Anything that requires a lot of research to find out about – individual casualties at the Battle of Bunker Hill, the precise royal budget for 1713, whether Napoleon marched through a given small town on his way to Waterloo – is changeable. An Average or Complex change is the GM's call; an Amazing change should be impossible.

Hollow History

Or, possibly, history can be changed, but the present just doesn't know about it. Somewhere in the past, the Fang Sing have factories in Carthage churning out repeating crossbows for the final war with Rome. The Architects rule over Elizabethan England with machine guns and steamships, preparing to launch their invasion of France. Evil Time Circles command criminal empires in the pirate Caribbean, or launch Balkan wars to exterminate their rivals' fortresses. None of it shows up in the history books, though, until these islands of “hollow history” can be connected in a great chain – the Fang Sing have to wipe out Rome four or five times, and then start taking over the Renaissance on the back of Tamerlane's invaders. Whichever side reaches the present first will rule the world.

To maintain the flavor of the game, changing history should still be difficult, onerous work. Apply a universal -5 modifier to all outtime technological, political, and cultural change rolls from pp. B505-508 or pp. 105-106. (Travelers should make use of the Extra Time rules on p. B346 to mitigate this problem for both Concept and Proposal rolls.) Opposition to political and cultural change delays things by *quintuple* the time given on p. 105 – a delay of eight weeks becomes a delay of 40 weeks, for example.

Fortunately (or unfortunately) for himself, a time traveler has an extremely privileged past, with much higher inertia even than the rest of history. His enemies can't kill him as a baby, or convince his parents to divorce, or burn down his hometown, or draft him into the Army. This has its downside, too. A traveler who puts a shilling in an interest-bearing account in 1700 will come back to find no fortune waiting in the present. Instead, the bank went under in 1749, or a different claimant withdrew the cash a decade ago, or the government confiscated that account for tax delinquency. A traveler can bury treasure in the past and hope to dig it up in the present, but making history work to change his life – in either direction – is right out. Further, he can't interfere in his own timeline; no attempt at communication with his past or future self is possible.

CAMPAIGN ASSUMPTIONS

Parameters

Scale: The default scale is fairly prosaic, one of individual Time Circles competing for power, influence, and handsome Meissen dishware. However, it can escalate with the goals of the villains, especially if the Architects or the Fang Sing become major players.

Scope: Broad, intentionally so. The more exotic and wild the past, the better to lock into the “pulp Twenties” feel of the campaign world.

Boundaries: The past, essentially as depicted in a good 1920s history book, with lots of Dark Ages and Mysterious Civilizations outside the well-lit progression of Egypt, Greece, Rome, Merrie England, and Our Glorious Selves. Psionics are the default source of “magical powers,” although the GM can change the flavor by adding other supernatural elements if desired.

Paraphysics

See the *Great Work of Time* discussion on p. 215; history is Plastic Time with High (or even Very High) Resistance. There is no Linearity Effect; a month of time travel still

takes only one night's ritual. There is no Observer Effect in the default setting, although the GM could add one if he wants a more mechanistic flavor to the Circles' strategy. The GM will probably want to impose a Recency Effect of about 20 years or so, if only to remove the temptation to do dirt to an enemy Circle last week.

As written, this setting involves Paradox-Proof Time, although one interesting variation would be Temporal Snarls that induce heavy Fright Checks, FP costs, Will penalties, and even IQ damage for communication with yourself. Is the message worth delivering, knowing that you'll go insane? A player can then “restart” in the position of his “younger self” (with said hefty damage) and replay the crisis, or the GM and players can agree to handwave the shift and move forward from the repair.

Characters

Members of the Order of the Hourglass likely have Enemies (Evil Time Circles), Wealth, and Status.

Power Level: Any, although slightly pulpier heroes (around 175-200 points) fit the setting's feel. Characters without several languages are going to get themselves killed.

Niche: All PCs are assumed to be members of a Time Circle, friends or trusted associates of whichever PC it is that has the Gakuji source.

Freedom: One hopes that all PCs will comport themselves as ladies and gentlemen, whether in the present or the past. American heroes are expected to try their best, given the handicaps under which they labor.

Edges: The only edge the PCs have is time travel, although the GM may allow other psionic powers if he wishes. Their foes have at least the same edges the PCs possess; on average, evil Time Circles are PC-equivalent, the Architects have more wealth and power, and the Fang Sing have more psionics and deadly kung fu.

Time Travel Advantages

Gakuji (+40): Jumper (Time) (Warp Jump; Naked (Except for period items, -20%), -25%, Past Only, -20%, Preparation Required (1 hour), -50%, Psionic Teleportation, -10%, Research Required, -25%, Trigger (Gakuji,

occasional) -30%; -80%) [20]; Warp (Warp Jump; Naked (Except for period items, -20%) -25%, Preparation Required (1 hour), -50%, Psionic Teleportation, -10%, Research Required, -25%, Trigger (Gakuji, occasional), -30%; -80%) [20].

Architect Ley Travel (+40): Jumper (Time) (Warp Jump; Attunement Required (Structure) -20%, Past Only -20%, Preparation Required (1 minute), -20%, Psionic Teleportation, -10%, Special Portal (Ley nexus structure), -30%; -80%) [20]; Warp (Warp Jump; Attunement Required (structure) -20%, Preparation Required (1 minute), -20%, Psionic Teleportation, -10%, Special Portal (ley nexus structure), -30%; -80%) [20].

Ch'i Feng Technique (+40): Jumper (Time) (Linked +10%; Astral Projection, -10%, Only in Trance, -30%, Past Only, -20%, Preparation Required (10 minutes), -30%, Projection, -50%; -80%) [20] and Possession (Linked +10%; Astral Projection, -10%, Only in Trance, -30%, Preparation Required (10 minutes), -30%, Spiritual, -20%; -80%) [20].

With any of the above methods, a critical failure throws the traveler off course by 6d months either way.



Genre and Mode

This setting is a pulp conspiracy setting; in general, members of good Time Circles are good guys and can be trusted, but the bad guys might be anywhere else. Order of the Hourglass adventures can support the investigative mode well. Historical fidelity is less important than exciting scenery; at its base, Minoan Crete is a Thrilling Location, not a fully evoked society, unless the GM wants to explore culture clash more deeply than “I say, Sir Nigel, they don't seem to be wearing any, er, you know . . . camisoles.”

THE TIME CORPS

In the late 20th century, the physicist Alexei Arbatov proved the existence of “entropic charge,” an energy potential inherent in all matter. Entropic charge declines over time; presumably it was at its maximum at the time of the Big Bang, and will reach zero when the Universe reaches its maximum expansion and begins to collapse. Physicists are still arguing over what happens after that . . .

Arbatov postulated that entropic charge serves to “hold” matter stationary in time, and could be manipulated to move matter through time. But nothing was actually achieved for over 50 years, when Mariana Brill first demonstrated time displacement in the laboratory on the atomic particle level. The Arbatov-Brill Effect used huge amounts of energy, and was uncontrollable and unstable. Another 30 years went by before Nehemiah Eden used a new type of organic-plastic semiconductor to create Focal Referent devices, which made the stable displacement of objects practical – though the energy cost remains staggering.

The United Nations, by then a true world government, immediately moved to establish control over time travel. Under the general title of Project Timepiece, they constructed the first large-scale Arbatov-Brill-Eden Transmitter, and set up the Temporal Control Authority (TCA) to operate it.

Unfortunately, Timepiece is not alone in the past. Early in its existence, it encountered the operatives of an organization calling itself Stopwatch, who were attempting to alter history at key points. Stopwatch is the equivalent of the TCA from an alternate present, in which a gray bureaucracy rules humanity. (It calls itself United Mankind, but our world knows it as the Hive.)

Stopwatch agents are working throughout time to make certain that their future comes into existence. Project Timepiece has its own elite Time Corps to prevent this.

Agent Slang

Time Agents, close-knit and highly trained, have developed their own terminology. This slang adds color to a campaign. (GMs can also develop their own – or encourage their players to do so.)

The implanted Focal Referent is called the Latch, or the Jockstrap. The Mark II that non-agents wear has nicknames like Safety Belt.

Agents tend to deride non-agents, and (when the victims aren’t listening) call fitting the Mark II “tucking them in” or “putting on training wheels.” The Transmitter Stage may be called Home Plate, Ground Zero, or similar names; only a rookie calls it “the Transmitter” or “the Stage.”

Timesickness has many colorful nicknames; among the more printable are “Wells’ Revenge” and “The Crosstime Cookie Toss.”

We can’t print their nicknames for Stopwatch agents.

Time Corps Glossary

Absolute Now: the “real” present, from the point of view of someone at ABET headquarters.

blackout: an area of time which cannot be reached by the ABET transmitter. Some are temporary; some seem permanent.

clock out: travel in time.

crunch time: time in the Absolute Now passing at a faster rate than experienced time while on a mission.

divergence: warning of impending historical change (p. 225).

downtime: toward the past.

dropout: when all agents in a time period are thrown back to Base by a historical change.

Ear: a device for detecting items entering or leaving the local time.

Eddy Effect: the reason agents in the past may not get supplies or reinforcements exactly as expected. This has other names we can’t print, but JAFEE (pronounced “jaffy”) stands for Just Another (Freaking) Eddy Effect.

nak: short for “anachronism.” A person, place or thing belonging in a different time or timeline.

native: anyone who belongs in the current world or time.

Observer Effect: a phenomenon limiting the type of historical event that can be changed (p. 159).

slack time: time faster than normal relative to Absolute Now.

traveler: anyone who goes between times, dimensions, planes or alternate worlds. See also “nak.”

uptime: toward the future.

Who controls the past controls the future; who controls the present controls the past.

– George Orwell, 1984

MECHANICS

The Arbatov-Brill-Eden Transmitter (ABET) is at the center of a town-sized complex in the Canadian wilderness. While the Transmitter Stage is just a plain metal disc five yards in diameter, its support consists of ranks of cryogenic supercomputers and one of the largest power-generating stations on Earth; each pound of mass sent into the past requires some \$10,000 worth of electricity. The rest of the TCA complex provides housing, research, and training facilities for approximately 600 Time Agents and several thousand support personnel.

Once displaced into the past, an object has “negative temporal potential”; Arbatov’s entropic energy constantly tries to return it to the present. Displaced objects must always be inside the field of a Focal Referent device, or they return to the Transmitter Stage. (There is one very important exception to this: the Divergence Effect, described on p. 225.)

The ABET can send a load of 1,200 lbs. to any period for which a window (see below) can be found – distance into the past does not matter.

The ABET can reach any physical location on Earth; agents do not only travel in time, but also in space. (It does not seem able to hit off-Earth points accurately, due to the lack of a gravitational frame of reference.) The first agents sent to a given site have a 1 in 6 chance of a small coordinate error – not fatal, but often interesting.

Target Periods and Blackouts

Because of the Arbatov Barrier, an effect analogous to the “potential

barrier” around the atomic nucleus, nothing above the atomic level can be sent back less than 130 years. For an Absolute Now of 2100 – a good starting place for the campaign – this means that no time after 1970 can be reached.

Even before 1970, the ABET cannot send agents to any chosen period in time. It is limited to “windows” – periods 245 days, 496.5 seconds apart. These window periods move as the Absolute Now does. If June 7, 1832 is a “window” right now, then June 14 will be a “window” next week. These “windows” have no width at all. You can send to one specific instant in June 7, 1832 . . . or you can send to another instant, some eight months earlier or eight months later . . . and so on. If you want to get to June 14, you will have to wait a week . . . either in the present, or in the past.

Thus, agents sent into the past must usually wait several months to get to a desired historical event – but sometimes they have no choice but to land almost on top of it, and act with little preparation.

For game purposes, it is easiest to think of the present as “dragging” a string of windows through time. These are the only points to which a time traveler can go. They are about eight months apart. So if you can hit January 1700 right now, you can also hit September 1700, and May 1701, and so on – assuming no blackouts intervene. In practice, of course, the GM can put a window whenever he wants one by deciding what date the Absolute Now is at.

Certain periods, though, are blacked out and unavailable. Some of these are due to successful Stopwatch

interventions (see below). Others are mysteries. The blackout from 25 B.C. to 82 A.D. is especially irritating to historians. Blackout periods have been known to move and change, too. (The GM can set blackout periods for any time he finds convenient.)

When a window moves into a blackout, nothing can be sent through it, or emerge from it . . . but the window will re-emerge from the blackout on schedule. Agents with downtime when a blackout begins cannot return home until it is over, and sometimes have odd memory lapses.

Just sending something back in time creates a temporary blackout. When something is sent to a window, that window closes for the next 3d×100 hours of past time (which is an average of a month and a half). The actual time it will remain closed cannot be predicted, but the ABET can detect the window opening again.

Since linearity is not conserved in this scenario – the Absolute Now does not necessarily move at the same “speed” as the past, with respect to an observer in the past – someone who was sent through a window will not always be “on” that window with respect to Control. Sometimes, but not always! In general, the more a visitor meddles with the past, the likelier he is to set up an “eddy” which will reduce the precision with which Control can send him reinforcements or supplies (see below).

Returning

Agents may return at any time (unless Divergence is occurring; see p. 225). They return to whatever moment the Absolute Now has reached. The Linearity Principle (p. 156) does not always hold true. The more changes the agents make, the more likely it is that time *will* be linear, as their personal duration “fills up” any accumulated slack in the timeline.

Anything which returns to the future reappears on the ABET stage. The TCA keeps the stage clear at all times except while actually transmitting something, and takes returnees off the stage immediately. (Theoretically, anything returning to a fully occupied stage would simply be displaced in a random direction, to appear in an open area, but nobody wants to take chances.)

Eddies and Uncertainty

Agents who meddle with the past, or who are in the presence of Stopwatch agents who meddle with the past, find that Control can’t hit their time *exactly* with reinforcements, supply drops and so on. The “window” has become uncertain. This uncertainty is from 1d to 10d hours; the GM judges the current level of historical change on a scale from one to 10, and rolls that many dice.

The message or reinforcement usually arrives after it was expected. On any roll containing more than two 6s, the shipment arrives *before* it was expected. If the shipment was in response to a request from the past, it will *never* arrive before it was requested!

The Absolute Now

The Absolute Now – the date to which agents return when they clock back from the past – starts at the date on which they leave ABET, determined by the GM. Changes are partially determined by the PCs' actions. For instance, if they send a note to Control, requesting a machine that takes three months to build, then the Absolute Now advances by three months, even if the agents get their machine tomorrow relative to their time.

The GM can also advance the Absolute Now arbitrarily while the agents are in past time. This means that when they clock forward, they will come back later than the time they left. As a general rule, future time passes at only 10% of observed time if the agents do nothing (this allows for some great vacations). Minor variations let it flow at 30% of past time speed; major ones at 60%; huge ones at 100%. This can vary by 4d% in either direction, though never to less than 0%. The GM can always declare "A month has passed at Control with no report from you. They get nervous and send you a message."

The existence of an Absolute Now prevents one sticky sort of paradox. Agents can meet an agent from "their future" – but they cannot carry information back to the time they left from. They will return to the same Absolute Now that the later agent came from.

Example: Ng Chan clocked out on January 1, 2100. He traveled 200 years downtime to January 1900. He remains there, observing, for 100 days. Normally he'd assume that only 10 days Absolute had passed (he's not taking any actions – just observing). One evening, though, Al Morris, a fellow agent, contacts him. Al tells Ng that he clocked out in July 1, 2100. Ng now knows that the Absolute Now has advanced seven months – and he'll probably try to figure out why! No matter what the explanation, Ng will now snap back to July 1 or later – he has "lost" the intervening seven months (this is known as "crunch time"; see the box below). Biologically, Ng would have only aged three months (the length of time he spent in 1900).

The clock in San Dimas is always ticking.

*– Rufus, Bill and Ted's
Excellent Adventure*

It is possible that the "real" absolute now is 500 years from now, and that Timepiece agents are being watched by the agents of some future time corps – but that would be a different campaign, and would require some explanation of why Timepiece agents return to their own time. In this frame, our heroes are at the real Now, the farthest point that eternity has advanced. They will not see agents from the far future. If they see agents from a near future, that future becomes their present when they return.

The Focal Referent

A Focal Referent (FR) is the device that keeps a transmitted object in the past. Time Agents have a Mark III Focal Referent implanted in the chest and abdomen. It is powered by myoelectricity from the user's body, and is not detectable by surface examination. The organic plastic does not appear on an X-ray, though a careful search with ultrasonic equipment (available only after the late 1960s, and therefore not much of a risk) or surgical invasion might reveal it.

The Mark III monitors the wearer's heart and brainwaves. If he is badly

wounded, the device switches off, and the agent returns to the transmitter stage, where an emergency medical team is constantly standing by. With TL10 medical care, "if he's breathing, he's cured." The only thing that Timepiece's medical staff can't deal with is severe head injury. If an agent pops back with most of his head missing, he's dead. Even so, if the player likes, a clone of the agent can be created from a braintape made before the mission!

To return voluntarily, at the conclusion of a mission or before, the agent uses his tongue to activate two switches built into his teeth (two, rather than one, to avoid accidents). Even so, there is a small chance (a roll of 5 or less on 3d) that any blow that gets past the head's DR will pop the agent back to his home time. (The GM may ignore this result if it interferes with the game, but players will usually be amused; it's better than dying.)

Non-agents sent into the past usually wear a Mark II FR as a belt or chest strap (with a heart sensor, which functions like the life sensors on the Mark III). It weighs 1 lb. and has DR 3 and HT 5.

Crunch Time and Slack Time

When the Absolute Now advances at a faster rate than the personal time of a traveler, this is known as crunch time. In the example above, Ng might complain that he was "crunched seven months, and missed the basketball playoffs."

On the other hand, if everything goes well, an Agent can spend longer downtime than the Absolute Now passes. This is known as "slack time."

Crunch time and slack time can introduce some interesting effects, especially regarding calendar age vs. biological age. For instance, someone with a lot of slack time might have a calendar age of 20 years, but a biological age of 50+. Someone who uses slack to his own benefit (meeting deadlines, rising in rank, etc.) is known as a "slackmaster."

Conversely, an Agent with a great deal of crunched time might appear to be 25 years old – but have actually been born several *hundred* years ago (if the Absolute Now had advanced that far since the campaign started)!

When an agent returns by surprise or without taking precautions after a very long visit to the past, he may take actual injury because some of his molecules stay in the past!

Both the Mark II and III Focal Referents “hold” the wearer’s clothing and personal equipment to a range of about five yards. Beyond this range, the gear will snap back. Equipment can be fitted with a Mark I FR, about the size of a credit card (DR 2, HT 3). Agents usually carry a spare Mark I in case they have to temporarily store their gear. Placed in a closet or chest of drawers, for instance, the Mark I would stabilize everything within two yards. Weapons are usually not equipped with their own circuits – very effective insurance against their falling into the wrong hands.

Any “home-time” item that leaves an FR field snaps back to the ABET stage. This includes shed blood, sweat, fingernail clippings, and so forth – which is why agents take a strong laxative a few hours before leaving. The return of random trash is messy and inconvenient when the Stage is occupied, but rarely dangerous. When necessary, pressure sprayers sweep the Stage clear. (The backup system is a couple of people with mops . . .)

Exception: An item in a blacked-out period will not snap back to the future, even if it loses its Focal Referent, until the blackout ends.

Any FR field will hold a “future” object; if one agent hands a stunner to another, it the second agent’s field holds it when the first agent walks away. But Stopwatch FR fields will not hold an item from the Timepiece future, and vice versa.

The Transference Effect

The food that a traveler consumes in the past, once digested and assimilated, becomes part of the traveler and returns when the traveler does; so does the air in his lungs. It appears that when atoms from the future

chemically bond with atoms from the past, the Arbatov charge “leaks” via the electrons. If a future object interacts chemically with past materials inside a Focal Referent field, it gradually leaks its “future” charge. Similarly, “past” atoms can be assimilated into objects from the future, though they tend to acquire a “future” charge.

Since most of the human body is water, an agent can avoid any significant effects by drinking a great deal of future water for at least a week before returning. This replaces the system’s “past” water and seems to replenish the charge on the body’s other molecules.

But when an agent returns by surprise or without taking precautions after a very long visit to the past, he may take actual injury because some of his molecules stay in the past! Roll 1d-2 injury for each full year the agent stayed in the past, or 1d-3 if he lived as much as possible on rations brought from the future. (But note that since the agent returns to the ABET stage, where some of the world’s best medical care is available, he’s usually in little danger unless he’s dead when he arrives.)

Still, there are spooky side effects. When an agent leaves some of himself behind, those who remain see a greasy, bloody mist in the shape of a man – the left-behind molecules. And there have been cases, not thoroughly explained, where long-term agents vanished from the past and did not return to the future. Were their molecules dispersed throughout history, or did they arrive, intact, partway to the future?

A much commoner painful side effect occurs when any agent returns; a major fraction of the material in the digestive tract remains in the past.

This sudden vacuum in the gut is painful, and costs 1d FP.

There *are* good side effects of transference. After someone has been in the past for about a month (8d days, different for each traveler), their cut hair, fingernails, skin flakes, etc., no longer snap back to the present once removed, eliminating a telltale sign of Agent-ness. Living matter like blood cells snap back; hair and fingernails on a living body snap back when the person does (though they may get shorter).

Bringing Past Items Forward

In general, it can’t be done. Past-time items carried by returning agents, placed within items set to return, etc., etc., simply stay in their own time. Agents wishing to send inanimate items “forward” must bury them in time capsules.

With patience, the transference effect can be used to bring a living being forward. A pair of *Eohippus*, captured in the prehistoric era and carefully fed on modern food and water for five years, returned to the ABET stage with no ill effects; they have already produced a colt.

TIME AGENTS

Timepiece agent characters begin with a base of 180 points (or more, if the campaign is to be cinematic). Certain advantages and skills representing agent training are mandatory, and certain disadvantages prohibited. (The GM may want to use the Infinity Patrol templates on pp. 186-188 as a starting point for constructing Timepiece Agents.)

Timepiece recruits must all be in first-rate physical and mental health. Sending a hemophiliac into the Middle Ages would amount to murder! Time agents can have no physical disadvantages; mental disadvantages are allowed only if, in the GM’s opinion, they would not directly impede the agent’s work. Impulsiveness or Overconfidence would be allowable; Pyromania or Sadism would not. Pacifism could be a plus, although Total Nonviolence is likely too much of a handicap in getting the job done. Agents do not have Dependents, and

the agency does not normally send non-agents into the past. (See the disadvantage lists in the Patrol templates, or the Alternate Outcomes troopers on p. 189.)

The GM should play the role of recruiting officer when the players ask for disadvantage points. Timepiece might accept a reformed alcoholic, if he was very talented – a linguistic genius, say. Many disadvantages that wouldn't disqualify a character would also never affect him in play, and therefore wouldn't be worth any points in the first place.

Agents have a -20-point Duty to Timepiece (Constant; Extremely Hazardous). This includes an obligation not to kill if any other option is available. It is not a prohibition on killing, but the GM should reward characters who consider the options and find alternatives, and withhold points from those who kill needlessly.

Naturally, Timepiece can provide training in virtually any skill agents might need, from fencing to disarming nuclear weapons. Top Field Agents are generalists rather than specialists. But Timepiece also has many agents, including combat specialists, who are relatively one-dimensional. They are usually used either as part of teams, or for very brief missions – i.e., they're usually NPCs. These include the combat specialists, or “grunts,” Timepiece uses when direct confrontations are inevitable.

Timepiece is worth no points as a Patron, because usually the time when

an agent is in most need of help is the moment when Timepiece can't do anything.

Field Agents

About 600 active Field Agents work out of the Canadian base, plus another 100 retired agents (see below). Therefore, while there is a good chance that any agent will know any other active-duty agent, nobody can recognize all his fellow agents by sight. There are recognition codes . . . but nothing is foolproof.

Local Agents

Timepiece maintains a classified number of Local Agents in dozens of past times. These agents often spend years in place and develop firm identities in the past. Of course, Stopwatch does the same thing.

Local Agents can escape to Base at any time just by triggering their FR devices. But they can return to a specific time only when a “window” crosses it.

Local Agents may receive instructions from Timepiece at any time, but with rather weird constraints. At any given Absolute Now, communication is possible only with a string of points in history, eight months apart, with various gaps. So once an agent has been in place for eight months, you can almost always communicate with him – but not necessarily at the most convenient time. You can't depend on telling him “Do this now!” You may

have to tell him “Do this in six months . . .”

Retired Agents

Retired agents often stay with the service as instructors and advisors, and can return to the field in a pinch. Many of them also volunteer as Local Agents in the past, becoming permanent observers for the rest of their lives. Currently, Base has about 100 retired agents on its staff.

THE ENEMY

The Hive occupies an “alternate present.” It is impossible to travel between the Hive's present and that of Timepiece. However, both alternate presents can send agents into their common past. The Hive is a world in which everyone works for the government – or for some part of a web of overlapping governments that starts at the level of the huge, gray apartment blocks, and goes all the way to the bloated descendant of the U.N. All corporations have been nationalized (or all governments have been bought out by the corporations – it's hard to tell).

It is a polluted, overpopulated, desperately resource-poor world. But its civilized portions are very regimented and orderly. When a Hive agent visits the past, he is likely to see not freedom and wealth, but a disgustingly undisciplined display of waste. But there are exceptions; some Hive agents revel in the past and don't want to leave.



Time Agent Equipment

Agents have access to any equipment they need, without regard for budgets, at TL10 . . . within the limitations of the 1,200-pound maximum transfer. Of course, the agents' superiors (that is, the GM) may veto any request that seems unreasonable. The GM, playing the supervising agents, decides which items may have built-in FRs (so they can stay on the past on their own) and which do not have FRs (so they will snap back if dropped). See the Patrol equipment on pp. 22-27 for some similar gear.

Weapons

There are two standard weapons, which *never* have built-in FRs. Occasionally a past-timer will manage to get hold of one which is "stuck" in the past due to divergence, but it always vanishes as soon as the Divergence Effect ends.

The Stunner is a sonic stunner in the shape of a short metal wand. It can be tuned for either tight-beam or area effect. (Use the CF/3 statistics on p. 200).

The Stinger is a gas-operated pistol that fires tranquilizer darts. It may be camouflaged to look like an antique weapon (flintlock, Colt .45, etc.) and fitted with powder charges to make the appropriate flash and bang, or disguised as a cane, prayer book, or other item, in which case it operates nearly silently. The darts contain a plastic FR circuit, which is charged as they spin through the barrel rifling: a few seconds after firing (more than enough time to reach the target) the charge dissipates and the dart vanishes, leaving only a small puncture wound like an insect bite. The Super Stinger is a rifle version of the Stinger with telescopic sight; if not disguised as an antique weapon, it folds to fit in a small shoulder bag. (Use the Needle statistics on p. 200; the Super Stinger has four times the range and six times the weight.)

Costumes and Money

The Costuming division can provide copies of any period dress, with improvements such as Kevlar lining for leather armor. Some items, such as suits of plate armor, may have Focal Referents to keep them from snapping home when separated from the wearer.

Traveling money is a problem neither of the time agencies has ever fully solved. Precious metals, or even

gemstones, are cheap compared to the cost of transmission, but they are difficult to stabilize. Where commerce is well developed, Research Division can provide instructions for profitable, inconspicuous investments. They have also manufactured large coins and articles of jewelry containing small FR circuits, although these lose their charge and snap back in a few days, giving rise to stories of magicians' gold that dissolves after the sorcerer departs . . .

Other Gadgets

The effects of Focal Referents are described on p. 219.

The *Notebook* is a portable audiovisual recorder/player, about the size of an average hardcover book. It is used to record the course of a mission, though if fitted with a Focal Referent it can be used as a snooping device. It records on laser discs that can be ejected and used to send messages to the present (see also next entry). Time Agents are notorious for using the recorder for all sorts of purposes *except* keeping an accurate record of their activities . . .

Notecards are small sheets of plastic with a faint radioactive tracer. Agents in the field can write messages on a card and leave it behind; once out of range of the agent's FR, it snaps back to the ABET stage, where its tracer sets off a warning to pick up the note. The special cards are rarely necessary, of course. *Anything* that appears on the stage will be examined immediately. But if a note appears on the stage at the same time that several wounded agents snap back, the special plastic cards are likelier to survive and be noticed! Notecards that do not disappear provide a warning of Divergence Effect.

The *T-Meter* is a device for measuring Arbatov energy; it can precisely identify the moment in time at which the travelers have arrived. (If the GM would rather the players not know this, the T-Meter may be made unreliable, or not used at all.)

Homemade Equipment

If the agents are going to be in place for a *long* time, they can bring tools and equipment from home and *build* some fairly high-tech equipment. If they really need an Uzi, they can have one made from local materials.

Hive agents may be from any industrialized part of the world – North America, Europe (including European Russia), eastern China and Japan, Australia, and Argentina. The poorer areas have simply collapsed in famine and disease, and have been abandoned. Where they held valuable resources, as in South Africa, enclaves from the Hive exist to strip them dry.

Why are there only two competing timelines? Neither side knows. Temporal physics seems to be governed by a strange attractor – a mathematical function that boils down almost all probabilities into two. Consider: When you spin a coin, it is random, a ball of light moving about the table. But when it stops, no matter where it falls, it will almost always end

in one of two states: heads or tails. (But it *might* land on its edge, or fall off the table . . . just as agents have occasionally reported observers from potential futures other than that of the Hive.)

The timeline seems to be spinning like a coin. Whatever happens in the past seems to lead almost inevitably to

either the Timepiece world or the world of the Hive.

And here the coin analogy breaks down, because now – whatever “now” means – both the Timepiece world and that of the Hive seem to exist. They are not separate timelines . . . at least, nobody can travel between them. They are different aspects of the same timeline, with almost equal probability.

Could enemy action change history enough to extinguish one side entirely? Mathematics suggests it can’t . . . but if a timeline becomes unlikely enough, it will no longer be able to travel in time. And that, by itself, is worth fighting for! Timepiece agents not only oppose Stopwatch’s changes, but try to create their own, to make history favor their world.

Timepiece has only a general idea what events favor Stopwatch, and what events favor themselves. The final decision which determines which way the coin falls must lie in the 130 years which the ABET can’t see or visit. Something during that period was important enough to reduce all preceding history into one simple choice.

All the maneuvering of both sides is simply directed at influencing that one decision, without knowing just what it is. But from probability readings after each known change, Timepiece knows about what to

expect. In general, it seems that historical events favoring freedom and personal liberty favor its world, and those favoring control (whether dictatorship or just bureaucracy) favor the Hive. The form of government doesn’t seem important: corporate control is just as bad (for Timepiece) as rule by king, president or Mafia don. Wars in themselves may be good or bad, but they’re more often bad because war, or the fear of war, encourages stricter controls.

Stopwatch Agents

The agents of the alternate-world Stopwatch organization are every bit as well trained and equipped as the PCs. Most of them are motivated by a personal lust for advancement; the world of the Hive is comfortable only for those on top. Furthermore, they have been convinced that the other timeline must be extinguished if theirs is to survive, so their dedication is fanatical.

Attempts to bring Stopwatch agents back don’t work. Timepiece agents have been captured by Stopwatch and taken away, but interrogation of prisoners reveals that none have ever made it back “home.” Their fellow Timepiece operatives have never seen them, either – nobody knows where they went!

The GM should occasionally force the two sides to make a temporary truce and cooperate, either to save all their lives from the angry locals, or to avoid a change so massive that it might make both worlds less probable.

Stopwatch agents are generally more ruthless than Timepiece agents. They have more to gain and more to lose – though as just mentioned, truces are possible. And while Stopwatch does not specifically train its agents against killing as Timepiece does, they are just as subject to the effects of changing history, and have the same need for caution. They rarely kill someone unless they know he’s from Timepiece. And even so, they can often make the Observer Effect work for them by leaving a foe alive. A favorite Stopwatch tactic – and some Timepiece agents use it, too – is to slit a bound foe’s wrists. The blood loss triggers his FR and sends him back home, where he is patched up to tell his story. (If the victim wasn’t really from the future, of course, he simply dies.)

Stopwatch cannot be taken as a specific Enemy, because it’s built into the campaign as part of the overall risk that agents take, and does not seem to target specific Timepiece agents – or to have any way of doing so if it wanted to.

Other Realities and Doubled Agents

The only documented “alternate present” is that of the Hive and Stopwatch; however, Agents have reported contacts with individuals who seem to be Time Agents from other realities, some of them quite bizarre.

The other troublesome effect involves the people of the Hive’s universe. Are they the same in both worlds? That is, do Timepiece agents have duplicates in Stopwatch’s world, or are they entirely different people? If they do coexist, one would expect that at least some of the people who are recruited as Time Agents in one world would also be employed by their foe. Again, agents have reported meeting their apparent doubles – but nothing has been documented.

Visitors From the Future

Control has never been blessed (or cursed) with visitors from its own future. The explanation for this is purely theoretical.

It starts with the idea that Control exists in the true “Absolute Now.” There is no future yet, just unformed possibilities. (There is no mathematical proof of this, though.)

Even though the current Control exists in the Absolute Now, it might be able to send agents to the Control of eight months ago. But the Arbatov Barrier prevents this by imposing a minimum time-jump distance of 130 years.

Still, it is possible that 130 years from now, the Control of that time will be able to send agents to the Control of the “present.” But there are theoretical reasons to think that the existence of an ABET transmitter is one of the things that can create a “blackout” period. If this is true, then a time that is the source of time travelers can never be the *destination* of time travelers.

It is possible that some of the unexplained visitors to the past, occasionally reported by Timepiece agents, are really from Control’s future. But if they are, they haven’t admitted it . . . or anything else!

DETECTING INTERVENTIONS

Penetration Detection

When a penetration is made from Absolute Now in one timeline, the ABET on the other timeline can pick it up. Thus, it is meaningful to say, "Stopwatch penetrated 1850 A.D. about 20 minutes ago."

However, there are lots of false alarms. This may mean that there is time travel going on that Timepiece doesn't know about, or that they don't understand the system, or both. Over 70% of the time, a team sent back to check a penetration detection finds nothing.

Problem Reports

Whenever possible, Local Agents monitor important historical events. Sometimes they observe a problem directly (an agent in Moscow sees the Germans marching in). Sometimes they see its effects afterward (an agent in Berlin receives word that Moscow has fallen and Stalin is a prisoner). In either case, the agent's duty is to return to Control *immediately* with a full report. If several agents are present, one returns. The others wait to be contacted. Usually the contact comes within minutes after the messenger leaves . . . even if it is from agents who have been on the scene for months.

When a Local Agent becomes aware of a problem, the one thing he must *not* do is observe too much! This seems like a paradox – in most wars, information is vital. But in crosstime conflict, often the more you know the less you can do.

Object Size

Fingernail, button, etc.

Notecard, dart

Bullet

1/2 pound

1 pound

10 pounds

100 pounds

1,000 pounds

1,200 pounds (maximum ABET send load)

Ear Detection Range

5 yards

10 yards

20 yards

30 yards

40 yards

50 yards

60 yards

70 yards

71 yards

The Observer Effect vs. Changing History

New agents often ask, "How can history be changed at all, if the Observer Effect really works? After all, everything important about history has been recorded."

The answer – for practical purposes, anyway – has to do with *direct* vs. *indirect* action. A directly observed event has a great amount of inertia; it is not likely to change because of direct action. *Indirect* action, however, which does not itself contradict anything observed, can build up a "momentum of events" that can sweep away observed actions. But this momentum can take months or years to build!

Thus, a time traveler *can* take actions that will eventually change observed history. This can sometimes sweep away whole sections of known history, with all their observations . . . and with all the Local Agents of both sides. And if, as often happens, the change is reversed, the "old" history will be back in place, along with its agents. But observations made during that period will no longer be fully reliable; there is once again scope for free action by Time Agents.

Agents can detect enemy action in the past through the Eden-Arbatov Energy Reflector – the EAER, or "Ear." This detects the ripple of energy created when a mass enters or leaves "current" time nearby. The larger the mass, the farther away it can be spotted by the Ear. Agents wear small Ears; they are built into the skull, and translate the energy into sound to let the agent "hear" something entering or leaving. Thus, agents can often

detect each other by listening! Sending a note at the wrong time, or carelessly dropping something, can be a fatal giveaway.

An agent can tell by the sound whether something is coming or going, the direction, the general size, and the approximate distance. The distance something can be "heard" depends on its mass, and increases according to a reverse power curve; the maximum theoretical distance at which any ripple can be picked up is less than 150 yards. The table above shows the range at which typical masses can be detected coming or going.

Larger Ears are available (20 lbs.). These have no more detection range, but read out the exact mass and distance of each penetration, and can log all penetrations for later examination . . . which is useful, because everybody sleeps from time to time.



Gross Changes: A Bad Idea

“Why don’t we just nuke Hitler?” Every new Timepiece agent asks that question, or something like it. Why can’t we just send a whole army of Time Agents, armed to the teeth, to forcibly put history on the kind of track we want?

Because it doesn’t work, that’s why.

Timepiece and Stopwatch don’t play a subtle game because they want to. They’re subtle because they have no choice. Both agencies have learned the hard way that noisy, flashy maneuvers don’t benefit anyone.

In the early days of the Time War, Stopwatch tried several blatant attacks on the early days of American history, from machine-gunning Washington’s troops to planting a fuel-air explosive device on Wall Street. In every case, the result was to pop all agents of both sides out of the affected time, and to reduce the Absolute Now probabilities of both sides’ coming into existence.

Apparently if the past-timers realize, as a group, that they’re being invaded, that tends to throw history along very different lines. Nobody knows what those lines might be, and nobody really wants to find out.

So, agents . . . be happy with your plotting and your careful maneuvers in the background of history, and forget about nuking Hitler. Unless, of course, you can make it look like an *accident* . . .

Divergence and Dropout

If scheduled reports fail to come back from a given time, it may mean that the agents have been cut off by the Divergence Effect (see below). Of course, if it is divergence, no reinforcements can be sent directly to the time in question.

Sometimes the first warning Control has of a change is when it finds out that Timepiece has lost the round . . . by the unexpected appearance of all its agents and equipment for a particular time period.

The blackout of that period remains in effect, and often spreads. History has been changed.

CHANGING HISTORY

History can be changed. In fact, it can be changed over and over.

Entropic energy allows an absolute sequence of events to be imposed on changes made in past time. Suppose that in 2001, Stopwatch agents launch a time-attack against Wellington at Waterloo. They are partially successful, and history changes. So in 2002, it

is true that Napoleon won and the French Empire survived another 13 years. But in late 2003, Timepiece launches a counter-effort, which restores history to its original track. Thus, the history books of 2003 are very much like those of 2001.

When one side or the other changes history – accidentally or on purpose – the effect is to change the *frequency* of the entropic energy associated with each possible future. In other words, the *probability* of each future is changed.

Instruments at Control can detect these probability fluctuations. A probability change takes the form of a curve along a chart of history. Some changes seem to “damp out” immediately. Others have an avalanche effect . . . but even these seem to damp out in the 130-year period that the ABET can’t reach.

The instruments at Control can measure the probability of their own existence at Absolute Now. This is used to keep overall score in the campaign; see *The Final Outcome*, p. 226.

Control cannot measure the local probability of success in some contested past time, but the agents in

that time have two rough-and-ready indicators of success.

The Divergence Effect

When the local probability of Timepiece’s coming into existence drops below a certain point, travel between that time and the Absolute Now is no longer possible . . . for Timepiece agents! Stopwatch agents are unaffected. The reverse is true for Stopwatch.

An agent can check this at any time by tossing a bit of future material outside his FR field. If it vanishes, things are not going too badly. (On the other hand, a Stopwatch Ear might hear it go, so even good news might be bad news.) If it fails to vanish, the mission is in jeopardy. Often, the first that an agent knows of the failure-to-vanish problem is when someone tries to return home, and fails . . . or when a hurt buddy’s body doesn’t vanish, but stays right there and bleeds.

When one side gains a strong advantage, the other is “stuck” in the past, with possibly deadly results for severely injured agents who can’t get home to high-tech medicine. Agents call this “divergence loss.” It is not final: probability can flip back and forth more than once during a mission, until one side is completely defeated – or, as occasionally happens, the probability balance is restored, and both sides agree to back off.

When this Divergence Effect occurs, the time period is blacked out from Control’s point of view. Control cannot send anything to the closest “window” beforehand, and sometimes for several “windows” afterward.

Dropout

When the local probability of Timepiece’s coming into existence drops below a final threshold, all Timepiece FRs in that period cease to function, and all surviving agents and equipment snap back to the Stage in failure. The reverse is true, of course, for Stopwatch. There is often no doubt when you “win” an encounter; your foes vanish! The losing side can then send no agents into that period or the time immediately following, giving the winners a chance to consolidate their gains.

In game terms, if the GM decides that Stopwatch is about to win, he cuts off communication between the Timepiece agents and their base. And if he decides that the agents have failed and Stopwatch has won that encounter, he snaps everyone and everything back home.

Long-Term Effects

Over a term of months or years, as the Absolute Now measures time, the local probabilities tend to even out. The more massive the change, the longer they take . . . but eventually most of that period, with its changed history, will be accessible once again. Usually, though, one critical area remains “blacked out” and unavailable for direct ABET transfer forever.

Visiting Changed History

When history is changed, the GM must decide how far-reaching the change was. The sooner the change damped out, the less history the GM must rewrite or avoid!

Agents visiting changed history will be familiar with the new history. After all, this is history now; they read about it in their history books. Thus, the GM should start any such visit with a briefing to the players. Often the new history will be because of a Stopwatch intervention, and the players’ mission will be to make a change that – they hope – will push history back toward a favorable track. The inertia of time will help them in this. (The GM may also decree that some part of “real” history is a Stopwatch plot, and send the party back to change historical reality.)

Remembering “Original” History

Only those individuals with Temporal Inertia (p. B93) can remember events of an “original” history, including missions (their own or others’) to that period. Usually, the Time Corps’ first warning of a change comes from its agents or employees with Temporal Inertia. (Timepiece hires individuals with Eidetic Memory and Temporal Inertia, even if they have no other qualifications, specifically as “rememberers.”)

Record-Keeping and the Observer Effect

Timepiece has two very different kinds of record-keeping. It keeps extensive records about the detailed course of history, as recorded by historians and as observed by agents in “unthreatened” periods. Timepiece has the greatest historical library in the world . . . fully computerized, of course, but many of the original materials can be examined. (+2 to any Research roll on a historical subject!)

But Timepiece does *not* keep detailed records of the observations and actions of its own agents, once a specific crisis has passed. Even the greatest success leaves only a numerical rating in the agent’s record, along with a note that he has successful experience in that period. Minor failures, likewise, leave only ratings. Agents rarely survive major failures.

The reason, of course, is to attempt to outsmart the Observer Effect. The less detail is recorded about some things, the easier it is to get around them. On the other hand, if you know nothing about what either your agents or the enemy are doing, how can you proceed? It’s a problem that makes the lives of Time Agents entirely too interesting.

After a change, the Time Corps immediately debriefs its rememberers and produces a file of alternate history. This can be used in an attempt to plan actions that might undo a change.

The Final Outcome

If one side loses enough successive contests, then its probability becomes low enough that it cannot travel in time reliably, if at all. It seems unlikely that any probability can be completely erased . . . but who would want to take the chance?

In game terms, the GM should start with the relative probabilities of Timepiece and Stopwatch at 49% each. (The remaining 2% is made up of a huge number of low-probability futures.) Any successful intervention by one side adds 2d% to its own probability, and subtracts 2d% (not necessarily the same number, but reroll any result that is more than 2 different) from the opposing probability. The “main” probabilities may never total more than 99%, with the last 1% going to the “wild” futures. Should the Timepiece-Stopwatch total ever be more than 99%, reduce the higher probability to make the total 99%.

The GM may also decide that a badly botched intervention has made both futures less probable, reducing each one by 1d% or even 2d%.

If Timepiece’s probability is reduced below 8%, the campaign has ended in failure for the agents. If

Stopwatch is reduced below 8%, the PCs have won – and can continue to travel in time as researchers or even tourists. (But if they do something to change history again, Stopwatch may reappear!)

It is also possible that repeated disasters will reduce the combined probability of Timepiece and Stopwatch to less than 70%. If that happens, the GM may create a third time-twisting agent force, with any characteristics he likes . . . another probability has reached critical level, and may be treated like the first two. Things can *really* get complicated then . . .

CAMPAIGN ASSUMPTIONS

Parameters

Scale: The scale of the Time Corps is an interesting mix of prosaic, subtle adventures and the ultimate stakes – the future of the world! This is a good compromise level, and the GM should try to emphasize both elements of it where possible.

Scope: Time Agents are the best of the best, alone in the past. They have a broad operational scope, although the nature of the windows and the Observer Effect tend to constrain them.

Boundaries: One world, but all time (with variations) up to about 1970. There is only one method of time travel, and no gates or other cheats.

Paraphysics

As given in the Mechanics section, the Exclusion Rule (p. 157) applies. Travelers can't travel to a time where they already exist. If they visit a time just *before* they already exist, they must leave again before their "earlier" version appears (or is born). If they don't, the "later" version will pop back to the ABET stage.

The agents in the field can almost always communicate with Control via notecards (see *Other Gadgets*, p. 222), or by returning in person if necessary. This only becomes impossible if a mission is imperiled by divergence (p. 225). Control can communicate with agents by sending physical messages through the ABET, but each time a package is sent, that window is closed for a long time. In a pinch, Control can send a package to an earlier window and mark it "Do not open until [whenever]!" Attempts to use this trick to get around the Observer Effect fail; usually, such a message is simply blank when read. Each communication from Control advances the Absolute Now from the point of view of the agents.

History in this campaign is Plastic but very Resistant. The Observer Effect (p. 159) applies; paradoxes seem to be impossible. If a Timepiece or Stopwatch agent changes history, the change affects the Absolute Now only on a probability level.

It is possible for an agent in the past to meet someone else from "his future." That is, someone from 2100 could meet someone who had been sent from 2101. When that happens, the agent from the earlier time knows that the Absolute Now has advanced (p. 219); if he clocks back, he'll arrive in that later time. Agents in this situation are careful to exchange only information required for the mission.

Characters

See pp. 171-200 for character design notes; Timesickness (p. 181) is Common and Mild.

Genre and Mode

This is a quintessential technical SF setting, with much of the challenge focused on using the mechanics of time travel to accomplish the mission.

A GM with a strong historical SF interest can, of course, run plenty of repair missions (p. 211) in both directions! Missions are likely to be investigative, with a strong dose of technothriller (to fill out those months of waiting for the Observer Effect or the window). The setting probably works best if Timepiece agents are, in fact, the good guys, but a certain amount of grittiness won't spoil anything.

OPERATION ARCHDUKE: A TYPICAL MISSION

Because of the high percentage of "false alarms" and missions to protect "weak spots" against *possible* incursions, the *truly* typical mission is one in which the agents clock back . . . spend several paranoid weeks downtime, possibly getting in trouble with the natives . . . and clock home, never having seen any evidence of a Stopwatch agent. Certainly the GM can throw in such a mission now and then. But players will expect to encounter enemy agents . . . and the player *characters* are *paid* to expect enemy agents.

Our typical mission, then, is one where Stopwatch is really up to something. Here's an account of the mission as it happened . . .

The Warning

The ABET operators report a possible Stopwatch transmission: to a window at May 30, 1914, in Austria. The time and place suggest that this is real. On June 28, Archduke Francis Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, and his wife were assassinated, leading immediately to World War I. Obviously, this is a key historical event. But how does Stopwatch stand to gain by changing it?

Three days later Brunner, the Local Agent in Vienna, sends a further report. Just as a precaution, he had bugged the homes and meeting places of the Serbian conspirators who were to assassinate Ferdinand. Through his listening devices, he heard sounds of a disturbance. A little detective work on his part confirmed that the main conspirators had been removed and replaced by Stopwatch agents!

The Briefing

The agent team is called together and briefed on the period. In this particular case, the Austria of 1914 corresponds almost exactly to that of our "real" history. The GM mentions one non-historical detail: the American escape artist and writer, Harry Houdini, is currently living in Austria, writing, researching, and doing occasional short performance tours. (The depth of this briefing would depend on the GM and the group. If everyone enjoys research, the GM probably started by checking several books out of the library, and he might end his briefing by handing them to the players.)

The problem is that the nature of the intervention is not immediately obvious. Clearly it has something to do with the assassination. But the Archduke was, in his time, a force for stable unity and peaceful devolution of power. One would think that Stopwatch would want him dead! So the agents will have to watch carefully and think on their feet.

The Initial Penetration

The closest window to use would be the same one that Stopwatch used, now at June 2. (The fact that they used it recently does not black it out to Timepiece – just to them.) But Control is concerned that the team might not have time to prepare properly. Brunner is the only agent in that time period, and he is not well equipped.

So: Six agents (the PCs) are clocked to the *previous* window, eight months earlier. This gives them time to prepare. Immediately afterward, Control sends six combat specialists ("grunts") to the June 2 window, with orders to wait for contact from the PCs and follow their instructions.

The PCs in 1913 are under strict orders *not* to contact the Local Agent in any way, and not to interfere with the Stopwatch actions that Brunner reported. To do so would be to challenge the Observer Effect. However – armed with the information supplied by Brunner – they place the fake assassins under surveillance without being detected, and they identify a total of seven Stopwatch agents.

One of the players tries direct action anyway, just to see what the GM will do. He sets up an ambush to zap one of the female agents with a Super Stinger – no women are known to be crucial to the Stopwatch moves already observed. But the entire team is afflicted with food poisoning from a bad dinner the night before. The rifleman is doubled up with cramps five minutes before his target appears, and his FR yanks him home. Since he didn't tell the rest of the team what he was up to, they spend a lot of time being paranoid. The Stopwatch agent who was being targeted "heard" the missing agent clock out, and her team is paranoid, too.

In January 1914, the "early" team gets a time-dropped package of extra weaponry, supplies and information; the missing agent returns in this drop. (If the PCs had thought of anything in particular that they really needed, they could have requested it by notecard and gotten it in this drop.)

The Moment of Freedom

At the moment in 1914 at which Brunner sends his note back to Base to give the alarm, the agents are free. They are no longer constrained by the Local Agent's observations. They can contact Brunner, and they can act against Stopwatch in any way that does not contradict what is currently known of history.

However, they choose not to contact Brunner, because they know from their own surveillance that the Stopwatch agents have spotted him as a possible foe. But Stopwatch isn't sure, which is why Brunner hasn't been attacked.

The First Move

The Timepiece team decides that they don't know enough yet to try to frustrate the plot. They could try direct action against the Stopwatch team, but then who will assassinate Ferdinand?

But after six days of waiting, they become impatient and worried. When the "grunt" team (NPCs) appears, the agents decide to act. They divide their forces to track the enemy agents, hoping to clean them up in a simple fire-fight. A couple of combats ensue. Five Stopwatch agents are hit by darts and clock out to escape. One is captured, but nothing is learned from him before he gets away (you can stuff a rag in someone's mouth to keep him from using tongue-switches, but it's hard to interrogate him in the meantime). One escapes.

Three of the Timepiece agents are shot in the melee. Two have to clock out to save themselves. One is merely wounded in the arm. The noisy gunfire draws police; the wounded agent and one other are arrested. Ironically, the Austrians suspect them of being English spies (someone missed a Language roll) and potential assassins! Worse, all the agents must discard their weapons as they flee the police, rather than risk having future gadgets captured. (The grunts, their job done, clock out.)

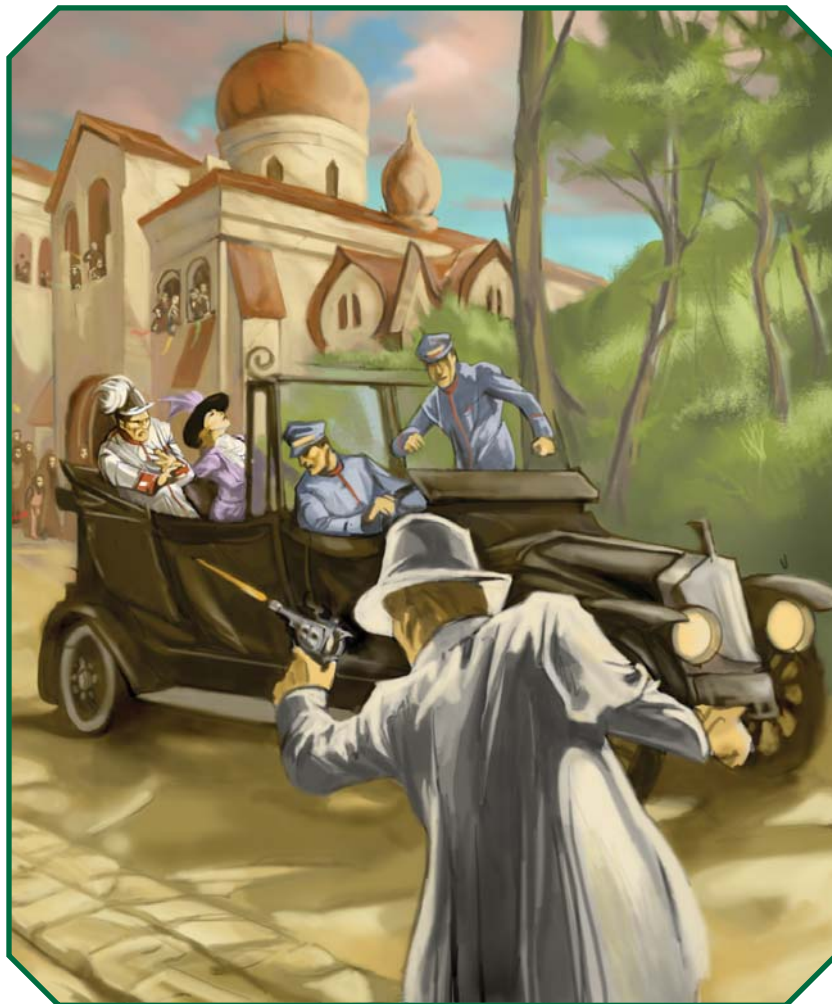
Jailbreak!

Since they have little to lose, the agents contact Brunner. With his help, and via some bribery, their two jailed comrades are freed – an adventure in itself. But at this point, the agents find out the hard way, via the Divergence Effect, that they are in danger of failing their mission. (The jailbreak has gotten national attention, and war fears are raging . . . with speculation that England and America are plotting against Austria. The visiting Houdini is suspected of being a spymaster! And maybe it's true . . .)

Neither the agents nor their remaining equipment can clock home. The agents are now absolutely on their own; they can't get help from Control, and they can't escape. (But at least the surviving Stopwatch agent, and any cronies she may have, won't be able to "hear" them.)

Thinking It Through

One key to resolving this situation lies in the war scare; if none of the players are history buffs, the GM should make a few History or IQ rolls for the agents, and drop some hints.



The Austrians are now rattling their sabers, but it's out of paranoid fear . . . historically, they didn't expect the British to get involved on the Continent, let alone the *Americans*. Right now, the leaders of Austria and Germany are rethinking their plans to start a war, and *this* is what is changing history.

A Solution?

The agents should deduce that a postponed WWI works against Timepiece. Perhaps they will realize that the war is inevitable, and a later war will be worse than an early one. They may have to assassinate

Ferdinand themselves to get history back on track!

One Stopwatch agent is still loose, and the agents' Ears hint that she is still active; she knows who they are, and has been snooping around. She'll probably be trying to stop the assassination.

About Houdini

Houdini, of course, is the wild card in the adventure. He might be a Local Agent for either side. Or he could be the real, original Houdini, just "out of place" as a side effect of some past historical meddling – and if he is, he might or might not be involved in espionage. Either way, he could be useful to the agents!

Houdini's birth name was Erich Weiss. He was the son of a rabbi from Budapest (the other capital of the Hapsburg dual monarchy). He spoke fluent German and had toured Germany, Austria, and Russia (he was in fact suspected of being a spy by the Russian secret police). As a Jew, a potential Hungarian nationalist, and a possible spy, he was distrusted in many quarters. He had contacts at many levels of society and a formidable array of skills. By 1913, he was an aviator, a mechanic, an expert driver, a good rifle and pistol shot, an acrobat, an illusionist, and an escape artist. He might know anything else useful that could be learned at the time; he was insatiably curious.

THE HORATIO CLUB

I've forgotten what I was looking for, when first I found the Club. I was in London, I think; but I won't tell you where in London, because the details would either send you looking for the place, or bear no relation to the London you know.

It's what used to be called a Gentleman's Club – quiet, serviced by impeccable butlers who know your name and your habits, with the best food and drink; a warm haven to the members, a closed book to everyone else. It isn't fusty and exclusively male – the nature of the membership is not fusty nor exclusively anything. There are no windows anywhere in the Horatio Club . . . but there are doors.

They do their best to hide the nature of the place. The furniture is comfortable but nondescript; the only emblems you see are the Club's own. The pictures on the walls are of nobody and no place you recognize. There are no clocks at all – but if you ask one of the butlers what time it is, you always get an answer that makes sense.

Stay long enough, of course, and the truth will out. You'll meet someone dressed oddly (maybe very oddly), or hear a reference that doesn't fit your memories. (For a true vision of what the Club is, listen

carefully to the toasts offered before dinner; but if you're present for that, you're already a member.)

I said there were doors. There are many of them, upstairs, up and down long quiet carpeted halls lined with the most eccentric collection of curios outside a museum. Some of them lead to bedrooms, with the most comfortable beds you've ever slept in (or done anything else in, for that matter, but the Club is discreet as nowhere on Earth is discreet) – no television, no radio, but a shelf of books, at least one of which you've always intended to read. Most of the doors are locked. And every now and then one opens, onto places . . . different from the one you left.

Behind one of them, the sun never set on the British Empire, and King Charles III rules from the Mideastern Colonies to the Mississippi Frontier. Behind another, that same Mississippi Valley still belongs to the French, who seem to be in a prolonged global war with the Portuguese and the descendants of Chaka Zulu. Behind another, it's the same city you left, but there's a dome over it. Behind another, another dome, but you look up at a black sky and see the Earth; in its dark crescent, the craters of cities still glow.

Not all the worlds behind the doors are noisy, or imperial, or dead.

There are paradises, too. I know, I know: every world is paradise to someone; every paradise is Hell to someone else. I'm being subjective. And I know that if most of those doors were not locked – if the Horatio Club were open to all comers – there would be changes.

That's why I'm convinced that, whatever it may sometimes seem like, no one ever enters the Horatio Club by accident. If you find your way here, you're a member, whether you know it yet or not.

Surely there must be some kind of rules, if there's going to be this sort of crossroads. Can you let just anybody go hopping from one universe to another? Good question. I can't say, though perhaps someone else can, whether the Club enforces the rules, or if it's simply part of the system.

I do know this: one time and one only, I met a fellow-traveler who spoke, not seriously at all, I thought, about finding a door into a world he could conquer – not just make his way in, but rule. I saw him again, not long after by my clock; he looked about 20 years older, a bit scarred and much quieter, and he didn't talk of conquest anymore.

I know that, and that all the members are human. I think.

*HORATIO: O day and night, but this is
wondrous strange!*

*HAMLET: And therefore as a stranger give
it welcome.*

*There are more things in heaven and earth,
Horatio,*

Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

*– William Shakespeare,
Hamlet, I:v:175-179*

The Club is a deuces-wild alternate-worlds frame. Like Poul Anderson's Old Phoenix Inn, it is a comfortable crossroads between all the universes that are, were, or might be, both a way station and a checkpoint – because, while some of the travelers are quite lost, the staff always seem to make sure that they get somewhere that they somehow ought to reach; and conversely, the selfish and destructive of the world(s) are never admitted there.

There's no point in giving very specific rules for the Club, because it is not by its nature rule-driven; it's philosophical fantasy, not hard science fiction. Some guidelines, however:

The Club is most appropriate to small groups of adventurers, ideally the sort of people who like to explore a situation and find out its possibilities, rather than be assigned clear-cut mission objectives, or simply shake down the world for whatever wealth is in its pockets. The group members need not all have entered together, or even be from the same world. Yes, this is a version of the good old "You meet in this tavern on a dark and stormy night" gimmick to start a campaign. Encourage the players to spin tales of where they came from and how they happened to find the Club door, as if they were sitting over one of the fine Club dinners. (Doing this by candlelight, over whatever you prefer to eat and drink, won't hurt the atmosphere a bit.)

The doors of the Club do not open at random. Nobody knows (or will say) what Mysterious Power controls them, but Whoever It Is has a remarkable knowledge of the guests' skills

and abilities, and of wrongs and injustices on all the myriad worlds that those people are just the ones to set right.

GM Advice

Have the players design their characters well in advance of the first play session, or if that isn't possible, hold the design session, the introduction to the Club and the dinner-table conversation, and then send everyone upstairs to the Club apartments and stop. Then spend some time working out what sort of world all these different people should have their joint adventure in, what uses they can make of their skills (not to mention the players' own personal talents). This is rather more involved than loading hostile critters into 10'x10' square dungeon rooms, but it is also rather more rewarding.

Most of the Club's guests are not casual universe-hoppers. Some may only visit once in their lives. In the classical fictional paradigm, they are traveling from a world in which they are hopeless romantic misfits to one where they can be real heroes and live Happily Ever After. In GM terms, this means a world-problem that can't be solved too easily or quickly. Perhaps much of the adventure will be spent figuring out just what the solution – or just what the *problem* – is.

By Way of Example: The Dolorous Maiden

Your Club guests have retired to their rooms, but they can't sleep. The books on the bedside table make them

think odd, faraway thoughts. Independently, they get dressed (or perhaps just pull on a robe and slippers) and go out into the hallway, where one of them has found an unlocked door. There's a darkness beyond, and without really thinking why, they walk through.

Suddenly there's no more door, no more hallway, and the darkness is thinning into a blue dawn. The guests are standing in a formal garden maze, hedges twice as high as their heads. Just ahead is a stone bench, and on it sits a woman, and she's crying. They approach. She looks up. She's very beautiful (of course). Her mouth opens. And she disappears.

Now, *there's* a story hook. Who's the crying woman? Was she real, an illusion, an astral projection, a ghost? Was she one of the good guys? (Not all the beautiful maidens are, you know.) And, hey, whose garden is this, are they going to be annoyed when they find us here, how do we get out of the maze, it's kind of cold to be standing here in a bathrobe . . .

And there begins the adventure. The group is certainly going to want to find out about the Weeping Whoever-She-Was, but before that they have lots of other practical problems to solve, and they're in no position to solve them by the classical dungeon-crawler's method of armed robbery.

Next Week's Special Guest Star Is . . .

Another cliché of the field that the Club can vary a bit is the notion of the characters as wandering gunslingers, who always ride on once the local wrong is righted. Maybe some of the travelers will like this world, once it's straightened out. Maybe one of them will marry the Princess, or the Prince, and settle down. A native or two who want to see strange worlds may join the others, and the Club will have a place at the table for everyone. This can let players switch off and play all kinds of characters. If one isn't working out, the player can make up someone who seems to fit the GM's campaign a little better, or one that he might not play for a year's worth of sessions, but wouldn't mind exploring for a week or two.

Variant Clubs

Of course, the GM can leave morality right out of it, and let the guests go conquer worlds (or get chewed up trying) as they please. The multiversal nexus might be not just a passive way station, but an active clearinghouse and dispatch center for the worlds, matching up teams of adventurers with adventures: an Infinity Patrol using freelancers instead of (or in addition to) its own full-time troops. Going even further, this could be crossed with the Eternity's Rangers frame (p. 34), making the Club a kind of multiversal mercenary hiring hall and armory, where crossworld swash-bucklers recruit and outfit for conquest, plunder . . . and maybe some of that righting-wrongs stuff too, just to stay in practice.

And the Club doesn't have to be a dim-stuffy-plush retreat. It can be a kind of Explorers' Club, furnished from many worlds and eras, decorated with souvenirs from as all over as it gets; it might look like an airport lounge (although one of the cool Fifties ones before they became so horribly depressing), a railroad terminal in the grand old Belle Epoque

style, a medieval inn (like the Old Phoenix), or an ultra-ritzy 21st-century hotel. Maybe it looks like all those things at once.

CAMPAIGN ASSUMPTIONS

Parameters

Scale: Completely up to the GM, but this frame works best with personal stories and a minimum of sturm and drang. You can save the universe in every other campaign frame; let this one be about true love.

Scope: Equal to the characters, but not predictably so. The GM may want to experiment with a "hidden scope," in which the problem at hand only seems local, but has great repercussions in proper fairy tale fashion.

Boundaries: The only boundaries are at the interface between the characters and the Club, which cannot be hustled, squeezed, robbed, blackmailed, destroyed, or pestered to death by the adventurers. The GM may want to eventually develop the Club's officers and staff, and give the

PCs a glimpse into its workings, but this will risk making the campaign about the Club, rather than about the worlds it opens onto.

Paraphysics

Any. Adventurers can meet themselves, travel in time or space, and whirl about free of paradox – as long as the Club allows it. If things get too awfully snarled up, well, that's one door that the staff keeps locked from now on.

Characters

Power Level: Any. Low-powered characters can shine just as brightly as superheroes and giants. It's up to the GM to craft compelling, personal stories for any type of hero.

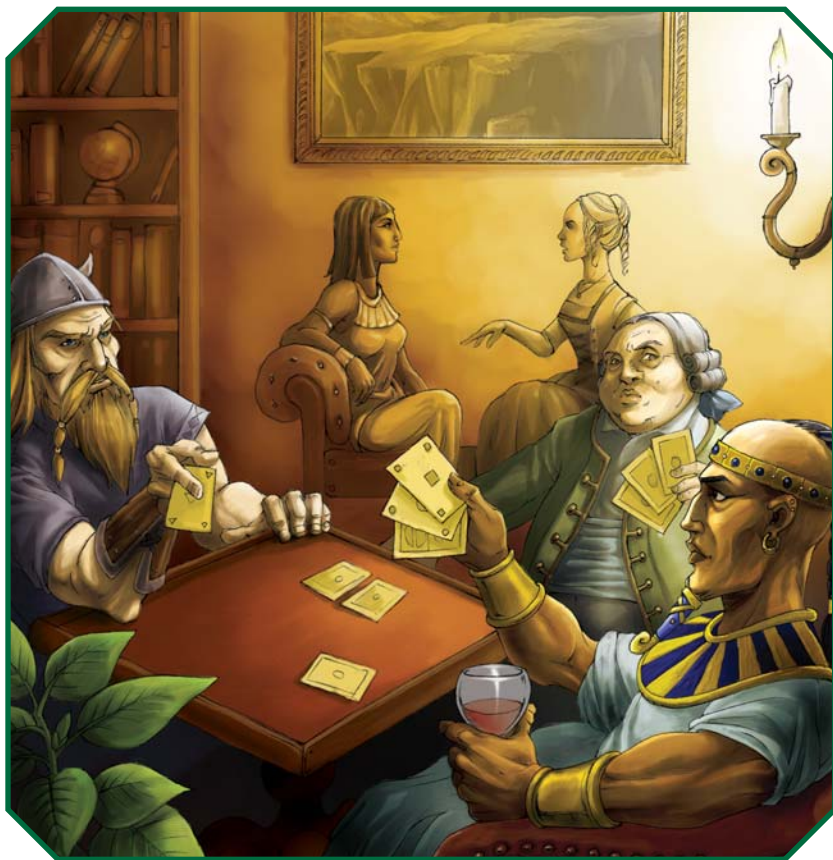
Niche: None. You all, literally, might have met in the bar. Perhaps the adventure will reveal why the heroes are traveling together, or perhaps the players will come up with something clever and satisfying.

Freedom: Be excellent to each other. And party on, dude, but in a genteel fashion, please.

Edges: Up to the GM. Our heroes should never be able to swat the adventure's problems aside like a fly, but True Faith, bardic immunity, guest-holiness, and other intangible protections seem apropos.

Genre and Mode

This is a philosophical fantasy frame, designed to allow personal stories on a smaller scale but an infinite canvas. If it's a cinematic game, it should have a nice romantic component along with the last-minute escapes and dogfights; if it's a pulp game, it should present at least one obstacle that twin Colt automatics or fists of deadly fury can't actually overcome. The Club will not work as a dark or gritty setting; nobody wants to give something that unpleasant the control over their actions that the players are implicitly giving the Club. Any style, from Gothic horror to bright fantasy to Arabian Nights exoticism to intellectual gamesmanship, has a place in the Club, as long as it lets the players think *and feel* for a change.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

This bibliography can only skim the surface of the thousands of works on time travel, alternate histories, and so forth even on this one world. Absolute musts, the best of the best or pioneering works in the genre, are adorned with a star (*).

FICTION

Categories are fluid at best; some of the early classics, especially, slop over into more than one. For example, H. Beam Piper's *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen* combines an in-depth AH setting (an Indo-Aryan America trapped in medievalism) with cross-dimensional politics (the Paratime Police and its concerns) with the classic time-travel trope of the resourceful castaway who brings modern technology (in this case, gunpowder) to a primitive milieu.

Alternate Histories

These stories, anthologies, and novels primarily concentrate on the nitty-gritty of the alternate history (AH) setting in question, some of them to the exclusion of plot or character. With a good enough setting, one can overlook such flaws.

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Amis, Kingsley. *The Alteration* (Jonathan Cape, 1976). Castrati politics in a world without a Reformation.

* Anderson, Poul. *A Midsummer Tempest* (Doubleday, 1974). A brilliant Shakespearean myth parallel.

Baxter, Stephen. *Anti-Ice* (HarperCollins, 1993). Victorian England gets antimatter in this serious update of the Verne adventure genre. *The Time Ships* (HarperCollins, 1995) is a sequel to Wells' *Time Machine*.

* Benford, Gregory and Greenberg, Martin H. (editors). *Hitler Victorious* (Garland, 1986). Axis-victory AH stories, including David Brin's classic "Thor Meets Captain America." The four volumes of their *What Might*

Have Been? series (Bantam, 1989-1992) contain a high proportion of good, interesting stories.

Bensen, D.R. *And Having Writ . . .* (Bobbs-Merrill, 1978). Aliens survive the Tunguska crash and redirect history trying to fix their ship.

Card, Orson Scott. *Seventh Son* (Tor, 1987). First of the "Alvin Maker" series, set in an alternate 19th-century America where folk magic works.

* De Camp, L. Sprague. "The Wheels of If" (1940). One of the very first "trapped in an altered history" stories; still holds up.

* Dick, Philip K. *The Man in the High Castle* (Putnam's, 1962). Axis victory in the absolute best AH novel ever.

Dozois, Gardner and Schmidt, Stanley (editors). *Roads Not Taken* (Del Rey, 1998).

Dvorkin, David. *Budspy* (Franklin Watts, 1987). Unsettling novel of politics as usual in a world with a victorious Nazi Germany.

Ford, John M. *The Dragon Waiting* (Timescape, 1983). Intricate AH fantasy in a world with a pagan Byzantium, vampires, and Richard III.

Fry, Stephen. *Making History* (Hutchinson, 1996). Removing Hitler makes things worse.

Garfinkle, Richard. *Celestial Matters* (Tor, 1996). A very alternate history in which Classical Greek theories of astronomy, physics, and politics are all literally true.

Garrett, Randall. *Lord Darcy* (Baen, 2004). A collection of the "Lord Darcy" stories, classic AH mysteries set in the 20th-century Anglo-French Empire.

* Gentle, Mary. *Ash: A Secret History* (Gollancz, 2000). The seminal reality quake novel about an alternate Visigothic Carthage and the evil computers who must destroy Burgundy and its history to thrive.

Gibson, William and Sterling, Bruce. *The Difference Engine* (Gollancz, 1990). Steam-powered cyberpunk AH diverges with Babbage's computers.

Harlan, Thomas. *Shadow of Ararat* (Tor, 1999) and the rest of the *Oath of*

Empire series are high fantasy in an alternate Rome.

Harris, Robert. *Fatherland* (Harper, 1992). A solidly written AH about the biggest murder investigation of all time.

Hogan, James P. *The Proteus Operation* (Bantam/Spectra, 1985). Time-travel WWII novel with two separate AHs.

Keyes, J. Gregory. *Age of Unreason* (Ballantine, 1998-2001). AH tetralogy of Newtonian magic, meteor strikes, and angelic math.

Laidlaw, Marc. "His Powder'd Wig, His Crown of Thornes" (1989). Possibly the best "British defeat the Revolution" AH story, and a powerful indictment of colonialism.

Leiber, Fritz. "Catch That Zeppelin!" (1975). Smarter than usual "no WWII" AH.

Linaweaver, Brad. *Moon of Ice* (Tor, 1993). A slightly more bizarre AH, expanded from the short story in *Hitler Victorious* and an excellent source for crazy Raven Division schemes.

McAuley, Paul J. *Pasquale's Angel* (Gollancz, 1994). Novel of steampunk Renaissance Italy, featuring Machiavelli as a hard-drinking reporter.

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Silverberg, Robert. *The Gate of Worlds* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967) and *Roma Eterna* (Harper-Collins, 2003). Aztec and Roman survival AHs, respectively.

Smith, L. Neil. *The Probability Broach* (Del Rey, 1980) and sequels. This series begins as well-realized AH adventure and increasingly becomes strident libertarian lecture.

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* Waldrop, Howard. *Them Bones* (Ace, 1984) is a small time travel (and AH) gem, but his short stories are true masterpieces of obsessive AH

weirdness; collections include *Howard Who?* (Doubleday, 1986), *Strange Monsters of the Recent Past* (Ace, 1991), and *Going Home Again* (St. Martin's, 1998).

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Anthony, Piers. *Ox* (SFBC, 1976). Highly trained agents from thousands of close parallel worlds battle for control.

Asimov, Isaac. *The End of Eternity* (Doubleday, 1955) and *The Gods Themselves* (Doubleday, 1972).

Barnes, John. *Patton's Spaceship* (Harper, 1997), *Washington's Dirigible* (Harper, 1997), *Caesar's Bicycle* (Harper, 1997). Fast-paced dimension war series with better than average AH settings. In *Finity* (Tor, 1999), expatriate Americans from diverse parallels meet and investigate.

Bayley, J. Barrington. *The Fall of Chronopolis* (DAW, 1974).

Bear, Greg. *Eon* (Bluejay, 1985), *Eternity* (Warner, 1988), and *Legacy* (Tor, 1995). Paradimensional weirdness trilogy.

Brunner, John. *The Infinitive of Go* (Ballantine, 1980). An experiment in teleportation turns out to be an experiment in parachronics.

Chalker, Jack. *And the Devil Will Drag You Under* (Del Rey, 1979). Aliens draft humans to steal parallel-world artifacts.

* De Camp, L. Sprague and Pratt, Fletcher. *The Complete Compleat Enchanter* (Baen, 1989). Classic 1940s-1950s short stories of mental travel between dimensions to various myth parallels.

De Chancie, John. *Castle Perilous* (Ace, 1988) and sequels. Castle serves as dimensional nexus for 144,000 different realities.

Dickson, Gordon. *Time Storm* (St. Martin's, 1977). A riff on Murray Leinster's classic "Sidewise in Time" (1934), both about Earths with different times intermingled; Dickson's is much darker.





Farmer, Philip José. *Riverworld* (Putnam, 1971-1980). The series is not precisely dimension travel, but well worth reading as an example of historical characters from many milieus interacting. His *World of Tiers* series presents bored immortals creating gate-linked universes as playthings.

Heinlein, Robert A. *The Cat Who Walks Through Walls* (Putnam, 1985) and *Number of the Beast* (Fawcett, 1980) present travel between alternate realities and lengthy discussion thereof.

Hodgson, William Hope. *The Ghost Pirates* (Stanley Paul, 1909). Dimension travel as supernatural horror.

* Kessel, John. *Corrupting Dr. Nice* (Tor, 1997). Screwball comedy of trans-temporal looting; a sequel to "Mozart in Mirrorshades."

Kilian, Crawford. *The Empire of Time* (Del Rey, 1978), *The Fall of the Republic* (Del Rey, 1987), *Rogue Emperor* (Del Rey, 1988). Kilian's Intertemporal Agency has a lot in common with Centrum's Interworld Service.

Kube-McDowell, Michael P. *Alternities* (Ace, 1988). Gritty novel of covert AH exploration by a parallel Earth.

Kurland, Michael. *Perchance* (NAL Signet, 1989), *The Whenabouts of Burr* (DAW, 1975). Light crossworld adventures; Kurland has also written two adequate Lord Darcy novels.

Laumer, Keith. *The Time Bender* (Berkley, 1966) and sequels; *Worlds of the Imperium* (Tor, 1986) and sequels. Adventurous cross-dimensional action in two series.

Meredith, Richard C. *At the Narrow Passage* (Putnam's, 1973), *No Brother,*

No Friend (Doubleday, 1976), *Vestiges of Time* (Doubleday, 1978). The "Timeliner Trilogy" features a satisfyingly cosmic dimensional war and some gritty 1970s action.

* Moorcock, Michael. *The Cornelius Quartet* (Avon, 1977). This omnibus gathers Moorcock's increasingly strange stories of multi-dimensional mayhem from their original publications between 1968 and 1974.

Niven, Larry. "All the Myriad Ways" (1968). The ultimate crossworld story.

* Piper, H. Beam. *Lord Kalvan of Otherwhen* (Ace, 1965) and *Paratime* (Ace, 1986). The Paratime stories are archetypal tales of cross-world cops tasked with keeping order and The Secret. "Lord Kalvan" is part of the series but goes its own way; Pennsylvania state trooper Calvin Morrison is accidentally caught in a Paracop conveyor and dumped on a primitive parallel, where he introduces gunpowder and turns society on its ear. After Piper's death, Roland Green and John F. Carr wrote a sequel, *Great Kings' War* (Ace, 1985). Carr has produced two more sequels and continues to write.

Pullman, Philip. *The Golden Compass* (Scholastic, 1995), *The Subtle Knife* (Scholastic, 1997), *The Amber Spyglass* (Scholastic, 2000). "Young adult" fantasy trilogy involves parallel Earths, the nature of God, and talking bears.

Rohan, Michael Scott. *Chase the Morning* (Avon, 1990), *The Gates of Noon* (Gollancz, 1992), *Cloud Castles* (Gollancz, 1993). Cross-dimensional piracy, magic, and myth.

* Sterling, Bruce. "Mozart in Mirrorshades" (1985). A classic of

callous crosstime exploitation, complete with freedom-fighting Masons.

Stirling, S.M. *Conquistador* (Roc, 2003). Unscrupulous moderns settle an unspoiled "America next door."

Zelazny, Roger. *Nine Princes in Amber* (Doubleday, 1970) and many, many sequels present dimensional travel as a squabbled-over family heirloom. *Roadmarks* (Ballantine, 1979) is a strange time-travel fable.

Time Travel

These stories and novels offer ideas for interesting situations, or give distinct views of paradox, causality, and time tampering. If they introduce AHs, they generally depend strongly on the time traveler.

Aldiss, Brian. *Frankenstein Unbound* (Jonathan Cape, 1973). Time traveler meets Mary Shelley and the Monster.

* Anderson, Poul. *There Will Be Time* (SFBC, 1972) is the best time-jumper novel ever. *Time Patrol* (Tor, 1994) is a near-perfect collection. "My Object All Sublime" (1961) is a "time travel as prison" story well worth seeking out, while "The Man Who Came Early" (1956) brilliantly explores temporal inertia.

Anthony, Piers. *Bearing an Hourglass* (Del Rey, 1984). Interesting notions of causation; don't bother with the rest of the series.

Baker, Kage. *The Garden of Iden* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1997). First of the historically detailed "The Company" series; cyborgs from the future are secretly hidden in the past to observe and exploit it.

Benford, Gregory. *Timescape* (Simon & Schuster, 1980). Communications from the future breed paradox.

* Bester, Alfred. "Hobson's Choice" (1952) and "The Men Who Murdered Mohammed" (1958) are must-reads of the genre.

* Bradbury, Ray. "A Sound of Thunder" (1952). Dinosaur hunting meets chaos theory, decades early.

Chalker, Jack. *Downtiming the Night Side* (Tor, 1985). Good time patrol book.

Cook, Glen. *A Matter of Time* (Ace, 1985). Multiple futures co-exist; the past *can* be changed without destroying the future.

* Crowley, John. *Great Work of Time* (Bantam Spectra, 1991). British conspiracy manipulates the time stream with the very best intentions.

* De Camp, L. Sprague. *Lest Darkness Fall* (Tor, 1996 reprint from 1939). Paradigmatic SF classic: a modern scholar prevents the Dark Ages.

Dick, Philip K. *Martian Time-Slip* (Ballantine, 1964); *Now Wait For Last Year* (Doubleday, 1966). Time travel through schizophrenia and drugs, respectively.

Drake, David. *Time Safari* (Tor, 1982). Ultimate dinosaur hunting novel.

Finney, Jack. *Time and Again* (Simon & Schuster, 1970). Time travel romance.

* Flint, Eric. *1632* (Baen, 2000). Modern West Virginia coal-mining town appears in the middle of Thirty Years' War Germany; adventure and sequels ensue.

Frankowski, Leo. *The Cross-Time Engineer* (Del Rey, 1986) and sequels. Much detail on advancing technology in medieval Poland, but marred by excessive outtime help and an adolescent-male sex-fantasy tale.

Gerrold, David. *The Man Who Folded Himself* (Random House, 1973). Classic "message to yourself" novel.

Grimwood, Ken. *Replay* (Arbor House, 1987). The hero has many chances to relive his own life.

Haldeman, Joe. *The Forever War* (St. Martin's, 1974), *The Hemingway Hoax* (Morrow, 1990).

Harrison, Harry. *The Technicolor Time Machine* (Doubleday, 1967). What do you use a time machine for? Cheap location shoots for Hollywood B-pictures, of course . . .

Hawke, Simon. *The Ivanhoe Gambit* (Ace, 1984) and 11 sequels form the *Time Wars* series, notable for the attempt to historicize famous adventure novels, and for the increasingly convoluted temporal physics.

* Heinlein, Robert A. "All You Zombies" (1959) and "By His Bootstraps" (1941) are the classic short stories of temporal paradox. Less essentially, *The Door Into Summer* (Doubleday, 1957) and *Time Enough For Love* (Putnam, 1973) further explore physical and social challenges of time travel.

Hogan, James. *Thrice Upon A Time* (Del Rey, 1980). Messages to the past allow the routine changing of the future.

Jeschke, Wolfgang. *The Last Day of Creation* (St. Martin's, 1984). Strange time travel novel with many unforgettable bits.

Jeter, K.W. *Morlock Night* (DAW, 1979). Excellent steampunk sequel to the Wells classic.

Koontz, Dean. *Lightning* (Putnam, 1988). Workmanlike thriller.

* Leiber, Fritz. *The Big Time* (Ace, 1961) and associated stories form the "Change War" series. Atmospheric, intelligent handling of the "two groups struggle to change history through time travel" trope, which Leiber invented in this book along with the "rescue" method of recruitment.

* L'Engle, Madeline. *A Wrinkle in Time* (Farrar, Straus, 1962). Juvenile fiction classic; the sequels deal less with time travel.

Long, Frank Belknap. "The Hounds of Tindalos" (1929).

* Lovecraft, H.P. "The Shadow Out of Time" (1936). The seminal time travel horror novella.

May, Julian. *The Many-Colored Land* (Houghton Mifflin, 1981) and sequels. One-way exiles establish a colony in the Pliocene Era.

Miller, P. Schuyler. "As Never Was" (1944). Time travel and archaeology don't mix.

Moorcock, Michael. *Behold the Man* (Allison & Busby, 1969). Unstable time traveler and the life of Jesus entangle.

Niffenegger, Audrey. *The Time-Traveler's Wife* (Macadam/Cage, 2003). Mainstream novel of true love and time travel.

Niven, Larry. *The Flight of the Horse* (Ballantine, 1973). Bizarre hunting expeditions into the past lead to wacky hijinks.

Norton, Andre. *Time Traders* (World, 1958) and sequels.

* Powers, Tim. *The Anubis Gates* (Ace, 1983). Magical time travel to 1810 London, tangled personal timelines, evil clowns, and werewolf killers are only part of the fun.

Reynolds, Mack and Ing, Dean. *The Other Time* (Baen, 1984). Time-traveling archaeologist beats Cortés to Aztec Mexico by a couple of days.

Rogers, Mark E. *Samurai Cat in the Real World* (Tor, 1989). Lavishly illustrated adventures of a samurai cat fighting Capone, Hitler, Stalin, and Nazi dinosaurs; the earlier books in the series send the cat to parody versions of famous fantasy and SF worlds.

Shiner, Lewis. *Glimpses* (Avon, 1993). Rock and roll fan tries to save great artists – and albums – from oblivion and inertia.

Silverberg, Robert. *Hawksbill Station* (Doubleday, 1968). Political criminals are marooned in the prehistoric past; *Up the Line* (Ballantine, 1969) is a slam-bang novel of time tour guides in Byzantium.

Simak, Clifford. *Mastodonia* (Del Rey, 1978).

Simmons, Dan. *Hyperion* (Doubleday, 1989) and sequels. A complex story involving "time tombs" whose contents move *backward* in time.

Smith, Clark Ashton. "The City of the Singing Flame" (1931), "The Holiness of Azedarac" (1933), "The Plutonian Drug" (1934), and "Ubbo-Sathla" (1933) are only a few of his atmospheric, weird short stories. Many of his story cycles occur in the extreme past or future, and make excellent game settings.

Stirling, S.M., *Island in the Sea of Time* (Roc, 1998). First book in a trilogy which sends modern Nantucket Island back to the Bronze Age.

* Turtledove, Harry. *Guns of the South* (Ballantine, 1992). Robert E. Lee with AK-47s. 'Nuff said.

* Twain, Mark. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (Webster, 1889). Cruel fun from the master cynic.

Varley, John. "Air Raid" (1977). This short story about rescues in the past became the novel *Millennium* (Berkley, 1983), which in turn became a film (Michael Anderson, 1989).

Vinge, Vernor. *Marooned in Realtime* (Bluejay, 1986). One-way travel into an unexpected future.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse-Five* (Laurel, 1968). Determinism as oppression, and vice versa.

* Wells, H.G. *The Time Machine* (Heinemann, 1895). Fascinating as an insight into Victorian historical modeling, as well as spawning the key imagery of the genre.

Williamson, Jack. *The Legion of Time* (Fantasy Press, 1952).

Willis, Connie. *To Say Nothing of the Dog* (Bantam Spectra, 1998). Hilarious yet moving novel of the Observer Effect and the air raid on Coventry. *Doomsday Book* (Bantam Spectra, 1992) is a grim tale of time travel and the plague years.

Non-Fiction

Alternate History

In recent years, the AH genre has spread into mainstream nonfiction, if not quite into mainstream academic history.

Comins, Neil F. *What if the Moon Didn't Exist?* (HarperCollins, 1993). Astronomical alternate Earths.

Cowley, Robert (editor). *What If?* (Putnam, 1999), *What If? 2* (Putnam, 2001), and *What Ifs? of American History* (Putnam, 2003). Collections of adequate to excellent essays by leading (mostly military) historians.

* Deutsch, Harold C. and Showalter, Dennis E. (editors). *What If?: Strategic Alternatives of WWII* (The Emperor's Press, 1997). Useful primarily as a corrective to romantic silliness, but interesting in its own right.

Ferguson, Niall (editor). *Virtual History* (Picador, 1997). Overwritten and underthought AHs in general, but the essays often give interesting insight into historical processes; Ferguson's introduction should be mandatory reading for those trying to understand the philosophy of history.

Macksey, Kenneth (editor). *The Hitler Options* (Greenhill/Stackpole, 1998).

North, Jonathan (editor). *The Napoleon Options* (Greenhill/Stackpole, 2000). Primarily details the tactical alternatives; only a few essays look at larger strategic options.

Roberts, Andrew (editor). *What Might Have Been* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004). Collection of essays; a mixed bag.

Sobel, Robert. *For Want of a Nail* (Macmillan, 1973). Straight-faced history, complete with fictional footnotes, of a happier North America after the failed Revolution.

* Squire, J.C. (editor). *If It Had Happened Otherwise: Lapses Into*

Imaginary History (Longmans, Green 1931). Includes essays by Hilaire Belloc, Winston Churchill, and G.K. Chesterton! The classic AH collection.

Tally, Steve. *Almost America* (HarperCollins, 2000).

Tsouras, Peter (editor). *Rising Sun Victorious* (Greenhill/Stackpole, 2001). Articles exploring victorious Japanese AH scenarios; his *Third Reich Victorious* (Greenhill/Stackpole, 2002) compiles similar pieces on German decision points, and *Cold War Hot* (Greenhill/Stackpole, 2003) and *Dixie Victorious* (Greenhill/Stackpole, 2004) repeat the procedure for the Cold War and Civil War, respectively. He has also written a solo AH scenario, *Disaster at D-Day* (Greenhill/Stackpole, 1994).

Real History

To build a convincing alternate history, real history is a necessary foundation. The following sources highlight important aspects of real history or are just plain excellent.

Caviedes, César N. *El Niño in History* (Univ. Press of Florida, 2001).

Crosby, Alfred. *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe 900-1900* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986). The consequences of the spread of European ecosystems into the New World and Australia.

Diamond, Jared. *Guns, Germs, and Steel* (W.W. Norton, 1998). A well-written environmental grand history of humanity that suffers only from the flaw of fighting a war won decades ago.

Fagan, Brian. *Floods, Famines and Emperors* (Basic Books, 1999), *The Little Ice Age* (Basic Books, 2000), *The Long Summer* (Basic Books, 2004). Popular presentation of climate history.

Fischer, David Hackett. *The Great Wave* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1996). The history of the Price Revolutions.

Lamb, H.H. *Climate, History and the Modern World* (Methuen, 1982).

Landes, Daniel. *The Wealth and Poverty of Nations* (Norton 1998). An acerbic, opinionated economic history of the last half-millennium or so, focusing on impolitic questions and giving equally abrasive answers.

* McEvedy, Colin. *The New Penguin Historical Atlas of Ancient*

History (Penguin, 2002). This volume and its successors in the same format combine accessibility with accuracy and tons of clear, useful maps.

* McNeill, William H. *Plagues and Peoples* (Doubleday, 1976). Ground-breaking historical study of disease and its consequences. McNeill's *Rise of the West* (Univ. of Chicago, rev. ed. 1991) is still the best one-volume world history.

Smil, Vaclav. *Energy in World History* (Westview Press, 1994). To the author, "energy" covers agricultural efficiency as well as industry, making this a good reference work for the history of basic technology.

* Stearns, Peter N. (editor). *Encyclopedia of World History* (Houghton Mifflin, 2001). The sixth edition of Walter L. Langer's absolutely indispensable reference. One volume, no waiting, all the pestiferous details you could look for in 50 other places right here at your fingertips. If you own no other historical reference book, own this one.

Temple, Robert. *The Genius of China* (Touchstone, 1989). A bare summary of Joseph Needham's magisterial *Science and Civilization in China*, which is also heartily recommended to anyone with a decade or so to kill.

Historical Modeling

These sources discuss ways to look at history as a process or as a system with its own internal logic; they may some day be the ur-texts of cliodynamics.

Barnes, John. "How to Build A Future" (1990).

Denemark, Robert A., et al. (editors). *World System History* (Routledge, 2000).

* Flynn, Michael. *In the Country of the Blind* (Tor, 2001). This reprint of Flynn's 1990 novel includes his essay "An Introduction to Cliology." The novel is a gripping tale of secret societies using historical modeling to gain power.

Frank, Andre Gunder and Gills, Barry K. (editors). *The World System: Five Hundred Years or Five Thousand?* (Routledge, 1993).

Modelske, George. *Long Cycles in World Politics* (Univ. of Washington Press, 1987).

Spengler, Oswald. *The Decline of the West* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1922). A biological look at culture, and a pessimistic look at political philosophy.

Toynbee, Arnold. *A Study of History* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1934). An increasingly religious response to Spengler; skim it for its scope, but check out the three AHs in the appendices to Volume II.

Trevor-Roper, Sir Hugh. *History and Imagination* (Clarendon, 1980). A great historian on the necessity for historical imagination.

Strauss, William and Howe, Neil. *Generations* (William Morrow & Co., 1991).

Time Travel

Blumenthal, Howard J., et al. *The Complete Time Traveler* (Ten Speed Press, 1988). A tourist's guidebook.

Hawking, Stephen. *A Brief History of Time* (Bantam, 1988). A good attempt at explaining space-time to the non-physicist.

Macvey, John W. *Time Travel – A Guide to Journeys in the Fourth Dimension* (Scarborough House, 1990). Informed speculation about time travel using black holes, tachyons, time dilation, and hyper-space in this and other universes.

Moon, Peter and Nichols, Preston. *The Montauk Project* (Sky Books, 1992). First of four volumes (so far) on this fine time travel conspiracy theory.

Moore, William L. and Berlitz, Charles. *The Philadelphia Experiment: Project Invisibility* (Fawcett Crest,

1979). All about the *USS Eldridge* and its mysterious fate from a believer's perspective.

* Niven, Larry. "The Theory and Practice of Time Travel" (1971). Short, witty, comprehensive discussion of physics, paradox, and why none of this can possibly work; included in *All The Myriad Ways* (Ballantine, 1971).

Randles, Jenny. *Time Storms* (Piatkus, 2001). Excited UFOlogist discusses time vortices, time slips, and other wonderful nonsense.

COMICS

Aramaki, Yoshio. *Deep Blue Fleet* (Gentosha, 2000). Manga of a modern Japanese Navy officer timeslipped back to the Pacific War; later adapted into the anime *Azure Fleet* (Takeyuki Kanda, 2003).

Ellis, Warren. *The Ministry of Space* (Image Comics, 2000, 2004). Dark history of the triumphant British AH space programme.

Kawaguchi, Kaiji. *Zipang* (Kodansha, 2001-present). Manga series in which a modern Japanese naval task force is timeslipped back to 1942; the result is a meditation on the Japanese role in the world.

Miller, Jack. *Rip Hunter, Time Master* (DC Comics, 1961-1965). Classic "gee whiz" time travel series; a more serious Rip has shown up in DC's increasingly convoluted temporal continuity, even fighting the Illuminati in Bob Wayne's *Time Masters* (1990).

Moench, Doug. *Aztec Ace* (Eclipse Comics, 1984). Excellent pulp

adventure featuring a time-traveling Aztec flying ace.

Morrison, Grant. *Animal Man* (DC/Vertigo, 1988-1990) and *The Invisibles* (DC/Vertigo, 1994-1996) both involve time travel as key plot elements.

Nomura, Ted. *Luftwaffe: 1946* (Antarctic Press, 1996-present). Alternate air adventure in quasi-anime technophiliac style.

Ostrander, John. *Grimjack* (First Comics, 1984-1991). Takes place in Cynosure, a nexus point for all the dimensions.

Shetterly, Will. *Captain Confederacy* (Steeldragon, 1986-1987; Marvel/Epic, 1991-1992). AH series set in a fragmented North America.

* Talbot, Bryan. *Adventures of Luther Arkwright* (Prout, 1982; Valkyrie, 1987; Prout, 1989). Fabulous, intricate cross-dimensional adventures; they continue in *Heart of Empire* (Dark Horse, 1999).

Wolfman, Marv. *Crisis on Infinite Earths* (DC Comics, 1985-1986). Epic ending to the multidimensional DC cosmos that had begun with "Flash of Two Worlds" in 1961.

FILM AND TV

Movies

Army of Darkness (Sam Raimi, 1993). Postmodern "Connecticut Yankee" story, with zombies and chainsaws.

* *Back to the Future* (Robert Zemeckis, 1985). Modern classic of the genre; the 1989 "Part II" sequel is the best AH movie so far.

Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure (Stephen Herek, 1989). Totally awesome romp caroms off causality and history.

The Butterfly Effect (Eric Bress and J. Mackye Gruber, 2004). Ashton Kutcher keeps trying to change his past; things keep getting worse.

Donnie Darko (Richard Kelly, 2001). Ironic "indie film" take on free will and causality, with a giant evil rabbit for extra fun.

Fatherland (Christopher Menaul, 1994). HBO movie based on the better novel of the same name; Rutger Hauer does make a convincing SS officer, though.



The Final Countdown (Don Taylor, 1980). The *USS Nimitz* goes back in time to December 6, 1941.

Godzilla vs. King Ghidorah (Kazuki Omori, 1991). Convoluting time travel story is a masterpiece of retroactive continuity. Plus, Ghidorah!

* *It Happened Here* (Kevin Brownlow, 1966). Riveting, morally complex AH film set in Nazi-occupied Britain.

Jin-Rô (Hiroyuki Okiura, 1998). Grim anime love story in a German-occupied AH postwar Tokyo.

* *The Navigator* (Vincent Ward, 1988). Medieval peasants flee the Black Death through a time tunnel to modern New Zealand.

The One (James Wong, 2001). Evil Jet Li must kill all the other Jet Lis in all alternate timelines to gain their kung fu power. Good Jet Li must stop him. Discuss.

The Philadelphia Experiment (Stewart Raffill, 1984). Not a bad Michael Paré time travel thriller. *Philadelphia Experiment II* (Stephen Cornwell, 1993) is the straight-to-video "Nazis win" AH sequel.

Sliding Doors (Peter Howitt, 1998). Gwyneth Paltrow's life diverges with a chance decision; the movie shows both timelines.

Somewhere in Time (Jeannot Szwarc, 1980). Much-beloved romance of true love overcoming time; from the Richard Matheson novel.

* *Terminator* (James Cameron, 1984) and *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (James Cameron, 1991). Ultimate time travel menace movies, complete with the occasional looping paradox.

Time After Time (Nicholas Meyer, 1979). Literate romp as H.G. Wells takes his time machine to 1979 to hunt an escaped Jack the Ripper.

* *Time Bandits* (Terry Gilliam, 1981). The "map of time" is an excuse for silliness and adventure in the Gilliam mode; wonderful imagery and overacting.

Timecop (Peter Hyams, 1994). Silly, but good-looking, Van Damme action movie goes well with popcorn.

The Time Machine (George Pal, 1960). The best film adaptation of Wells' novel.

* *Twelve Monkeys* (Terry Gilliam, 1995). The paradoxes of temporal communication, and questions of

sanity and free will, hedge this intellectual thriller.

Wings of Honneamise (Hiroyuki Yamaga, 1987). Meditative and existentialist anime of the first manned space launch from an alternate 1955; the AH is never very clear, but the look of the alternate civilization is unique.

Television

Doctor Who (1963-1996). Classic BBC series about a wry Time Lord and his adventures across space and time.

Kishin Corps (1993). AH WWII anime series featuring a three-sided struggle between alien invaders and two human factions.

Quantum Leap (1989-1993). Uncontrolled time traveler helps resolve personal crises, usually on a human (rather than a historic) scale.

Sliders (1995-1999). This miserable Fox TV series was the first all-AH, all-the-time TV show; later, it struggled along on the Sci-Fi Channel fighting cavemen or something.

Star Trek (1966-present in various incarnations). Standout time travel or AH episodes include "City on the Edge of Forever" (*TOS*), "Mirror, Mirror" (*TOS*), *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home* (Leonard Nimoy, 1986), "Yesterday's Enterprise" (*TNG*), "Time's Arrow" (*TNG*), "All Good Things . . ." (*TNG*), "Trials and Tribble-ations" (*DS9*), and "Year of Hell" (*VOY*). The current series, *Enterprise*, uses a "temporal cold war" as a story frame.

Stargate SG-1 (1997-present). "Stargates" lead to alien worlds, many with resonances to Earth history. An excellent framing device for an RPG, such as the one by Patrick Kapera, et al. (AEG, 2003).

Time Tunnel (1966-1967). Irwin Allen classic of time-lost scientists.

Twilight Zone (1959-1965). Standout time travel episodes include "The Last Flight," "Back There," "Walking Distance," and "The Odyssey of Flight 33."

Voyagers (1982-1983). Like Rip Hunter, but without the bitter cynicism.

GAMES

Adams, Chris, et al. *Continuum* (Aetherco, 1999). Probably the most detailed and seamless set of time

travel RPG rules yet published, with an intriguing setting as well.

Cordell, Bruce. *Tangents* (Wizards of the Coast, 1999). An excellent sourcebook, covering parallel dimension travel for the *Alternity* RPG.

Garcia, Jose, et al. *Nexus: The Infinite City* (Daedalus Games, 1994). Sadly defunct RPG of colliding realities and the dubious characters who seek to exploit them. See also the only supplement, Robin Laws' *Nexus Life* (Daedalus Games, 1994), which includes several nifty new realities, discussion of inter-reality trade, and more.

Gorden, Greg. *TORG* (West End Games, 1990). Clashing realities duel for Earth! Intriguing and original.

Kenson, Steve, et al. *All Our Yesterdays* (Last Unicorn Games, 2000). The time travel supplement for LUG's *Star Trek* RPG line; fairly complete survey of space-operatic time travel in a series or campaign setting.

Moldvay, Tom. *Lords of Creation* (Avalon Hill, 1984). High-powered RPG of warring demigods in parallel dimensions. Recalled fondly by some.

Porter, Greg. *TimeLords* (BTRC, 2003). Revision of Porter's workmanlike 1987 RPG, this time as a supplement to his *EABA* system.

Tucholka, Richard. *Fringeworthy* (Tri-Tac Games, 1981). Now in its third edition (1990); this is the RPG of the "fringeworthy" and their adventures in parallel Earths.

Voss, H.N. and Worzel, William P. *Time and Time Again* (Timeline, Ltd., 1984). Nearly unplayable game system, with an interesting setting; time cannot be changed and the "voltageurs" must protect researchers and resolve historical mysteries.

THE INTERNET

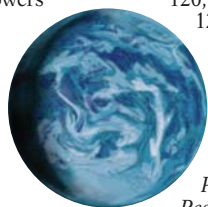
Normally, the Web is too mutable a thing for a print bibliography to cite, but we make an exception for the **soc.history.what-if** discussion group on Usenet (a rare haven of productive sanity and interest in that blasted heath) and for Robert Schmunk's magisterial AH bibliography site at **www.uchronia.net**. For other links, see this book's Web page at **www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/infinitemodels/**.

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