

# *The School of Night*



*by Kenneth Hite*



Pelgrane Press

# Ken Writes About Stuff

## KEN WRITES ABOUT STUFF

### Ken Writes About Stuff

Ken Hite has joined Pelgrane as a full-time writer, and we've come up with a clever way of using his considerable writing talents. Now, you can subscribe to Ken Writes About Stuff, featuring new and original Hite goodness every month for twelve months. It costs \$24.95 and as well as giving you a generous 30% discount on the individual article price of \$2.95, we'll be offering an exclusive extra later in the year to all subscribers.

Any time you order, you'll get all the issues of the current Kwas to date. The latest edition will be added to your order receipt page when it is released, so all you need to do is click on the link in your order email. (If you can't find your receipt email, you can get another one sent to you by entering your email address here).

Ken describes it as so:

"A burst of Hite goodness that you can imbibe or not as you see fit, secure in the knowledge that there's another one coming down the pike in a month at a reasonable price. I'll be putting about 4,000 words worth of fun together every month — maybe an optional rules system, maybe a longish DramaSystem Series Pitch, maybe a "ripped from the headlines" mini-scenario, maybe a campaign frame or a mini-setting, maybe an extended riff on some worthy intelligence organization or serial killer or astrophysical anomaly. Leave requests in the comments, and I shall take them most indubitably under advisement."

<i>Publisher</i>	Cathriona Tobin
<i>Author:</i>	Kenneth Hite
<i>Layout</i>	Cathriona Tobin
<i>Artwork</i>	Jeff Porter

### Contents

The School of Night	3
Scholars of Night	3
Your Night Scholar	3
Build Points and Abilities	3
Ability Details	3
Remake the Man: Ashen Alchemies	4
Optional General Ability: Ars Memoriae	5
Status table	6
Arms and Armor	7
Magic	7
Magic Difficulty Modifiers	8
Magic Ability Table	8
Magic Difficulty Table	9
Historical Scholars	9
More Scholars	10
Where's John Dee?	11
Players on the Other Side	11
Humans	11
Monsters	11
Faerie	12
Demons	12
Sources	12



# The School of Night

*Black is the badge of hell. The hue of dungeons and the school of night ...*

*-- William Shakespeare, Love's Labours Lost, Act IV, Scene iii*

Shakespeare's allusion may not even be an allusion, but if it is, it might be an allusion to a secretive group of swashbucklers or magicians or scientists or spies or poets or all of the above who might have met at Sir Walter Raleigh's house for tobacco and alchemy. If they existed, that is. And if they existed, they probably fought monsters. Because that's just what swashbucklers and magicians and scientists and spies and poets *do* at Night.

Queen Elizabeth's realm lies vulnerable, not just to the Spanish or the plague, but to occult forces perhaps more dangerous than either. You study those forces at the risk of torture — at the risk of your soul — but you must hold them at bay or see England destroyed. This GUMSHOE campaign frame sets the PCs on the stage with John Dee, Christopher Marlowe, and Sir Walter Raleigh ... and perhaps with traitors in their ranks.

Your *School of Night* campaign might resemble a 16th-century *Night's Black Agents* investigation of a demonic conspiracy, a picaresque "weirdness and monster hunt" game ala *Fringe*, *Supernatural*, or *The X-Files*, Tudor ghost-breaking and exorcism played for psychological and proto-scientific chills, or feature straight-up horror of the Cthulhoid or Gothic bent. It might feature "wolf in the fold" gaming as players betray Raleigh to the Tudor police state for their own masters, or play up the espionage element in true "wilderness of mirrors" style. Or it might combine all of these elements but *really* feature the fun of carrying rapiers, casting Enochian spells, and playing the dozens with that new-fledged goose Shakespeare down at the Mermaid Tavern.

## Scholars of Night

Always presuming it existed at all, the School of Night came together around Sir Walter Raleigh in about 1585.

Along with Lord Ferdinando Strange and the "Wizard Earl" of Northumberland, the intellectually voracious Raleigh patronized a bizarre collection of poets, spies, and occultists including Christopher Marlowe, who was all of those things by himself. Called the "School of Atheism" by Raleigh's enemies, its activities (unless they were invented by said enemies) were enough to get Marlowe and Raleigh investigated for atheism — in 1593, the same as treason. Without God, what after all happens to the divine right of Queen Elizabeth to rule?

The School probably survived Marlowe's death in 1593 and even Lord Strange's death in 1594 — and since it may never have existed, who's to say when it stopped existing? It may have even survived Raleigh's execution in 1619: the Earl of Northumberland's "three Magi" Hariot, Hues, and Warner performed experiments with him while he was imprisoned in the Tower of London from 1605 until 1622.

## Your Night Scholar

Like most occult societies before 1880 and most scientific ones before 1980, the School of Night is overwhelmingly male. (Elizabeth Carey may have been member as well as muse.) However, since the School may not have existed at all, feel free to add or play female Scholars to suit your campaign.

## Build Points and Abilities

Build characters as normal for GUMSHOE, using the following parameters:

Each player gets 65 points to spend on General abilities, regardless of group size.

See the list of available abilities for Night Scholars in the sidebar on p. 6.

NUMBER OF PLAYERS	INVESTIGATIVE BUILD POINTS
2	32
3	24
4	22
5+	18

## Free Rating Points

Take 1 free rating point in each of the Investigative abilities Art History and Occult Studies. The School of Night exists to study art and magic and their intersection.

In General abilities, take 4 free rating points in each of Health and Stability, and 2 free rating points in Art-Making. (Dance, singing, and musical instrument are the "generalists' specialties" in such cases.)

Each player also gets 6 free points in Faction.

## Ability Details

Most of the abilities in this campaign frame are familiar from other GUMSHOE games, or their parameters are obvious from their names. Others are simply familiar GUMSHOE abilities renamed for period flavor:

**Accounts:** Accounting

**Antiquary:** Archaeology

**Art History:** Includes poetry, literature, and written arts generally

**Artillery:** Explosive Devices + heavy weapons such as cannon

**Ciphers:** Cryptography + invisible inks, steganography, solving artistic codes, etc.

**Driving:** of course refers to carriages, wagons, oxcarts, etc.

**History:** includes Anthropology

**Militaria:** Military Science (*Night's Black Agents*), Materiel (*Gaeen Reach*)

**Sailing:** includes small boats without sails, barges, etc.

**Tod-Spotter:** Assess Honesty (*Trail of Cthulhu*), Bullshit Detector; a tod is a fox, hence also a wily or duplicitous person.

**Wilderness Lore:** Outdoor Survival (*Night's Black Agents*), Outdoorsman (*Trail of Cthulhu*) + weather sense, herbalism, etc.



Here are a few clarifications and details for the remainder:

## *Alchemy (Technical)*

The study of the nature and elements of matter. Also, the creation and identification of compounds, tinctures, potions, metallic poisons, elixirs, etc., incorporating among other things the GUMSHOE ability Pharmacy.

*In a cinematic game, this ability may also convey skill at making flash-powder, smoke bombs, acid vials, or other adventurous concoctions.*

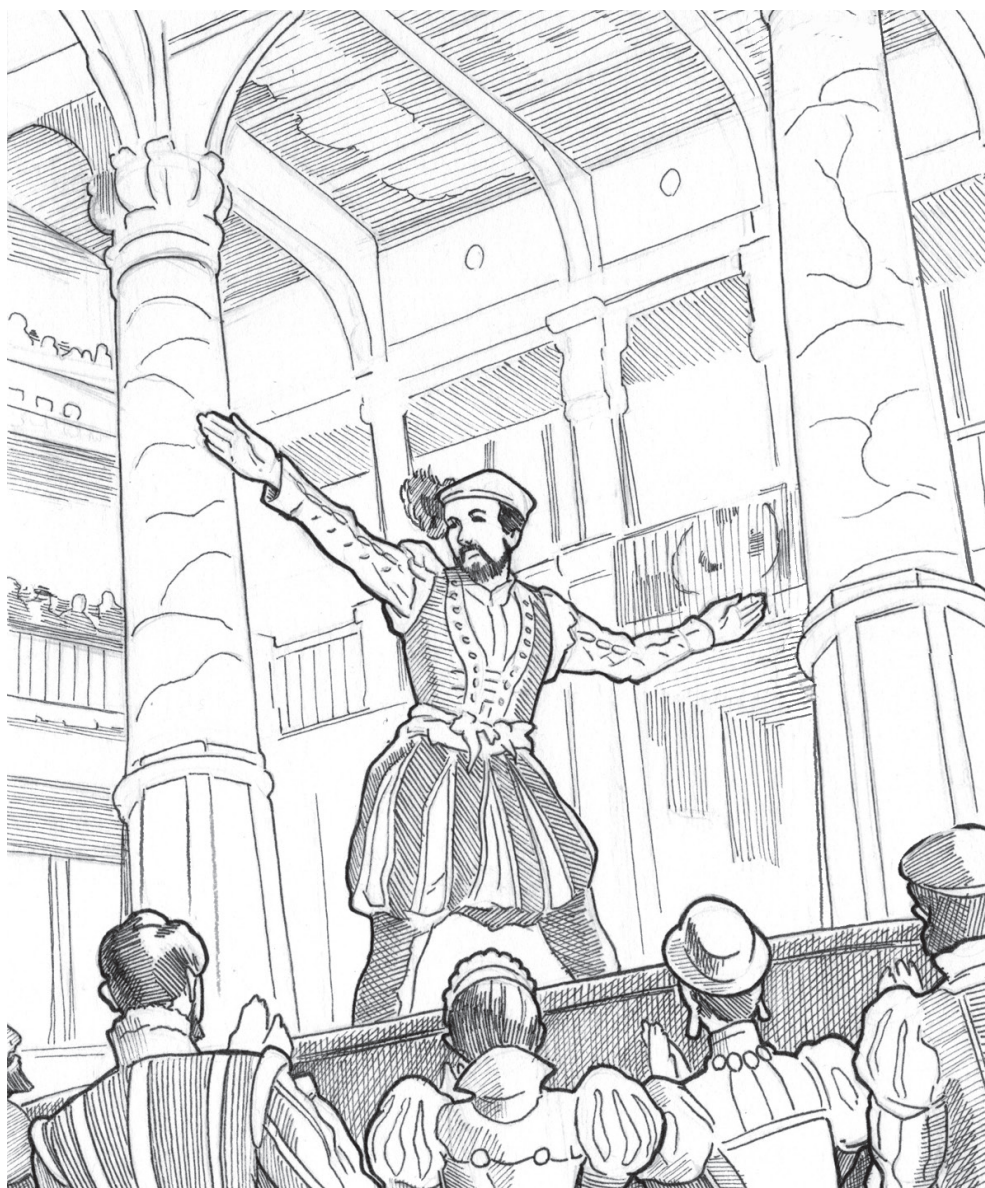
## *Art-Making (General)*

Replaces (and incorporates) the Investigative ability Art; you can conceive and execute artistic works. Choose an artistic specialty: Painting (includes drawing, engraving, etc.), Sculpture, Design (includes architectural, scenic, masque, and pageant design), Musical Composition, Poetry (includes history, epics, fictions, and prose), Play-Writing, Dance, Singing, Musical Instrument.

## *Remake the Man: Ashen Alchemist*

The viroware enhancements in **Ashen Stars** make excellently alchemical elixirs. For NPC evil alchemists, just use them as written, with maybe one or two potions surviving the fire in the laboratory for the Scholars to experiment with.

For an enhanced alchemical Scholar, each elixir (enhancement) costs 4 build points to derive or discover the recipe. Using it in an adventure requires an Alchemy spend equal to the enhancement's initial therapy cost; your Alchemy rating can never exceed 6. After imbibing the elixir, take Health damage with the Upkeep as the damage modifier. This Health damage cannot be refreshed or healed until the end of the adventure.



To practice multiple pursuits, pick as many as you desire and divide your Art-Making points between them.

Most Investigative tests of Art-Making can involve a spend from any specialty.

Artistic compositions can also incorporate secrets (involving a successful Art-Making and perhaps a 1-point spend of Ciphers) or more esoteric truths.

If you or your patron have Alchemy, Astrology, or Occult Studies, your composition can incorporate a

## *Artistic Execution Table*

<i>MARGIN</i>	<i>QUALITY</i>	<i>EFFECT</i>
0	Mediocre	Pays the rent, does not embarrass your teacher too much
1-3	Solid	Allows you to interact with higher Status characters as if your Status is 1 higher for one month; serves as a dedicated pool of 1 point for Occult, etc.
4-6	Exceptional	Allows you to interact with higher Status characters as if your Status is 2 higher for a year; dedicated pool of 2 points for Occult, etc.; 1 expendable pool point in a Magick ability
7+	Masterpiece	Status as Exceptional, but for three years; dedicated pool of 3 points for Occult, etc.; 3 expendable pool points in a Magick ability; 1 dedicated pool point in a Magick ability



dedicated pool in that ability. This pool refreshes after each adventure.

If you or your patron have a Magickal ability, your composition can incorporate an expendable point pool in that ability. Once used in the game, these points are gone (perhaps they refresh after a decade or a century or more). Masterpieces also retain the equivalent of 1 dedicated pool point, or more, which refreshes after each adventure.

To create a work of art, roll and spend from Art-Making as normal. The margin by which you succeed determines the quality of the artwork.

## *Astrology (Academic)*

Study of the stars and planets, and other celestial phenomena such as comets and meteors, and their influence on the world. You can cast a horoscope, given the place, date, and time of someone's birth. For someone you have a horoscope for, you can guess at their motives, nature, and past with roughly the reliability of a 21st-century criminal or psychological profile.

*In a cinematic game, this ability may also convey advance warning of crises or dangers, or even allow rough predictions of the future. Specific visions of the future require divination spells.*

## *Carousing (Interpersonal)*

You can impress and delight people at parties, taverns, dances, or other festival occasions, while retaining general command of your own tongue and faculties. This is also the ability to pick up the "word on the street" or at least in the bar or crowd, as the **Gaeen Reach** ability Scuttlebutt.

## *Faction (General)*

This ability represents your faction: your retinue, friends, servants, relations, crew, apprentices, etc. At any time, you may reveal or remember the existence of a member of your faction. Assign this NPC (your factotum) his own pool of points taken from your unassigned Faction pool.

Your factotum's capacity to accomplish something within her remit resolves as a test of her pool against a Difficulty set by the GM. You can also tap a factotum for knowledge as if he were an Investigative ability. (If he has a core clue, it's 0 points, for example.)

Although this ability resembles Network from **Night's Black Agents**, your factotums' pools refresh normally at the end of an adventure, assuming they survive it. Unless the GM is feeling very cruel, dead or otherwise inaccessible factotums' rating points return to your unassigned Faction pool. You can always increase a factotum's rating (or your own unassigned Faction pool) by spending your experience points on it.

Factotums cannot use Magickal abilities or create better than solid instances of Art-Making.

## *Optional General Ability: Ars Memoriae*

The Art of Memory allowed classical orators and Druids to memorize entire epics and bodies of lore. Revived by Giordano Bruno in 1584 and tied to zodiacal and other occult imagery, **Ars Memoriae** allows you to remember anything you've already read or seen by entering a meditative "memory palace" to re-visualize it. The GM adjudicates this on an ad hoc narrative basis (getting her to tell you details about NPCs or forgotten elements of the scenery), likely informed by heavy doses of *Sherlock*. Difficulties depend not on how hard the detail is to recall, but (like Preparedness) on how unlikely it seems that your character ever read or saw it in the first place.

If **Ars Memoriae** is a special ability (requiring the first rating point to be bought with 5 build points, like Magickal abilities; see p. 8) then it *also* allows you to spend points of **Ars Memoriae** as Investigative pool points on any topic your Scholar might ever have learned in his life. **Ars Memoriae** becomes a pool of "generic" Investigative points that can be re-assigned and (after normal refreshing) re-spent on any likely ability. Although super-fun to play, this has real potential to break the game contract, so consider just explaining all the Scholars' ludicrously high Academic and Technical ratings as being due to their study of the Art of Memory rather than carving it out as a separate ability.

If the Scholars use **Ars Memoriae**, their Jesuit enemies definitely do, too.

## *Inspiration (Interpersonal)*

Introduced in **Ashen Stars**, this ability allows you to identify the witness' noble or higher principles and awaken or play upon them. This also acts as a generic "leadership" ability for ships' crews (or thieves' crews).

You can also act as a muse, spending Inspiration on other artists' Art-Making tests. If the artist is not your lover, you can spend only 1 point (total) of Inspiration as their muse.

## *Languages (Academic)*

Operates as in **Esoterrorists** and **Trail of Cthulhu**: one extra language per rating point. You may buy both Latin and Greek together for 1 rating point to reflect formal schooling if you wish; if you are Status 4+, you must do so.

Enochian is the language of the angels, and the true language of magickal rituals.

## *Mathematics (Academic)*

Encompasses all mathematics contained within Euclid and algebra (if you invent calculus, you keep it to yourself), as well as cosmography, the science of map

projections and mapmaking.

*In a cinematic game, you can mathematically analyze the relevant names involved in a situation using gematria (if you also have Languages (Greek)) or cabala (if you also have Languages (Hebrew)) to discover a pattern or truth behind the surface. This might resemble Traffic Analysis (Night's Black Agents) or a (usually) less-horrific version of Cthulhu Mythos (Trail of Cthulhu). You must spend both Mathematics and Languages to "solve" the situation thusly.*

## *Natural (Academic)*

## *Philosophy*

This is the study of the laws of Nature, incorporating among other things what later generations will term physics, biology, geology, and the more academic reaches of botany and zoology. Wilderness Lore covers plants and animals in the wild. Chemistry falls under Alchemy; astronomy under Astrology.

## *Performance (Interpersonal)*

You gain trust, sympathy, or favor by performing: song, drama, dance, etc.

Scholars of Night Abilities

Investigative

Academic

Accounts  
Antiquary  
Architecture  
Art History  
Astrology  
Diagnosis  
History  
Languages  
Law  
Mathematics  
Militaria  
Natural Philosophy  
Occult Studies  
Research  
Theology

Interpersonal

Bureaucracy  
Carousing  
Flattery  
Flirtation  
Inspiration  
Interrogation  
Intimidation  
Negotiation  
Performance  
Reassurance  
Status  
Streetwise  
Taunt  
Tod-Spotter

Technical

Alchemy  
Ciphers  
Craft  
Forgery  
Navigation  
Notice  
Wilderness Lore

General

Art-Making  
Artillery  
Athletics  
Conceal  
Disguise  
Driving  
Faction  
Filch  
Gambling  
Health  
Infiltration  
Mechanics  
Medico  
Preparedness  
Riding  
Sailing  
Scuffling  
Sense Trouble  
Shooting  
Stability  
Surveillance  
Weapons

Magickal Abilities

Jupiter  
Mars  
Mercury  
Moon  
Saturn  
Sun  
Venus

6

Although it overlaps with Art-Making, any character can use it, winning hearts or attention by simple emotional appeal or by coy technique.

In a cinematic game, this might also include the GUMSHOE Investigative ability Impersonate.

Status (Interpersonal)

This is your status in Elizabethan society. Similar to Credit Rating in *Trail of Cthulhu*, Status is better understood as a congeries of abilities, each allowing smooth interaction with one's social equals and respect from inferiors, and conveying knowledge of etiquette toward one's superiors.

You can cadge invitations or introductions, call in favors, mingle socially, avoid scandal, gain the benefit of the doubt, know rumors or general information, etc. suitable to your class.

At the GM's discretion, Status may also come with money, land, houses, etc. at higher levels, but there are plentiful examples of bankrupt nobles in the Tudor court. A lower Status than normal for one's rank might indicate base conduct

or illegitimate birth, or just poverty or social isolation.

Taunt (Interpersonal)

You have an unerring sense of what insult or gibe will get a reaction from your

target. You may intend to put them off-balance, goad them into unwise action or revelation, or otherwise aim their ill-humor. In the company of poets or other hot-blooded sorts, this ability also allows you to achieve some status as a quick thinker and keen speaker.

STATUS SOCIAL POSITION OR RANK

0	Beggar, farmhand, ruffler (unskilled criminal)
1	Husbandman, house servant, laborer, mercenary soldier, entertainer, skilled criminal
2	Workingman or cotter, small farmer, low taverner, tradesman, able seaman, servant in a great house, Upright Man (crime boss)
3	Townsmen (respectable householder) or yeoman (free land- or leaseholder), sheriff, alderman, justice of the peace, artisan, surgeon, guild officer, shipmaster, mercenary officer, impecunious university graduate, merchant traveler
4	Gentry (own tenanted land, allowed to bear arms), professional (priest, doctor, lawyer, academic scholar), rich burgess or merchant, mayor
5	Knight, child of Lesser Peer, Dean or other important priest, merchant prince
6	Lesser Peer (baron), child of Greater Peer, Bishop
7	Greater Peer (duke, marquis, earl, viscount), Archbishop

## Arms and Armor

Elizabethan firearms vary from enormous (.80 caliber!) muskets requiring a brace to fire, to snaphaunce flintlock pistols that can be concealed in a cloak. Most pistols are wheel-locks; most long arms are matchlocks or wheel-locks.

Prefiguring Chekhov, any given firearm should only be fired once during a scene; reloading is a slow and cumbrous process best ignored, and (twin-barrel fowling pieces aside) multiple-shot firearms are theoretical curiosities.

On an unmodified roll of “1” on a Shooting test, roll again; on a second 1, the gun misfires. This rule does not apply to cannon or crossbows.

### Notes

**Belt Pistol:** Carrying a concealed belt pistol is a Difficulty 6 Conceal test.

**Buckler:** A small metal shield held in the fist, can be used to smash opponents with a Scuffling test. Increases melee Hit Threshold by 1 if user’s Weapons skill is 8+.

**Cosh:** Small leather sack full of shot; uses Scuffling, not Weapons.

**Fowling Piece:** Use normal GUMSHOE shotgun rules for a 12-gauge shotgun.

**Lance:** Successfully using a lance from horseback requires a Riding test against the same Difficulty as the attack Hit Threshold.

**Longbow:** To use a longbow effectively, you must have the Archery ability; the first rating point in Archery costs 5 build points.

**Swivel Gun:** If loaded with grapeshot, damage increases to +3 (+4 at Close) and range stops at Near.

### Explosives

Use the Artillery ability and the explosives rules from your favorite GUMSHOE game; grenades are still grenades, just much bulkier and more dangerous; assume a barrel of gunpowder is the rules equivalent of a bundle of dynamite or brick of C4.

### Cannon

There are way more cannon than the table lists, but those are the most common types. Cannon loaded with grapeshot only fires out to Near range, but can do full damage to one additional target for every 2 points in the Artillery test’s margin of success.

There isn’t space in this issue for full-throated ship

## WEAPON

	DAMAGE
Fist, kick, bated stage sword	-2
Belaying pin, buckler, cosh, dirk, whip	-1
Billhook, crossbow bolt, falchion or other cheap thick sword, hammer, pocket pistol, quarterstaff, sickle	+0
Backsword, battle axe, belt pistol, claymore, fowling piece, halberd, longbow arrow, maul (2-handed), pike, rapier	+1
Arquebus, caliver, petronel (horse pistol), pike (set against charge), swivel gun	+2
Falconet (light cannon), heavy musket, lance (while mounted)	+3
Demi-culverin (medium cannon)	+5
Cannon of seven (heavy cannon)	+12

combat rules. Just fake it with contests of Artillery and Sailing. Maybe in another GUMSHOE Zoom, if enough people ask for them.

### Armor

Armor in Elizabethan times is a hodge-podge of buff coats, half-plate, and everything in between. Anything except a buff coat is impossibly heavy; wearers act last in a fight and are at +1 Difficulty to all physical tasks including combat. At the GM’s discretion, long-serving military veterans (Weapons 8+ and Militaria 2+) like Spanish *tercio* infantrymen do not suffer this increase to foes’ Hit Thresholds while armored.

### Magic

In addition to the Heptarchic magick detailed below, the GM should feel free to mix in any other magical system she likes the feel or flavor of. The Elizabethan magical world is a varicolored tapestry. Particularly appropriate magics include:

- alchemical elixirs (*Ashen Stars* vioware, see p. 4)
- goëtia (*GUMSHOE Zoom: Goëtia*)
- Improvisational Magic (*Trail of Cthulhu, Rough Magicks*)
- Cthulhu mythos magic (*Trail of Cthulhu, Rough Magicks*)
- voodoo or other sympathetic magic, perhaps re-skinned as “cunning

man” charms (*GUMSHOE Zoom: Voodoo*)

### Magickal Abilities

The planetary Magickal abilities are based on (and vastly simplified from) the *Heptarchia Mystica* system developed or discovered by John Dee in 1582. Heptarchic magick depends on knowledge of the Heptarchs or angelic entities governing the seven planets and their influence. Despite its angelic origins, sinful men can use Heptarchic magick, at least in the game world. (Demons and black magicians use infernal magic.)

Magickal abilities are special General abilities. Build points for Magickal abilities come from the pool of General build points. The first rating point in any Magickal ability costs 5 build points; after that, build points for that ability and for all other Magickal abilities become rating points as normal.

*Raleigh wants to get the Magickal ability Mars. He spends 7 build points, and gets Mars with a rating of 3. The first rating point costs 5 build points; the next two each cost 1 build point. If he then spends 4 build points on the Sun, he gets Sun with a rating of 4.*

Using a Magickal ability is like any other General ability use: roll a die, add any points you spend, and compare the result to the Difficulty. However, you *must spend* at least 1 point from your Magickal ability pool.

Different effects have different minimum spends. If you have insufficient points in the relevant Magickal pool, you must spend points from other pools instead, at the following ratios of spent pool points to *effective points* added to the die:

EQUIPAGE	ARMOR VS. MELEE	ARMOR VS. FIREARMS
Buff coat	-2	
Mail	-3	-1
Plate cuirass or back-and-breast; steel helmet	-4	-1



# Ken Writes About Stuff

## Magickal Difficulty Modifiers

CONDITION	MODIFIER
Spell cast outside a thaumaturgical laboratory or other magical space	+3
In physical peril or otherwise distracted	+3
Caster reads spell by rote (no relevant Language ability)	+1
Spell seems like kind of a reach to the GM or other players, as opposed to naturally fitting the domain or effect	+2 to +4
Spell's effect or ritual really meshes harmoniously (in judgment of GM and other players) with artistic masterpiece used	-1 to -3
Spell effect duration: <i>permanent</i> (+5), <i>one month</i> (+2), <i>until sunrise</i> (+1), <i>one scene</i> (+0)	
Effect on outside world: <i>history-making</i> (+7), <i>major</i> (+5), <i>affects others</i> (+2), <i>noticeable to others</i> (+1), <i>entirely personal to caster</i> (+0)	
Spell casting time: <i>3 hours</i> (+3), <i>one night</i> (+2), <i>three nights</i> (+1), <i>one month</i> (+0)	

## Magickal Ability Table

ABILITY	DOMAIN	CORRESPONDENCES	Secondary	Names
Sun	Wisdom, understanding, science, philosophy; seas, ships, and sea creatures, birds; health	Sunday, yellow, topaz, diamond, gold, saffron, birch, ash, eagle, lion	Venus	Bobogel, Befafes, Och, Graphiel
Moon	Mathematics, politics, doctrine; light, magical beings, operations of the Earth, wonders; madness	Monday, white, moonstone, quartz, silver, opium, willow, cat	Saturn	Carmara, Bagonel, Phul, Chashmodai
Mercury	Depths and secrets of the Earth, caverns, the past; judgment, Hell, the Gates of Death, Fire; languages, magic	Wednesday, violet, opal, agate, quicksilver, mandrake, snake	Jupiter	Bnaspol, Brorges, Ophiel, Tiriel
Venus	Perfection of nature, metals, art; divination, heights and works of the Air; beauty, love	Friday, green, emerald, copper, apple, rose, alder, dove	Moon	Bornogo, Baligon, Hagith, Hagi
Mars	Depths of the Waters, mysteries of Water, duality, deep emotion; breath of life, plants and animals, birth; war	Tuesday, red, bloodstone, ruby, iron, gentian, tobacco, pine, cornel, dogwood, dragon	Sun	Babalel, Butmono, Phaleg, Nakhiel
Jupiter	Treasures, mysteries of the Earth, subterranean rivers; time, pattern, new worlds, new people and dynasties; aerial spirits, humors, emotions	Thursday, blue, sapphire, lapis, tin, anise, oak, cedar, unicorn	Mars	Blisdon, Bynepor, Bethor, Yophiel
Saturn	Humans; wicked spirits, the doings of evil men; invisibility, petrification, darkness	Saturday, black, onyx, pearl, lead, hemlock, yew, aconite, raven	Mercury	Hagonel, Bralges, Bnapsen, Aratron, Agiel

**Secondary Magickal ability:** 1 pool point spent equals 1 effective point. Each Magickal ability has a “secondary” ability listed on the table, as the Heptarchs share responsibilities over their planetary spheres.

**Other Magickal abilities:** 3 pool points spent equals 2 effective points.

**Alchemy, Astrology, Language (Enochian), Mathematics, Occult Studies, Theology:** 2 pool points spent equals 1 effective point.

**Architecture, Art-Making, Craft, Performance:** 3 pool points spent equals 1 effective point. Describe how you involved your artistic ability in preparing or casting the ritual.

**Health, Stability:** 4 pool points

spent equals 1 effective point. Describe the specific debility, madness, or injury you court or cause yourself to prepare or cast the ritual. These points do not refresh until the end of the adventure.

Shocking revelations or other uncanny phenomena accompanying Magickal ability use will more than likely trigger further Stability tests (likely 3- or 4-point potential losses).

After using a Magickal ability, you must make a Difficulty 5 Health test or immediately lose 2 Health and become Hurt for the rest of the scene. (If you are already Hurt, you become Seriously Wounded.) This represents a profound, bone-deep exhaustion approaching shock, not an actual injury.

Magickal abilities do not refresh until after an adventure.

**Domain:** The areas the ability can magickally affect. There is a good deal of overlap in these domains, as befits an essentially medieval and feudal angelic hierarchy.

**Correspondences:** Symbols, emblems, etc. that reflect or exemplify the Heptarch's influence. The GM may enforce them (Moon spells can only be cast on Mondays) or allow players to invoke them (casting a spell of Venus using a copper sword lowers the Difficulty by 1), but Correspondences should not change the Difficulty by more than +2 or -2 either way.

**Secondary:** The Heptarchs share responsibilities. Points spent from the secondary ability are equivalent to those spent from the primary ability in a casting. However, the caster must always spend at least 1 point from the primary ability to cast a spell.



## Magical Difficulty Table

EFFECT	DIFFICULTY	MINIMUM SPEND
Invocation, abjuration	3	1
Divination, obfuscation	5	2
Alteration, restoration	7	3
Domination, liberation	11	6
Creation, destruction	13	9

**Names:** Taken from Dee, the *Arbatel of Magic* (1575), and other sources, these are associated angelic names to conjure with, to add flavor to castings and spells.

The GM is the final arbiter of whether a spell is allowed or correctly defined, but should allow flavor, feel, and drama to play a role in what is “correctly defined.”

## Spell Effects

Spells’ game-mechanical effects should generally match the caster’s **result** (the total of the die plus effective spends): at minimum, 1 Health, Stability, Athletics, etc. or Difficulty shift per 1 point of result. Divinations allow the answer of one yes-no question per 2 points of result, the equivalent of a 3-point spend of an Investigative ability, etc.

Player characters and magical or otherwise prepared NPCs may resist spells *directly affecting them* (usually with Stability or Health tests) at a Difficulty equal to 2 + the relevant Magick ability rating of the caster. Spells automatically affect scenery and minor NPCs.

Extrapolate and interpolate effects based on equivalent spends in other GUMSHOE magic systems.

## Requirements and Artifacts

All spells and rituals absolutely require:

- the caster to be within an inscribed circle or pentacle
- drawing or writing the specific sign of the spell or its patron entity, often as part of the circle
- forthright speech in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, or Enochian
- the use of one of: fire, water or blood, incense (or other odor such as burning meat or blood), or a magical scrying surface such as a shewstone or mirror
- at least three hours of time

The GM may also introduce magical items, grimoires, specific rituals, etc. that count as effective spends: a table inscribed with the Enochian, Latin, and Greek alphabets might count as an effective spend of 1 point; an obsidian shewstone from an Aztec temple might count as an effective spend of

2 for any spell of Saturn or Mars, for instance.

Creating such an item can only be done with the GM’s explicit permission; at minimum, a magical tool that counts as a 1-point spend for a given Magickal ability requires an alteration effect *and* an Art-Making test success by 5.

## Multiple Casters

Multiple casters may participate in a spell or ritual by spending 2 Magickal ability points, which do not add to the die. At least 1 point thus spent must be of the primary or secondary Magickal ability being cast. If any of the other casters do not have the needed Language ability, increase the Difficulty by +1.

## Historical Scholars

Although you can invent your own Elizabethan magician-poets or intelligencer-architects at will, it’s perhaps more fun to play actual figures from the Tudor era. Here are just a few of the possibilities, given scores roughly matching the historical (and romantic) record. Their Investigative ability totals are slightly higher than normal beginning characters – this is what we in game design call “a bribe.”

Expand on the brief biographies given here with Wikipedia or even further research into the period – you will never get bored reading up on Elizabethan occult-espionage-theatrical gossip, I promise.

No historical Scholar has Magickal abilities assigned – yet.

## Float Points

Some game statistics include a number in brackets after the Investigative or General Ability identifiers. This is a number of float points the player can spend to buy new abilities of that type. These can be spent during play to

acquire abilities they don’t already have. Once spent, the points are gone. Investigative float points can only be spent to gain an ability no other PC in the scene has.

## Thomas Hariot

*Reclusive Genius*

You were born in Oxford in 1560; after graduation in 1580, Raleigh hires you as a mathematician. You accompany the second Roanoke expedition in 1586 and publish a survey of Virginia upon your return in 1588. Your mathematics anticipates Descartes, your astronomical and optical knowledge instructs Kepler, your telescope predates Galileo’s by years. But you don’t publish, perhaps content to build your reputation as a scholar – and as a magician – with your peers and patrons.

If anyone in the School has Ars Memoriae (see p. 5), it’s you.

**Possible Drives:** Scholarship, Thirst for Knowledge

**Investigative Abilities:** Accounts 2, Alchemy 1, Art History 1, Astrology 3, Ciphers 1, Inspiration 1, Languages 4 (Algonquin, Arabic, Greek + Latin, Hebrew), Mathematics 4, Natural Philosophy 3, Navigation 2, Notice 1, Occult Studies 2, Research 2, **Status 3**

**General Abilities [31 Float Points]:** Art-Making (Musical Instrument) 1, Athletics 3, Faction 6, Gambling 4, Health 6, Mechanics 8, Preparedness 3, Sailing 2, Sense Trouble 4, Shooting 4, Stability 8, Weapons 1

## Christopher Marlowe

*Faustian Playwright*

You were born in Canterbury in 1564, and graduate from Cambridge in 1584. Your Master of Arts is endangered by time spent studying at the (treasonous) English Seminary at Rheims, but is finally awarded in 1587 after intervention by the Privy Council. This is because you serve as an intelligencer in Sir Francis Walsingham’s spy network, for which you also tutor Lady Arabella Stuart in 1589 and infiltrate a forgery ring in Flanders in 1592. You may have entered the School of Night as an intelligencer for Walsingham!

## More Scholars

Other figures bruited about as possible Scholars of Night (and hence player characters!) include:

**Thomas Allyn:** (1542-1632) Mathematician and “black artist” for the Earl of Leicester; antiquarian and manuscript collector.

**Edward Blount:** (1565-1632) Stationer of London; friend and publisher of Marlowe, Shakespeare, Jonson, and Lyly.

**Sir George Carey:** (1547-1603) Husband to Elizabeth, soldier, crypto-Catholic, sometime governor of the Isle of Wight. Becomes Lord Chamberlain in 1596, sponsors Shakespeare’s company.

**George Chapman:** (1559?-1634) Playwright, masque designer, and poet; masterful translator of Homer, Hesiod, and Virgil. His 1594 poem *Shadow of Night* may allude to the School.

**Robert Hues:** (1533-1632) Mathematician, geographer, student of Hariot. Voyages to Virginia for Raleigh and circumnavigates the world one and a half times.

**Lawrence Keymis:** (1564-1618) Geographer, mathematician, and sea-dog. Fellow of Balliol College from 1583-1591. Joins Raleigh’s 1595 Guiana expedition and becomes Raleigh’s right-hand man until committing suicide on Trinidad.

**George Peele:** (1556-1596) Gifted poet, playwright (including part of *Titus Andronicus*), and translator. A gambler and rakehell, he dies of the pox.

**Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland:** (1564-1632) “The Wizard Earl,” alchemist, wealthy peer, crypto-Catholic, owner of an immense library, possible conspirator against the throne. The School may also meet at his estate Syon House in Richmond west of London.

**Matthew Roydon:** (1560?-1622) Poet, satirist, freethinker, intelligencer, friend of Marlowe. Between 1591 and 1594, a courier between Lord Burghley and the alchemist Edward Kelley in Prague.

**Ferdinando Stanley, Baron Strange:** (1559-1594) Brilliant mind, patron of the arts (including Shakespeare’s company after 1592), possible conspirator against the throne. 5th Earl of Derby after 1593, possibly poisoned the next year.

**Thomas Walsingham:** (1561-1630) Patron (and possible lover) of Shakespeare and friend of Marlowe, from 1590 a landed gentleman in Kent, knighted in 1596. Cousin to Sir Francis Walsingham, employed as an intelligencer from 1580 to 1591; in turn employs Robert Poley and Ingram Frizer, who kills Marlowe in 1593.

**Walter Warner:** (1563-1643) Alchemist and anatomist, born without a left hand.

**William Warner:** (1558?-1609) Poet and playwright; in 1586 authors a long, mystical historical poem, *Albion’s England*.

**Thomas Watson:** (1555-1592) Poet, lyricist, music critic, and intelligencer; friend of Marlowe and tutor for the Cornwallis family.

Your double life impels your true career, writing poetry and plays. With *Tamburlaine* in 1587, you become England’s greatest playwright; your 1592 *Doctor Faustus* depicts black magic on stage to great controversy and better box office. Like many theatrical folk, you love tobacco, boys, and getting into fights; in May 1593 you are under investigation for atheism. Either these proclivities or blowback from your intelligence work kills you in a Deptford bar and safe house on May 30, 1593.

**Possible Drives:** Curiosity, Desire for Self-Knowledge, Hotshot

**Investigative Abilities [5 Float Points]:** Art History 2, Carousing 2, Ciphers 1, Flirtation 1, Forgery 2, Languages (Dutch, French, Greek + Latin) 3, Notice 2, Occult Studies 2, Performance 1, Research 1, **Status** 3, Streetwise 1, Taunt 2, Tod-Spotter 3

**General Abilities [5 Float Points]:** Art-Making (Play-Writing 8, Poetry 6), Athletics 8, Conceal 4, Disguise 4, Faction 6, Gambling 4, Health 6, Infiltration 2, Preparedness 3, Riding 1, Sailing 1, Scuffling 4, Sense Trouble 5, Stability 5, Surveillance 4, Weapons 5

## Sir Walter Raleigh

*Gloriana’s Favorite Sea Dog*

You were born in Devon about 1554, and Catholic persecution left you a fervent Protestant; you soldiered for Protestantism in France and in Ireland, where you maintain estates. In 1584/5, you sponsor the Virginia Colony on Roanoke Island, which vanishes mysteriously in 1588. (Your half-brother Humphrey Gilbert also disappears on a voyage of exploration in 1587.) The School of Night meets in your London house, Durham House on the Strand.

You become a favorite of Queen Elizabeth before 1585, when she knights you and makes you Warden of the Stannaries, Lord-Lieutenant of Cornwall, and Captain of the Queen’s Bodyguard. You introduce your friend Edmund Spenser (b. 1552) to Court in 1590; his *Faerie Queene* causes a sensation. However, in 1591 you secretly marry the Queen’s lady-in-waiting Bess Throckmorton, earning you both dismissal from Court and a stint in the Tower in 1592. Released to raid the Spanish treasure fleet, you have not returned to favor despite your piratical successes. In 1595, you explore Guiana searching for El Dorado.

**Possible Drives:** Adventure, Discovery, Glory

**Investigative Abilities [7 Float Points]:** Art History 1, Carousing 1, Flattery 1, Flirtation 2, History 3, Inspiration 1, Languages 3 (French, Greek + Latin, Spanish), Law 2, Militaria 2, Navigation 1, Occult Studies 1, **Status** 5

**General Abilities [14 Float Points]:** Art-Making (Poetry 4, Dance 1), Artillery 3, Athletics 6, Faction 10, Health 7, Preparedness 4, Riding 4, Sailing 7, Scuffling 2, Sense Trouble 4, Shooting 3, Stability 8, Weapons 6

## Lady Elizabeth Carey (née Spencer)

*Spenser’s Muse*

You were born in Northamptonshire in 1552 and in 1574 marry Sir George Carey, second cousin to the Queen. Carey’s father, Baron Hunsdon, becomes Lord Chamberlain in 1585 – you are terrifyingly well connected at Court. In 1579, your sister Alice marries Baron Strange, future Earl of Derby (see sidebar) and another patron of the School. You translate Petrarch in your own right, and patronize many other artists, especially your distant relative Edmund Spenser. You inspire his *Muiopotmos* in 1590 and have disguised parts in his other works including *The Faerie Queene*.

You and George have one child, your daughter Elizabeth, born in 1576 and raised amid the School of Night’s experiments and bold conversation. After 1596, you become Baroness Hunsdon when George accedes to the title and the Lord Chamberlainship.

**Possible Drives:** Artistic Sensitivity, Curiosity

**Investigative Abilities:** Accounts 1, Antiquary 1, Art History 2, Bureaucracy 1, Craft (Embroidery)



## Where's John Dee?

Dee is not a member of the School, and may never have even met Raleigh. He returns to England from Bohemia in 1589 to find his library and laboratory looted by his wealthy neighbors – possibly including the Earl of Northumberland! He spends the next five years living hand to mouth in Mortlake until Queen Elizabeth appoints him Warden of Christ's College in Manchester. He is miserably immured in Manchester from 1595 to 1605.

The GM can use Dee as a cautionary example, a heroic (if fallen) exemplar of the Art, a feeble exposition dump, a possibly paranoid intelligencer forcibly retired, as a source of dangerous thaumaturgical accidents ... or as a potential arch-villain. Bringing him on stage at the age of 62 to chase demons through the London sewer seems somehow less than kind.

1, Flattery 2, Intimidation 2, Languages 2 (Greek + Latin, Italian), Negotiation 1, Notice 3, Occult Studies 1, Performance 2, Reassurance 3, **Status 6**, Tod-Spotter 2, Wilderness Lore 1

**General Abilities [20 Float Points]:** Art-Making (Dance 1, Design 2, Musical Instrument 1, Poetry 3, Singing 1), Athletics 2, Faction 20, Health 10, Preparedness 4, Riding 2, Sense Trouble 5, Stability 8, Surveillance 2

## Players on the Other Side

For the opposition, the GM should add any or all special powers that take her fancy. Demons come in all forms, after all, and necromancers and Spaniards nearly so.

Investigative abilities appear for NPCs to provide flavor for the GM.

## Humans

Purely human opponents might include pursuivants looking for evidence of criminal atheism, Jesuit spies, rival lords, black magicians, witches, or bravos or intelligencers hired by any of the foregoing. Match worthy foes to the Scholars' ability levels.

A single metahuman out of *Mutant City Blues* can easily be played for demonic horror, weird wonder, or some combination: she might be a Mandevillian foreigner, a faerie changeling, or just a mysterious example of the work of comets altering a person's stars.

## Necromancer

A sorcerer who traffics with the dead. He has muscular bravos for grave-robbing, and perhaps a thief or lock-breaker in his employ as well.

**Abilities:** Antiquary 1, Athletics 4, Driving 3, Health 6, Languages (Latin) 1, Mercury 7, Necromancy 8, Occult Studies 2, Saturn 5, Scuffling 3, Status 3 or 4, Streetwise 2, Weapons 3

**Hit Threshold:** 3

**Alertness Modifier:** +1 (touch of the Sight)

**Stealth Modifier:** +2 (shadowy)

**Damage Modifier:** -1 (boning knife)

**Necromancy:** A general pool of points to power darkness or other ghostly effects (2 per effect), spend to animate zombies (1 point per zombie, minimum 2 points per scene) or talk to the dead (1 point), etc.

## Werewolf

A werewolf (or lycanthrope) is a man whose melancholic humor is far out of balance. This leads to periods of time during which he seeks to kill and devour humans, often his loved ones, in wolfish fashion; he may have no memory of this condition, or be racked with guilt. A werewolf may be of any station. Ability scores are "in wolfish state."

**Abilities:** Athletics 10, Disguise 4, Health 6, Intimidation 3, Scuffling 13, Weapons 0 or 5

**Hit Threshold:** 4

**Alertness Modifier:** +3 (what keen senses you have)

**Stealth Modifier:** +2 (wolfish subtlety)

**Damage Modifier:** -1 (furious claw and bite), +0 (knife if used)

**Armor:** -1 (seemingly unconscious of wounds, never Hurt)

**Lupine Leap:** The Athletics Difficulty of any leap for the werewolf equals half the distance in yards (horizontal) or the distance in yards (vertical).

## Monsters

Particularly apropos monsters from other GUMSHOE products include those from *Trail of Cthulhu* (especially serpent folk, rat-things, and ghouls) and *Esoterrorists*, or even the occasional crashed alien beast from *Ashen Stars*.

## Manticore

This is a beast of India, with a man's face, red lion's body, and scorpion's tail. His mouth boasts a triple row of teeth with which to eat human flesh; his tail flings quills like those of the porpentine. The voice of the manticore is pleasingly trumpet-like. Some manticores are intelligent, alien predators with magickal knowledge (Mercury, Jupiter, or Moon) learned from India or from Hell.

**Abilities:** Athletics 11, Health 11, Scuffling 20, Shooting 10, Voice 6

**Hit Threshold:** 4 (fast)

**Alertness Modifier:** +1 (bestial senses)

**Stealth Modifier:** +2 (moves silently)

**Damage Modifier:** +1 (bite), +2 (claw), +0 (quill, out to Near range); the manticore can shoot 3 quills or make two claw attacks per round.

**Armor:** -2 vs. any (lion-skin)

**Voice:** The manticore's musical voice soothes and fascinates those who hear it (-2 to Hit Threshold). The Stability test to resist its charm is the total of the manticore's Voice ability roll and spend.

## Ranthead

This monster lives in wells, meres, cellars, and other dark, damp places, crouching on piles of bloody bones or lurking underwater. It has a gleaming skull for a head, and covets the flesh of children. Its strength and speed are prodigious. Few scholars know of its vulnerability to lightning.

**Abilities:** Athletics 13, Health 13, Scuffling 16

**Hit Threshold:** 4

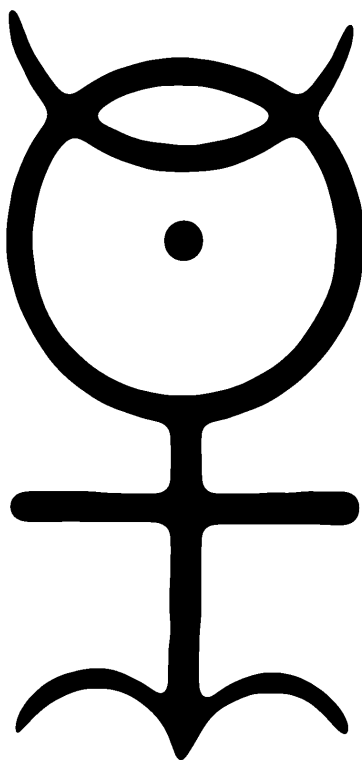
**Alertness Modifier:** +2 (smells human flesh)

**Stealth Modifier:** +2 (moves silently)

**Damage Modifier:** +2 (bony bite), +2 (wrenching grip)

**Armor:** -4 vs. any except lightning (does double normal damage)

**Strength and Speed:** Can smash its way through anything but metal; always goes first in combat. Once grabbed, its foe's Hit Threshold drops by 2. Its own Hit Threshold drops to 3 against that foe, but she must spend 2 Athletics to make any attack at all: at Athletics 0 she can



do nothing but struggle feebly in Rawhead's grip. Escaping requires a successful contest of Athletics with Rawhead.

## Faerie

There are as many faeries and as many contradictory stories and names for them as there are tellers of faerie tales. This is apropos, given that their great gift is for illusion and confusion, although they often have a great deal of raw power for work or over nature. They may be tiny enough to fit in a flower, or tall and aristocratic – or both; a fairy's "true form" might be an illusion, too.

## Hob

This is a middling "normal" fairy, if there is such a thing.

**Abilities:** Fae 21

**Hit Threshold:** 5 (flickery or tiny or ghostly or ...)

**Alertness Modifier:** +2 (the Sight)

**Stealth Modifier:** +2 (silent as a breeze or shadow)

**Damage Modifier:** -1 (elf shot)

**Armor:** invulnerable to everything except other faeries and to iron

**Fae:** This pool can be used by the fairy to do anything including increase his modifiers, simulate any ability, create illusions, alter the weather, or just do faerie miracles such as

teleport, shapeshift, etc. Altering a pool, rating, die, or Difficulty costs 1 point per point altered. Otherwise, faeries spend 1 point for minor effects and 2 points for "normal" faerie effects, or more at the GM's discretion. Iron damage is taken off the Fae pool. Fae refreshes upon the fairy's return to Faërieland, where it must stay for as many days as points it refreshed. Or not.

**Faerie Glamour:** Faerie glamour is impossible to penetrate unless you have the Sight or a potion to do so, or unless the fairy's guise has been pointed out to you or reasonably suspected (Difficulty 7 Sense Trouble). Then it requires a Difficulty 6 test of Stability (Difficulty 5 with Occult Studies) to recognize the illusion.

**Faerie Oath:** If a fairy gives its word, it cannot break it.

## Demons

If anything, demons are even more diverse than faeries. Fairies might indeed be demons, as some scholars suggest.

**The Book of Unremitting Horror** is an excellent source for demons; any given demon might have any or all of the superpowers in *Mutant City Blues* or vampire powers in *Night's Black Agents*, for example. Hastur (especially in his Tattered King aspect) might be a powerful demon of despair or artistic ennui, with other Mythos entities not aliens but archdukes of Hell.

## Hell-Hound

Black as coal, with glowing red eyes, the hell-hound (a.k.a. Gabriel-Ratchet, Devil's Dog, Dando's Dandy, etc.) appears to the damned and chases them to death, or drags them to Hell, or just howls prophetically.

**Abilities:** Aberrance 10, Health 9, Scuffling 13

**Hit Threshold:** 4

**Alertness Modifier:** +1, +3 vs. sinners (smell)

**Stealth Modifier:** +2 (padded paws)  
**Damage Modifier:** +0 (bite), -1 (flaming breath), +1 (howl)

**Armor:** -3 against all but blessed weapons; -1 against silver weapons

**Apport:** The hound spends 2 Aberrance and vanishes, either to Hell or to reappear somewhere else – perhaps behind you!

**Hell-Chase:** Every round in which you

lose an Athletics contest with the hound, you take +0 Health damage.

**Howl:** The hound spends at least 2 Aberrance and rolls; the Difficulty of the Stability test to resist +1 Stability and Health damage (and not flee in panic fear) equals the total of the hound's spend and roll.

**Worrying Bite:** The second successful bite in a row against one target does double damage. All other bites on that target automatically hit for normal damage; the hound's jaws have closed on his limb or throat.

## Mephistophilis

A scholarly devil who prefers dickering with magicians. If a magician sells her soul, Mephistophilis grants the customary "anything you want for seven years" pact. But he prefers offering "free" points for tests of any kind -- including Magickal abilities, of course. Once a magician has accepted total points from Mephistophilis equal to her Stability rating, he can order her to perform a service for him once per month. Once she has accepted 12 more points from him, she is damned without even seven years' wishes to show for it.

## Sources

The best, and really sole, source for the School is the 1936 thesis *The School of Night*, by M. C. Bradbrook. She did not invent the theory of the School, but her long essay made it unforgettable if not entirely respectable. On Marlowe and Elizabethan intelligence in general, *The Reckoning* by Charles Nicoll is the best RPG book ever written that isn't an RPG book. For Elizabethan magic, Frances Yates' *Occult Philosophy in the Elizabethan Age* and *Religion and the Decline of Magic* by Keith Thomas set off the bounds well, between them covering the high and the low, both Hermes and Herne. *The Queen's Conjurer* by Benjamin Woolley is a decent biography of Dee; Katharine Briggs' *Anatomy of Puck* is unbeatable on Tudor fairy lore. *The Elizabethan Underworld* by Gamini Salgado, *Elizabeth's London* by Liza Picard, and finally *The Elizabethan World Picture* by E. M. W. Tillyard take us from the gutter to the stars via Charing Cross.

In fiction, Anthony Burgess' *A Dead Man in Deptford* is the best novel about Marlowe. Melissa Scott's *Armor of Light*, Elizabeth Bear's *Ink and Steel*, Patricia Wrede's *Snow White and Rose Red*, and Sarah Hoyt's *Ill Met By Moonlight* are all one or another iteration of Elizabethan urban fantasy, and all generally enjoyable.

That said, Lisa Goldstein's *Strange Devices of the Sun and Moon* combines Marlowe, Faerie, Arthuriana, and bookselling in a nearly perfect historical fantasy – but I already said "Lisa Goldstein" so you probably guessed that.

For the magickally curious, John Dee's *Heptarchia Mystica* is online in a well-annotated text at <http://www.esotericarchives.com/dee/hm.htm>



